

HENRY 'CHIPS' CHANNON

THE DIARIES
1918–38

'The greatest British diarist
of the 20th century'
BEN MACINTYRE

'Wickedly entertaining'
ANDREW MARR

'Gripping reading'
MAX HASTINGS

'A masterpiece'
GUARDIAN

'An irresistible read'
NOEL MALCOLM,
TELEGRAPH

EDITED BY
SIMON HEFFER



PENGUIN BOOKS

Henry 'Chips' Channon
The Diaries: 1918–38

'A feast of weapons-grade above-stairs gossip. Now, finally, we are getting the full text, in all its bitchy, scintillating detail . . . Channon is a delightful guide, by turns frivolous and profound.' Ben Macintyre, *The Times*

'One of the most impressive editions of our time.' *Telegraph*

'Gripping reading . . . While countless of Chips's decent contemporaries and especially politicians are today forgotten, the diaries make him an indispensable source for anyone writing of this period.' Max Hastings, *Sunday Times*

'Among the most glittering and enjoyable [diaries] ever written.' *Observer*

'The diaries are fascinating and sometimes a key historical record.
And the man could write.' *Daily Mirror*

'Chips perfectly embodied the qualities vital to the task: a capacious ear for gossip, a neat turn of phrase, a waspish desire to tell all, and easy access to the highest social circles across Europe . . . Replete with fascinating insights.' *Financial Times*

'A masterpiece of storytelling and character assassination.' *Guardian*

'A compelling account of the extraordinary times of interwar Britain . . . Impossible to put down. A superb edition of an indispensable chronicle.'
Oldie Magazine

'Heffer has done a stupendous job. Eminently worth publishing.'
Literary Review

'There are gems on every page. Highly recommended and I'm looking forward to volumes two and three.' *Express*

'The abundant footnotes . . . swam with everything you might want to know about the British aristocracy between the wars . . . His pen portraits of friends and rivals alike are etched in acid.' Anthony Quinn, *Observer*

‘The fascinating, unexpurgated interwar diaries of the Tory MP and social alpinist Henry “Chips” Channon, who met everyone who was anyone from Hitler to kings, the Pope and the Mitfords. Bonking, snobbery and bitchy remarks abound in this big beast of a book.’ *The Times*

‘The Chips Channon diaries bring alive a section of society in the 20s and 30s with great vividness.’ Robert Harris

‘These unabridged, risqué, waspish, snobbish, social-climbing diaries have been worth the wait . . . All credit to Simon Heffer for his masterly editing and annotation.’ *Field*

‘The diaries are indeed indispensable for anyone seriously interested in the political and social history of interwar Britain.’ *History Today*

‘Though this colossal self-portrait describes much that’s misguided, vain, and idiotic, it prompts you too to imagine those perishable qualities that history and biography so often fail to capture: the charm, generosity, personal magnetism, and brilliance of conversation that must have explained and sustained Chips’s progress, the “success after success” that the diaries record and celebrate.’ Alan Hollinghurst,
New York 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*.

Copyrighted Material

Henry 'Chips' Channon

The Diaries:
1918–38

Edited by
Simon Heffer

Copyright  Material

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Penguin Books is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com



Penguin
Random House
UK

First published by Hutchinson in 2021
Published in Penguin Books 2024
001

The Diaries copyright © Georgia Fanshawe and Robin Howard as the
Trustees of the diaries and personal papers of Sir Henry Channon 2021
Introduction and notes copyright © Simon Heffer 2021

The moral right of the author has been asserted

This book contains some language that is outdated and offensive. Such language does not reflect our beliefs or values either as individuals or as a company, but at Penguin Random House we believe it is important to maintain these books as an accurate historical record. In most cases, our readers want to read the original text and we trust them to recognise historical and literary context.

Typeset in 11/13.5 pt Minion MM Roman
by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd, Pondicherry

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorised representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-529-15931-8

www.greenpenguin.co.uk



Copyrighted Material
Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.

Contents

Foreword	vii
Editor's Introduction	ix
Editor's Acknowledgements	xix

THE DIARIES

1918	1
1923	53
1924	93
1925	139
1926	195
1927	247
1928	297
1929	351
1934	353
1935	371
1936	493
1937	635
1938	799
Appendix One: Channon's memorandum on the abdication, written in January 1937	939
Appendix Two: Manuscript notes dated 30th and 31st January 1937 by Chips Channon	949
Index	953
Picture Acknowledgements	1003

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

Foreword

Our grandfather's diaries have been part of our lives since we have been old enough to be aware of them. During the lifetime of our father, Paul Channon, Lord Kelvedon, we knew he was approached a number of times over the years about publishing them in full. However, we were also aware of the dilemma he faced, given the initial negative reaction to the heavily abridged edition that was published in 1967, and the fact that many people mentioned in the diaries – members of the wider family, friends and acquaintances – were still alive.

The last time our father gave serious consideration to publishing a full version was in 2004, when he asked Kenneth Rose to review those diaries that had not been represented in the published abridgement (1918 and 1923–28, and also the diaries for the years 1954 and 1958 which had turned up in a car boot sale a few years earlier). He also discussed the matter, and Kenneth's review, with us and with Robin Howard, who is our co-Trustee for the diaries, and who has acted as an adviser to the Guinness family for many years. He told Robin that he was still in two minds about what to do, but urged that if he had not arranged publication of the full diaries during his lifetime, Robin should encourage us to do so. The fact that a clause in our grandfather's will expressed the hope that the full diaries would be published sixty years after his death – in other words, in 2018 – added to the expectation that a full version would eventually see the light of day.

We are therefore very pleased that we have been able to realise our grandfather's and our father's ambition. This would not have been possible, however, without the considerable help and advice of Robin, who, after we had held some abortive discussions with another editor in 2012, offered in late 2016 to take on the task of arranging the full transcription of the diaries. He has gone on to help us agree the appointment of our literary agent, editor and publisher.

The other person we are greatly indebted to is Professor Simon Heffer, who has brought to the task of editing the diaries his outstanding skills and knowledge, as well as great enthusiasm and application. It has been an enormous pleasure working with him.

We would also like to acknowledge the help we have received from Dr Oliver Cox and David Howell of Oxford University, who gave us advice on the handling of the manuscript diaries and other archive material; Alan Williams, who gave us advice on various legal agreements; our literary agent, Georgina Capel; Nigel Wilcockson, publishing director at our publishers Penguin Random House; and Hugo Vickers, who kindly agreed to read the text of Volume 1 and who made some very helpful comments. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Helen Howard, who has assisted Robin by preparing copies of the manuscript diaries for use by the transcribers and Simon and then checking

and correcting the transcriptions, and we offer our thanks to the transcribers who worked on Volume 1: Ralph Lopes, Isabella Darby, Haseeb Iqbal and Gabriella Dawson.

Finally, we would like to mention two important points about this new edition. Firstly, given the historical value of the diaries, we felt it vital that Simon should have full editorial control over what to include. Secondly, as Simon discusses more fully in his Introduction, we wish to stress that because the diaries inevitably reflect the attitudes of the time they were written, they include some language and opinions that are now rightly considered to be outdated and offensive. They also contain sometimes critical or disparaging comments and disclosures about the parents and relatives of members of our wider family and friends. We want to make it clear that such material has been retained solely to ensure the editorial integrity of the diaries, and that its inclusion does not mean that we in any way condone it, or wish to cause embarrassment or offence.

Georgia Fanshawe and Henry Channon

Editor's Introduction

The publication in 1967 of a condensed and highly redacted edition of the diaries of Sir Henry Channon – the politician known since his time at Oxford in the early 1920s as ‘Chips’ – caused a literary sensation. An unexpurgated edition was impossible, as many of those mentioned in the diaries were still alive. Indeed, Lady Honor Svejdar, Channon’s wife whom he divorced in 1945, commented to Channon’s close companion Peter Coats that although she was ‘rivetted [*sic*]’ by the diaries when she read them in draft, ‘I think some of the “catty” remarks (which fascinate) *MUST* be cut.’ Her main concern was the obloquy that she feared would fall on their son, Paul (1935–2007; later Lord Kelvedon), himself then a Conservative MP who went on to become a Cabinet minister. ‘Most people remember that Chips tried to leave them untouched for fifty years – *we* know that he told Paul he saw no reason why they shouldn’t be published, but they don’t. Some of these catty remarks would still be resented by people who might therefore not promote Paul’s political career.’ She was concerned notably, too, about how the 2nd Earl of Halifax, to whom she was related, would take some of the remarks about his father, Neville Chamberlain’s Foreign Secretary; or how the ‘Queen Mum’ might react to some of the entries about her. Unsure as Lady Honor said she was about the contemporary world of politics, and the possible reactions of the children of her former husband’s friends and enemies described within the diaries, she told Coats that ‘I have begged Paul to read them carefully from that point of view.’ She said for her part she had cut nothing except a few disobliging remarks about her friends and some matters to do with money that she felt ‘would reflect badly on Chips’.

Those who devoured the book found that the joy of reading Channon was not just that he was an acute observer who wrote with candour and wit, and without the pomposity, conscious self-aggrandisement and dishonesty too often found in this genre. His readers also found that he expressed his opinions on issues and of others freely, and did not shrink from retailing gossip and scandal about his friends, enemies and acquaintances. Had the diaries then been published in their entirety, the ensuing libel suits would have ruined his publisher, despite the overwhelming majority of the gossip Channon retailed having (as history has often proved) a sound basis in fact.

And also there were elements of Channon’s own character, and opinions, that those closest to him did not, at the time, feel it was suitable to make public. On his death in 1958, at the age of just 61 and the year after receiving his knighthood, he had left the diaries to Coats (whom he met in 1939, the year after this volume closes) to deal with. Coats would guide the eventual editor of the expurgated edition, Robert Rhodes James, strongly away from material that might cause

embarrassment or difficulties by the simple expedient of not letting him see it. One has only to look at the original manuscript volumes, with sometimes page after page blue-pencilled out, to see that Coats interpreted his duty to Channon's memory rigidly. Rhodes James never saw the original manuscripts; he worked from transcriptions of such material as Coats felt suitable for him to see. One suspects Lady Honor did not see them either; otherwise she would have had far more to object about, and would have understood why Channon had been so guarded about their unredacted publication, and not sought it until fifty years after his death.

Thus it was that Rhodes James, who himself later became a Conservative Member of Parliament, could produce an edition of only around 250,000 words from a manuscript estimated to contain nearly two million – though Rhodes James did claim, about the wartime diaries especially, that there was much more he could have published but was restricted also by his publisher's constraints on space. Also, some diaries from the 1950s that were thought to have been lost were returned to the ownership of Channon's son in the early 1990s, having been found at a car boot sale. They had not been available to Rhodes James to use. We do not know why Rhodes James – who by 1967 had made a reasonable name for himself as a historian and scholar, thanks to his acclaimed 1963 life of Lord Rosebery – chose to work on this basis. Being unable to see the original documents, he had no way of knowing whether the transcriptions from which he had to work were accurate, or of evaluating their context. Today, no reputable scholar would agree to work under such constraints, not least because he or she would be unable to attest to the accuracy of the text being placed before the public.

Now, more than sixty years after Channon's death in 1958, the Trustees of his literary estate have chosen to make the unexpurgated text – an exceptional historical document of the years from 1918 to 1958 – available to the public. It is intended to produce three sizeable volumes of this material; even so, the present editor has struggled to find space for all that is either historically interesting or revelatory about the character of the diarist and the other most prominent figures in his story. However, the task has been far easier than the one that confronted Rhodes James, thanks to the openness of the Trustees of Channon's estate and their determination to see that a correct and reliable historical record is published. It is hoped by the end of the process that the published diaries will include everything of historical significance that Channon recorded, and will allow the reader to form a clear three-dimensional picture of him and the main *dramatis personae*.

Channon was an American: he was born in Chicago on 7th March 1897. His father, also Henry 'Harry' Channon (1868–1930), had inherited a small shipping fleet that took freight and passengers around the Great Lakes. He also had a small banking business. His mother, Vesta Westover (1869–1943), was another Chicagoan, though both sides of the family traced their descent from England: in

the diaries Channon visits Ottery St Mary, in Devon, which he claims as the village whence his forebears came (21st May 1937). He had been to Paris as an adolescent and seems to have toured Europe widely by 1914, before going back to France in late 1917 as a volunteer for the American Red Cross. Later in 1918 – the first year of his diaries – he becomes an honorary attaché at the American Embassy in Paris. He certainly absorbed European culture deeply: the diaries reveal a connoisseur's knowledge of the fine arts, particularly painting, of architecture and of literature.

However, the first edition of the diaries caused many readers and reviewers to conclude that Channon was little more than a charming social climber. Nancy Mitford described the diaries as 'vile and spiteful and silly' and added that 'one always thought Chips was rather a dear, but he was black inside how sinister!' He would not have denied some of these criticisms, accustomed as he was to being frank about himself. A number of times he reflects how he feels contented only when in the company of royalty; he records his shopping sprees, which seem a diversion from some sort of inner emptiness; and he never minces his words. One also senses that he kept his diaries largely as an outlet for his frustrations and a repressed creativity, so if candid and occasionally dark statements appear in them it is hardly a surprise: what people such as Miss Mitford seem to be complaining about is a breach of manners and taste. It is the usual criticism of published diarists, that they record private conversations that no interlocutor ever thinks will be made public. No participant in the private conversations Channon records in this volume is still alive.

Channon was fortunate, in his desire to settle and make a career in England's highest society, to have a generous father to subsidise his life in London. He also had the self-knowledge to reflect regularly on how poor a son he had been to his parents, in terms of repaying their love and support and giving them the respect and admiration they might have expected. In that he was no different from thousands of privileged young people of his generation, except that he had the honesty to put his shortcomings in writing. Until he became a Member of Parliament in 1935 Channon seems to have had no job that paid him a salary, though in 1933 he had married Lady Honor Guinness (1909–76), daughter of the 2nd Earl of Iveagh, the then head of the highly successful brewing family. Channon soon became a director of the Guinness company, his father-in-law making him a gift of the necessary shares, and that position provided him with regular emoluments. His wife's family were also exceptionally generous, as he recounts, in helping the young couple set up house in one of the most exclusive areas of London, and to acquire a country estate in the Home Counties. Before his marriage his lifestyle stretched him financially and he was the occasional bane of his bankers' lives; his social ambition exceeded his income until the Guinneses came into his life. To Channon's credit, he went out of his way to share his good fortune, when it came, and he was much loved by his friends not least as a result of his extensive generosity towards them.

Some who wrote about the original edition, while not denying the diaries were entertaining and gripping reading, nonetheless branded Channon vain, trivial, snobbish, shallow and profoundly lacking in judgement. Readers of this first volume may reach the same conclusions. However, they will also find a man who was intensely loyal (sometimes in spite of himself) to his friends, easily wounded, often insecure, capable of exceptional kindness, well read and immensely civilised. Above all, Channon was a natural observer, and would have made a superb journalist. As a result, and thanks to his social and political connections, his diaries are of outstanding significance; that view was taken of them (sometimes grudgingly) more than fifty years ago, and their stature will be even greater now that they have not been subject to heavy redaction.

This volume begins with Channon, aged 20, in Paris in 1918, his milieu that of the characters in Marcel Proust's sequence of novels *À la recherche du temps perdu*, written in the same period; and it ends on 30th September 1938, when he was 41, a Conservative MP and a parliamentary private secretary in the Foreign Office. Neville Chamberlain was about to return from Munich and his third meeting with Hitler. Channon had a ringside seat for appeasement – and was a committed appeaser himself – just as, a little under two years earlier, his friendship with Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson had given him an equally privileged view of the abdication crisis. In the earlier years we witness Channon's life as a bachelor about town in the 1920s, and then his early married life in the 1930s, often seen through a series of balls, dinners, house parties and encounters with the grand and famous.

The diaries are not complete for the period covered by this volume, and around half the text comes from the last three years, when Channon had become a Member of Parliament. The existing diaries cover 1918, 1923 to 1928, and 1934 to 1938. It is not clear whether those for 1919–22 and 1929–33 are missing, or never existed. Sometimes Channon becomes too busy, or too bored, to keep a complete diary even in the years for which manuscripts do exist; but at least he admits, after a break of weeks or months, that he has neglected the task. He makes a similar admission early in 1934, when he makes a false start but then becomes a more consistent chronicler. By that stage one senses that keeping the diary has not only become a habit for him again, but an emotional necessity. The missing years are frustrating, because we have no contemporary account of his time at Oxford, nor of his establishing his household with Viscount Gage, his closest friend of the immediate post-Oxford years. Then by the time the diary resumes after the 1929–33 hiatus Channon has met and married Lady Honor. He does not, therefore, tell us how they met, or how their marriage came about.

What is clear very early on is how much Channon has come to detest the land of his birth. The distaste he feels for his home, and its inhabitants, when he spends the autumn and winter of 1924–5 in America is uncoiled; and by the 1930s he has married into the British aristocracy, taken British citizenship, and put down roots with a house in Belgrave Square and an estate in Essex. Channon is honest

about his dislike of America, and his relief at having shaken the Americans off, as he is honest about everything else. His are not diaries that leave one wondering about the inner workings of the diarist's mind: Channon shares them with the reader frequently. We witness his insecurities and fears as well as his vanity, his boastfulness and his successes, because he tells us all about them. On 13th April 1935, comparing himself with the bankrupt from whom they are acquiring their house in Belgrave Square, Channon engages in a typically candid moment of introspection: 'I wonder – have I touches of his weak, absurd character too? His love of royalty, jewels and collections . . . the worst sides of my character.' His honesty, especially about the difficulties that emerge in his marriage, is sometimes alarming. Whatever one comes to think of Channon – and the reader must make up his or her own mind about that, on the basis of the ample evidence these diaries provide – one certainly ends up knowing him well.

Robert Rhodes James (1933–99) was a noted biographer and historian already when he came to edit the diaries, which were published in 1967; he had written an acclaimed life of Lord Randolph Churchill in 1959, and his life of Lord Rosebery, published in 1963, remained for over forty years the unrivalled work on the former Prime Minister. After working on Channon's diaries he continued to have a literary career; few of the hundreds of books written on Winston Churchill have surpassed his 1970 work *A Study in Failure*. Yet he laboured under serious handicaps in editing the Channon diaries that his successor has been fortunate to avoid, thanks to the enlightened and intellectually generous attitude of the Trustees of the Channon estate towards their precious resource. As has been noted, Coats not only closely controlled access to the parts of the manuscript Rhodes James was allowed to see, but also sometimes wrote his own version of passages and presented them to the editor. Rhodes James's publishers, in restricting the length of his book, seem not to have foreseen the potential interest in the diaries and their commercial success. Also – and this will have been the editor's choice – footnotes are sparse, and many modern readers of the 1967 edition will need to resort to reference books and the internet to gain some understanding of who many of the characters Channon mentions were, or what was the relevance of many of the events, private and public, that he mentions.

It appears that, in preparing a text for Rhodes James to use, Coats took liberties with the text in places in a way that would not conform with modern standards. Sentences that are otherwise infelicitous are sometimes rewritten; occasionally details from more than one entry are combined; and once or twice (as with the very first entry in his edition) the dates are wrong. Anyone who compares Rhodes James's text with the same passages in the 2021 edition and notices differences should be assured that the 2021 text faithfully reproduces what the diarist wrote, and takes no account of Coats's bowdlerisations or rewritings. Sometimes Channon's handwriting is poor, and on a few occasions in this text 'illegible' appears in square brackets to indicate that that word has defied all

efforts to decipher it. The text of this edition is as it was written, with the following exceptions. Channon's use of punctuation and capitalisation is often random, and I have tried to impose consistency and clarity. His spelling was generally excellent, but I have almost always corrected any mistakes, again mainly to avoid any ambiguity or misunderstandings, and I have always corrected misspellings of proper names. In his use of French titles of nobility I have followed the French style and have not capitalised them, except when referring to princes and princesses. In my footnotes I have always indicated all the courtesy titles by which a member of the United Kingdom nobility was known at any time in his or her life, and given the dates when those titles changed because of inheritance. Channon frequently uses French words or phrases and except where the English meaning is blindingly obvious I have translated them, as I have his occasional use of German or Italian. Where I have omitted material within a paragraph I have substituted it with an ellipse of four points, thus: . . . ; where I have simply repeated Channon's own ellipses, there are three points. I have not indicated where I have omitted entire paragraphs.

Otherwise, the text is as he wrote it. There have of course been omissions, but these have been made solely on the grounds of lack of interest. Some of the remarks left in may be considered harsh, damaging or unpleasant, but the underlying assumption is that Channon at this stage was not writing for publication – he says that, on Harold Nicolson's advice, he is going to leave the diaries to Christ Church, his college at Oxford, for them to be locked away – and therefore he would have little to gain by lying to himself. He has come off badly in some other diaries, so it is as well to give him his own back. If he has said something known to be unfair or wrong, this is stated unambiguously in a footnote.

Almost everyone named in the text has a footnote explaining who he or she was, dates of birth and death, and any other relevant biographical information. Some people who were not public figures have proved impossible to trace. Historical events and places have been glossed.

The diaries inevitably mirror the mores, language and attitudes of the era in which they were written. More particularly, they reflect the snobbery and prejudice that was not uncommon in the circle in which Channon moved. He sometimes uses deeply offensive terms about, for example, black and Jewish people that are rightly condemned today, and would indeed have been distasteful to many when he wrote them. The Trustees, editor and publisher deliberated at length whether to include or exclude such passages from this edition. After careful consideration, and consultation with external authorities, it was decided to leave them in, while seeking, through the footnotes, to contextualise them. The diaries are a valuable historical document, and it was felt the text should not be falsified to create a sanitised and therefore unhistorical and anachronistic picture not just of how Channon wrote and spoke, but how many others in the society in which he lived also wrote and spoke.

*

In his transcriptions of the text that he presented to Rhodes James, Coats went to lengths to cover up some of Channon's political misjudgements too. Take the entry for 17th December 1935: Channon, who had been in the House of Commons for barely a month, says that Sir Samuel Hoare was 'definitely in the right' to make his much-execrated pact with Pierre Laval over the Italians in Abyssinia (Ethiopia); and he denounces the League of Nations as a 'cursed body of busybodies'. Neither sentiment appears in the first edition. In the same entry in the MS Channon admits his impatience with his constituents, who are deeply opposed to the pact. This too is cut, as negative remarks about them are throughout Coats's edition. On the grounds that similar sentiments about the tiresomeness of constituents have been expressed by almost every Member of Parliament since the Great Reform Act, if not before, this edition preserves them where relevant. Although Channon often took, and expressed, delight in being a constituency MP, the experience of representing Southend sometimes palled, and he said so. Coats also moderated negative remarks about Winston Churchill, dead only two years when the first edition came out and with an unchallenged status as a national saviour.

Although Channon had many friends in Parliament, others, equally, viewed him with suspicion, feeling he used his connections even more than most Tory MPs did in order to get on; his wife's uncle (Lord Halifax, by then Foreign Secretary) and his wife's money, spent on legendary lunch and dinner parties in their sumptuous house, were believed to have been put to good use. Channon was also a victim of the snobbery he was accused of practising; the suspicion some Tories held him in stemmed from the fact that they had not known him since school, or as part of a family from their parents' aristocratic network. When Rab Butler, as under-secretary at the Foreign Office, appointed him as his parliamentary private secretary, he explained his decision to sceptical colleagues as reflecting his need to attach a first-class restaurant car to his train.

Later on Channon occasionally expresses his support for Hitler. Coats took great care to exclude such expressions from the texts he supplied to Rhodes James. It is clear that Channon was not a fifth columnist, nor a fascist: he was however a devout anti-communist, because the memory of what the Bolsheviks had done to the established order in Russia was still so current, and the fears of something similar happening in Britain during the 1930s were not confined to Channon. He unequivocally prefers Hitler, Mussolini and Franco to the idea of Stalin and Stalinism, as did many of his contemporaries before they were blessed with hindsight. When Duff Cooper, who did not share his views, joined the government, Channon noted that 'personally and privately I am not altogether happy in my mind about Duff's appointment. He is too bellicose a nature and too violently anti-Nazi (it amounts to an obsession) for the job.

He belongs, or rather leads, the extreme pro-French group in the House of Commons . . . shall I have the courage to raise my lonely voice in favour of Germany in the House?' (23rd November 1935)

The following year, while (together with numerous other English politicians and grandees) enjoying the Third Reich's hospitality at the Berlin Olympics, Channon recorded of a dinner on 8th August 1936 that 'I was next to a Countess Welczeck, who is herself ½ Spanish, but is the wife of the German Ambassador to Paris. She told me appalling stories of the daily outrages in Spain: the communists have stopped and outraged nuns before setting them alight with petrol. They have torn the emblems of Christ from crucifixes and substituted in His place live priests and monks . . . and the civilised world allows such infamy to go unpunished and dines out! That Germany, too, is not now communist is due to Hitler. It is thanks to him that these games go on, that these fêtes take place . . . oh! England wake up. You in your sloth and conceit are ignorant of the Soviet dangers and will not realise that . . . Germany is fighting our battles . . .'

The British press was not entirely obedient to the architects of appeasement in the government, and Channon would have had to be blind and stupid (and he was neither) not to have noticed the stories of the horrific acts carried out by Hitler's lackeys against Jews and other opponents of the regime. One of the low points of his perception is when he is taken to a labour camp to see how unlike the usual image of these institutions this one was; he was completely taken in (as were many others). It was routine on such visits to substitute real prisoners with well-fed and healthy SA or SS men. Like many of his fellow Britons of this time, Channon could hardly have cared less; but few of them had had the opportunity to make such a close examination of the Nazi regime and its luminaries. The reader must judge whether his blindness was wilful or otherwise.

On 5th December 1937 he recounts the visit of his uncle by marriage, Lord Halifax, to meet Hitler (this was the occasion when, famously, Halifax almost mistook him for a footman). 'He described Hitler's appearance, his khaki shirt, black trousers and patent leather evening shoes! And, he said, he liked all the Nazi leaders, even Goebbels! whom no one likes. He was much impressed, interested and amused by the visit. He thinks the regime fantastic, perhaps too fantastic to take seriously. But he is v glad that he went and thinks nothing but good can come of it.' Channon's admiration for Hitler far exceeds Halifax's, perhaps because, unlike Halifax, he never met him. 'He is always right, always the greatest diplomat of modern times,' he records of the dictator on 2nd September 1938. But ten days later he shows, once more, how he was part of a groupthink on the subject, not that there was that much evidence of anyone thinking too deeply: 'A long day of waiting for Hitler's big speech tonight, in which he is to decide the fate of Europe. Who won the War now, that an Austrian paper-hanger can so terrify civilisation? Bits of the speech began to come through at dinner time and Charles Peake and I took down extracts of H's speech over the telephone from London, where it had

been relayed by Berlin. I rushed these bits of news to Rab, who was dining below with Rob Bernays, Buck De La Warr and Euan Wallace . . . I secretly agreed, indeed sympathised with Hitler's demands and refuse to look upon him as an Antichrist, as he is considered here.' Just over a fortnight later on the 28th, when Chamberlain heads for Munich for what in retrospect has been depicted as one of the great debacles of British policy, Channon can barely contain himself: 'The Saviour of Peace, the greatest man since Christ, got smilingly into his car, umbrella and all.'

During the crises of 1938, with which this volume concludes, it is clear he is exceptionally naive about what was happening in international politics – as were many others. Writing like a gushing schoolgirl about Chamberlain suggests he was star-struck rather than level-headed about what was going on: though at a time when Chamberlain's role as prime minister is being constantly reappraised, it is instructive to see the effect he had on others, before his posthumous reputation took such a blow as it did. Channon's suspension of disbelief about the political direction of the party and government he served with such intense loyalty would be endearing had it not occurred in so grave a context, and constituted such a historic misjudgement.

But the first Channon we encounter is the one similarly dazzled by the British aristocracy, and longing (not least under unconscious instruction from Lord Curzon) to join their club. 'Oh! why am I not very very rich – and a peer? Then all would be well . . .' he wrote on 14th July 1924. Like many Americans before and since he was struck by the institutions of old Europe, starting with the monarchy. 'Secretly I am glad whereon any pendulum swings towards monarchists – I am all for absolute monarchies and inquisitions and forced Catholicism. These colourless fatherless republics – ugh!' he noted on 27th April 1925. This fed his loathing of America: on 22nd February 1935 he says that 'I realised as I lay luxuriously in bed dictating letters to my new secretary, Mrs Heale, a timid efficient creature, that today is Washington's birthday. I had not thought of it for years and years; but remember now how I hated the anniversary as a child – hated anything then that savoured of America or Americanism,' which suggests the prejudice was innate rather than acquired.

Yet, again and again, one is reminded that the extraordinary value and appeal of these diaries, above and beyond the milieu they chronicle, resides in their absolute transparency and sets them above so many others. Channon was as frank about his attitude as a diarist as he was about everything else. 'As I reread my diary I am frequently horrified by the scandalous tone it has; one might think we lived in a world of cads and rotters; this is far from true, but the weaknesses of the great and one's friends are more amusing to chronicle than their dignified conduct which one takes for granted.' (31st December 1927) Nearly eight years later, on 26th July 1935, he reported: 'I had a rather candid, even treacherous, keeping this diary from the eyes of my wife – yet it is my one secret, or at worst one of two. She knows I keep it, but if she were to read it, if I knew she were, it would lose much

spontaneity, and cease to be a record of my private thoughts. Once or twice in the past I have dictated a few harmless paragraphs to a secretary – and they have never been the same, become impersonal and discreet immediately. And what is more dull than a discreet diary? One might as well have a discreet soul.

Editor's Acknowledgements

My first debt is to the Trustees of the literary estate of Sir Henry Channon – his grandchildren Georgia Fanshawe and Henry Channon, and Robin Howard – for asking me to edit these *Diaries*. I could not have wanted to work with more considerate, helpful and understanding people, and they, and Katie Channon, have made the entire project a huge pleasure for me. To edit a complete edition had been a much sought-after task by generations of writers and historians ever since the heavily abridged and redacted *Diaries* appeared in 1967, and I am sensible of the honour done me in inviting me to take up this highly enjoyable and fascinating challenge.

I am also deeply grateful to Hugo Vickers, who generously made available to me his enormous expertise in the social and royal history of the period to help me avoid either lacunae or egregious errors in the footnotes, for reading the proofs with great care and being available on many occasions to answer inquiries I made of him. Such errors as remain are entirely mine. I thank Richard Davenport-Hines and Edmondo di Robilant for offering suggestions about amendments to footnotes, which I have gratefully accepted. Sue Brealey also read the proofs to great effect with her customary meticulousness. Emily Ward made a crucial introduction and Shannon Mullen suggested an important refinement to the presentation of the work. The Trustees employed a team of painstaking transcribers who made a digital version of a manuscript, over the three volumes, of around two million words, which made my task as Editor infinitely easier than it would otherwise have been, and I thank them sincerely. At the publisher's, Stephanie Heathcote was responsible for the superb design of the cover and Peter Ward designed the text; David Milner copy-edited the manuscript with exemplary skill, and Jonathan Wadman's proof reading was of the same calibre. Alex Bell created a superb index.

I have more reason than usual to thank my editor, Nigel Wilcockson, for seeing this project through so superbly in circumstances – not the least of them the Coronavirus pandemic – that proved at times exceptionally trying. Rochelle Wilcockson will understand why I wish to thank her too. Professor Philippe Sands, Professor Olivette Otele and Professor Sir Geoff Palmer provided indispensable advice and wisdom to me, the Trustees and the publishers. My agent, Georgina Capel, who also acted for the Trustees, was tireless in her support of us and as always she has my profound gratitude. Above all, my work in editing the *Diaries* was eased and supported from beginning to end by my wife Diana, and I valued too the constant contribution to my morale by my sons, Fred and Johnnie. And Chips – with whom I feel on sobriquet terms after all we have been through together – has been an enriching presence in my life for the last three years. I

salute his memory for having the wit to write his magnificent *Diaries*, and to write them so well. I hope he would find the finished product, to use one of his favourite terms, *réussi*.

Simon Heffer

Great Leighs

5 October 2020

1918

The diaries for 1918, which are the first extant, are in typescript, presumably copied from an earlier handwritten MS. They are pasted into an empty 1924 page-per-day foolscap diary (identical to one Channon uses for that year itself); he notes in his 1924 diary, when he is in Chicago visiting his family, that he has begun to put the diary in order, suggesting that it was then that he made the transcript. The diary has various pencil marks, but some of these are by Peter Coats and have been ignored in creating this edition. Channon's own corrections, doubtless made at the time of transcription, have been retained. Where this has led to inconsistencies or anachronisms, these have been noted. For nearly the entire year of 1918 he was in France, almost always in Paris, before leaving for London at the very end.

TUESDAY 1ST JANUARY

There were no midnight Masses last night to celebrate 'réveillon'.¹ Nor were the restaurants allowed to remain open after 9 p.m. I went to the Casino de Paris where Gaby Deslys² twice daily charms the most cosmopolitan audiences the world has ever seen. The *promenoir*³ during the *entr'actes* is enlivened by an American negro 'jazz' orchestra which amazes the hundreds of French and Italian officers as much as it delights the Americans, Canadian and English Tommies. The bar is the world's rendezvous for all armies (even the 'Boche' if the cynics can be believed). There you find your tailor from Nevada turned colonel, pretending to enjoy the French. And 'Antonio' falls into the arms of his brother that he left in Sicily. Alone the cocottes and the English 'red tab' generals remain inscrutable. Later went for tea to the comtesse de la Béraudière's⁴ whose salon has also become an international meeting place of a somewhat different class. English Guardsmen look vainly for the dancing partners of four years ago. The

1 New Year's Eve.

2 Gaby Deslys (1881–1920), born Marie-Élise-Gabrielle Caire in Marseilles, was an internationally famous dancer, singer and actress who died of complications arising from the Spanish influenza epidemic.

3 Literally, a covered walkway under which a promenade takes place.

4 Marie-Thérèse Brocheton (1866–1952), wife of Jacques, comte de la Béraudière (1864–1949). She was mistress of comte Henry Greffulhe (1848–1932), who was said to be the model for the duc de Guermantes in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Duchess of Sutherland¹ told us of her wonderful work in her barge hospitals that were floating ships of mercy and will be known in legend when forgotten in history. She is lovely in a wrecked Madonna way and most fascinating. Mme de la Béraudière is supposed to be the most hirsute woman in Paris; [she] was youngishly dressed, fat and gracious. She introduced me to HRH Prince Antoine d'Orléans,² a son of the comte d'Eu.³ He is a typical Bourbon and looks like Louis XIV. He dances and speaks English well. He is in the Canadian army and wears their uniform, as the law in France forbids members of its oldest family from serving under its colours. He is the heir to the empty throne of Brazil, his mother being the last sovereign . . . one occasionally hears of royalist feeling as being still existent there. Dine with comtesse de Béarn,⁴ I am falling in love with her. I long for an affair in the grand manner.

THURSDAY 3RD JANUARY

Tea with the vicomtesse de Dampierre,⁵ 31, rue de Bellechasse. She was *née* Ruspoli and has a great deal of their furniture. She is mid-Victorian and sweet, pretty and simple, being 25 years old. I gave her some sugar, which is exceedingly rare in Paris, and she nicknamed me the 'Sugar Boy'. I am working hard, many long hours a day and expecting promotion. The American army and Commissariat are beginning to send vast quantities of stuffs here and are building railroads and hotels and warehouses with true American efficiency. It is a vast organisation.

- 1 Lady Millicent Fanny St Clair-Erskine (1867–1955), daughter of the 4th Earl of Rosslyn, was one of several British *grandes dames* nursing in France. Her husband, the 4th Duke of Sutherland, whom she had married in 1884, had died in 1913 and she had married the following year Major Percy FitzGerald (1873–1933), though was still widely known as Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland.
- 2 Prince Antônio Gastão de Orléans e Bragança (1881–1918). His mother was Princess Imperial of Brazil, daughter of Emperor Pedro II. He was aide-de-camp to Brigadier General John 'Jack' Seely (1868–1947), 1st Baron Mottistone, formerly Secretary for State for War and in 1918 Commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. Prince Antonio died of injuries sustained in an air crash in Edmonton, Middlesex, on 29th November 1918.
- 3 Prince Gaston d'Orléans, comte d'Eu (1842–1922), Imperial Consort of Brazil, was son of Louis, duc de Nemours, and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. He was a grandson of King Louis Philippe of France (1773–1850) and first cousin through his mother of both Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland (1819–1901) and her husband Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819–1861).
- 4 Married Henri de Galard de Brassac Béarn (1874–1947), comte de Béarn. His first wife, Beatrice Winans (1884–1907), had been from Baltimore.
- 5 Vittoria Ruspoli (1892–1982), wife of vicomte Roger de Dampierre (1892–1975), Papal Duke of San Lorenzo Nuovo.

FRIDAY 11TH JANUARY

The peace farce between the Germans and the Russians still goes on.¹ President Wilson² echoing Lloyd George³ has made a great speech which has produced much comment; he names fourteen conditions as a premise for discussing peace. Will the Boche answer? Mme d'Hautpoul⁴ was lovely and an unfortunate incident resulted. As she was waiting for us in the foyer of the Ritz whilst we fetched our hats, a man approached her and began to talk in American. Cécile drew herself up and said severely:

'I am not one cocotte, I am one comtesse.'

Her admirer indignantly replied:

'I am a congressman ...'

'Caillaux⁵ is also one congressman,' Cécile answered as she walked away.

The Ritz is ever the centre of all that the pre-war epoch has left to us. There are beautiful ladies, English generals, royalties incognito, statesmen *en route* from one conference to another, officers from the Supreme War Council at Versailles,⁶ etc.

SATURDAY 19TH JANUARY

Anxious relations write consoling letters to me . . . 'you poor Parisians' . . . I suppose they believe us to be starving and freezing, instead life is remarkably easy in Paris just now, and so interesting that it is pleasant. Everyone does some sort of work and gathers somewhere in the evening. Someone predicted that we should have air raids by aeroplanes such as London has been enjoying. Paris is rife with rumours . . .

- 1 Negotiations following the decision of the recently formed Bolshevik government in Russia to withdraw from the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. The discussions would end in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, concluded on 3rd March 1918.
- 2 Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) was 28th President of the United States of America.
- 3 David Lloyd George (1863–1945) was Liberal MP for Caernarvon Boroughs from 1890 to 1945. He was Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1916 to 1922, and of Ireland from 1916 to 1921, and leader of the Liberal Party from 1926 to 1931. Lloyd George had outlined his country's war aims on 5th January, which Wilson quickly followed with his own, set out in fourteen points.
- 4 Cécile Antoinette des Roys (1873–1949), widow of Raymond, comte d'Hautpoul (1867–1911).
- 5 Joseph Caillaux (1863–1944), Prime Minister of France from 1911 to 1912, was about to stand trial for treason for his defeatist policy of concluding a peace with Germany at the expense of Great Britain.
- 6 Following an agreement between the French, British and Italian governments, a supreme Allied command had been established at Versailles in the autumn of 1917.

SUNDAY 20TH JANUARY

The duchesses de la Rochefoucauld¹ and d'Uzès² and comtesse d'Hautpoul and Bobbie Pratt Barlow³ and his general Blackader⁴ dined with me . . . People have such a regard for their rank in Paris that it takes an expert to seat six people! Later we went to the cinema. I am called 'the White Rabbit'⁵ as fate seems to throw me ever with duchesses. There are unfortunate rumours that Mme d'Uzès spies, not against France exactly, but that she is defeatist in that she would make a separate peace with Austria and she is accused of using her position to have dangerous conversations.

MONDAY 21ST JANUARY

Rowland⁶ left for England in his little car, his job having come to an end in Paris. I shall be miserable without him. He has left me in his stead a charming friend of his called Bobbie Pratt Barlow . . . We dined together at the Casino de Paris . . . Englishmen are very odd . . . but divine.

WEDNESDAY 23RD JANUARY

I am devoted to Bobbie . . . we plan a flat in London together after the war and weave other impossible dreams that will never come true.⁷ I think I must go to Oxford if Englishmen are all as sympathetic as he is.

THURSDAY 24TH JANUARY

Bobbie Pratt Barlow tore himself away to rejoin the Coldstream Guards. I almost wept as I have never liked any[one] so much in so short a time. I suppose he will be killed and I will go on dining out . . . there is something eternal about me . . .

- 1 Mattie-Elizabeth Mitchell (1866–1933), born Portland, Oregon, daughter of Senator John Hipple Mitchell (1835–1905); she married, in 1892, François XVI Alfred Gaston (1853–1925), 5th duc de la Rochefoucauld.
- 2 Marie-Thérèse d'Albert de Luynes (1876–1941), wife of Louis Emmanuel de Crussol, duc d'Uzès (1871–1943). Channon supplies no extra information about what these potentially toxic conversations were.
- 3 Lieutenant Robert Francis Pratt Barlow (1885–1959), Coldstream Guards. Heir to a paper-manufacturing fortune, and a friend of D. H. Lawrence, he later attracted notoriety for owning a Sicilian mansion, Casa Rosa at Taormina, staffed entirely by prepubescent boys.
- 4 Major General Charles Blackader CB, DSO (1869–1921) was Commander of the 38th (Welsh) Division. Pratt Barlow was his aide-de-camp.
- 5 In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (published in 1865), the White Rabbit becomes an obsequious servant to the Duchess, and to the King and Queen of Hearts.
- 6 This may be Rowland Thomas Baring (1877–1953), 2nd Earl of Cromer, who was in France at the time; but the identification is not conclusive.
- 7 They did not, indeed, come true.

I went to have tea with Elinor Glyn,¹ she squinted her tiny green eyes at me and read extracts from her new book. She talked about intoxication of the senses and souls becoming the prey of new emotions, etc. If only I weren't so shy and young I might have really amusing adventures.

SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY

Dined with comtesse d'Hautpoul . . . it seems she takes drugs. I must find out what kind.

SUNDAY 27TH JANUARY

Walked all morning and looked in at the American headquarters. How crude and surly they seemed. I did not realise I disliked my compatriots so much . . . Peace, nothing but peace is being discussed, as Czernin² and Hertling³ have answered Wilson and Lloyd George. Russia is in a state of absolute chaos, they say. There are all sorts of absurd rumours going about . . . one to the effect that America should buy Alsace-Lorraine in cash rather than in lives and return it to France thus ending the war and settle the old grievance between France and Germany. What do the fallen in the trenches think of our silly chatter? I suppose they don't know about it . . .

MONDAY 28TH JANUARY

I have moved to a much nicer suite at the Ritz⁴ . . . A letter from Bobbie [Pratt Barlow] from [the] front, thank God he is still alive. They have been having heavy fighting nearby at Armentières. He says he thinks only of me when he is going into battle, which is nice of him.

WEDNESDAY 30TH JANUARY

Channon dines at Madeleine Le Chevre's,⁵ where he had hoped to meet Jean Cocteau,⁶ who was detained elsewhere.

- 1 Elinor Glyn (1864–1943) was a romantic novelist and later Hollywood scriptwriter who developed the idea of the 'It Girl'. She had been widowed in 1915, but before that had become mistress to Lord Curzon, with whom (and whose family) Channon would become close friends on his arrival in England. Her most recent book was *Destruction*, an account of her experiences the previous year when visiting the Western Front.
- 2 Ottokar Theobald Otto Maria Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz (1872–1932) was Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary from 1916 to 1918.
- 3 Georg Friedrich Karl Graf von Hertling (1843–1919) was Chancellor of Germany from 1917 to 1918.
- 4 The Ritz was part hotel, part hospital, part lodging house at this time.
- 5 Madeleine Le Chevre (1881–1954) was an author and translator.
- 6 Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) was a writer, designer, artist and film-maker, and a central figure in French culture for half a century.

Someone suggested dancing, and we removed our shoes and got very excited when suddenly . . . it was 11.20 . . . there was the strangest noise like cats *in extremis* . . . it was *le bruit sirènes*¹. We were to have an air raid. We hurried downstairs to the deserted streets. Every light went out and people were scattering in every direction to the cellars. Madeleine and I sat on a balcony and watched the most wonderful display of fireworks imaginable . . . the Boche planes circling over Paris and caught by the giant searchlights and the machine guns playing on them . . . and the roaring of the bombs they dropped. Later I walked . . . from Passy to the Ritz . . . over five miles, the noise increasing as more and more planes seemed to get over the lines. Soon it was a din, the humming of the motors heard quite distinctly, the tolling church bells and the *mitrailleuse*² in action. I loved it. At first the streets were empty and black but soon curiosity tempted the braver ones out and I felt less lonely hurrying along . . . I arrived at the place de la Concorde just in time not to be killed by a descending French Spad plane that fell only thirty feet from me, killing the pilot and injuring others. Petrol splashed on my shoes. I went on to the Ritz amidst the bursting shells. We watched the raid for a couple of hours. Many houses have been struck, one in the rue du 4 Septembre, another avenue de la Grande Armée. About three *la barloque*³ was sounded and we knew the Germans had retreated. On the whole the crowds were amazed, incredulous and interested. They were more indignant than afraid.

THURSDAY 31ST JANUARY

I arrived late at the office having overslept in consequence of the raid . . . no one else had arrived. Even the typists didn't appear until after luncheon . . . We sat up late waiting for another air raid, but none came. The papers announced thirty-five deaths from last night's carnage, but we at the Red Cross know that there were over 200.

SATURDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

Much mail from America. Do I want to marry Mary⁴ as soon as I return there? Yes, if she will come to Paris and become a *grande dame*. Several letters from Mary. I only hope she will have her teeth arranged.⁵ I had a long talk with Elinor

1 The sound of the sirens.

2 Anti-aircraft gun.

3 All clear.

4 Mary Landon Baker (1901–61) was the daughter of a prominent Chicago lawyer whose family was friends with the Channons. She and Channon had been sweethearts from around the time she was 16, before he went to France late in 1917. Like Channon, she would also live in London after the war. She is said to have received sixty-five proposals of marriage, but accepted none of them: whether this was because of her waiting in the hope of Channon asking her can only be conjecture.

5 Presumably he means 'fixed'.

Glyn ... 'To live! to love! and to write! ... and to read the Bible!' *En somme*,¹ that is her envoi, her message to an admiring world. All else she says, is rubbish ... I dined at 19, rue de Ranelagh with Madeleine Le Chevrel ... Reinach² the great military critic and political writer was there. He writes under the name of Polybe! I thought him conceited ...

TUESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY

I left Paris last night in an English train for Boulogne, sharing a wagon-lit with a snoring Italian colonel. I passed into the war zone with no difficulty. Boulogne has become anglicised and everywhere one sees shining well-washed Tommies enjoying a few days' respite either before or after going into the line. How different they are from the dirty rather surly *poilus*.³ And the streets are filled with girls with Scottish faces called WAACS.⁴ There are *camions*⁵ and munition wagons and ambulances and all the paraphernalia of war. English has quite superseded French and one sees smart red-tabbed ADCs [aides-de-camp] wrangling with the fishwomen in the market for oysters for their mess. There are several hospitals nearby and they and the army as a whole use Boulogne as a base ... In the afternoon I met Bobbie ... In their [Blackader's] Rolls-Royce we swiftly left Boulogne behind us and went into the country, which has the air of *ballet russe*⁶ scenery, so spotted is it with camouflage. There are hills and castles and fields that quite fool one, all the work of the camouflage artists. And everywhere there seems to be barbed-wire netting and an interminable procession of *camions* carrying ammunition and provisions. I was much impressed by the seeming orderliness and casualness of the arrangements. Soon we were actually on the front, I suppose a mile back from the trenches. The low monotonous booming of cannon was heard. It never seems to stop although I am told that this sector is comparatively quiet for the moment and there is a lull every afternoon when both the English and the Boche have tea. At last we arrived at staff headquarters, a small brick pink villa, three miles from Armentières, sparsely furnished. A staff of nine officers live in it, presided over by General Blackader, a nice fat black walrus of whom everyone is terrified ... After dinner we adjourned to a sort of sitting room, someone played a gramophone. I was put at the General's bridge table. A glowing fire made us comfortable, quiet servants brought in trays of whiskey and soda; some read *The Times* just from London. One chap constantly telephoned along the line for news.

1 All in all.

2 Joseph Reinach (1856–1921) was a writer and politician, champion of Alfred Dreyfus and author of *Les Commentaires de Polybe* on the Great War.

3 French slang for private soldier, the equivalent of the English 'Tommy'. *Poilu* means hairy.

4 Members of the Womens Auxiliary Army Corps, founded in 1917.

5 Lorries or trucks.

6 Russian ballet, popular in pre-war Paris.

We were so snug, it might have been a London club . . . except for the roaring of the guns and the occasional lighting up of the sky by bursting shells when the house would shake a bit. And yet within two miles men were knee-deep in cold water and dying and longing for home. The cold in the bedrooms was terrific, though the servant who was assigned to me buttoned me in a wool-lined sleeping bag. Sleep would not come, I thought every shell destined for me personally . . .

SATURDAY 9TH FEBRUARY

. . . Bobbie and I lunched in the ruins of Ypres Cathedral, sitting on a pile of marble fragments which must have been the nave . . . the town has ceased to exist . . . heaps of debris and the traces of roads tell one it is hot country. Everywhere there is desolation and chaos, one is reminded of Pompeii. Every street is demolished. The Germans have even ceased to shell such barren waste. We also visited the Messines crater¹ and the town of Cassel, being in Belgium most of the day and always along the firing line. The troops returning from the trenches are the saddest lot of humanity I have ever seen. They are true to type, for with as much energy as remains to them, they run to the baths . . .

SUNDAY 10TH FEBRUARY

Spent the morning in the trenches and sat for a time in a dug out. No Boche fired at us, thinking us too small a bag. The tin hats we wore seemed heavy. With a spy glass I could see the Germans moving about and smoking and sometimes we could actually hear them talk. There is a Tommy stationed about every seven yards. Later we went to Armentières. It has recently been evacuated and unlike Ypres bears the mark of man. There are stoves, and dogs in the street. Houses with sides knocked off reveal squalid and hurriedly abandoned interiors . . . an unmade bed, a toppled-over chair, a forgotten doll, but not a human nor a piece of glass. But I believe a baby was found . . . We also went to Vimy Ridge, scene of such frightful battles, and there I picked up a dirty German hymnal in the trenches.

He returned to Paris on 14th February.

SATURDAY 16TH FEBRUARY

Tea with Princesse Violette Murat.² I gave her a dozen bottles of whiskey from Bobbie. It is very difficult to procure it in Paris. She received me in a white

1 During the Battle of Messines in June 1917 British sappers had tunnelled under German lines and planted deep mines which when detonated left enormous craters in the land around where their trenches had been.

2 Princesse Eugène Murat (1878–1936), born Violette Ney d'Elchingen, married Prince Eugène Murat 1899; friend of Igor Stravinsky and Jean Genet.

boudoir, everything including the floor and rugs were of the purest snow colour. She reclined in a white chaise longue and looked old, ugly and wicked, but very friendly.

WEDNESDAY 20TH FEBRUARY

I dined with Princesse Violette Murat, a party to celebrate the whiskey, I gathered, as everyone seemed most hilarious. There were about twenty, the men mostly home on leave. They behaved very badly and all got drunk including the princesses . . . this is not my milieu, I must retreat further into the *faubourg*.¹

SATURDAY 23RD FEBRUARY

A very amusing witty dinner at Madeleine Le Chevre's . . . Jean Cocteau . . . is like some satyr of old . . . his wit was dazzling and his manner electrifying. He is quite young and is famous for his startling conversation and genius. He must have cloven feet. I shouldn't trust him for an instant though he was especially agreeable and said he would write an ode to '*Jeunesse américaine*'.² I hope he doesn't. He wanted to lunch with me next day but something told me I should not be seen with him. He said my eyes were set by Cartier, which nettled me. There was also Madrazo³ the painter and Reynaldo Hahn⁴ the musician. It was a very worldly milieu *des gens qui ont connu la vie et n'en plus d'illusions*.⁵ As I could not sparkle in such company I tried to be as *ingénu* and as handsome as possible. They all petted me like a child.

THURSDAY 7TH MARCH

My birthday.⁶ I bought myself a platinum wristwatch at Cartier's with a cheque father had sent to me.

1 The '*faubourg*' had become a synonym for the French nobility, and the highest echelon of Parisian society. It began as shorthand for the Faubourg Saint-Germain, in what is now the 7th arrondissement of the city, on the *rive gauche*. It is the location of the French National Assembly, many government offices and embassies, and since the time of Louis XIV has been the home of the aristocracy in the capital, usually in spectacular *hôtels particuliers*, or grand town houses.

2 American youth.

3 Raimundo Madrazo y Garreta (1841–1920) was a Spanish realist painter.

4 Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947) was a Venezuelan composer (mainly of songs in the French style), conductor, critic, diarist and theatre director.

5 Of men who have known life and have no illusions about it.

6 He was 21.

FRIDAY 8TH MARCH

Just after I had got to bed there was the most appalling noise. I realised it was an air raid. Every bell in the Ritz rang as the lights had been switched off. I dressed as quickly as possible and hurrying downstairs I found a few people in various stages of *déshabillé*¹ grouped about a candle. I went to fetch Mrs Glyn, who was asleep. Her red hair, miles of it, looked lovely in the moonlight. I woke her, and waited as she put on her pearls and a fur coat. We then joined the others. We were about sixty Cécile [d'Hautpoul] much doped with ether and angry at being awakened. We were up half the night Mr Ellis the amiable manager of the Ritz, was surprised to discover his hotel more crowded than he knew. How embarrassing for those caught out!

SATURDAY 9TH MARCH

Had tea with the old duchesse de Rohan² who was in her *infirmière*'s³ costume as she is busy with her *blessés*⁴ many hours a day. She is almost the only woman of the *faubourg* class to devote her energies and fortune to the wounded. She has been decorated with the Legion of Honour. She is strange, fat, undistinguished, almost grotesque with great charm and intelligence. She has something of the people about her, perhaps it is her sympathy. She looks an old ragbag, and many are the stories told of her eccentricities. She eats in a disgusting manner that makes one sick.

THURSDAY 21ST MARCH

Dine with some chaps from the Supreme War Council at Versailles including nice Victor Cazalet.⁵ The offensive opened this morning.⁶ The Boche with vast reserves and an almost new organisation have opened fire all along the line. It is their final

1 Undress.

2 Herminie, daughter of the marquis de Verteillac (1853–1926), prominent in pre-war Paris for her literary salon and as a watercolourist, married the duc de Rohan in 1872. During the Great War she turned her Paris house into a hospital for the wounded, of which she became matron.

3 Nurse's.

4 Wounded.

5 Victor Alexander Cazalet (1896–1943) was at this stage a captain in the Royal West Kents. He had won the Military Cross the previous year. He was on the military staff of the recently formed Supreme War Council at Versailles. After a career as a Conservative MP – he sat for Chippenham from 1924 to 1943 – he would die in the same plane crash as General Sikorski. He encouraged the acting career of Elizabeth Taylor, his goddaughter.

6 The German offensive on the Western Front would soon bring them to within fifty miles of Paris before the Allies drove them back; it would exhaust an already demoralised and over-stretched army and lead to the Armistice of November 1918.

geste.¹ Either they will win and break through, taking Paris, or else be held and gradually worn down until the arrival in the trenches of the Americans . . . which must mean the beginning of the end for *Bochemange*.²

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH

Bombs are bursting all about us. It is 4 p.m. At nine this morning the sirens began to blow. And they have been going more or less ever since. Some bombs were dropped as early as seven but I didn't hear them, being very sleepy as we were up half the night with last night's air raid. This morning I met an English friend who has an official car; he suggested going to Montmartre. Several of us piled in his car and we bravely sallied forth. On the way up the hill we heard a terrific noise. It was one of the stations . . . Gare de l'Est hit. There were seven killed, four of them soldiers. From the hill of Montmartre we watched, excited, Paris and the battle. The attacking planes were too high to be seen. We remained there for a while and then decided to go to the Bois,³ which is ever the safest place as it is never bombed. The streets were quite empty, a few people were grouped nervously about the *abris*⁴ peering out. The planes seemed to come at regular intervals. The defence guns could not answer as the Huns were so high, quite out of range. We were entirely at their mercy. Even the guns on the Arc de Triomphe were quiet. There were short lulls and then the booming would recommence. We rowed for a bit in the lake in the Bois, but returned to the Ritz for luncheon. All communication has ceased . . . the telephone has been stopped as it always is during raids; the metro no longer functions nor the trams; and the shops are all shut. Only military cars and a few stray taxis are on the streets. In the restaurant the tables are only half filled, people doubtless delayed *en route*. And the windows are open to prevent the crashing of glass. Now after nine hours of bombing we are beginning to be *agacé*,⁵ but no one is frightened . . . The strangest thing is that no one has seen a German plane. There is a wild rumour that we are being shelled, not bombed, by some new diabolical invention from the front.⁶ I shall try now to go out . . . boom that was quite near.

1 Act, or gesture.

2 Literally, 'the German eats'. Some French had alleged that the invading Germans in 1914 had eaten children – '*les soldats boches mangent des enfants*'.

3 The Bois de Boulogne, a less populated part of the outer city, to the west.

4 Shelters.

5 Annoyed or irritated.

6 They were being shelled. The Germans had developed a 256-ton 112-foot-long gun, known as the Paris Gun or Big Bertha, which could fire on Paris from seventy-five miles away. The bombardment started with the offensive of 21st March and continued until August 1918, when the Germans were in retreat. Around 350 shells were fired, with a maximum of twenty in a day.

Later. When the bombing stopped I went out for tea . . . I repeated the rumour about being shelled and was ridiculed. They insisted the planes from the German lines had been painted a strange invisible colour . . . There was nervousness in the air, if not actual anxiety. Everyone fears that some of the beautiful monuments and palaces will be destroyed and lovely Paris, which every Frenchman worships as a mistress, will be scarred. Late in the evening I went to the English HQ, who admit it is a giant gun shelling us from over forty miles away. They were telephoning excitedly to Arras and Amiens for news.

FRIDAY 29TH MARCH: GOOD FRIDAY

The bombardment has been terrific today. The first shell nearly threw me from my bed this morning at 7.20. In the afternoon there was a particularly loud report and a few minutes later we were telephoned that a church had been hit. The shell had come through the roof; the church, being old, crumbled to bits crushing over eighty people and wounding many more in the midst of a Good Friday service. One woman victim I had only met last week.

SATURDAY 30TH MARCH

Easter Sunday:¹ I spent most of the day at the English HQ . . . listening to the telephonic reports. It is like an election night. The Parisians are worried about the offensive but are reluctant to admit it. The suddenly remembered children are packed off to the country. There are riots at the stations. The offensive has not abated but the danger of the Boche capturing Paris seems to have been averted. Boulogne has been bombed incessantly night and day for ten days. The Boche may be planning a surprise rush attack on Calais or Amiens but everywhere there is confidence in Foch.²

THURSDAY 11TH APRIL

Yesterday afternoon I had a long talk at the Hôtel d'Arenberg with l'abbé Mugnier,³ the *faubourg's* pet prelate. He is the most seductive of men and worldly and *fin*⁴ to a degree. He is nearly 70 and has spent his life converting where others have failed. A most dangerous proselytizer from a Protestant point of view, as his

1 Clearly written the following day.

2 Ferdinand Foch (1851–1929) was Commander-in-Chief of the French and Allied armies.

3 Arthur Mugnier (1853–1944) was a cleric who had served in Parisian parishes since 1881 and who was fascinated by the literary world and by high society, inviting disapproval from his peers. He was close to many of Channon's friends and also a confidant of Proust and Cocteau. It was said he was so worldly that he would be buried wrapped in a table napkin.

4 Refined.

doctrines are so beautifully and insidiously expressed. He began by telling me how he had brought about the repentance of Huysmans¹ (he wrote the preface to *Pages catholiques*) and of his conversations with Oscar Wilde,² who was always a Catholic at heart. At the end of two hours my hereditary resistance was broken down and I became a Roman Catholic in heart at least and realise I will continue to be so all my life. But to be officially admitted to the Church of Rome would bring too much unhappiness to my family, too much disaster to myself, at least for the present.

SUNDAY 28TH APRIL

Tea with the duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre³ in her Passy house. It is full of *bibelots*⁴ and *chinoiserie*.⁵ She is witty and wicked and deserted by her husband. Her father was the much-married duc de Gramont and she is *femme littéraire*⁶ about whom there is sometimes unsavoury talk. But about whom is there not?

FRIDAY 10TH MAY

Yesterday I lunched at the Inter-Allies Club, which I have joined. The house, lent by baron Henri de Rothschild,⁷ is delightful, and is one of the great Faubourg Saint-Honoré *hôtels* with a large garden overlooking avenue Gabriel. The Rothschilds have received much kudos for this act of generosity, for recently opinions have varied as to whether they have been sufficiently patriotic; true they have founded hospitals etc, but there is a suspicion they care more for humanity than for France and are really indifferent, like many of the great international families, who wins the war. They must profit in either case. The club was full of generals, and Briand⁸

1 Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907) was a critic and novelist, best known for his 1884 novel *À rebours* (published in English as *Against Nature*). *Pages catholiques* was a work of 1899 describing his apostasy from and return to the Roman Catholic Church.

2 Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (1854–1900), Irish wit, playwright and poet, spent the last years of his life in Paris after serving a prison sentence of two years with hard labour for gross indecency.

3 Antoinette Corisande Élisabeth de Gramont (1875–1954), known as Élisabeth, daughter of the 11th duc de Gramont, was a close friend of Proust, writer of several acclaimed books, and long-term lesbian partner of Natalie Clifford Barney (1876–1972), an American writer originally of Dayton, Ohio.

4 Ornaments or trinkets.

5 Decoration in the Chinese style.

6 A woman of letters.

7 Henri de Rothschild (1872–1947) was the scion of the banking family, and also a well-known French playwright.

8 Aristide Briand (1862–1932) was eleven times Prime Minister during the Third Republic, and in 1926 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. When Channon saw him he was between his sixth and seventh administrations.

was at a nearby table. Had tea at the Brissacs¹ to meet the Italian Ambassador, the Conte Bonin Langare,² a good-natured fattish man like an ancient Doge of Venice. The Ambassadors is chic, her arm circled many times by heavy gold bangles that are supposed to be service stripes given her by a Hebraic admirer. She has that unpleasing Italian intonation when she speaks French . . . she is very much loved in Paris. Her embassy is THE embassy. We had a long talk and she admitted she got a great deal from her *carrière*,³ that she enjoys her trade in [fact] In the small hours I walked home through sleeping Paris and looked at the dark, sinister river that has seen so much of the folly of mankind, with the lights reflected in it and the canal boats floating by. In the distance in the moonlight was Notre Dame, ever the inscrutable mother of this mad city. The river becomes a silver ribbon by night and serves as a beacon for the Boche aeroplanes. To camouflage it is beyond the power of even the War Office!

SATURDAY 11TH MAY

Life in Paris runs along normally. The bread cards⁴ are amusing except when one has forgotten them, and then one does without. No cheese, no butter, no sugar are served in any restaurant. But one has more to eat really than one wants. People are politely wondering when the Americans are to be a real force in the trenches.⁵ The offensive seems really to have subsided for a bit; there is a slight lull and the Germans are doubtless gathering new strength. Six weeks ago Paris was rapidly emptied and there was no end of excitement . . . riots at the station etc. Now people are gradually creeping back lured by shame and curiosity. For days now the Grosse Bertha as the cannon is called has not fired. Have the Huns decided to give Paris a respite only to begin later with renewed energy?

SUNDAY 12TH MAY

Am I becoming a snob? The world's worst little cad? Today I tried not to see Madeleine Le Chevrel to whom I am supposed to be devoted and was almost in love with . . . she left for the country and when she returned I pretended not to see her. How much I still have to learn about the world and its ways. These women with

1 Anne Marie Timoléon François de Cossé Brissac (1868–1944), duc de Brissac, married in 1911 his second wife, Eugénie Joséphine 'Marguerite' de Beaurepaire de Louvagny (1874–1936). The duchesse was to become Channon's closest friend and confidante in Paris.

2 Conte Lelio Bonin Longare (1859–1933), Ambassador of the Kingdom of Italy to France 1917–21.

3 Career.

4 For rationing purposes. Because of the submarine war waged by the Germans against Allied shipping, there were food shortages in both Britain and France which were causing some hardship, especially among those less resourceful or connected than Channon.

5 Although the United States had declared war the previous April, its troops had never been trained for trench warfare or European conditions, and so took over a year to arrive in any significant numbers.

whom I am intimate are wonderful, are so seductive and have so many advantages that I am drugged by their charm and beauty and forget how possessive they are. I spent an hour with baronne Roger¹ this afternoon; I fear she is falling in love with me. I was warned the other day that she has never had an *amant*² and longs for the experience especially inasmuch as her husband was very old and his skin was pitted with some strange scrofulous disease . . . I went on to the Cercle Inter-Allié for an amusing hour. Maréchal Joffre,³ looking like one's grandmother, was speaking. I chatted with Mrs Glyn and it was then that Madeleine Le Chevrel passed by . . . Henri Bergson⁴ looking very Irish spoke and much too much.

MONDAY 13TH MAY

Such fun today. *Mon dieu* can this life continue? I am too happy, something will snap. The abbé Mugnier is the greatest Chateaubriand⁵ scholar of the day and he is never without a copy of one of his works. I asked him if this were true and he immediately produced one from his pocket . . . Later I dropped in to see Mrs Glyn . . . Really life is very agreeable and Mrs Glyn looking very lovely read to me excerpts from *A Sentimental Journey*⁶ and advised me to embark on a career of love; as it would add to my cachet etc. She said: *couche avec toutes les femmes du monde*.⁷ But I am happy as I am though I suppose I must begin soon as everyone asks me if I am still a virgin and all my friends so urge me to begin a life of going to bed with them or others.

WEDNESDAY 15TH MAY

I called on abbé Mugnier this afternoon in his flat, rue Méchain. He tried to convert me; told me I should be a charming Catholic . . . He said that I was an extremist, a sensationist, an individualist, an original and half a mystic. I told him '*Je crois avec mes yeux, mes oreilles and mon nez déjà*'.⁸ Really I don't know whether I am serious or not; this affair began frivolously enough but I must admit to being very strongly drawn to Catholicism.

1 Henriette-Paule-Marie Drouilhet de Sigalas (1872–1961), daughter of vicomte Étienne Charles Drouilhet de Sigalas, married in 1895 Eugène-Albert Roger (1850–1906).

2 Lover.

3 Joseph Joffre (1852–1931) had been Commander-in-Chief of French forces on the Western Front from 1914 until sacked in 1916.

4 Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941) was a French philosopher, who in 1927 would win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

5 François-René (1768–1848), vicomte de Chateaubriand, was a French diplomat, statesman and writer, regarded as the founder of Romanticism in French literature.

6 *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, by Laurence Sterne, is a picaresque and unfinished novel published in 1768.

7 Sleep with all the women in society.

8 'I already believe with my eyes, my ears and my nose.'

Oh what would I not do to make NOW last forever? ... to be forever 20¹ in Paris in the springtime ... what could be more divine? ... and it is now the thought steals across my brain ... there can be no God, for if there were he would be in Paris.

Mugnier is not a *farceur*;² he is deep and earnest and has a wide knowledge of the human heart. He is intimate with Anatole France³ who he says is *en route* to being converted for one must be mightily interested in anything to ridicule it much. He adds Chateaubriand to the Trinity. His flat is hideous, an odd collection of old books, dreadful furniture and modern religious images. There is always a queue of princesses waiting to see him.

Went to the play in the evening. About ten sirens announced a threatened raid. There was the slightest of stirs in the audience and the revue continued. Later I returned to the Ritz and went at once to bed, where soon I heard the distant church bells and the *barloque* telling us that danger had passed. The planes had been driven off.

THURSDAY 16TH MAY

It is dreadful my life, dreadful yet wonderful to skim the cream off life ... gliding along on oceans of delight when the world is mourning and is suffering. In the world drenched with misery, is one drop of happiness a sin? Electric waves of depression seem to sweep over Paris. The theatres are all open and the streets and restaurants are crowded. The giant balloons placed in conspicuous places have restored confidence, the idea being that the wires suspended from them impede the progress of the Boche planes. Really they are probably useless, but as a matter of fact there has not been a successful raid for three weeks. The people in the know believe the English forces and possibly the French will fall back, that the Ypres salient will be abandoned and that they will take back Amiens or Arras. Then the tide will turn and it will be the Allied hour backed by the Americans to victory ...⁴

Chaponay⁵ is more cheerful since the duc de Lévis-Mirepoix⁶ has been acquitted. He is supposed to have left letters written by the Queen Mother of

1 Channon had the habit of lying, even to himself, about his age. This would later cause him embarrassment.

2 Clown.

3 François-Anatole Thibault (1844–1924) was a French novelist, journalist and poet, who would win the 1921 Nobel Prize in Literature.

4 Which is remarkably similar to what happened.

5 Marquis Antoine Marie François de Chaponay-Morancé (1893–1956). In 1923 he would marry Geneviève d'Orléans (1901–83), Princesse de France, daughter of the 8th duc de Vendôme.

6 Antoine Pierre Marie François Joseph de Lévis-Mirepoix (1884–1981) was a historian and novelist. He inherited the dukedom from his father in 1915. He would later become a member of the Académie française. He had fought in the French army but by 1918 was engaged on diplomatic work.

Spain¹ in a taxicab wrapped in a pair of stays. There are vague rumours that they were left in the house of a well-known actress playing at the Capucines. He was court-martialled, in spite of the opposition of Foch and Clemenceau,² (the 'Tiger'³ ever delighted to persecute an aristocrat) and was freed from blame. The Lévis-Mirepoix are most arrogant and they claim descent from Levi⁴ – and always refer to the Virgin Mary as '*notre cousine*'. The tact of the usually tactless Prince de Beauvau⁵ in not getting into this scrape at Madrid is much commented on. Table-turning⁶ this evening predicted the fall of Clemenceau. Of course the *monde*⁷ hate him and are most Clemenceauphobe,⁸ although they have no candidate to suggest. I am like them, anti-Pershing,⁹ anti-Clemenceau, for no reason unless it is type-antipathy.

FRIDAY 17TH MAY

Incessant gun activity on the front, which increases in severity. Does this herald the reopening of the offensive? Perhaps this is the gravest hour of the war, and people are wondering whether an offer of peace will follow this show of strength? Three times yesterday the German planes tried to come to Paris without success.

He goes out to a tea party.

Suddenly with much *éclat* entered the comtesse Mathieu de Noailles,¹⁰ the famous poetess. She was *née* Princesse Brancovan. She came up to me without an introduction and said '*C'est la coqueluche*,'¹¹ and immediately sat me down beside her and I studied her closely whilst she raved about Huysmans, about

1 Archduchess Maria Christina of Austria (1858–1929).

2 Georges Benjamin Clemenceau (1841–1929) was Prime Minister of France from 1906 to 1909 and from 1917 to 1920.

3 Clemenceau's nickname. Channon perhaps insufficiently draws attention to the irony of the Prime Minister's relative leniency in this matter.

4 In the Book of Genesis, Levi is the son of Jacob and Leah, and Moses's great-grandfather.

5 Charles-Louis de Beauvau-Craon (1878–1942), 6th Prince of Beauvau, was a veteran of a society scandal in 1909 when, while already married, he fell in love with the married Princesse Bibesco (*née* Marthe Lahovary) (1886–1973).

6 A form of seance becoming fashionable in Paris as part of the vogue for spiritualism during the Great War.

7 Fashionable people.

8 Because his radical politics held little appeal for the privileged denizens of the *faubourg*.

9 General John Joseph 'Black Jack' Pershing (1860–1948) was Commander of the American Expeditionary Force on the Western Front.

10 Anna de Noailles (Princesse Anna Elisabeth Bibesco-Bassarabde Brancovan) (1876–1933) was a Franco-Romanian novelist and poet; she married in 1897 comte Mathieu de Noailles (1873–1942). She was a cousin of Princesse Bibesco (*vide supra*).

11 'It's the darling'.

d'Annunzio¹ whom she says the war has vulgarised, about Shakespeare, about Anatole France and Gide² (when I last saw Gide at Madeleine Le Chevreil's one afternoon he was a dreadful, unkempt poet-looking person) . . . as I write these lines distant *coups*³ are heard, is the bombardment recommencing? One can hear it on very still nights . . . Mme de Noailles was seductive, a Byzantine, very engaging and arch, and full of gestures and mannerisms. She said to have poetry in one is to win eternal youth. She wore a silver bodice and carried a long string of queer blue beads which she fondled and dangled and played with as though seeking inspiration for her conversation. She carries this rosary everywhere. She has opinions on every subject and never allows one to finish a sentence. I asked her if the rumour was well founded that she was setting the Train Directory to verse, which annoyed her. I left to go on to the Brissacs. The Duchess, siren-like, was extended on a couch, all in white and much pleased with a new sapphire bracelet the Duke had given her. She told me narcotic tales about Mme de Noailles – her mad elopements to Capri with very young men, of scandals and suicides. James Gordon Bennett is dead.⁴

It is now 1.30 and I am in bed listening to the sirens wailing. The Germans seem determined to give us bad nights. The raids make very [little] difference to one's life though Mme Waddington,⁵ energetic and intelligent as ever in spite of her eighty years, told me today that the old marquise de Talleyrand⁶ fainted for three hours last night from sheer fright. She had come to Paris for only twenty-four hours to fetch some things. Most people are brave and stay.

SATURDAY 18TH MAY

There is a vague feeling that the offensive is to reopen. Without being all *defaitiste* one must remember that the Germans in the last month have made no gains; but they have not attacked except for the usual minor engagements

- 1 General Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938), Prince of Montenevoso, Duke of Gallese, was an Italian novelist, playwright, poet of the Decadent movement, politician and journalist who took an active part in the Great War.
- 2 André Gide (1869–1951) was a French novelist, playwright and poet, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1947.
- 3 Bangs or blows.
- 4 James Gordon Bennett Jr (1841–1918) was publisher of the *New York Herald* and one of the English-speaking world's leading press magnates.
- 5 Mary Alsop King (1833–1923), a writer, born in New York, moved to Paris in 1871, marrying William Henry Waddington (1826–1894) in 1874. Waddington became Prime Minister of France in 1879 and was French Ambassador to London from 1883 to 1893.
- 6 Marie de Gontaut-Biron (1847–1922) married the 3rd marquis de Talleyrand (1845–1918) in 1876.

and indeed the much-heralded offensive degenerated into ordinary warfare. During this month they have doubtless prepared terrible onslaughts. I have been proposed for the Tir aux Pigeons¹ by the duc de Brissac and seconded by Prince Pierre d'Arenberg.² The tennis courts there are crowded with *jeunesse*, which thanks to American blood and a new love of exercise, is much less decadent and sophisticated than the older generation.

SUNDAY 19TH MAY

Motored to Versailles . . . without once being stopped for papers; I went into the Trianon Palace Hotel to fetch Gen. Sackville-West³ and Lord Derby⁴ who were lunching . . . Afterwards I walked to the duchesse de Luynes⁵ . . . where I found four sad dull damp daughters, all in deep *crêpe*. Three months ago their brother the dashing young duc de Chevreuse⁶ was killed and they talked of nothing else, which was embarrassing, but I took it as a compliment to me. Fortunately there is a younger brother to succeed one day. The house, 4, rue Jacques Royceau, is a rented one and is gloomy. One can feel tragedy in the air. The hideous furniture and bourgeois villa are hardly fitting the grandest family in France . . . they still own the chateaux of Dampierre and Luynes. Leaving them I went to Miss Elsie de Wolfe's,⁷ 57, blvd Saint-Antoine . . . a very different atmosphere. The *manoir*, as she calls it, is charmingly arranged. Lord Derby amused people by saying 'I am the greatest joke ever perpetrated by the English government.' He is as pleased with his appointment as a child with a new toy. It is in reality an excellent one as his geniality pleases the French and he is far from being the fool he pretends. Miss de Wolfe has an enormous garden with a terrace, and keeps open house from Saturday to Monday.

1 A sporting club in the Bois de Boulogne.

2 Charles-Louis Pierre d'Arenberg (1871–1919).

3 Charles Sackville-West (1870–1962), 4th Baron Sackville, had been appointed to the General Staff of the Supreme War Council at Versailles as an acting major general.

4 Edward George Villiers Stanley (1865–1948), 17th Earl of Derby, had been Secretary of State for War until the previous month when he was made British Ambassador to France. He was also known as 'The King of Lancashire' because of his control of the then mighty Conservative Party political machine in that county.

5 Simone Louise Laure de Crussol d'Uzès (1870–1946), married in 1889 Honoré d'Albert de Luynes (1868–1924), 10th duc de Luynes.

6 Charles Honoré Jacques Philippe Marie Louis d'Albert de Luynes (1892–1918), duc de Chevreuse.

7 Elsie de Wolfe (1865–1950, though some accounts give her date of birth as 1859), credited with inventing the profession of interior design, was a New Yorker by birth, a former actress and a radical opponent of nineteenth-century design. She married Sir Charles Mendl in 1926. She, like Channon, also volunteered for the Red Cross.

SATURDAY 25TH MAY

Lunched at comtesse du Bourg de Bozas.¹ This is the political salon of Paris, as Mme Roger's² is the chic one. Of course Mme de Fitz-James,³ whose salon before the war was so famous, is not received now because of her Boche origin. There were some ministers at luncheon and a Mlle d'Annay who is supposed to be the daughter of Clemenceau. There was Daniel-Vincent,⁴ a lively *ministre* who reminds one of Lloyd George. The du Bourg *hôtel* is enormous but mostly closed for the moment but she still gives *intimes déjeuners*⁵ for twenty daily. Tea at a restaurant with the duchesse⁶ . . . tea is now a very complicated affair, or perhaps I should say simplified for one has tea, and only tea . . . sugarless, milkless and cakeless. Dined with Elinor Glyn and Lady Congreve.⁷ Afterwards went to the Brissacs for supper. Monseigneur Prince Antoine d'Orléans came. He has rather an idiotic manner sometimes and laughs uproariously at his own jokes, especially riddles and puns . . . all royalties adore this form of humour. He is so inbred that he retains all the physical characteristics of the Bourbon and Orléans families . . . He told me only the King of Spain, as the oldest Bourbon, knows the true history of the Man in the Iron Mask.⁸

SUNDAY 26TH MAY

Lunched with Lady Congreve and had tea at the American Embassy, 14, avenue d'Eylau. The house is built on enormous lines and is really handsome, as the

- 1 Marguerite du Bourg de Bozas (1876–1935). Her husband Robert (1871–1902) was an explorer who died on an expedition to Africa; she undertook a world tour, and wrote a bestselling book about it, while he was on this fatal trip.
- 2 The baronne Roger.
- 3 Rosalie von Gutmann (1862–1923), comtesse de Fitz-James, was the much younger wife of comte Robert de Fitz-James (1835–1900). Born in Vienna, her salon included Proust, abbé Mugnier, ambassadors, statesmen, writers and aristocrats. She was immortalised by Edith Wharton in *A Backward Glance*; her salon evaporated with the outbreak of war because of her Austrian origins. She was known as 'Rosa Malheur'.
- 4 Charles Augustin Daniel Vincent, known as Daniel-Vincent (1874–1946), had been a deputy in the National Assembly since 1910, and was Under-Secretary for Aviation.
- 5 Intimate lunch parties.
- 6 Unclear which one: probably Mme de Brissac, to whom he was closest.
- 7 Cecilia Henrietta Dolores Blount La Touche (1867–1952) was wife of General Sir Walter Norris Congreve VC (1862–1927), General Officer Commanding VII Corps. Lady Congreve had spent much of the war as a nurse on or near the Western Front; her son Major William La Touche Congreve VC, DSO, MC (1891–1916) had been killed on the Somme after numerous acts of conspicuous gallantry that won him the Victoria Cross; he and his father are one of only three fathers and sons each to have won the VC.
- 8 An unidentified prisoner arrested in 1670 and held until his death in 1703. Voltaire thought, without any evidence, that the prisoner was the older, illegitimate brother of Louis XIV.

furniture etc is well chosen . . . but they are poorly grouped. George Sharp¹ is a clever chap and a bit more civilised than his family who are too bourgeois for words. They had asked some of the American colony to tea. I never get on with them; they are exotic and are neither American nor French, but a strange mixture of the two, with the prejudices of both and the tolerance of neither. One can never tell when one may tread on their puritanical feelings or petty jealousies.

MONDAY 27TH MAY

The Grosse Bertha . . . awoke us this morning early – it fired fifteen shots before noon. The barrage while it lasted was intense. For several weeks we have not been so attacked, evidently the gun had been laid up for repairs. All the shells fell within a certain radius which is called the ax^2 . . . it is the *faubourg* district. In the afternoon the bombardment had practically stopped and I made huge purchases for the army, in the danger zone . . . we learned that the offensive had reopened this morning on a large scale. We were prepared for this, nevertheless it was an unpleasant shock. We all shuddered at what that might mean to civilisation . . . and to us. I dined *au lit*³ exhausted, hoping to snatch a little sleep before the air raid, which turned out to be a bad one. The cannon, an air raid, the offensive . . . what a disastrous day!

TUESDAY 28TH MAY

. . . The offensive seems to have begun in earnest. We hear the English have retreated; also the French near Soissons have been obliged to fall back.

At noon I went to the elaborate Montesquiou–Roger wedding.⁴ The service lasted an hour and a half. Afterwards there was a sumptuous breakfast at the house. Mme Mathieu de Noailles called out to me ‘*Voilà Henri III*’ and it was the *mot* of the ceremony, everyone buzzing with it. I lunched with her and she confided to me she was half-beast half goddess, but certainly not human . . . Shells today fell opposite the duchesse de Rohan’s, another rue Jacob, another in the Tuileries. All day the cannon spat death at us.

WEDNESDAY 29TH MAY

The cannon has fired all day. One shell fell in the rue Washington, another rue d’Artois – evidently the ax has been changed. One fell directly opposite the

1 George Sharp (1898–1973), son of William Graves Sharp (1859–1922), was United States Ambassador to France 1914–19.

2 Axis, or target zone.

3 In bed.

4 Marie Amédée Andréine Joséphine Roger (1898–1979), married Hubert Henri Fernand (1890–1983), comte de Montesquiou-Fézensac.

house where I dined last evening. The offensive has become very serious. People are worried. Lunched with Pierre de Brissac at the Inter-Allié Club . . . there was nervousness in the air. We were presented to Barthou,¹ he seemed an agreeable, Chinese-looking little man with a greyish beard and spectacles; he looked very dirty and quite like a *bibliophil*. Why is it most French men especially politicians look so undistinguished?

We hear Soissons has fallen to the Huns. At eleven I went to the Brissacs for the air raid to discuss plans. I will not leave Paris until the Boche enter it We telephoned for the official communiqué² and when we learned both Soissons and Rheims had fallen everyone wept. The raid proved to be *une fausse alerte*³ and we returned at midnight with the pleasant thought that the Germans are marching on to Paris and may arrive at almost any moment. I have a feeling they will never arrive but will be held at Compiègne. It will be much like 1914 over again. Meanwhile I believe people should live normally so as not to cause a panic. People are paying fabulous prices to get away, the stations are overcrowded . . . where shall I be a week hence?

THURSDAY 30TH MAY

I awoke this morning to find myself still peacefully in the Ritz. The cannon has fired only three times today. The published communiqué hints only at the capture of Rheims – we of course know it to be a fact. I had tea at the *hôtel d'Hinnisdal*⁴ Emily Sloane, now baronne de La Grange,⁵ was at tea. She is attempting to become *faubourgienne*.⁶ Why do Americans abroad so detest one another? Is it *une jalousie de metier*?⁷ The old *hôtel d'Hinnisdal* is an imposing edifice filled with priceless things; unfortunately its dirt amounts to squalor. The servants are even dirtier and dressed atrociously. The tea was so badly served in such disgusting cups one could scarcely gulp it down. [Mme La Grange] seems to think she has reached the summit of Parisian society, she forgets that all Paris does not live within the sacred precincts of the rue de Varenne. I longed to ask her about her family's furniture shop in New York but didn't quite dare. She lives in the rue Vaneau, I believe. The rue Barbet-de-Jouy remains the street par excellence of

1 Jean Louis Barthou (1862–1934) was Prime Minister of France for eight months in 1913.

2 In Paris, as in London at the time, those with the means to do so could telephone a newspaper or press agency subscription service to receive details of the latest government announcements on the progress of the war.

3 A false alarm.

4 In the 6th arrondissement, now a French historic monument.

5 Emily Eleanor Sloane (1890–1981), daughter of Henry Sloane (1845–1937) and wife of baron Amaury Louys de La Grange. Her Sloane was son of a carpet manufacturer.

6 To seem like a native of Parisian high society.

7 Professional jealousy.

Europe. It is as quiet as *une rue de province*;¹ but all its great *hôtels* are inhabited and none have been sold to intruders; one breathes the eighteenth century. I went on to the Tir aux Pigeons for tennis. I am now a definite member, having paid 330 francs entrance fee.

*That evening he dines at Maurice de Rothschild's.*²

I liked his wife, the Mouton Rothschild³ as she is called. She is *bien élevée*⁴ and simply dressed, indeed rather English, which is singing great praises for a Jewess. The *hôtel* is mostly given over to their hospital, only a few rooms are left to the family. We were received in a small typical Rothschild salon, a gorgeous room hung with blue brocade, in good taste except for far too many pictures. The dining room is less agreeable. The dinner was horrible and the food was poor and the service ghastly. Why cannot Jews be like other people?⁵ There was a cheap air about everything so out of place amidst such luxury. The Maurices' table manners are revolting, though she ate well. The cannon fired several times during the meal, one shot just scraping the Madeleine.⁶ Later we returned to the Brissacs; soon the sirens blew and we had a magnificent raid. The increasing barrage, the searchlights, the bombs made an unforgettable scene. It was quite unbelievable like a Wells⁷ novel, the fireworks of some greater Nero . . . In all it was a quieter day than we dared to hope for. They must yet take Château-Thierry and Épernay before Paris is in actual danger. Gossip tells us that Foch and Clemenceau have quarrelled because of the too frequent visits of the "Tiger"⁸ to the front. A gradual, unofficial evacuation of Paris has taken place . . . people are still fleeing in every direction.

FRIDAY 31ST MAY

The news is bad today. Château-Thierry has fallen and the Huns are headed for us. Only a battle or a miracle can save Paris. The Germans will find it a deserted city

1 A provincial street.

2 Maurice Edmond Karl de Rothschild (1881–1957), son of Edmond James de Rothschild, owned vineyards and a stunning art collection as well as being involved in the family finance business. He married, in 1909, Noémie Halphen (1888–1968), whose mother was of the rival Péreire banking family.

3 *Mouton* means a sheep: the joke is that one of the great first-growth clarets comes from Château Mouton Rothschild.

4 Well bred.

5 Channon's youthful ignorance and callowness occasionally drags him in to unpleasant observations such as this. Sadly, they were common among the class he is energetically seeking to imitate. He would, eventually, come to realise his moral failing.

6 The church in the 8th arrondissement, built as a monument to Napoleon's army.

7 Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) was a novelist, science-fiction writer, polemicist, prophet, womaniser and Fabian.

8 Clemenceau, who was taking a hands-on approach to the oversight of strategy.

as over a million people have left. We all spent the day hanging on the telephone awaiting news. No one seems to know anything definite; there is a deadly calm which is depressing.

SATURDAY 1ST JUNE

Every moment is a century; life is full. The offensive news is steadily worse. The Germans are still pressing on. The calm of the Parisian population is depressing; they seem not to realise that their Paris could ever be in danger. I drew some money from the bank and discovered that I have spent over a thousand dollars a month for three months. And to show for it? I am a member of two clubs, have a beautiful wristwatch and a few trinkets, and am still alive: that is all. Last night there was a double air raid. The *barloque* announced a victory just as the awful sirens shrieked new danger. It was a beautiful night and the exploding shrapnel had a sheet of stars for a background.

SUNDAY 2ND JUNE

The news is decidedly worse. The Huns have now Rheims, Soissons and Château-Thierry, Châlons and Senlis have been evacuated and one hears Meaux is about to be. The Princesse [d'Arenberg]¹ has promised to take me to her chateau of Menetou² should the Germans get to Meaux or even to Compiègne. In 1914 they were actually at Chantilly and some strayed as far as Saint-Germain. The cannon did not fire all day and the terrible bombardments we had so feared, are they not to be? Comtesse d'Hautpoul motored me through the Bois, the only car allowed to pass as she has a permission for a *député*.³ She has just returned from a *séjour* in a *maison de santé*⁴ and is much changed; she is more tranquil in her movements and has regained her dignity and calm. Even her voice has changed and her mannerisms are no longer the same . . . she no longer paints! She is exceedingly pretty and chic and has *rajeunie*⁵ ten years, I hope she will not begin to etherise⁶ herself again . . . I stayed in bed all day. Everyone is tired after these sleepless nights full of air raids. At four I went to the Tir aux Pigeons for tennis: there I found all the *jeunes filles bien élevées*.⁷ The Tir is the only place *la jeunesse* is allowed any freedom.

1 Antoinette Hélène Emma Louise de Gramont de Lesparre (1883–1958), daughter of Armand de Gramont, duc de Lesparre, married in 1904 Charles Louis Pierre d'Arenberg (qv).

2 Château de Menetou-Salon, in the Loire about fifteen miles from Bourges.

3 Member of the National Assembly.

4 A stay in a clinic, presumably for her drug addiction.

5 Rejuvenated.

6 A euphemism for drug use.

7 Well-bred young women.

MONDAY 3RD JUNE

We talked war at lunch and war at dinner with the inevitable questions . . . ‘Will they take Paris?’ ‘What will you do?’ People are still sending away their tapestries and pictures but there is endless difficulty in getting boxes out of Paris. The streets are filled with trunk-laden taxis and one feels the excitement in the air. We hear the Banque de France and the Crédit Lyonnais have moved to Bordeaux; there has even been talk of transferring the government, but Poincaré¹ has decided not to repeat his mistake of 1914. The Germans naturally advance in as much as they have thirty-five more divisions than we. We had every possible unit at the front and they had thirty-five fresh divisions with which to launch a giant offensive; they were all moved at night before it began. All day people were depressed but this evening our spirits rose.

TUESDAY 4TH JUNE

The Huns have evidently been checked, temporarily at least. Everyone adores the Americans now, after their victory of today.² One hears: ‘If only we can hold out until the Americans arrive!’ Dined with dear Maurice [de Rothschild]. I am really devoted to him but wish he were less sarcastic and sensitive. He lectured me today, accusing me of inventing a new vice in Paris . . . which, in itself, he admitted, showed ingenuity. It is ‘making fools of duchesses’ . . . and said I must be careful as my reputation was colouring . . . why, I don’t know, as I am still as pure as the winter’s snows. He attributed my ‘phenomenal success’ to my ‘extraordinary good looks and novelty’, and that I am the ‘embodiment of all that is young’. What a sinister man he is; was he trying to pull my leg? Really, if I hadn’t American standards supported by bourgeois good morals I could have an unheard-of career in this astounding Paris, where forty-three people have tried to make love to me. Some I have insulted, others have understood and others made scenes. What a demoralised condition the world is in. I wonder that I have escaped.

THURSDAY 6TH JUNE

War news no better. The revolting Billing³ scandal has come to an end in London. It seems the scoundrel compiled a list of 47,000 people of the *haut monde*

1 Raymond Poincaré (1860–1934) was President of France from 1913 to 1920.

2 The American Expeditionary Force of 27,500 men on the Aisne had been part of the force that checked the German advance.

3 Noel Pemberton-Billing (1881–1948) was an aviator and independent MP who founded a magazine in support of his views, called the *Vigilante*. He had been sued by Maud Allan, an actress, for alluding to her lesbianism in an article entitled ‘The Cult of the Clitoris’, which had alleged that 47,000 perverts were at large in high positions in British society, and being blackmailed by the Germans. His victory in the case caused widespread shock, even though Allan was a lesbian – something not widely known outside her circles.

and in politics who had either *moeurs étranges*¹ or some skeleton in their lives they wished at all cost to keep secret. These he blackmailed; his defence was that the list had been made by German spies before the war!!! Jokingly one asks one's friends . . . 'Are you on the blacklist?' People squirm and laugh it off.

FRIDAY 7TH JUNE

They seem to be marking time at the front, at least, neither side has made a gain these last thirty-six hours. This is due in a measure to the splendid and unexpected resistance of the American troops, which has done much to improve the French morale. The French at last realise the American army is to be a decisive factor and even should Paris fall the war is by no means over. I hear submarines are now operating off the American coast and are attempting to blockade the port of New York.

SATURDAY 8TH JUNE

The cannon still fires, yesterday about noon the bombardment was almost violent, shells raining about the Ministère de la Guerre.² I have sent my dog to the country. Comtesse de Noailles sent me her charming books with an autograph. No air raid for some time . . . not for two whole nights!

MONDAY 10TH JUNE

The war news grows steadily worse. A new offensive at Montdidier in the Compiègne sector began last night. There are now two fronts, that one, and the one at Château-Thierry where there is a slight lull. The Germans are determined to take Paris this time and most people fear that they will. The city has been practically entirely evacuated and the streets seem deserted . . . yet there are street riots at the stations. The question is now a question of kilometres; they must advance at least twenty before Paris can be severely bombarded. Dined with the Brissacs, a gloomy evening.

TUESDAY 11TH JUNE

The news is dreadful: they are still advancing at the rate of four kilometres a day. What will happen no one knows. People are still leaving in thousands. In fact only three classes remain . . . the very poor, the war workers whose presence is indispensable, and the *faubourg* who refuse to budge. The *nouveaux riches* have long since flown. I lunched with Cécile d'Hautpoul. As she is distantly related to

Copyrighted Material

1 Peculiar practices.

2 Ministry of War.

the Wittelsbachs,¹ she thinks the German high command would treat her with respect and so plans to remain. Dined at Princesse Mme d'Arenberg's We wondered if this would be our last pleasant meal; if the Germans should take Paris it will be years before the present order is re-established.

TUESDAY 18TH JUNE

I dined at the Brissacs' At eleven o'clock we telephoned for the communiqué, which was good. People are still leaving, the streets more and more present a funereal aspect and more and more of the shops are closing for lack of business . . . this will have a demoralising effect on the working people thrown out of their jobs. Really I can't understand all this, for the conditions are better than they were a week or even a month ago. People are still dining out, still dressing and still trying to live the normal life . . . all the tapestries, the silver, and the valuables have been sent away for safer keeping because of the threatened bombardments.

FRIDAY 21ST JUNE

There are rumours that thirty or more Berthas are soon to bombard us from Château-Thierry and people are all buying absurd little worsted dolls called Ninette and Rintintin. They are supposed to protect people from shells . . . the vendors are making heaps of money. I was going away with the Princesse d'Arenberg to her chateau at Menetou for a few days tomorrow but people are gossiping so we have decided not to go. Really in life and especially in society it is one's friends rather than one's enemies that one fears. How wonderful to be young, to have the world at the tip of one's fingers . . . oh, the mad, mad waltz of youth . . . the lights are on, the stage is set, the music is playing, I am exuberant . . . how long will it last? Morality I am sure is an *invention des laids*² who cannot be immoral – it is their revenge. The Princesse was wonderful and we went motoring at midnight and I succeeded in diverting her

SATURDAY 22ND JUNE

I went to the Bois to the Tir. There I could only find young Sharp; he evidently thinks it is part of the duty of an ambassador's son to play tennis. The Sharps neglect French society in a way that is almost scandalous. I dropped in on d'Astier,³

1 A German dynasty that at various times included the kings of Bavaria, the dukes of Merania and the margraves of Brandenburg; they also provided two Holy Roman Emperors, in the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. Channon became an expert on them in the course of writing his book on King Ludwig of Bavaria.

2 An invention of the ugly.

3 Emmanuel Raoul Maurice d'Astier de la Vigerie (1901–69) was later a writer, politician and *résistant*.

his *garçonnère*¹ is a dream – all dull greens and *bibelots*. Napoléon Gourgaud² was stretched siren-like on a divan, smoking with every air of a *cocotte*. He flirted with everyone and stretched his handsome limbs in a voluptuous fashion. I wonder whether he is really the husband of the striking Eva Gebhard,³ whom he married a little while ago? He is handsome, languorous, a volley of wit and cynicism. He told me that the Chevreus⁴ hoped that I should marry their daughter who though well *dotée*⁵ is searching for a husband . . . her mother sighs that there are so few dukes in France . . . and so is obliged to take an *étranger*!

In the evening went to the Gaston de Montesquiou-Fézensacs',⁶ a very impressive, though small, dinner and *soirée*. It was for Lord Derby. All the ladies literally hung on his neck . . . Princesse d'Arenberg passed first and was easily the most beautiful in mauve and dark red roses. She advised the Lord Derby to take French lessons; he said he did in the daytime but not at night, and that he was too old for that kind of thing and that also he had been faithful to Lady Derby for the first seventeen years of his marriage. He is fat and good-natured, a gentleman to the fingertips, who adores being an ambassador and frankly tells everyone so. I finally fled with the Princesse and we went to the Brissacs where we found the duchesse and Maurice de Rothschild. The Princesse sent me home and went walking herself with Rothschild at 1 a.m. in the Bois. Lord Derby was very jovial . . . [he] roared with laughter and teased me, saying Paris was too small for us both. He said that all his flirts were in love with me. I replied that he had all the privileges, being an ambassador.

WEDNESDAY 26TH JUNE

Paris was declared *zone des armées*⁷ yesterday. What this means no one exactly knows. It is probably designed to frighten away the people. The government is exerting every effort to empty Paris. That there is to be a severe bombardment now no one doubts. This calm cannot last in spite of the fact that Kühlmann⁸

1 Bachelor flat.

2 Baron Napoléon Gourgaud (1881–1944) was a philanthropist and collector, who specialised in impressionists.

3 Eva Gebhard (1886–1959), philanthropist, art connoisseur and collector, was born into a prominent banking family in New York. She had married Gourgaud in 1917 and divorced him in 1939.

4 Comte Urbain Chevreau d'Antraigues (1855–1934) was Gourgaud's uncle.

5 Endowed: that is, would bring a good marriage settlement.

6 Gaston de Montesquiou-Fézensac (1870–1953).

7 A war zone.

8 Richard von Kühlmann (1873–1948), German Foreign Secretary 1917–18. His remarks, quoted by Channon, forced his resignation after an interview with Kaiser Wilhelm II, but they were indicative of the beginning of the slump in German morale that would force them to sue for peace within months.

announced yesterday in the Reichstag that Germany could never win by the force of arms alone . . . a great admission for a Hun and quite contrary to the Kaiser's boast that he would be in Paris by the 28th of June.

THURSDAY 27TH JUNE

The ministers at dinner were most discouraging, advising everyone to leave. They said that Paris was in very grave danger; that at least thirty cannons would soon fire upon us and that there would be terrible air raids. But today seemed as usual. There is a rumour that the Tsar has been assassinated in a train by the Red Guard.¹ Everyone is indignant with the Russians. They are evidently imitating the French of 1792. At eleven there was an air raid . . . I arrived home rather late to find the Ritz had been bombed and a sorry sight it was. Every window in the hotel had been broken, furniture smashed, doors jammed, etc. The lights all went out and people had begun to cry out. The Swiss concierge hid under a desk for safety while most people hurried to the cellars. But no one was killed. Was it by chance that tonight was selected to bomb the Ritz, or had the Kaiser an old score to pay on his uncle, the Duke of Connaught,² who is here for two days?

SATURDAY 29TH JUNE

Lunched with the Brissacs. Antoine d'Orléans was next to me. He is very difficult to talk with, for without being intelligent he is cynical and over-worldly. He is a bit bitter, which is only natural having been so near to two thrones. I got along quite well when I forgot and used the *verboden*³ 'vous'!⁴ The Ritz since the shell fell there the other night has suddenly become fashionable again.

SUNDAY 30TH JUNE

Everyone is furious that Kerensky⁵ is here as he will undoubtedly incite a revolt among the lower classes; we notice that the English didn't keep him very long.

1 Untrue: he would be assassinated, with his immediate family, in Yekaterinburg three weeks later.

2 Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert (1850–1942), Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, was seventh child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, younger brother of the late Kaiserin (mother of Wilhelm II), and uncle of King George V.

3 Forbidden.

4 For God and royalty, it should be the second person singular, *tu*, not *vous*, which is otherwise used formally as well as for multitudes.

5 Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970) was former Minister-Chairman of the Russian provisional government until the Bolsheviks took power in November 1917. He had fled Russia, sensibly fearing for his life, when it was clear his forces could not overthrow Lenin's. He lived in France until 1939, when he settled in the United States. Channon's fears that his presence would cause unrest came to nothing.

The reports that the Tsar has been murdered are being corroborated; for the first few days no one believed them. The court of England has so far taken no steps towards mourning . . . a difficult position for the King.¹ Everyone thinks the big bombardment will start Thursday the 4th of July. There were a hundred people at Saint-Cloud today and if there were no motors in Paris it is because they are all at Saint-Cloud!! Anthony Drexel² arrived in a great Rolls-Royce followed quickly by Prince Michel Murat³ and Lady Michelham⁴ . . . the richest and most *mal vue* woman in England.

WEDNESDAY 3RD JULY

The attitude of society toward the men of the government is ironical. The *faubourg* and the *beau monde* are not loath to invite officials to dinner – for a price. Unheard-of favours are always asked and always accorded, so great is the spell of a grand name. But when their benefactors are not heeded for the moment [when a favour is] wanted they find themselves mocked or forgotten. This system has been invented to take the place of privileges that would naturally be theirs by right of birth in other countries.

SATURDAY 6TH JULY

A large dinner at Cercle Agricole⁵ organised by Mme Roger – all the men from the Supreme War Council at Versailles including Colonel Macready,⁶ about who [*sic*] there is so much talk, who seemed dull. He is an Irish youth of no family. He has fallen in love with Elisabeth de Noailles⁷ – duchesse de Noailles has forbidden

- 1 No order for mourning had been made for the very good reason that the Tsar was still alive.
- 2 Anthony Joseph Drexel Jr (1864–1934) was an American financier and philanthropist and formerly a close friend of King Edward VII. He had lived in Europe, mainly in London, since 1893 and in Paris since 1915.
- 3 Prince Michel Anne Charles Joachim Napoléon Murat (1887–1941) was part of the Russian diaspora.
- 4 Aimee Geraldine Bradshaw (1882–1927), known as 'Bertha', was the much younger wife of Sir Herbert Stern Bt (1851–1919), 1st Baron Michelham, banker and philanthropist. Her husband bought the Hotel Astoria in Paris after war broke out and turned it into a hospital for British troops, where Lady Michelham nursed. They opened a number of other convalescent homes for British officers and paid all the expenses. The cause of Channon's antipathy towards her is unclear and probably groundless. *Mal vue* means 'disapproved of'; she had reportedly been seduced by Jefferson Cohn (1881–1951), her husband's secretary.
- 5 An elite Parisian gentlemen's club, founded in 1835 and later merged into the Nouveau Cercle.
- 6 Gordon Nevil Macready (1891–1956); his distinguished military career would culminate in his becoming a lieutenant general, Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff during the Second World War, and head of the British Military Mission to Washington from 1942 to 1946. He was of Irish descent but not Irish: he was born in Cayton, his father, another distinguished general, in Cheltenham and his grandfather, a famous actor, in London.
- 7 Élisabeth Pauline Sabine Marie de Noailles (1898–1969) was daughter of the 7th duc de Noailles; she married Macready in 1920.

a marriage and has locked up the unhappy girl in her room at Maintenon. Paris quick to take sides and always full of ardent partisans has divided itself into two camps. One headed by the English [*sic*] Embassy maintain that an English gentleman is good enough for any French duke's daughter in these democratic days and that the Noailles should consider themselves jolly lucky. The *faubourg* however take the opposite view . . . that untitled Englishmen are good enough to die for France but to marry her daughter . . . *jamais!* Dined at the duchesse de Brissac's to meet Prince Eugène de Ligne and his wife:¹ they are very *gratin*,² that is most hideously dressed. He is *un peu Belge*,³ I have never met a Belgian except Stanislas d'Herbemont⁴ who was not. It is a distinct brand of provincial dowdiness.

SUNDAY 7TH JULY

Prices continue to soar with discouraging rapidity. Lunched with Princess d'Arenberg to meet Princess Antoine d'Orléans – The duchesse de Noailles and Lord Derby no longer speak.⁵

MONDAY 8TH JULY

Lunched at the *hôtel* de Rohan with the old duchesse⁶ . . . Luncheon was served in what is obviously a library, as all the large rooms are used as hospital wards. There are sixty *blessés* in the hotel, which is entirely organised, supported and directed by the duchesse, who has slaved for four years unlike most of her class. She is a large, ungainly woman of deep understanding and gallic wit. She was in her uniform and most gracious and amusing. She is somehow a very *grande dame*, she has a certain grandeur of soul. Food was horrible, being the same fare given to the wounded who all worship her. They call her '*Grandmère*' and she holds their hands and jokes with them as they are being operated [upon]. Sometimes she is able to snatch only an hour's sleep a night, so long are her hours and so great her devotion to her patients . . . I noticed the old duchesse spit in her finger bowl.

1 Eugène de Ligne (1893–1960) succeeded his father as 11th Prince de Ligne in 1937. He was acclaimed for the work he did in the Second World War sheltering Jews. His wife Philippine Marie Cécile Douce de Noailles (1898–1991) was daughter of François Joseph de Noailles, Prince de Poix.

2 Upper crust.

3 A little bit Belgian. Although born in Normandy, Eugène's main seat was on the Belgian side of the border with France, at Beloeil. Originally in the southern Netherlands, Beloeil had been in the French department of Jemappe during the first French Empire, from 1795.

4 Comte Stanislas d'Herbemont (1889–1972) was born in Brussels, a Frenchman with a Belgian mother.

5 Derby had manifestly cultivated the duchesse on his mission to Paris, but fallen foul of her.

6 The duchesse de Rohan.

WEDNESDAY 10TH JULY

I am exhausted . . . air raids, overwork, strain combined with too much dining out. They have all combined to give me a severe sore throat. Whenever I am at all run down an infection seizes my tonsils. However, I pull myself to luncheon with the Princesse d'Arenberg and to dine at the duchesse de Brissac's.

MONDAY 15TH JULY

Stanislas d'Herbemont has arrived from the front for a lightning stolen *permission*¹ of three days. As his flat is let he is sharing my room at the Ritz. We lunched at the Brissacs' and in the afternoon (after an agreeable hour at a brothel) we organised a series of tea parties in our room . . . In the evening we went to the Casino de Paris. There must be a terrific battle raging tonight as Stanislas and I can distinctly hear the distant guns.

TUESDAY 16TH JULY

Spent the day with Stanislas, as my own *permission* started this morning. We dined with our lovely duchesse [de Brissac], who has a Phèdre-like² charm, and the Princesse [d'Arenberg] and in the evening he returned to the front. I am staying the night with the Brissacs . . . my luggage has gone to Cabourg³ and I am sleeping in one of the Duke's cotton nightshirts . . . the coronet worked on the pocket scratches my plebeian skin. There has been a flare-up at the front, terrific fighting. The big gun has fired on us today too.

THURSDAY 25TH JULY

CABOURG

A week that I hope will stretch into a fortnight . . . a week of glorious sun and sleep and bathing at this bourgeois *ville d'eau*.⁴ I motored with Jean⁵ and the others came by train. We are quite a large party . . . About twelve in all. Princesse d'Arenberg and others come from Deauville and take us on motoring expeditions. But we are divinely happy on our own. Jean and I have a large room overlooking

1 Leave.

2 Phèdre is the French name for Phaedra, a Cretan princess in Greek mythology. She is the title character of a tragedy by Racine, first performed in 1677, in which she is consumed by a passion for her stepson.

3 Cabourg is on the Côte Fleurie in Normandy, and was the inspiration for the resort of Balbec in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

4 Seaside resort.

5 Probably Jean de l'Espée (1898–1972), son of the duchesse de Brissac by her first marriage to baron de l'Espée; Jean was a composer, pianist and aviator and succeeded to his father's barony in 1910.

the sea . . . we sleep late and order a double breakfast on our sunlit balcony. Then follows a long sunbathe. Jean has every quality save modesty and he bares his beautiful brown, wounded body to the sun and passers-by quite shamelessly. We have our meal at a round table with the others and are most content and happy. In the evening we search the darkened broadwalks for adventure and never find it. The lights are extinguished very early for fear of submarines. Occasionally we dine at Deauville, which is enjoying a tiny war season, or at the nearby Guillaume le Conquérant. The hotel is full of unheard-of people including several very young rosy-faced English officers on leave with nice young French ladies who clumsily pretend in broken English to be their wives.

THURSDAY 15TH AUGUST

Back in Paris which is hot, stifling and deserted by all save the war-workers. My *chef*¹ is away and my office takes all my time. The war news is every day more encouraging.² I have been twice back to Deauville for weekends and again for a fleeting three days to my adored Cabourg. Last week I stayed at Fontainebleau chez baronne Roger. A cool delicious house where I felt much refreshed. We picnicked in the forest and went through the castle with the curator. At night vicomtesse de Sigalas³ stole into my room but I was tired and she looked withered and nothing happened . . . why chronicle my immoralities even in my own diary??

On the whole a quiet few weeks. I usually dine with the duchesse de Brissac who exhausted with four sons and four years of war is having a fortnight's rest-cure in bed. We dine on twin trays and I tell her the news of the town and the war rumours, whilst she reads me the children's letters and it is delicious. I am usually in bed by eleven and have a cold bath before going to bed. Never has Paris been so restful. I have been promoted and now have an entire staff under me and hope soon to receive a captain's commission. I am fortunate in having a most clever typist who adores me and is always to be depended on. She lives an hour from Paris and though her husband beats her cruelly yet she is never late. Everyone asks when are the Americans going to take Metz?⁴

1 Boss.

2 The Battle of Amiens was in progress, with the Germans being driven back over the ground they had taken since March, the Allies now assisted by American troops. German morale was collapsing, and the war had reached a turning point.

3 Xenia de Spiridonoff (1883–1948), married Étienne Charles Drouilhet de Sigalas in Moscow in 1904.

4 Metz had been annexed by the German Empire in 1871 after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, along with the rest of Alsace-Lorraine, so its capture by an Allied power or associate would have huge significance for France. The Americans did not enter it, but the French army did in November 1918.

FRIDAY 16TH AUGUST

Yesterday seemed so peaceful and in the evening I dined with some chaps and we went to the cinema. At eleven-thirty I was in bed. At one I heard the awful wail of the sirens and I got up and installed myself in an armchair on my balcony. My rooms are on the fourth floor. In five minutes' time the wailing was almost deafening; ten minutes later the noise of exploding shells told us the Gothas¹ were approaching. The searchlights began to sweep the already white sky. And the whole 'inverted bowl' was a mass of illumination. The purr-purr of the Boche motors could be heard distinctly. And every five minutes or so a particularly loud boom could be distinguished and one knew that a bomb had dropped and that people had been killed. The horizon after every explosion was orange for an instant and the sky continued to be a display of fireworks. Soon the blackout-lines of the defence balloons could be seen. And the coloured red spots in the distance showed us where the incendiary bomb had fallen.

And the dreadful concert continued . . . it seemed to be the noisiest raid of all. For a while I thought that Paris would blow up. In about an hour the noise gradually stopped and I went back to bed. I had been asleep some time when I again heard the noise of the sirens and I realised there was a second raid. This time I dressed and went to the cellars. I have never seen such an amusing night. It was filled mostly with frightened servants and some guests at the hotel half-dressed and some frankly *en pyjama* . . . Don Luis of Spain² wore mauve silk pyjamas, the Duchess of Sutherland quite sleepy and bored, Elsie de Wolfe angry and fussy, Winston Churchill,³ fat and puffy . . . and others. It was about five when the church bells announced the end of the raid. It was perhaps the worst one of all and the only serious raid for over a month. This morning, still exhausted after a sleepless night, I read that Austria has offered a separate peace. This is what some of our friends have been plotting for months.

1 German bombers.

2 Prince Luís Fernando de Orleans y Borbón (1888–1945) was a great-grandson of King Ferdinand VII of Spain and an Infante of the Spanish royal family. After being thrown out of France in 1924 for drug dealing he was deprived of his title and privileges by Alfonso XIII.

3 Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874–1965) was at that stage a Liberal MP. He had been elected as a Conservative for Oldham in 1900 but crossed the floor in 1904, and sat for Manchester North West from 1906 to 1908 and for Dundee from 1908 to 1922. Rejoining the Tories he was 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 Minister of Munitions in 1918, when Channon met him. He was in France making visits to the front, keen to witness tanks in action. He would be Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 1940 to 1945 and from 1951 to 1955. He and Channon would become adversaries over appeasement in the run-up to the Second World War. He married in 1908 Clementine Ogilvy Hozier (1885–1977), daughter of Henry Montague Hozier, though her mother, Lady Blanche Hozier, believed the biological father to be Captain William George Middleton.

SATURDAY 17TH AUGUST

The *beau monde* are creeping back to Paris now. I dined with my divine Princesse d'Arenberg.

TUESDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER

An amusing dinner at Princesse Violette Murat's; everyone was quite drunk. These large vulgar Murat women drink like Poles. In the evening there was a small dance which went on until two o'clock. Lord and Lady Alastair Leveson-Gower¹ came with his sister, Lady Rosemary² (the only girl with whom the Prince of Wales³ has ever flirted or cared for) and Mrs Capel and her sister Lady Lovat:⁴ a group in fact of rather slender British beauties, one of whom went up to Violette saying 'Princesse, do forgive this invasion.' The English in Paris invariably frequent the wrong houses and consequently form the most ludicrous opinions of Parisian society. Americans are more astute . . .

WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER

The summer calm is over. The restaurants are again filled with friends and the shops are reopening. Today I worked strenuously in my new responsible position⁵ and at six hurried to the Brissacs'. *En route* a heavy shower drenched me and I arrived literally dripping. 'Turdule', an ex-plowman and their comic butler, ushered me into the drawing room all muddy and wet as I was and there I had to face the four duchesses . . . Mme de Brissac quite recovered was lovely as ever; the duchesse de Lorges,⁶ old and impressive and a bit 'gaga'; the duchesse de Luynes in deep mourning for her son, the duc de Chevreuse, seemed most bourgeoisie, she the first lady in France! Her hands are not small nor her features fine and she is

- 1 Lord Alastair St Clair Sutherland-Leveson-Gower (1890–1921), who died of malaria while big game hunting in Rhodesia, was the second son of the 4th Duke of Sutherland and Lady Millicent St Clair-Erskine; and Elizabeth Demarest (1892–1931), daughter of Warren Gardner Demarest of New York.
- 2 Lady Rosemary Millicent Sutherland-Leveson-Gower (1893–1930), subsequently married the 3rd Earl of Dudley; she was killed in a plane crash with the 3rd Marquess of Dufferin and Ava *en route* from Le Touquet to London.
- 3 See footnote for 14th April 1923.
- 4 The Hon. Diana Lister (1893–1983), wife of Captain Arthur 'Boy' Capel (1881–1919; killed in a motorcycle crash supposedly on his way to a tryst with Coco Chanel, his mistress), and the Hon. Laura Lister (1892–1965), wife of Simon Joseph Fraser (1871–1933), 14th Lord Lovat. The sisters were daughters of Thomas Lister (1854–1925), the 4th Baron Ribblesdale.
- 5 As an honorary attaché at the American Embassy in Paris.
- 6 Anne Marie Henriette de Cossé Brissac (1865–1934), wife of the 4th duc de Lorges (1861–1912).

cold and uninteresting and housekeeperish. I was given some of the duc's clothes whilst mine were dried.

I spent the day in Versailles with Mrs Gordon Bennett¹ who in a most exquisite villa plays the dowager. The Foch family are her nearest neighbours. General Belin,² the *chef* of the French section at the Supreme War Council, came to luncheon. He is a gruff, witty man, the typical successful French general, who loves a coarse joke as much as he does a pretty woman or red wine. I called on Arthur Meyer³ at the Reservoirs, where he has an apartment. He is seeking a divorce from his 36-years-old wife who is no longer faithful to his bed, as he expressed it. He is forty years her senior. There was a strange antique there called Mme Hochon. It used to be Cochon⁴ but she changed it on becoming a widow. Cécile accuses me of being a snob. Why?

TUESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER

Paris is mad with joy at the victories. People talk of a triumphal entry into Berlin. Lunched with the duc et duchesse de Montmorency⁵ to meet Colonel and Mrs Theodore Roosevelt Jr.⁶ He is a mild-mannered, pleasing little man lacking his father's virility. I only once met the famous 'TR' and that was years ago in Chicago. He was terrifying and his hand was dripping with sweat . . . are presidents of the US's hands always wet? Later I was presented to President Taft⁷ and had the sensation of putting my hand into a barrel of syrup as I shook hands and the great genial giant smiled . . . But to return to today. I dined with my Brissac family. The duchesse, like the good Frenchwoman she is, ordered champagne and we drank '*à la victoire*' and '*à Berlin*'.

SUNDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER

The darkness has gone out of life. People are falling into their pre-war habits now that the danger which threatened civilisation seems to have been averted or at least postponed. One is no longer mentally in mourning.

1 Maud Potter (1866–1946), widow of James Gordon Bennett Jr.

2 Émile Eugène Belin (1853–1937), formerly Joffre's right-hand man.

3 Arthur Meyer (1844–1924) was director of the right-leaning newspaper *Le Gaulois* and a key political figure in the Third Republic. He did not marry until 1904, to a Mlle de Turenne.

4 *Cochon* is French for pig.

5 Napoléon, duc de Montmorency (1867–1951).

6 Theodore 'Ted' Roosevelt III (1887–1944) was the son of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States of America from 1901 to 1909. His wife was Eleanor Butler Alexander (1888–1960).

7 William Howard Taft (1857–1930) was 27th President of the United States of America from 1909 to 1913.

WEDNESDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER

Lunched with Lady Congreve and we discussed the probable peace terms. The French will demand Alsace-Lorraine, huge indemnities . . . as well as the Kaiser's head. They will expect England to be satisfied with a remote colony.

FRIDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER

Tea with the marquise des Isnards¹ in the depths of the *faubourg*. It took me quite an hour to find her flat and it smelt of the tomb . . . but the superb panelling makes up for all this.

SUNDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

Lunched with the Brissacs and went to a play. Tea at the Norwegian Legation, the most beautiful house in Paris . . . very *de l'époque*,² all the *meubles*³ and tapestries are perfect.

TUESDAY 1ST OCTOBER

Lunched at Cécile's charming new flat, 31, Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Her odd daughter Ninette,⁴ who is a great heiress, looks with horror on her mother and her gigolos, has gone to live in England at Margate with her designing governess. Dined with the Rothschilds to meet the Italian Ambassador. An almost pre-war dinner. Everyone magnificently dressed. The Ambassador, baronne de Rothschild, Princesse d'Arenberg . . . about twenty.

SATURDAY 5TH OCTOBER

The Central Empires have asked for an armistice . . . are they crumbling or is it a fiendish plot?⁵

TUESDAY 8TH OCTOBER

This morning I began my diplomatic career, choosing a moment when the world is electrified by the proposal of the Central Powers for an armistice, which amounts to an admission of defeat. As the note is addressed to President Wilson [it must] be

1 Rosalie de Laborde (1884–1919), married in 1906 Charles Louis Germain Marie des Isnards (1876–1964).

2 Of its period.

3 Furniture.

4 Antoinette d'Hautpoul (1898–1934).

5 They were crumbling.

answered by him. The old Downing Street supremacy always rivalled by the Quai d'Orsay¹ is quickly passing and yielding the *pas*² to Washington.³ Paris was calmer than one would expect. Doubtless the peace last week with Bulgaria has prepared us for the end of the war. I am sorry to leave the Red Cross and to surrender my commission. I have spent the happiest year of my life in its services, the year in which I found myself and took on what will probably be my permanent mould. I sadly parted with my dashing uniforms and look too appalling in 'mufti'. This afternoon I had tea with Princesse d'Arenberg, lovelier than ever . . . Her *hôtel* [in the] rue de la Ville-l'Évêque is handsome but hideous. There I found Maurice de Rothschild, large, ungainly, uncouthed creature draped on a *fauteuil*⁴ and telling amusing scandals.

WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER

Everyone is of the opinion that we shall have peace. Wilson's answer to the armistice note was known this afternoon . . . that peace is impossible until the Huns evacuate all the invaded territory which opens the question: is Alsace-Lorraine invaded territory? His answer is masterful, strong and ringing. Everyone is delighted and considers it as the only proposal possible. At tea the general feeling was that peace would be declared within several months perhaps by Christmas, although more thought faster.

SUNDAY 13TH OCTOBER

I lunched at the duchesse de Rohan's and found her fat, clumsy and freaky in her soiled *infirmière's* uniform. She sometimes surprises Parisian society! Returned to the Brissacs' for tea and more talk of peace. Princesse d'Arenberg had many *tuyaux*⁵ . . . that France ask [for] 20,000,000,000 francs indemnity and Alsace-Lorraine. Already we are talking as if peace were declared. A bit prematurely I think.

WEDNESDAY 16TH OCTOBER

Lunched with Mrs Elinor Glyn, almost thin in a grey chic suit and rabbit furs. By force of will and her yellow astral rays she has been able to reduce. She has had

- 1 The French Foreign Ministry.
- 2 The pace-setting.
- 3 The Central Powers had approached Wilson not because America was the greatest power, but because it had not joined the Allies, preferring instead to be 'associated' with them. Therefore the Central Powers hoped to conclude a separate peace that put its original enemies on the back foot. The ploy did not work.
- 4 Armchair.
- 5 Literally 'pipes', but here used idiomatically to mean 'tips' or 'inside information'.

severe flu¹ but her ambience, as she calls it, again saved her. Her red hair, so red and so unbelievably natural, is very striking. She is a dear, darling woman who has lived very much. I fear she is a bit of a snob and has *l'âme bourgeoise*² but she is an agreeable companion and talks more amusingly than she writes. She despises the Ritz crowd, the pack of *fripons*³ for whom the *poilus* are giving their lives. All the decadent people in Paris gather here for lunch. Everyone seems to have the Spanish 'flu', which they say is a mild form of the plague. People infected with it go to bed one day, wake up quite black the second, and die the third. The duchesse de Montesquiou died of it last week. Many people have it lightly and recover. Mme d'Arenberg had lunched with Lloyd George and Lord Derby who intimated 'peace' is very near. Mr Balfour⁴ is quoted as saying that not a shot would be fired after Christmas. The last deaths are almost more tragic than the ones at the beginning of the war that were necessary for the salvation of *la patrie*.⁵ The world tonight is waiting and watching Wilson in faraway Washington. Meanwhile our armies continue to be victorious on all the fronts and Cambrai is taken tonight.

Paris calm is occupying itself with the usual scandals. The marquis de Biron⁶ . . . is accused of commerce with the enemy and everyone is horrified. And the wicked Princesse Daisy de Broglie⁷ now that her husband is dead has cast off her lover Leishmann and has ordered her boudoir done over in crêpe. I saw her

- 1 The Spanish flu epidemic that ravaged most of the world in 1918–19 is thought to have had its origins in an army camp in Kansas and to have been brought to Europe by American soldiers. The first wave struck in June and July 1918; the second, and even deadlier, one in October and throughout the rest of the winter.
- 2 The soul of a bourgeoisie, or not quite from the 'top drawer'.
- 3 Rascals.
- 4 Arthur James Balfour (1848–1930) was Conservative MP for Hertford from 1874 to 1885, for Manchester East from 1885 to 1906, and for the City of London from February 1906 to 1922. He succeeded his uncle the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1902 to 1905, served in Asquith's coalition as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1915 to 1916, and as Foreign Secretary in Lloyd George's government from 1916 to 1919. A recipient of both the Order of Merit and the Garter, he was raised to the peerage as 1st Earl of Balfour in 1922.
- 5 The motherland.
- 6 Guillaume de Gontaut Biron (1859–1939) was a connoisseur and collector. There appears to have been no prosecution.
- 7 Marguerite Séverine Philippine Decazes de Glücksburg (1890–1962), daughter of the 3rd duc Decazes de Glücksburg, married Jean Amédée Marie Anatole de Broglie (1886–1918), who had died while serving in Algeria in the previous February. The official cause of his death was flu, but *faubourg* gossip was that he had killed himself after being exposed as homosexual; his wife had found him *in flagrante* with their chauffeur. In 1919 she would marry 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.

leave Cheruit's¹ with veils to her ankles and holding a black handkerchief to her eyes. I caught a glimpse of a pale and lovely face as she stepped in to her gorgeous limousine, one of the few left. Later I met her coming out of Worth's.²

FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER

All Paris is celebrating the taking of Lille and Ostend yesterday . . . the place de la Concorde and the Champs-Élysées are lined with captured enemy guns while the Tuileries are full of Boche planes. And the *place* last night was brilliantly lighted and tonight as well.

SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER

This morning's paper announces the taking of Tourcoing, Roubaix and Bruges. And one hears Ghent is about to fall. Doubtless Zeebrugge and the entire coast has already been taken by the British aviators and fleet.³ The Germans are on the run. Austria, so declares the Emperor Charles,⁴ is to be divided into small federalised states. Hungary has already announced its independence . . . Paris is bedecked with flags and the place de la Concorde recalls engravings of Napoleonic days, when the crowds delighted in the enemy spoils and captured cannon – only now there are machine and anti-aircraft guns and aeroplanes and all the terrific contrivances of modern warfare . . . The 'capture of Lille has made all hopes legitimate' says Clemenceau . . . 'The end is coming.'

TUESDAY 22ND OCTOBER

To the play with the [American] Ambassador's family. I was horrified that Mrs Sharp would allow her daughter to go to a revue . . . how American and middle class, synonymous words.

FRIDAY 25TH OCTOBER

I am liking my diplomatic work. I went the other day to the Élysée [Palace] to secure Poincaré's signature for some papers. I was ushered into a small *salle*

- 1 Louise Chéruit (1866–1955) was one of Paris's leading couturiers; her salon in the place Vendôme was in business from 1906 until 1935.
- 2 Another leading Paris fashion house, founded by an Englishman, Charles Worth (1825–95).
- 3 That was a premature assumption.
- 4 Archduke Karl Franz Josef Hubertus Georg Otto Maria (1887–1922) became heir presumptive to the Austrian and Hungarian thrones on the assassination of his uncle, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in June 1914. He succeeded his great-uncle, Kaiser Franz Josef, in 1916 as Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, but 'withdrew' from state affairs after the defeat of 1918; he never abdicated.

*d'attente*¹ adjoining his private sanctum, which is in the rue de l'Élysée wing. The door opened and I saw the little bearded kindly man at work. He smiled and bowed to me, but I was not presented. His secretary, an important fussy individual, handed him the papers, which he signed then, and I hurried away.

THURSDAY 31ST OCTOBER

We in Paris are settled back awaiting the peace that everyone considers imminent. There are contradictory rumours about the Kaiser's abdication etc . . . and one doesn't know quite what to believe. Meanwhile Paris is becoming more and more normal; the people are even beginning to dance in secret Yesterday I had tea at the American Embassy with the Sharps; it was the Ambassador's day. It was the *comble*² of the anti-chic! . . . loads of people one has never heard of before . . . relief workers de luxe, etc – and they offered us no tea. The duchesse de Montmorency and her sister the Serbian Ministress were 'taking it all in'.

SUNDAY 3RD NOVEMBER

Tonight several [friends] dined with me and I took an *avant-scène*³ at the Casino de Paris. During the *entr'acte* the manager announced that an armistice had been signed with Austria. The enthusiasm of the house and my friends knew no bounds. The 'Marseillaise' was played and hundreds sang lustily

WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER

Lunched at the Cercle Inter-Allié, now the military and social centre of Paris, with a group of Polish friends. I have visions of a season in Warsaw and of months in the vast Polish Versailles. We are daily expecting an armistice although there are some who would push on 'à Berlin'. I dined with the Brissacs and took young Sharp with me; he is too American to appreciate the charm of this milieu and *dix-huitième*⁴ flavour.

THURSDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

Some of the secretaries at the Embassy lunched with me and I dined with the Brissacs. Later we picked up Princesse d'Arenberg and we went to the Théâtre Edouard VII to see *Daphnis et Chloé*.⁵ This morning a report that the Armistice

1 Waiting room.

2 Height.

3 A table just in front of the curtain of a stage.

4 Channon is referring to the eighteenth-century atmosphere of the Brissac salon, not that it has a decadent air reminiscent of Montmartre and the 18th arrondissement.

5 A ballet to music by Maurice Ravel (1875–1937).

had been signed was circulated. Paris was delirious with joy and drank much champagne, but soon learned it was premature. We expect the end in a few days.

SUNDAY 10TH NOVEMBER

I motored to Jouy to Princesse Violette Murat's villa. Oh! the joy of fresh country air after these hectic weeks. At luncheon Mme Edvina¹ (the opera singer) sang the latest songs. It was delicious. Violette Murat's two black-eyed daughters² said never a word. They are 16 or 17 years old and are being fattened for the marriage market. We returned at dusk and I dined at the Brissacs' for what we called '*un dîner de la paix*'.³ The duchesse and Princesse and about eight chaps. We went to a play and then returned to my rooms at the Ritz for a hilarious supper party. I telephoned at midnight to the Foreign Office and was told the emissaries had already left for the chateau of the marquis de l'Aigle⁴ (Emma d'Arenberg's uncle) where the Armistice is to be discussed and signed.

MONDAY 11TH NOVEMBER

At nine-thirty I arrived at the Embassy where there was a rumour that the Armistice had been signed. I telephoned to the Quai d'Orsay and talked to Chaumont-Quitry.⁵ He said it had been signed that morning at about five o'clock. Immediately we put flags out at the Embassy and the neighbours followed our example. At twelve⁶ the cannons began to fire and the news was general. After lunch I hurried to the Chamber of Deputies and had a dreadful time arriving as the streets were crowded and the bridge leading to the building over the Seine was untraversable. I finally fought my way in with my *ticket diplomatique*. Thousands were clamouring to get in. Clemenceau arrived accompanied by all the ministers and a crowd cheering him. He spoke movingly, reading the conditions of the Armistice and the defence guns punctuated his remarks. The 'Marseillaise' was sung. All Paris was there, either in the President's gallery or in the diplomatic balcony. I have never seen such a well-dressed assembly or such an excited one. Clemenceau finally went to the window of the courtyard where there were delegations and bowed to the cheering crowd. We came out about five o'clock

1 Born Marie Louise Martin (1878–1948), she was Canadian, acclaimed around the world, and during the war gave numerous charity performances to help Canadian troops and their families.

2 Paula (1901–37) and Caroline (1903–59): both were married by 1922.

3 'A peace dinner'.

4 Marie-Joseph Charles des Acres de l'Aigle (1875–1935). The family owned land at Compiègne, and the Armistice was signed in Fock's private carriage of a train halted in the forest.

5 Odon de Chaumont-Quitry (1891–1971), comte de Chaumont-Quitry, was an official in the French Foreign Ministry.

6 Eleven o'clock Greenwich Mean Time.

and the streets presented a very different aspect. They were seas of flags and the crowds were drunk and the motors hooted and taxis had difficulty in getting through the mob. Sometimes as many as thirty were in one car. *Camions* were filled with shrieking soldiers of all countries kissing one another and everyone else. Women were lifted off their feet and embraced.

I was with the duchesse [de Brissac] in her car. The doors were forced open and she was seized . . . I was powerless – and after being much kissed in a friendly fashion we were allowed to proceed. The place de la Concorde was a strange sight; the cannons being exhibited as trophies were covered with people and some were being hauled . . . goodness knows where, distraught policemen were being kissed by mobs of women – I went to the Italian Embassy. It took me over an hour to get back to the Ritz, the metro had become useless and motors unsafe. One fought every step of the way. The streets were all lit up. I dined at La Rue's restaurant . . . just the four Brissac boys, the Princesse and the duchesse and me. The dining room was filled with people shouting and singing 'Madelon'¹ and there were almost as many people under the tables as at them. I believe we were very hilarious ourselves and I recall that we drank endless toasts and pledged eternal friendship.

The dinner cost the Brissacs 1,700 francs for seven people. We walked with the crowd to the place de l'Opéra where '[La] Marseillaise' was sung. The din was terrific, a medley of church bells, screams and drunken singing. We then went to the theatre; the crowd jumped on the stage and no one watched the good show. The whole audience was drunk and violently patriotic . . . We could not find our motor on leaving and decided to walk home. It was a tussle and we finally arrived at the Ritz with our clothes practically torn off yet thrilled and much amused. There we found an orchestra, to which we listened from my room, where we rested and drank more champagne. About two the ladies left and Jean and I adjourned to a cocottes' hall at Spinelli's² . . . an orgy that would defy description could I only remember the detail. How happy is this victorious France!! We left for the Brissacs' where I spent the remainder of the night. The streets in the early hours were even more hilarious than before. On our way to the avenue Charles-Floquet were crowds singing lustily, people were fighting, dancing, hugging and even undressing . . .

TUESDAY 12TH NOVEMBER

All Paris has headaches, but the rioting, the singing, the drinking, the kissing still goes on . . . *c'est la victoire!* I met some of the *bande joyeuse* this evening and we danced for hours in the place de l'Opéra with anyone who came by.

1 A French song of the Great War, known in English as 'Be true to the Whole Regiment', about a serving girl in a tavern, music by Camille Robert (1872–1957) and words by Louis Bousquet (1870–1941).

2 A Parisian actor of Channon's acquaintance.

FRIDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

The most appalling thing has occurred. It seems that the noise in my rooms has been so terrific these last evenings that it caused Lady Alastair Leveson-Gower in the contiguous apartment to have a *fausse couche*.¹ *'Vous avez raté le futur duc de Sutherland'*,² the manager of the Ritz explained to me. She had often complained of the din . . . almost every night . . . but we never paid any attention, thinking her a tiresome woman. Lunched at Mrs Gordon Bennett's, dined at baronne Roger's. People are rearranging their houses and sandbags are being removed from the statues and churches. The Cours la Reine and the Champs-Élysées are full of war trophies . . . *mitrailleuses*³ and tanks.

SATURDAY 16TH NOVEMBER

I dined with Princesse Soutzo,⁴ a large dinner. There were many men over,⁵ consequently I was between Marcel Proust⁶ and Jean Cocteau. Their manners, usually so bad, were excellent tonight. They seemed to compete as to which could be the more engaging. I felt stupid between the two wittiest men in Europe. It was a Niagara of epigrams. Jean is a stylist and his conversation is full of fire and rapier thrusts at his friends. Proust is quieter but longer-winded and meticulous. His bloodshot eyes shine feverishly and he poured out ceaseless spite and venom

1 Miscarriage.

2 'You've done for the next Duke of Sutherland'. If the miscarried child was a boy, he was right. Lord Alastair's elder brother, the 5th Duke, married twice but died without issue in 1963, the dukedom therefore passing to a distant cousin, a descendant of the third son of the 1st Duke.

3 Machine guns.

4 Héléne Chrissoveloni (1879–1975), Princesse Dmitri Soutzo, was the daughter of a Greek banker; she was the mistress of Paul Morand, one of Proust's confidants, whom she would later marry. She had a luxurious apartment in the Ritz, and after 1917 it was almost the only place to which Proust went out of doors.

5 That is, many more men than women.

6 (Valentin Louis Georges Eugène) Marcel Proust (1871–1922) was a novelist. His crowning achievement was the seven-volume modernist work *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which appeared between 1913 and 1927, and made him one of the great literary figures of history. The world Proust describes in those novels is the one Channon has described in his 1918 diary, of Parisian high society before and during the war. He was also a literary critic and *belle-lettriste*. A repressed homosexual, Proust had by this stage become nocturnal, sleeping all day and writing his novel during the night, and for the last three years of his life hardly ventured out of doors. His naturally poor health was not helped by his hypochondria. Although Channon knew him, and received enthusiastic letters from him, this is the first time in the diary that he describes a conversation with him. In a letter to Princesse Soutzo of 28th July 1918, published in Kolb's *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, Proust notes having met Channon and having had a letter from his mother, asking for some books for a library she was founding in Chicago. He felt Mrs Channon was *infiniment plus lettrée que son fils* – much better-read than her son.

about the great. His foibles are genealogy, heraldry and Ruskin.¹ He knows the arms and quartering of every duke in Europe. His black hair was tidily arranged, but his linen was grubby, but [*sic*] the rich studs and links had been clumsily put in by dirty fingers. Proust has always been kind to me and I don't like to libel him in the pages of my diary, so I will boil down to the minimum all the rumours about him: that he loathes daylight and is called at teatime the world knows. Does the world know that he tips with 1,000-franc notes? Does the world know he has evening gossips with the *Figaro-coiffeur*² of the Ritz? Does the world know that a most handsome waiter from here has disappeared and is now the major-domo and more in Proust's apartment? With questionable taste I asked him if this was true at dinner and he nodded. When I first met him long ago, he was particularly agreeable to me. A few days later, when walking with Maurice d'Astier, we met him. Maurice bowed but I hadn't noticed him until too late, never thinking that he would mind or even remember me. The next day he wrote to Maurice the letter of a madman, asking [in] twenty-seven pages of superb prose for an explanation why I had cut him. Long-drawn-out pompous suppositions in a super-Henry James³ manner, as to why a young man should dare to be rude to him!!! Maurice is keeping the letter. Jean Cocteau is like some faun that has indulged too long. He is a bit haggard at 26⁴ and his figure and smile have some[thing] mythological, something of the centaur in them.

MONDAY 18TH NOVEMBER

I went to a ball at the temporary Polish legation given by Count Zamoyski,⁵ who although his estates are occupied by the Bolshies [i.e. Bolsheviks] is entertaining lavishly. I drank vodka for the first time and felt remarkably full of vitality.

WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

This morning there was a *Te Deum* at Notre Dame, a most impressive ceremony. The Cardinal⁶ had sent me a ticket and I went with the Sharps. The church was decorated with flags and the Cardinal spoke very well to the overcrowded audience, all Paris and the *corps diplomatique* etc . . . Thousands were outside clamouring

1 John Ruskin (1819–1900) was an English art critic, aesthete and political philosopher.

2 Hairdresser.

3 Henry James (1843–1916) was a New York-born anglicised novelist and, like Proust, an obsessive observer of the most fashionable class. After becoming a British subject he was awarded the Order of Merit.

4 He was 29.

5 Count Władysław Zamoyski (1853–1921), although a Polish aristocrat, had been born in Paris and became a French diplomat. He settled in Poland in 1920.

6 His Eminence Léon-Adolphe Amette (1850–1920), Archbishop of Paris 1908–20, created Cardinal in 1911.

to get in. In the afternoon there was a monster parade on the Champs-Élysées. The Duke hired a balcony on the Champs-Élysées and we had a splendid view . . . some 150,000 paraders representing Alsace-Lorraine. They marched under the Arc de Triomphe like the victorious Napoleonic armies.

FRIDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

I fear I really must do something about securing a mistress. It must be very satisfactory having a lust-outlet always there.

WEDNESDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

Dined with Mrs Gordon Bennett last evening and lunched there today to meet old Countess Tyszkiewicz¹ who has been ill. She said she had nearly died and as she has long had many things to say to the Devil she is rather sorry she didn't.

MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER

Dined with the Brissacs. Their niece, Princesse Béatrix de Ligne² had just arrived from Brussels and told us stories of the German occupation. She, of course, had been virtually a prisoner for four years but gave one to understand that the occupation had been less severe than one had feared. The regulations had been more stupid than actually cruel. People she knew had been obliged to pay an *amende*³ of fifty marks for neglecting to give up their piano pedals when all the metal in the city had been requisitioned.

The price of food was exorbitant. An egg was 2 francs 50, a pound of butter twelve francs. Sometimes the dinner for the household came to as much as 12,000 francs. Their evening dresses had been made from old curtains etc but trimmed with lovely Brussels lace, as the lace industry never stopped. They were never allowed out of doors after ten o'clock but they had always been treated with great respect partly because the family represented the King and also because of the wholesale value Germans always put on rank. The Boche after the first few weeks of occupation molested few people and had kept to themselves. Only twice did officials attempt to search the Ligne palace. Messages reached them from the outside world of the safety and deaths of various relations in the most clandestine manner, sometimes worked in a bit of lace. One of the family had been allowed to go for a short time to France via Switzerland. This easy picture of conditions in Brussels is doubtless abnormal.

1 Widow of Count Michał Tyszkiewicz (1828–97). Egyptologist and collector. The family were ancient Polish-Lithuanian nobility.

2 Béatrix de Ligne (1898–1982), daughter of Ernest, 10th Prince de Ligne (1857–1937) and Diane de Cossé Brissac (1869–1950), and sister of Eugène de Ligne.

3 A fine.

THURSDAY 5TH DECEMBER

Antoine d'Orléans has been killed in an aeroplane accident. The poignancy of those after-Armistice deaths is terrible . . . 'Toto' was the most charming if futile of men. Very inbred, his features betrayed his origin. He said he was descended from Louis XIV in twelve ways and never did a man more physically resemble an ancestor. He was gay, kindly, rather silly like all royalties, but devoid of all suspicion or meanness and was undoubtedly the best of the Orléans princes. His mother reigned for a very brief time as Empress of Brazil, I believe, after the deposition of Dom Pedro. We had dined so happily only the other evening to celebrate *la victoire!* All his *permissions* had been passed in our company, in our happy little group. I am quite crushed.

FRIDAY 6TH DECEMBER

I have been in bed several days with the fashionable 'flu' or *grippe espagnole*.

TUESDAY 10TH DECEMBER

I lunched with Madame Tyszkiewicz. She put me off the other day because the mysterious Bertie Stopford¹ was lunching. He is a strange man, with a romantic career. For many years he was the *cavaliere servente*² of the Grand Duchess Vladimir,³ and he succeeded in rescuing her and her jewels from the Bolsheviks.

- 1 Albert Henry Stopford (1860–1939) was son of a Northamptonshire clergyman. He became an art and antiques dealer to European royalty and nobility, and offered his services as a spy in Petrograd during 1917. In the late summer of that year the Grand Duchess told him where in the Vladimir Palace in Petrograd he could find her collection of jewels, and he smuggled them out of the country in two Gladstone bags, via Sweden and Aberdeen. Stopford had been arrested in London in August 1918 as part of a homosexual ring operating in the West End; the following month he appeared at Bow Street Police Court, charged with gross impropriety with a Private Robert Anderson of the Scots Guards. He gave his address as the rue de Valois, Paris. He was remanded to the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey, where he appeared on 30th October. He said his only connection with Anderson had been their shared interest in boxing. On 21st November he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment: this throws some doubt on the veracity of Channon's tale, because at the time the lunch in Paris supposedly took place Stopford was in Wormwood Scrubs, and had not done 'several years' in an English prison as Channon claims. He was a friend of Queen Alexandra, widow of King Edward VII and mother of King George V. Since Channon himself reordered the diaries in 1924 he may have misremembered the exact chronology.
- 2 A euphemism that is often used for 'lover' or 'dependant': given Stopford was a notorious homosexual, Channon clearly implies the latter.
- 3 Duchess Marie of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1854–1920), daughter of Frederick Francis II, Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, married in 1874 her second cousin, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich of Russia (1847–1909), third son of Tsar Alexander II. She was the last Romanov to escape alive, on a fishing boat from the Caucasus, but this was without the involvement of Stopford.

He has long played an enigmatic role at the Court of St James's and Tsarskoye Selo¹ and was steeped in Russian intrigue, yet he could not be saved from English justice and his royal friends allowed him recently to serve several years in an English prison for a heinous offence; though Queen Alexandra, it is said, went in her car to the prison to meet him when he emerged. Old Tyszkiewicz said I was '*trop jeune*' and '*trop beau*'² to meet him.

WEDNESDAY 11TH DECEMBER

I dined, very ceremoniously, at the comtesse de Fitz-James's, in the rue Constantine. Old Madame de Fitz-James, famous for her cadaverous appearance, her caustic tongue and Austrian origin, is reopening her house now after her wartime isolation. It remains one of the few remaining houses that are eighteenth century in spirit. I escorted baronne Roger, whose salon has gained in importance as Madame de Fitz-James's declined. She greeted her hostess with a kiss and the crushing remark: '*Quatre ans, ma pauvre rose, qu'on ne t'a pas vu.*' Her wizened hostess, smiling, parried with: '*Et comme ces années t'enveillit, mon cher.*'³ . . . In older days the *faubourg* was quite isolated, but now that fewer want to penetrate it, the sacred citadel must send out scouts into the fashionable world, and so off they go, their sons and daughters, over the river to their gayer, richer cousins in the Champs-Élysées, to the Embassy and to the Ritz. Many never return and the rue Vaneau sees them no more. This is, I suppose, the rarest street in Europe. It is as quiet as an English country lane with weeds growing between the paving stones.

MONDAY 16TH DECEMBER

There are balls every night and Paris is enjoying a season . . . I have not a moment to call my own and long for next summer when I will be in the Canadian wilds. Oh! for the smell of wet pine trees and the lapping of the water far from diplomatic dinners and lunches with duchesses and strange people pestering one almost to madness at the Embassy . . . far from the scandals, plots, complications and elegances that make up this Paris . . . far from all that I adore and am a part of! . . . far from my telephone! No more intrigues, no princesses, no balls, no being rushed for time, no more leaving cards and entertaining the great . . .

1 Literally, 'the Tsar's Village', the compound fifteen miles from St Petersburg where the Romanovs and their court lived.

2 Too young and too beautiful.

3 'Four years, my poor rose, that we haven't seen you' and 'And how those years have aged you, my dear.' Channon writes '*mon cher*' but one presumes this should have been '*ma chérie*'.

FRIDAY 20TH DECEMBER

Dined at the Brissacs'. It has been a full week with dances and two 'heavy' functions. The first was a reception at the American Embassy to meet President and Mrs Wilson¹ that I had arranged. I was able to invite all my friends, including the Rohans. I escorted the duchesse de Brissac . . . to the avenue d'Eylau;² we were presented to the Wilsons. He seemed genial and distinguished and she was more presentable than I dared to hope with a southern accent, gracious manner and handsome figure. President Wilson is popular in Paris; he is staying with Princesse Murat. A few nights later the Italian Ambassador, comtesse Bonin Longare,³ gave a reception in honour of King Victor Emmanuel⁴ and the Crown Prince.⁵ A most elegant evening in the beautiful old Embassy, with all the greatest ladies in France '*en grande tenue*'⁶ many for the first time since four years . . . hence, perhaps, a faint suggestion of camphor and mothballs in the air and tiaras looking as if they wanted cleaning. The tiny martial little King with a set, grim face, was affable enough . . . *mais ça sentait un peu la caserne*!⁷ Towering above him, tall and graceful was the young Prince de Piemonts⁸ not more than 15 but already handsome. There was a well-bred queue to be presented when suddenly every light was extinguished and we found ourselves in utter darkness. There were whispers of 'Bolsheviks'!! And for one long moment everyone expected to be blown into the next world. It proved to be nothing more serious than fused electricity due to the extra lighting in a house dark for years; fear was soon dissipated. Several men following the example of the royal ADCs lit their *briquets*⁹ and formed a bodyguard around the King who, in the fluttering light, looked like an old monster. One could not see a foot in front of one. Some of the ladies climbed on chairs . . . to guard their pearls?

After a long pause a few candles appeared (it seems servants had scurried to the neighbouring houses to borrow them, but the *faubourg*, ever frugal, could

1 Edith Bolling Galt (1872–1961), from Virginia, married Wilson as his second wife on 18th December 1915.

2 Location of Ambassador Sharp's *hôtel particulier*.

3 Anna Bruschi Fulgari, who married in 1897 Conte Lelio Bonin Longare, Italian Ambassador to Paris 1917–21.

4 Victor Emmanuel III (1869–1947), King of Italy from 1900 until his abdication in 1946; later Emperor of Ethiopia (1936–41) and King of the Albanians (1939–43).

5 Umberto Nicolò Tommaso Giovanni Maria di Savoia, Prince of Piedmont (1904–83); became King Umberto II after his father's abdication but reigned for only thirty-four days until a referendum declared Italy a republic. Although he had a turbulent marriage with Princess Marie-José of Belgium (1906–2001), which produced four children, he was a promiscuous homosexual, and it is quite possible that none of the children was his.

6 In their finest evening dress.

7 But had a whiff of the barracks about him.

8 Courtesy title of the Crown Prince. He was 14.

9 Cigarette lighter.

produce but a few) and soon one's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. The King, with difficulty, was led to his motor. As more and more candelabra were produced the scene gained in dreamlike mellowness. Finally, one could just distinguish a field marshal from an old lady. At last in darkness and confusion, the fête broke up. Is this an omen for Italy?

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER

Clouds from over the sea are darkening my Elysian sky. That terrible faraway continent is calling. The sword is about to fall on my proud neck . . . I dined with the Brissacs, their very sweetness made me melancholy and they consequently thought me bored, when I longed to hug them to my heart which I suspect of breaking.

FRIDAY 27TH DECEMBER

I am going to America now. The bottom has gone out of life and I feel scooped out. I tell people, it is easier, that it is for three weeks . . . but I know it is for ever. I wonder will I ever have the courage to face it? Lunched with Roland and Cécile d'Hautpoul and Madeleine Le Chevreil, who were all gentle and loving. I cannot keep back the tears, even in restaurants. I called frantically all afternoon, trying to be brave and Spartan and *ancien régime* about it. The Brissacs took me to see . . . *Le cochon qui sommeille*.¹ Whatever else happens to me, my soul is theirs forever. I have given them it and my heart.

SUNDAY 29TH DECEMBER

Spent the day saying farewell to the Brissacs and later went to the comtesse de la Béraudière's to one of her *thé-dansants*.² Her house came with the war and will probably go with it . . . for years it has been the rendezvous of the passing English and some French, although I soon discovered the *faubourg* look on her with horror . . . Again I muttered 'Goodbye' that was more a prayer to the duchesse de Brissac as she left. I watched her smiling rouged face spotted with tears and her mauve hat, and her sons, as they turned and disappeared in the rue Alfred de Vigny. And I thought my heart and my life must stop. Dined with Princesse d'Arenberg, very sweet and gentle. She gave me a photograph of herself and took me to Mme Edward de Rothschild's³ ball. I left towards morning to pack and attend to tiresome matters . . .

1 A play, *The Sleeping Pig*

2 Tea-dances.

3 Germaine Alice Halphen (1884–1975), married in 1905 baron Édouard Alphonse James de Rothschild (1868–1949), financier.

MONDAY 30TH DECEMBER

I cannot describe today. I left Paris early this morning with little Eddie Sackville-West.¹ Roland came to the Gare Saint-Lazare and as Paris faded, I realised, I was more unhappy than I should ever be again. I sobbed myself into a sort of coma until [Le] Havre, when endless complications over passports distracted me. Eddie and I share a tiny bunk in this overcrowded ship. He is returning to Eton and I to hell.

TUESDAY 31ST DECEMBER

91 EATON SQUARE, LONDON

Today has been so strange and diverting. I have nearly forgotten Paris. I am staying with Lady Amherst.² Oh! quiet, gentle family, how did you produce your pagan Holmesdale?³ Lord Amherst is old and beautiful and quite like a Raeburn.⁴ Lady Amherst is frumpy and measured and wears splendid pearls. The girls, Lady Joan⁵ and Lady Molly,⁶ are English roses. The calm and repose of this English house! London I am in love with you already and feel you are pregnant with my destiny. I sail for America in ten days' time. I didn't write to the Brissacs today but will tomorrow. At midnight Henry Churchill,⁷ Holmesdale and I returned to three corners of the room . . . in a Lower Grosvenor Place flat . . . and listening to the bells, prayed, and for what? Oh! 1919 where will you lead me?

- 1 Edward Charles Sackville-West, from 1962 5th Baron Sackville (1901–65), was a music critic and novelist, son of General Charles Sackville-West.
- 2 The Hon. Eleanor Clementina St Aubyn (1869–1960), daughter of the 1st Baron St Levan, married Hugh Amherst (1856–1927) in 1896; he succeeded his brother as 4th Earl Amherst in 1910.
- 3 Jeffery John Archer Amherst (1896–1993), by courtesy Viscount Holmesdale from 1910 to 1927, when he succeeded his father as 5th Earl Amherst. He had met Channon in Paris while on leave from the Army. He was awarded the Military Cross during the Great War.
- 4 Sir Henry Raeburn (1756–1823) was a portrait artist.
- 5 Joan Gertrude Elizabeth Amherst (1899–1984), by courtesy Lady Joan Amherst from 1910. She became an ice-skating instructor.
- 6 Mary Evelyn Amherst (1902–93), from 1910 Lady Mary Amherst.
- 7 Henry Churchill (1890–1959) was the son of William Henry Churchill, a clergyman from Broadstairs, and does not appear to have been related to the family of the Duke of Marlborough. Educated at Eton, he had worked in postal censorship during the war and received the OBE after temporary service with the Foreign Office. He married, in 1920, Helen Mary Bradford (1898–1949), a cousin of Bobbie Pratt-Barlow (qv).

Copyrighted Material

1923

No diaries are extant for the years 1919–22. Channon briefly returned to America in 1919, but from January 1920 to December 1921 was at Christ Church, Oxford, which he left having obtained a pass degree in French. This marked the start not so much of his permanent exile in England as of his full-scale anglicisation. At the start of 1923 he was nearly 26, and had since the end of 1921 been sharing rooms in Mount Street, Mayfair, with his two closest friends, Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, whom he had befriended at Oxford, and Viscount Gage, another Oxford friend, eighteen months his senior and a Coldstream Guards officer during the Great War. There is no indication of his pursuing any employment; his intention appears to be to live off the generous allowance made him by his father. The MS of the diaries is in typescript and has been pasted into a foolscap-size day-by-day diary for 1923. It is possible – as I suggest in a footnote to the entry for 18th October – that some emendations were made when the original handwritten diary (which is not extant) was typed out, possibly resulting in some anachronisms.

MONDAY 1ST JANUARY

SANDBECK¹

The New Year frightens me always . . . what will it bring forth?

FRIDAY 5TH JANUARY

FIRLE²

The evening papers announced Elizabeth Lyon's³ engagement to the Prince of Wales, so we all bowed and bobbed and teased her, calling her 'ma'am'. I am not sure that she enjoyed [it]. It couldn't be true. How delighted everyone would be! But she has something on her mind . . . This evening we motored to Lewes for the South Downs ball and I danced many times with Elizabeth; she is more

1 Sandbeck Park, a Palladian house near Maltby in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where Channon was staying with Aldred Lumley, 10th Earl of Scarbrough (1857–1945), and his family. Channon was friends with his only child, Lady Serena Lumley (1901–2000).

2 Firle Place, the seat of the Gage family in East Sussex, where Channon was staying with Lord Gage (*vide infra*).

3 Lady Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon (1900–2002), daughter of the 14th and 1st Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, was not engaged to the Prince of Wales. She would be engaged to, and would marry, Prince Albert, Duke of York, who in 1936 would become King George VI on the abdication of his brother, King Edward VIII; and she would become Queen Consort.

gentle, lovely and exquisite than any woman alive. I thought her unhappy and affectionate and *distraite*. I longed to tell her I would die for her, although I am not in love with her. Poor Gage¹ is desperately fond of her . . . in vain. He is too heavy, too Tudor, and squirearch[ic]al for so rare and patrician a creature.

SATURDAY 6TH JANUARY

Elizabeth left Firlie at almost dawn. I watched her unseen from my window and felt one of those strange gulps in my throat. Oh, why? I mustn't fall in love with her. There are enough victims already Glenconner² is tragic. Everyone hunted but me a cold crisp English day.

MONDAY 8TH JANUARY

I left Firlie and travelled to Chatsworth³ with Archie Balfour.⁴ Here there is an enormous party, with scarcely anyone I know except the Mintos⁵ and Lady Barbara Bingham.⁶ The house, I should say palace, has the grandeur of Versailles and is more loaded with treasures than the Vatican, all very well arranged and to advantage. The vast library is full of the rarest Mss and readable books. It makes one sick with envy. The Duchess⁷ is very dignified but amusing and most knowledgeable about her possessions.

TUESDAY 9TH JANUARY

CHATSWORTH

We motored to Buxton for the High Peak ball We danced literally all night after being received with great homage. It is very grand to be a Devonshire in

- 1 Henry Rainald 'George' Gage (1895–1982) had succeeded his father as 6th Viscount Gage in 1912. He had fought in the Coldstream Guards during the war, reaching the rank of captain, and would become an active peer for the Conservative Party, and a courtier.
- 2 Christopher Grey Tennant (1899–1983) succeeded his father as 2nd Baron Glenconner in 1920.
- 3 Derbyshire seat of Victor Christian William Cavendish, 9th Duke of Devonshire (1868–1938), former Governor-General of Canada (1916–21).
- 4 Archie Balfour (1896–1968); his father, Captain Charles Balfour, was a first cousin of A. J. Balfour and was a Conservative MP from 1900 to 1907.
- 5 Victor Gilbert Lariston Garnet Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound (1891–1975), by courtesy Viscount Melgund until 1914, when he succeeded his father as 5th Earl of Minto. He served as aide-de-camp to the Governor-General of Canada from 1918 to 1919 and married, in 1921, Marion, daughter of George Cook of Montreal. The 4th Earl had been Governor-General of Canada (1898–1904) before becoming Viceroy of India (1905–1910).
- 6 Barbara Violet Bingham (1902–63), by courtesy Lady Barbara Bingham from 1914, was the elder daughter of the 5th Earl of Lucan.
- 7 Evelyn Emily Mary Petty-Fitzmaurice (1870–1960), by courtesy Lady Evelyn Petty-Fitzmaurice, daughter of the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, married Victor Cavendish in 1892; she was Mistress of the Robes to Queen Mary 1910–16 and 1921–53.

Derbyshire! I took the Duchess into dinner and she was epigrammatic but was charming and simple . . . not alarming as I had feared. She said many good things, amongst them . . . 'A gentleman's house is never without a baby.' Chatsworth is full of them and there were about ten grandchildren about. Lady Rachel¹ is very beautiful and friendly without being deep . . . I am convinced she will never marry the P[rince] of W[ales] as rumour has so often coupled them. I have never seen him dance with her, and once when I was [there] he was rather offhand and rude to her. We were amused that Elizabeth should have been singled out as his fiancée. In my heart of hearts I know he will never marry.

WEDNESDAY 10TH JANUARY

We spent the day at Hardwick, the stately stronghold of the much-married Anne of Hardwick.² The house is a splendid edifice and contains great galleries that are heavily tapestried, and full of treasures that are world famous. Unfortunately the boiler burst a few years ago and they have not lived here since; moreover the country is unattractive because of the coal. It has the stuffiness of a museum, with chairs too precious to sit in, etc. Chatsworth, bigger, grander, more modern, is a better home for the large noisy Cavendish family. But they all seem to be unanimous in saying that they love Lismore,³ their Irish place, best. How adored they were in Canada; they seemed to enjoy it thoroughly.

TUESDAY 16TH JANUARY

I was so startled and almost fell out of bed, when I read in the Court Circular that their 'Majesties are much pleased to announce the engagement of their second son Albert, Duke of York,⁴ with The Lady Elizabeth Lyon'. I was left numb. We have all hoped and waited so long for this romance to prosper that we had begun to despair that she would ever accept him. He has been the most ardent of

- 1 Rachel Cavendish (1902–77), by courtesy Lady Rachel Cavendish from 1908, married in 1923 James Gray Stuart (1897–1971), who sat as Conservative MP for Moray and Nairn from 1923 to 1959 and, having served as a whip and then Chief Whip, was Secretary of State for Scotland from 1951 to 1957. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Viscount Stuart of Findhorn in 1959.
- 2 It was actually built by the four-times-married Bess of Hardwick: Elizabeth Hardwick, later Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (1527–1608) and an ancestress of the dukes of Devonshire through her third marriage to Sir William Cavendish (1505–57), who sold his lands in Suffolk to buy the estate at Chatsworth.
- 3 Lismore Castle, in County Waterford.
- 4 Prince Albert Frederick Arthur George (1895–1952), second son of King George V and Queen Mary, was created Duke of York in 1920. He served in the Royal Navy in the Great War and was mentioned in dispatches for his service in the Battle of Jutland. Following the abdication of his brother, King Edward VIII, in 1936, he became King George VI of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Emperor of India.

wooters and was apparently at St Paul's Walden [Bury]¹ on Sunday, when he at last persuaded her. He motored at once to Sandringham and the announcement is the result; the royalties allowing her no time to change her mind. The Lyon family are rather taken by surprise as they had not expected the official announcement would appear so soon. He is the luckiest of men and not a man in England today does not envy HRH!! The clubs are in gloom; and already photographers display photographs of our future Princess for large crowds to gaze at. Bruton Street² is impassable because of the people. Everybody is delighted and I have written to console poor Gage.

THURSDAY 18TH JANUARY

ARUNDEL CASTLE³

An enormous party of over fifty here, mostly young, in celebration of Lady Rachel Howard's⁴ 'coming out'. Arundel is so feudal and medieval (although much is restored) that one expects beefeaters to bring in one's tea. There are moats, battlements, drawbridges and portcullis and a famous tilting yard . . . *toute la boutique*.⁵ Somehow it has more atmosphere than Windsor, if less comfortable. There are very few bathrooms. The Duchess of Norfolk⁶ is an agreeable, unpretentious, cross-eyed fat woman.

FRIDAY 19TH JANUARY

A ball this evening in the great barons' hall to which all of the county came including large parties from Petworth⁷ and Albury⁸ At four I went to bed and was lulled to sleep by the noise of the jazz and the dancing. We were over seventy at dinner and assembled in the dull Gothic library-gallery and processed in state into the dining room. The castle itself is quite bare of interesting furniture and tapestry and only a few mediocre pictures. I am almost the only 'prot'⁹ and little

1 The Bowes-Lyon house in Hertfordshire.

2 The Bowes-Lyon house in London, where Queen Elizabeth II would be born in 1926.

3 Seat of the dukes of Norfolk in West Sussex.

4 Mary Rachel Fitzalan-Howard (1905–92), by courtesy Lady Rachel Howard, was the eldest surviving child of Henry, 15th Duke of Norfolk (1847–1917). Twice married (in 1939 to Lieutenant Colonel Colin Davidson, and in 1961 to Brigadier Anthony Pepys) and twice widowed, she was between 1943 and 1968 Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent (1906–68).

5 Literally, 'the whole shop', idiomatically 'the lot'.

6 Gwendolen Mary Constable-Maxwell (1877–1945), in her own right 12th Lady Herries of Terregles, second wife of the 15th Duke.

7 Petworth House in Sussex, seat of Lord Leconfield.

8 Albury Park in Surrey, a property of the Duke of Northumberland.

9 Protestant. The Howards of Arundel were, and still are, one of the leading Roman Catholic families in England.

bells tinkle continuously to call the faithful to Mass. I feel an outrageous heretic, even the servants disapprove of one. Our 'Premier Duke' is a nice lad of 14 called 'Bernard'.¹ He is shy but will form well. I find the mother more interesting than the daughter.

Achille Murat² is engaged to be married to Mlle Chasseloup-Laubat.³ It sounds *très noblesse de province*⁴ but I may be wrong. What a gentle charmer Achille used to be. He would come to me always from the train when he arrived on *permission* . . . back in those happy 1918 days . . . when dirty, simple, young and unformed, he was a perfect companion for two or three days. We would go to plays and go dancing together and sometimes take his mother the Princesse Marie⁵ to dine with us. He had a deep sense of humour and yet was completely unselfconscious, almost as much as Ivo Grenfell.⁶ He was liked in his regiment and at last promoted to the dignity of *maréchal du logis*.⁷ It makes me sad this flight of time, and I realise so poignantly in flashes sometimes how much I have thrown away in abandoning my French life. Had I never known England and its rarer, richer charm of life I should have been happy there . . .

TUESDAY 30TH JANUARY

Gerry Wellesley⁸ has been to stay with me. I wish I could help in this odd tangle. His wife the pinched poetic Dottie . . . could anyone be better named? . . . suddenly ordered him from her house and their comparatively happy life has come to

- 1 Bernard Marmaduke Fitzalan-Howard, 16th Duke of Norfolk (1908–75), Premier Duke in the peerage of England and Hereditary Earl Marshal; he succeeded his father when he was only 9. He arranged the 1937 and 1953 coronations, and the state funeral of Sir Winston Churchill.
- 2 Achille Alain Joachim Napoleon Murat (1898–1987), nephew by marriage of Princesse Eugène Murat, who had befriended Channon in Paris.
- 3 Madeleine Marie Louise Chasseloup-Laubat (1901–45).
- 4 'Very provincial nobility', in other words not quite *faubourg*.
- 5 Marie de Rohan-Chabot (1876–1951), wife of Lucien Murat (1870–1933).
- 6 Ivo George Grenfell (1898–1926), son of the 1st Baron Desborough; killed in a car crash. His two brothers Julian (1888–1915) and Gerald (1890–1915) were killed in the Great War. In a letter of November 1920 to his father Channon describes Grenfell as 'my best friend in Oxford . . . he is as big as a great Greek god and looks like a Viking'.
- 7 A sergeant.
- 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; Wellesley, a diplomat and then an architect, succeeded his nephew as 7th Duke in 1943. He married in 1914 Dorothy Violet Ashton (1889–1956), a poet who was praised by W. B. Yeats; they separated in 1922 but never divorced, and she became the lesbian lover of Vita Sackville-West. Wellesley would be commissioned, not entirely happily, by Channon to remodel his houses in London and Essex. He was homosexual and, as a staff officer in the Second World War, was known as 'the Iron Duchess'.

an end. They had much in common: both are highly strung, selfish, exotic and ultra-modern, with a strain of commonness. Lady Scarbrough¹ says she cannot understand why her wayward daughter² should have left Gerry... 'he doesn't drink, nor is he fond of gamblin''... the Victorian and proper attitude to take. There is much bitterness. The Duchess of Wellington,³ that old cook with a Cyrano nose, has called her daughter-in-law a 'borderline case', which I think she is. Gerry has seized the children,⁴ two little Hoppners⁵ with deep lapis eyes; unfortunately she has the money and refuses to make settlements. One hears of nothing else in their little milieu of the super-exotic and under-sexed. She has written to me to use my influence with Gerry... I am fond of him – why, I don't know, as he is pompous, treacherous and vain; yet his amazing memory and knowledge and wit and his tired unhappy Pierrot⁶ manner appeal.

WEDNESDAY 31ST JANUARY

An enormous crowd fighting for admission was outside St Margaret's⁷ this afternoon at Joan Poynder's⁸ marriage to Sir Edward Grigg.⁹ Joan seemed ecstatic, I cannot understand exactly why, as he is middle-aged and almost bald. He is of course the rising young statesman etc, but ugly to look upon and Joan has been in love so often before... she is such a high-spirited, inspired radiant creature... a fashionable Joan of Arc. First it was Blandford,¹⁰ and Lady Islington,¹¹ ever the most amusing and treacherous lying woman of her age, did her best to encourage

- 1 Lucy Cecilia 'Cissie' Dunn-Gardner (1860–1931), daughter of Cecil Dunn-Gardner, married in 1899 as her second husband the 10th Earl of Scarbrough.
- 2 From Lady Scarbrough's first marriage to Colonel Robert Ashton.
- 3 Kathleen Emily Bulkeley Williams (1848–1927), wife of the 4th Duke.
- 4 Arthur Valerian Wellesley (1915–2014), by courtesy Marquess of Douro from 1943 to 1972, when he succeeded his father as 8th Duke of Wellington, and became a Knight of the Garter in 1990; and Elizabeth Wellesley (1918–2013), by courtesy Lady Elizabeth from 1943.
- 5 John Hoppner RA (1758–1810) was a celebrated portrait painter in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
- 6 Clown-like.
- 7 St Margaret's Church, Westminster, parish church of the Houses of Parliament, and venue of many society weddings – including Channon's own.
- 8 Joan Dickson-Poynder (1897–1987), daughter of the 1st Baron Islington, had volunteered as a nurse in France during the Great War.
- 9 Edward William Macleay Grigg (1879–1955) was Liberal MP for Oldham from 1922 to 1925 and for Altrincham from 1933 to 1945. He had been private secretary to Lloyd George. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Altrincham in 1945.
- 10 John Albert William 'Bert' Spencer-Churchill (1897–1972), by courtesy Marquess of Blandford until 1934, when he succeeded his father as 10th Duke of Marlborough.
- 11 Anne Beauclerk Dundas (1869–1958), married in 1896 Sir John Poynder Dickson-Poynder, 6th Bt (1866–1936). He was raised to the peerage as Baron Islington on assuming the Governor-Generalship of New Zealand in 1910.

the match, as she has all the old-fashioned Victorian ideas about marriage with eldest sons, etc – and what mother has not??

Lady Islington [had] sent a secret message, which I intercepted, to Gage that if he did not propose [to Joan Dickson-Poynder] within a fortnight she was convinced Grigg would be accepted . . . All the Round-Table milieu with its headquarters at Cliveden¹ are delighted as this wedding is their handiwork. Joan will make a glorious wife . . . most of the young men found her attractive but too Amazonian . . . A letter from Elizabeth [Bowes-Lyon] who is at Sandringham thanking me for my congratulatory letter . . . she is the thorn in Lady Islington's flesh.

THURSDAY 22ND FEBRUARY

Lord Morpeth² has arrived safely. How overjoyed the Carlises³ will be . . . especially Biddy [Carlisle] as now she will be spared the agony of childbearing for ages. Somehow I secretly suspect George [Carlisle] of deriving some strange primitive satisfaction *quand Biddy est enceinte de ses oeuvres*.⁴ I am to be a godfather and the child is to be named Charles James Ruthven Howard, Viscount Morpeth. He is heir to Biddy's Ruthven barony as well as George's titles. I fear he will never have Castle Howard;⁵ he has been cheated of more than half his birthright.

FRIDAY 2ND MARCH

A delicious letter from Elizabeth Lyon has come thanking me for a wedding present . . . a crystal electric bell. I don't like it and am going to exchange it for something nicer.

- 1 Home of the 2nd Viscount Astor and his wife Nancy, given to them as a wedding present in 1906 by the 1st Viscount. Waldorf Astor (1879–1952) was born in New York but attended Eton and New College, Oxford, his family having settled in Britain in 1889. He was Conservative MP for seats in Plymouth from 1910 to 1919, when he succeeded his father as 2nd Viscount Astor. Lady Astor (1879–1964) was born Nancy Witcher Langhorne and in 1906 married Waldorf Astor as his second wife. She was the first woman to sit in the House of Commons, in 1919, when succeeding her husband as MP for Plymouth Sutton following his elevation to the House of Lords. She held the seat until 1945. Cliveden became Britain's leading political salon in the 1920s and 1930s, and Channon clearly already had the notion that the political establishment settled its affairs there.
- 2 Charles James Ruthven Howard (1923–94), by courtesy Viscount Morpeth until 1963, when he succeeded his father as 12th Earl of Carlisle.
- 3 George Josslyn L'Estrange Howard (1895–1963), 11th Earl of Carlisle, married in 1918 Bridget ("Biddy") Helen Hore-Ruthven, in her own right 11th Lady Ruthven of Freeland (1896–1982); in the Second World War she commanded the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India).
- 4 When Biddy is pregnant with his works.
- 5 The 9th Earl had left this Vanbrugh house in the North Riding of Yorkshire to his younger son, Geoffrey Howard, in 1911.

SATURDAY 3RD MARCH

A divine boy and girl dance at Lady Curzon's.¹ I dined with Lady Dalhousie² and we forced Ramsay³ to come to his first ball. I adore that boy and feel towards him as I never have towards another human . . . a sort of brothering protecting feeling. The dance was very gay: there were confetti and favours and balloons . . . the true carnival spirit prevailed. Lord Curzon⁴ seemed amused but worried about his rugs . . .

WEDNESDAY 7TH MARCH

I have reached a very advanced age!⁵ I was pleased to receive a cheque for £100 from father. I danced at Lady Crawford's.⁶ They built a gallery to house the Dutch pictures inherited from Lady Wantage. The *primitifs* have all been moved to the dining room. They have a glorious collection of pictures . . . and children too. There are about seven of the latter, all enormous and stupid except Balniel,⁷ who is a shy, reserved long-nosed rare creature whom I knew well at Oxford. He is knowledgeable about pictures. Lady Crawford looms like a Medusa and is vast. She wears unsuccessful frocks of dullish colours, which are a bad background for her heavy massive jewels. She always looks untidy, if not dirty, which Lord Crawford, the most charming of men, frankly is.

WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH

I have sent a small lapis and diamond Cartier clock to the Yorks⁸ as a wedding present instead of the ridiculous bell. They are enchanted with it. I have had tea

- 1 Grace Elvina Hinds (1885–1958), from Alabama, married Earl Curzon of Kedleston in 1917, having inherited \$18 million from her first husband, Alfredo Huberto Duggan, an Irish Argentinian.
- 2 Lady Mary Heathcote-Drummond (1878–1960), daughter of the 1st Earl of Ancaster; married the 14th Earl of Dalhousie in 1903.
- 3 John Gilbert Ramsay (1904–50), by courtesy Lord Ramsay, succeeded his father as 15th Earl of Dalhousie in 1928.
- 4 George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) was one of the great proconsuls and statesmen of his age. Curzon was the son and heir of the 4th Lord Scarsdale. 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. Aspiring to be Prime Minister, he was passed over in 1923 for Stanley Baldwin. When this happened, and with reference to his wife's fortune, A. J. Balfour (who had advised King George V not to appoint Curzon) observed that he 'has lost the hope of glory but he possesses the means of Grace'.
- 5 It was his 26th birthday, or as far as his friends were concerned, his 24th.
- 6 Constance Lilian Pelly (1873–1947), married in 1900 David Alexander Edward Lindsay (1871–1940), by courtesy Lord Balcarras from 1880 to 1912, when he succeeded his father as 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarras. He served in Lloyd George's Cabinet.
- 7 David Alexander Robert Lindsay (1900–75), by courtesy Lord Balniel from 1913 to 1940, when he succeeded his father (*vide supra*) as 28th Earl of Crawford and 11th Earl of Balcarras.
- 8 He anticipates the marriage between the Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, which would take place in Westminster Abbey on 26th April.

with them several times lately and they seem radiant with happiness. She is little amused and a little fatigued by the fuss in the papers and the crowds. But everyone agrees it is an excellent marriage and there has not been a word of criticism. She is filling a difficult position extremely well. There is some doubt as to what rank she will assume. Of course she will be Duchess of York, but will she be HRH?¹ Precedents are being unearthed. After all James II as Duke of York married Anne Hyde and her daughters were both queens of England.²

MONDAY 9TH APRIL

HACKWOOD³

Have been spending a few days here . . . a *simpatico* party . . . Lady Curzon, glittering, gracious and a supreme hostess, all the Duggans;⁴ Lady Patricia Herbert⁵ (the very nicest girl in London, although Lady Mary Ashley⁶ runs her neck and neck . . .) . . . Mrs Vansittart,⁷ an affected American, Paul of Serbia⁸ . . . Lord Curzon

- 1 Given the morganatic marriage – where a woman who marries a higher-ranking husband does not acquire his rank – is unknown to English law, Lady Elizabeth became a duchess and a Royal Highness on her marriage to the Duke of York. This was taken as a sign of the House of Windsor moving with the times. The style of Royal Highness, as opposed to the rank of duchess, was in the gift of the sovereign, and would be denied to the Duchess's sister-in-law, the Duchess of Windsor, in 1937.
- 2 Queen Mary II and Queen Anne.
- 3 Hackwood Park, near Basingstoke in Hampshire, rented by Lord Curzon from 1906 until 1925.
- 4 Lady Curzon's children by her first marriage: Alfred Duggan (1903–64), who became a minor novelist; Hubert Duggan (1904–43), Tory MP for Acton from 1931 to 1943 and anti-appeaser in the 1930s; and Grace Duggan (1907–95).
- 5 Patricia Herbert (1904–94), by courtesy Lady Patricia Herbert from 1913, daughter of the 15th Earl of Pembroke and 12th Earl of Montgomery, married in 1928 William Henry Smith, 3rd Viscount Hambleden (1903–48). She was a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth from 1937 until 1994.
- 6 Lady Mary Sibell Ashley-Cooper (1902–36), daughter of the 9th Earl of Shaftesbury, married in 1928 Napier George Henry Sturt (1896–1940), who in 1919 succeeded his father as 3rd Baron Alington of Crichtel. He died on active service in Egypt during the Second World War, though of drink rather than in action.
- 7 Gladys Robinson-Duff (1892–1928), daughter of General William C. Heppenheimer of the United States, married in 1921 Robert Gilbert Vansittart (1881–1957), who would be Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office from 1930 to 1938, and who would be raised to the peerage in 1941 as 1st Baron Vansittart. Vansittart was also an accomplished novelist, playwright and poet.
- 8 Prince Paul of Yugoslavia (1893–1976) had known Channon at Oxford and would remain one of his closest friends, and be Prince Regent of Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) from 1934 to 1941 during the minority of Peter II. He was the nephew of King Peter I and married Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark (1903–97), sister-in-law of Channon's other closest friend, 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.

is away doing a Coué cure¹ for the benefit of his leg or brow beating some important conference for the welfare of civilisation . . . I forget which. Lady Curzon told us of a conversation she had with Lord Balfour² a few evenings ago. He was unusually playful and she depressed and discouraged, she is subject to unaccountable fits of *Weltschmerz*,³ which result, I think, from something unsatisfied in her.⁴ He tried to console her and talked to her beautifully about life and all she had to live for . . . her husband, the world's most striking and brilliant man . . . her children charming . . . her friends many . . . her beauty unsurpassed. Next day he wrote her an inimitable note to say how much he had enjoyed being next to her. She, delighted, said to Lady Cunard⁵ as she read it: 'AJB is an angel – I should like to kiss him on the forehead.' Maud repeated this to him and his only comment was: 'Why the forehead?' Maud Cunard motored to Hackwood with Serge Obolensky⁶ for what she calls 'the day in the country' on Sunday. They arrived at six o'clock. She pretended never to have seen plus fours before and said 'And what has little Paul got on? And Chips⁷ too what are they?' She made us rock with laughter for two hours with stories against herself of her hatred of the country, etc. She said that all Nancy's troubles were due to the fact that her father 'my dear at the age of 12 had put her . . . put her on a horse, a four-legged horse'. As she was leaving we loaded her car with guns, tennis racquets, golf clubs etc. She was much flustered at this or pretended to be and shook hands with a footman and 'bobbed' to the butler and was amazing but delicious . . . all pink and white, like a sweet, and

- 1 A psychotherapy-based cure featuring auto-suggestion, fashionable but heavily criticised at the time, developed by Émile Coué de la Châtaigneraie (1857–1926), a French psychologist.
- 2 A. J. Balfour, raised to an earldom in 1922.
- 3 World-weariness.
- 4 Curzon was desperate for a male heir (he had three daughters from his first marriage) to the earldom and marquessate he had obtained; various medical procedures had been followed to help Lady Curzon conceive, but no child resulted and the marriage was strained accordingly.
- 5 Maud Alice Burke (1872–1948), born in San Francisco, married in 1895 Sir Bache Cunard, 3rd Bt (1851–1925), grandson of the shipping line's founder. They had lived largely apart since 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.
- 6 Prince Sergei ('Serge') Platonovich Obolensky Neledinsky-Meletsky (1890–1978) had been educated at Oxford and became part of the Russian diaspora after the revolution. He emigrated to America and became a successful businessman.
- 7 The first time in the diaries that he refers to his nickname.

dressed in a *costume de sport* made by Vionnet.¹ Serge was anxious to return as he is wooing Alice Astor.² I introduced them . . . I shall now have this new romance on my conscience.

TUESDAY 10TH APRIL

Motored with Paul of Serbia and Lady Cimmie Mosley³ to Chichester for Lady Doris Gordon-Lennox's⁴ wedding. The groom is a horsey creature called Clare Vyner⁵ who strangely looks and lisps like a parish priest. The town was crowded with cheering people and bedecked with flags; the cathedral packed with locals with the Mayor and Corporation in full robes and with 'fashionables' from London. Paul was rather *triste* and thoughtful as he has wanted to marry Doris for years; it would have been a most disastrous alliance and I did my best to prevent it. His favourite hymn was played, by accident or design?? The Duke of York arrived with Elizabeth, her first really public appearance since her engagement. Afterwards we went to Goodwood House where we were received by the old Duke of Richmond.⁶ There were many presents but I looked more at the Van Dycks. It is extraordinary how Stuart they look these Gordon-Lennoxes.⁷

- 1 Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975) was one of Paris's leading fashion designers of the interwar years.
- 2 Ava Alice Muriel Astor (1902–56), daughter of John Jacob Astor IV. She and Obolensky married in 1924 and divorced in 1932. She would marry four times before her death at the age of 54.
- 3 Cynthia Blanche Curzon (1898–1933), second daughter of Lord Curzon and his first wife, Mary Victoria Leiter (1870–1906), of Chicago. Lady Cynthia (as she became on her father's advancement to an earldom in 1911) married in 1920 Oswald Ernald 'Tom' Mosley (1896–1980), who succeeded his father as 6th Bt in 1928. Mosley was Conservative and then Independent MP for Harrow from 1918 to 1924, failed to beat Neville Chamberlain in Birmingham in 1924, but became Labour MP for Smethwick from 1926 to 1931. He then founded his own party and became leader of the British Union of Fascists. His pursuit of fascist doctrine in the 1930s made him in equal parts a figure of fear and ridicule. He was interned during the Second World War with his second wife, Diana Guinness (*née* Mitford) (1910–2003), who had been his mistress, and whom he married in 1936 in Goebbels' house in Berlin, with Hitler in attendance.
- 4 Lady Doris Hilda Gordon-Lennox (1896–1980), daughter of the Earl of March, who succeeded his father in 1928 as 8th Duke of Richmond and Gordon; married Clare George Vyner (*née* Compton) (1894–1989) in 1923.
- 5 *Vide supra*.
- 6 Charles Henry Gordon-Lennox (1845–1928), by courtesy Lord Settrington until 1860 and Earl of March until 1903, when he succeeded his father as 7th Duke of Richmond and Lennox and 2nd Duke of Gordon.
- 7 The dukedom was created in 1375 for the bastard son of King Charles II with his mistress, Louise de Kérouaille.

SATURDAY 14TH APRIL

We dined at three tables this evening at the Grafton Galleries, we being the Carlises, the Prince of Wales,¹ Poppy Baring,² Mrs Coats,³ Alice Astor, Prince Henry⁴ and a little woman he is flirting [with], Prince George,⁵ Lady Alexandra Curzon,⁶ Serge Obolensky and Paul of Serbia. Paul Whiteman,⁷ an American, conducted his fabulous orchestra with intoxicating skill on hearing who was in the room. At about 11.30 the Prince of Wales decided to commandeer the band and we left . . . but where to go? We agreed on the Curzons' house (which is closed for repairs). The Prince of Wales sent to St James's Palace for a great deal of champagne: the band of twenty-eight musicians arrived and we all crept stealthily into the darkened house. But no glasses! Prince Henry and I searched the bedrooms and collected every available toothbrush glass At dawn we went out on the balcony and at last when the band was ready to collapse and we were exhausted we sadly separated. It was 7.30 Sunday morning. We walked up Pall Mall in our evening dress hunting taxis. The guard at Marlborough House⁸ recognised the young pink princes and presented arms. We have all sworn to secrecy about this hush party

- 1 Prince Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David (1894–1972), elder son of King George V and Queen Mary, created Prince of Wales 1911; succeeded his father in January 1936 as King Edward VIII, abdicated December 1936; created Duke of Windsor on his abdication; married Wallis Warfield Simpson (1896–1986), of Baltimore, in 1937.
- 2 Helen Azalea 'Poppy' Baring (1901–80), daughter of Sir Godfrey Baring Bt, and Eva Hermione Mackintosh: the Duke of York had proposed to her in 1921 but his mother, Queen Mary, had forbidden the union because of her supposed unsuitability. She was also vetoed as a bride for Prince George, whose mistress she became. She married William Piers Thursby (1904–77) in 1928. She ran a dress shop in Down Street, off Piccadilly in London.
- 3 Audrey Evelyn James (1902–68), daughter of William Dodge James, married in 1922 Captain Muir Dudley Coats MC (1897–1927) of the Scots Guards. Having been widowed she married in 1930 Marshall James Field (1893–1956), an American department-store heir, investment banker and newspaper proprietor. They divorced in 1934.
- 4 Prince Henry William Frederick Albert (1900–74), third son of King George V and Queen Mary, created Duke of Gloucester 1928; married in 1935 Lady Alice Christabel Montagu Douglas Scott (1901–2004), daughter of the 7th Duke of Buccleuch.
- 5 Prince George Edward Alexander Edmund (1902–42), fourth son of King George V and Queen Mary, created Duke of Kent 1934; married in 1934 Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark (1906–68). Although known before his marriage to have had a number of mistresses he was also believed to be bisexual, and became one of Channon's closest friends. He was killed on active service with the RAF in 1942 when his flying boat crashed into a hillside in Caithness.
- 6 Lady Alexandra Naldera 'Baba' Curzon (1904–95), Lord Curzon's youngest daughter by his first marriage. In 1925 she married Major Edward Dudley 'Fruity' Metcalfe (1887–1957), confidant and equerry of the future King Edward VIII, but conducted a number of affairs with men in high society, notably Lord Halifax, between the wars. Because of her flirtations with various fascists in the 1930s her nickname morphed into 'Baba Blackshirt'.
- 7 Paul Samuel Whiteman (1890–1967) was one of America's most famous band leaders.
- 8 Residence of Queen Alexandra in her widowhood.

but I wonder how long it will be before all London knows and gossips. I shan't say a word.

WEDNESDAY 18TH APRIL

The 'hush' party is much discussed; some look mysterious when it is mentioned and infer they had been there, and everyone pretends to know all about it and where it happened, etc. I change the subject.

THURSDAY 19TH APRIL

Large dinner at Lady Cunard's . . . After dinner I talked to Lady Curzon and discovered her to be seething with anger against me and she lost no time to tell me in brutal language about the now too famous 'hush' party. She had discovered from servants that we had been to Carlton House Terrace in her absence and thought it disrespectful and most treacherous of Paul [of Serbia] and me inasmuch as we are great friends of hers. I apologised as best I could but left feeling crushed and miserable . . . Never did she seem quite so beautiful, so radiant with her eyes ablaze with anger. She said Lord Curzon would write to the King² about the P of Wales's behaviour; I am sure he was secretly delighted.

MONDAY 30TH APRIL

Dined at Claridge's with Lord and Lady Curzon before the great charity ball she organised at Lansdowne House, which made £10,000 for hospitals and starting the season. The Prince of Wales very charming, Prince George pink, with his 'just-spanked look', Princess Helena Victoria,³ Princess Patricia⁴ and her husband Ramsay and others at dinner. The never-so-crowded restaurant rose like an army and remained standing until we were seated at a table at the far end of the room. After the ladies left the Prince of Wales and Lord Curzon had an animated, friendly

- 1 Throughout *The Diaries*, Channon routinely uses this verb when he means 'imply'.
- 2 George Frederick Ernest Albert (1865–1936), in 1910 succeeded his father King Edward VII as King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the British Dominions, and Emperor of India. He married in 1893 Princess Victoria Mary Augusta Louise Olga Pauline Claudine Agnes (1867–1953), daughter of His Highness the Duke of Teck.
- 3 Victoria Louise Sophia Augusta Amelia Helena (1870–1948), Princess Helena Victoria, daughter of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Princess Helena, third daughter of Queen Victoria; she was therefore the King's cousin.
- 4 Princess Victoria Patricia Helena Elizabeth (1886–1974), known as 'Princess Pat', daughter of Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, third son of Queen Victoria; therefore she was the King's cousin. She married in 1919 Commander Alexander Ramsay (1881–1972), third son of the Earl of Dalhousie, aide-de-camp to her father, on which occasion she relinquished the style and title of Royal Highness and Princess and as the daughter of a duke became styled as Lady Patricia Ramsay.

conversation about the House of Lords. The 'hush' party of the other evening was not mentioned . . . although five of us at the dinner had participated.

TUESDAY 15TH MAY

Dined with Mrs Corrigan¹ for her cabaret dinner. A very well done, if not very chic party. Yet one knew everyone in the room. Every season some freak, usually an American with a colossal fortune to spend on entertaining us, appears. Mrs Corrigan, if commoner than most and more twangy than most, has something disarming about her nevertheless. She is good-looking . . . this she attributes to her 'Yogi' exercises, for she stands on her head twice a day. Her vitality she owes to daily piqûres of oxygen, unlike her great enemy, Maud Cunard, who goes constantly . . . for electric massage. Lord Hastings² went up to Lady Ancaster³ the other evening and said 'Mrs Corrigan, may I have a dance?' . . . He will never darken the portals of Eresby House again, needless to add . . .

MONDAY 28TH MAY

FAIRLAWNE⁴

A large Friday to Tuesday party at the Cazalets here to meet HRH Princess Alice⁵ and Lord Athlone. I found Princess Alice delightful, human and pretty in an unostentatious way and even chic. I sat next to her two evenings at dinner and though we had great gossips she was always most kind. She told me only a sense of humour saves her. She is much the easiest of the royalties and she rather prides herself on it; she has none of their stupidity nor dullness, yet has their dignity and sweetness, and also their *esprit de concierge*⁶ . . . the royalties always know more gossip than anyone else. The Earl of Athlone is affable, polite, meticulous and rather

- 1 Laura Mae Whitlock (1879–1948), daughter of a handyman from Wisconsin, 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.'
- 2 Francis John Clarence Westenra Plantagenet Hastings (1901–90), by courtesy Viscount Hastings, succeeded his father as 16th Earl of Huntingdon in 1939. A painter and professor of art, he sat on the Labour benches and was known as 'the Red Earl'.
- 3 Eloise Lawrence Breese (1882–1953), of New York, married in 1905 Gilbert Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby MP (1867–1951), by courtesy Lord Willoughby de Eresby from 1892 to 1910, when he succeeded his father as 2nd Earl of Ancaster.
- 4 An estate in west Kent, near Tonbridge, owned by the Cazalet family from 1880.
- 5 Princess Alice Mary Victoria Augusta Pauline (1883–1981), daughter of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, youngest son of Queen Victoria; she was therefore the King's cousin. She married in 1904 Prince Alexander of Teck (1874–1957), brother of the future Queen Mary; his title was anglicised in 1917 after the creation of the House of Windsor and he was granted the earldom of Athlone, after which his wife was known as Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone.
- 6 The spirit of a concierge; collecting gossip about all who pass through.

the German cavalry officer in his sense of detail for uniforms, orders, etc. He is less distinguished than his brother, Lord Cambridge¹ and I am suspicious he minds more being degraded to the rank of a simple peer. Mrs Cazalet² always 'bobs' to him and refers to him as 'Prince Algy'. I fancy he does not mind. But then of course we all know the story of how she 'bobbed' to the telephone on hearing a royal voice. The Athlones and the Cazalets are old, devoted friends. It is extraordinary Mrs C's flair for royalty. Even the WC[s] are hung with the Queen's photographs. On the Monday there was a pageant with 3,000 people looking on. It was opened by the Princess Alice, who enjoyed the three hours watching it in spite of the drizzle which threatened to ruin our costumes. The gardens were an excellent setting. I was Charles II, complete except for the spaniels, and I was much the most applauded. I looked as rakish and as imperious as possible . . . Lady Irene Curzon³ was a corpulent Henrietta Maria. Baba Curzon and Lady Mary Thynne⁴ because of their great beauty were let off with selling programmes to the gaping proletariat.

TUESDAY 29TH MAY

Dined with Lady Oranmore and Browne.⁵ She is supposed to be raving but I thought her and her dinner merely a trifle 'Pont Street'!⁶ I was between Lady Hermione Herbert⁷ and Lady Mildred FitzGerald.⁸ . . . I fled to the Embassy Club⁹ to join Paul of Serbia *et alii*. He and the P of W have been great friends all

- 1 Adolphus Charles Alexander Albert Edward George Philip Louis Ladislaus, Duke of Teck (1868–1927). Like his brother, he relinquished his German titles in 1917 and, as brother of the Queen Consort, was created 1st Marquess of Cambridge. His younger brother was one rank below him in the peerage.
- 2 Maud Lucia Heron-Maxwell (1868–1952), married in 1893 William Marshall Cazalet (1865–1932); she was the mother of Victor Cazalet.
- 3 Mary Irene Curzon (1896–1966), known as Lady Irene Curzon after her father's advancement to an earldom in 1911, was Lord Curzon's eldest daughter. On his death in 1925 she inherited the barony of Ravensdale, and in 1958 was enabled to sit in the House of Lords by being granted a life peerage. She never married, declining a proposal from Victor Cazalet.
- 4 Lady Mary Beatrice Thynne (1903–74), third daughter of the 5th Marquess of Bath; she married in 1927 Charles Wilson (1904–74), 3rd Baron Nunburnholme.
- 5 Olwen Verena Ponsonby (1876–1927), daughter of the 8th Earl of Bessborough, married in 1901 Geoffrey Henry Browne-Guthrie (1861–1927), 3rd Lord Oranmore and Browne and 1st Baron Mereworth.
- 6 Evelyn Waugh, in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), uses the term to indicate slightly 'common' behaviour by members of the upper classes; Lady Julia Flyte regards it as 'Pont Street' to wear a signet ring.
- 7 Lady Hermione Gwladys Herbert (1900–95), daughter of the 4th Earl of Powis, married in 1924 Roberto Lucchesi-Palli, 11th Duca della Grazia (1897–1979).
- 8 Lady Mildred Murray (1878–1969), daughter of the 7th Earl of Dunmore, married in 1919 Sir John FitzGerald Bt, MC (1884–1957), 21st Knight of Kerry.
- 9 Then the most exclusive nightclub in London, in Bond Street, patronised by royalty, the aristocracy and stage stars.

this spring and telephone to each other constantly. The P's car is fitted up with an electric automatic cocktail mixer. He and Paul take Mrs Dudley Ward¹ to dine and dance at the Embassy Club. When she refuses I see him dining sadly at Buck's Club in a blue dinner jacket with his *éminence grise*, the irresistible Fruity Metcalfe.² Will he be the Lord Farquhar³ of the next reign?

MONDAY 4TH JUNE

Dressed very humbly as an American, in black knee breeches, waistcoat and coat, I was presented this morning at a levee at St James's Palace. I felt I looked an insignificant grey mouse next to my dazzling friends in levee dress or uniforms. The Life Guards are especially grand. It is a gorgeous male sight, a levee . . . much preening and red and plumes and pomp and tightly fitting tunics and splendid English faces. I was in a queue for over an hour and slowly we processed from room to room . . . Suddenly I heard Lord Cromer⁴ call out 'Mr Channon to be presented.' I advanced a few paces with as much dignity as possible and in front of me on a dais surrounded by the Court and the *corps diplomatique* stood the King! He had something oriental about him, something almost of a Siamese potentate. I bowed very low, he dropped his head as if to grunt, I backed two paces and then turned and walked away. He was in a red uniform. I saw the Duke of York's eyes twinkle . . .

WEDNESDAY 6TH JUNE

A brilliant ball at Derby House. The Queen did not come and we were told in time not to wear our knee breeches. Princess Christian⁵ is dying or dead and there are rumours that she is being kept on ice until after the Derby. Everyone is sorry a Derby horse⁶ did not win today instead of Papyrus.⁷ We wonder what effect court mourning will have on the season? Any?

1 Winifred May 'Freda' Birkin (1895–1983), married in 1913 William Dudley Ward MP; she was mistress of the Prince of Wales from 1918 until supplanted by Mrs Simpson in 1934.

2 See entry for 14th April 1923 and footnote.

3 Horace Brand Farquhar (1844–1923), financier, had been Master of the Household to Edward VII and Steward of the Household to George V until 1922. For services rendered to both monarchs he was created a baron in 1901, advanced to a viscountcy in 1917 and an earldom in 1922. After his death he was revealed to be bankrupt. Metcalfe might well have performed similar services to Edward VIII as monarch had the King survived more than ten and a half months.

4 Rowland Thomas Baring, 2nd Earl of Cromer, had been Lord Chamberlain since 1922.

5 Princess Helena Augusta Victoria (1846–1923), fifth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. She was the King's aunt and widow of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, whom she had married in 1866; she died three days later.

6 That is, one owned by Lord Derby.

7 The 100/15 winner. Neither the King nor the Queen attended the race because of Princess Christian's condition.

THURSDAY 14TH JUNE

Lady Mary Cambridge¹ was married to Lord Worcester² this morning. No reception followed because of court mourning.³ All the royal family, the King, the two queens, princesses, Empress of Russia,⁴ etc stood for ages in front of St Margaret's kissing one another. Royalties in public always behave as if they were enjoying great privacy. Mary looked exceptionally lovely. The marriage is a *liaison hippique*⁵ and most suitable.

FRIDAY 15TH JUNE

Dined with Lady Cunard for her fancy-dress ball. I wore my comte de Flahaut⁶ costume and looked really exquisite with a curled reddish wig . . . Bidy Carlisle was an 1820 Lady Carlisle; Jack Carmarthen⁷ was a hurdy-gurdy, Gage looked impressive in a Raeburn costume rather like one of an ancestor in the portrait gallery; Blandford was a very tall, juvenile Louis XIV, Lady Cunard was 'Rule Britannia', Mrs Reggie [Daisy] Fellowes very provocative as a street urchin. Nancy Cunard is having an affair with a Persian prince and dear loyal Maud explains it saying . . . 'He is a direct descendant of the sun.'

MONDAY 18TH JUNE

Glorious weekend at Oxford with Paul [of Serbia] at Longwall House.⁸ We retraced all our divine years there together and it made us very sad reminiscing on our lost happiness . . . but I suppose thousands of youths for thousands of years will return to the green quads and grey cloisters to relive and recapture, for a few hours, their

- 1 Lady Victoria Constance Mary Cambridge (*née* Princess Mary of Teck) (1897–1987), daughter of the Marquess of Cambridge and niece of Queen Mary.
- 2 Henry Hugh Arthur FitzRoy Somerset (1900–84), by courtesy Marquess of Worcester, succeeded his father as 10th Duke of Beaufort in 1924. He was acclaimed as the finest fox hunter in England of the twentieth century and, because of his long mastership of the Beaufort hunt, was known universally as 'Master'. In his memoirs he noted that 'obviously the hunting of the fox has been my chief concern'.
- 3 After the death of Princess Christian.
- 4 As Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich of Russia (1856–1929), grandson of Tsar Nicholas I, had been recognised as Tsar by the Russian monarchist movement in 1922, Channon presumably refers to his wife, the former Princess Anastasia Petrović-Njegoš of Montenegro (1868–1935). They both escaped from Russia on a British battleship after the revolution.
- 5 An equine marriage: both bride and groom were passionate about horses and riding.
- 6 A French general in the Napoleonic wars.
- 7 John Francis Godolphin Osborne (1901–68), by courtesy Marquess of Carmarthen, succeeded his father as 11th Duke of Leeds in 1927, and squandered almost all the family's wealth.
- 8 Now an annexe of Magdalen College.

old bliss. Today we motored to Sutton,¹ too beautiful in the full summer sun. And all day we drank in its enchantments . . . I was most amusing and witty . . . Mary Baker, my great American friend, who has been in love with me all her life,² and who was very rare and fragile, made friends with Paul. In the cool evening we motored to Hackwood, where we find a *pomposo* party.

MONDAY 18TH JUNE TO SATURDAY 23RD JUNE

HACKWOOD

A jolly Ascot party, only a little too grand even for Chips. Paul of S, Serge Obolensky and I were together in a sort of suite at the end of the house. We had greatest chap fun together. The ladies of the party in addition to our shining hostess . . . Lady Ancaster, very sirenic and mischievous and good company and I fear very open about her liaison with Lord Londonderry³ who is also here, Mrs Walter Burns,⁴ a boring little marquise de Polignac.⁵ She is the most disgusting snob and was so ecstatic at lunching with the King the first day that I fear she will never recover. Her little fat military husband Melchior de P⁶ is very much in love with her . . . Dinner is never until 9.30 and then we get little messages that Lord Curzon has been detained by work . . . a treaty or two I suppose⁷ . . . and that we are not to dine until ten, which is really too un-English.

We motor in state in five Rolls-Royces to the racecourse every day. Our host goes up to London to the Foreign Office. In the evenings there is poker and bridge . . . On Saturday morning, as I was leaving, I received a message to come to Lord Curzon's bedroom and I found this potentate in a blue dressing gown. Lady Curzon was talking to him and they told me I must stay for the weekend as every ambassador in the world was coming . . . but it wasn't that, but the arrival of the two Italian princesses (the daughters of the King) who had just announced their arrival. I longed to remain and help but I didn't dare to chuck Lady Lowther⁸ to

- 1 The Manor House, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, where Channon was a recurring guest of Norah and Harry Lindsay; see entry for 4th July 1923 and footnote. The Lindsays hosted regular intellectual and establishment gatherings at the house.
- 2 See entry for 2nd February 1918 and footnote.
- 3 Charles Stewart Henry Vane-Tempest-Stewart (1878–1949), 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.
- 4 Ruth Evelyn Cavendish-Bentinck (1883–1978), great-great-granddaughter of the 3rd Duke of Portland, married in 1907 Walter Spencer Morgan Burns (1872–1929); she had been a leading society hostess in London since before the war.
- 5 Nina Floyd Crosby (1881–1966) of New York, married in 1917 the marquis de Polignac (*vide infra*).
- 6 Marie Charles Jean Melchior, marquis de Polignac (1880–1950), ran the Pommery champagne company (an inheritance from his mother, Louise Pommery) and was a member of the International Olympic Committee.
- 7 Curzon was at the time Foreign Secretary.
- 8 Alice Blight (1873–1939), married in 1905 Sir Gerard Augustus Lowther Bt (1858–1916), Ambassador to Constantinople from 1908 to 1913.

whom I am promised since a month for the weekend. I left sadly rather out of favour, I fear, because of my refusal.

MONDAY 25TH JUNE

A quiet weekend at Lady Lowther's house in Queen Anne's Mead, Windsor. We played heaps of tennis and, on Sunday evening, went on the river like the [sic] *hoi polloi* in a punt. Lady Lowther ever chic, ever French, has never got over being Ambassador to Constantinople . . . her memories of the palace on the Bosphorus and John Bullish daughters are all that remain of her grandeur . . . it was the high-water mark of her life . . . She admitted being the heroine of that ironical book of Edith Wharton's¹ *The House of Mirth*.

WEDNESDAY 27TH JUNE

A small dance, always the season's best ball, at Lord Revelstoke's.² There was an unfortunate scene. Ronald Storrs,³ Governor of Jerusalem, home on leave, had dined with Lady Lovat and somehow had been cajoled by her and Lady Cunard and others to accompany them uninvited to the ball, they having said 'it would be all right'. I saw him arrive and dance several times. Suddenly Lord Revelstoke, very angry, went up to him and in none too courteous language turned him out. People discussed nothing else in whispers, most thinking that it had been very careless and under-bred of him to have come and rather worse for his unwilling host to order him out as, after all, he is a gallant soldier and HM's representative in Jerusalem . . . not a pink guardsman.

FRIDAY 29TH JUNE

Lunched at Lady Cunard's. The usual potpourri and brilliant chat. She told Lord Balfour he was like God and 'yet so Christ-like'! Dined with Michael Hornby⁴

- 1 Edith Newbold Jones (1862–1937), married in 1885 to Edward Robbins Wharton, was an American novelist of the belle époque, known for her depictions of American society. Her 1905 novel *The House of Mirth* was the story of a woman who rose through society from humble origins, and attacks the corruption and decadence of the elite.
- 2 John Baring (1863–1929), 2nd Baron Revelstoke, was senior partner in Barings Bank and Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall.
- 3 Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs (1881–1955) had been Governor of Jerusalem and Judea since 1920 and would hold the post until 1926, when he would become Governor of Cyprus. He had been Military Governor of Jerusalem from 1917 to 1920 – the first, he claimed, since Pontius Pilate, though this was not entirely true since a British predecessor had resigned after just a fortnight. T. E. Lawrence called him 'the most brilliant Englishman in the Near East'. He would be knighted in 1929.
- 4 Michael Charles St John Hornby (1899–1987), son of St John Hornby, was the founding partner of WH Smith.

at Shelley House¹ and we went to *Stop Flirting*, the popular revue in which two charming little people, Americans, called Fred and Adele Astaire, are the stars.² Later a most lovely ball at Someries House³ . . . Lady Zia Wernher's.⁴ It was successful indeed and starts a new era in entertaining . . . I was presented to a tallish gentleman, the Crown Prince of Sweden⁵ . . . he is to marry the Lady Louise Mountbatten.⁶ It will be announced next week. What luck for her as she has only about £300 a year and is living in obscurity at Kensington Palace. The Mountbattens after being degraded during the war⁷ to the rank of mere marquises and earls are now much on the ascendant . . . they are ever a lucky family, poverty-stricken, they specialise in brilliant marriages. I sat in the gardens with Lady Desborough⁸ and found her witty and wily as ever . . . does everyone realise, as I do, that she is the character of the age?

- 1 The Hornby family's house in Chelsea.
- 2 Frederick Austerlitz (1899–1987), who took the name Fred Astaire, was an American actor, dancer and singer who achieved worldwide fame in the 1930s in a series of Hollywood musicals renowned for their dance routines; and his sister Adele Marie (1896–1981), with whom he began a vaudeville act as children in 1905, when they changed their name to Astaire. By 1923 they had a Broadway act, which they were touring in London.
- 3 A Crown Estate property rented by the Wernhers in Regent's Park, designed by John Nash and damaged by bombing during the Second World War. It was demolished in 1958.
- 4 Countess Anastasia Mikhailovna of Torby (1892–1977), elder daughter of Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich of Russia, and therefore a great-granddaughter of Tsar Nicholas I. She married, in 1917, Harold Wernher (1893–1973), later 3rd Bt. She was granted the rank and precedence of an earl's daughter after her marriage and stopped using her Russian title, being known as Lady Zia Wernher thereafter.
- 5 Oscar Fredrik Wilhelm Olaf Gustaf Adolf (1882–1973), from 1950 King Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden. He was the widower of Princess Margaret of Connaught (1882–1920), whom he had married in 1905; she was the cousin of King George V, and had died suddenly while eight months pregnant with her sixth child.
- 6 Louise Alexandra Marie Irene Mountbatten (1889–1965), previously Princess Louise of Battenberg, married the Crown Prince of Sweden (*vide supra*) in 1923, and was Queen Consort of Sweden from 1950. She was daughter of Prince Louis of Battenberg, who became 1st Marquess of Milford Haven when renouncing his German titles in 1917. She had earlier turned down proposals from King Manuel II of Portugal and had been secretly engaged to Prince Christopher of Greece, who was unable to marry her because he had no money; a second engagement was to Stuart Hill, an artist, whom she met while nursing in the Great War and who turned out to be homosexual.
- 7 There was a protracted debate between Lloyd George, King George V and Lord Stamfordham, the King's private secretary, in 1917 about the titles to be bestowed on German members of the King's family who had pledged allegiance to him and had been prepared to forfeit their German ranks. The King was cautioned against granting too many titles and to avoid bestowing any dukedoms. The Mountbatten marquessate was a compromise and their rise would indeed be unstoppable, with the surname of members of the House of Windsor becoming Mountbatten-Windsor in 1960, thirteen years after the marriage of the future Queen Elizabeth II to Philip Mountbatten.
- 8 Ethel 'Ettie' Fane (1867–1952), married in 1887 William Henry Grenfell (1855–1945), 1st Baron Desborough, a former Liberal MP who had joined the Conservatives in 1893 over his disagreement with the second Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Their three sons (qqv) predeceased them, two killed in the Great War and a third in a car crash.

MONDAY 2ND JULY

In the evening we dined at Brook House some ninety strong with General and Mrs Vanderbilt.¹ Later there was a large ball, very fashionable and grand yet 'kind'. Mrs Vanderbilt passed first into dinner with Paul of Serbia, which was correct but seemed to irritate Lord Curzon . . . At midnight the P of W and the Yorks arrived . . . her² first ball. Everyone was interested to see what would happen and what etiquette would be preceded and established. She was charming, dignified and blushing a little. Everyone 'bobbed' to the ground, if anything even lower than to the princes. Now that is settled. She brought no lady-in-waiting as Princess Mary³ frequently does . . .

WEDNESDAY 4TH JULY

Spent the day at Newmarket, Alice Astor, Serge [Obolensky], Paul [of Serbia], Baba Curzon (we are all furious with her, she has become so self-important and is quite convinced that she is to marry the P of W. She has practically 'carted' Prince George who has long been in love with her) . . .

Returned in time to give delicious Norah Lindsay⁴ and Gerry Wellesley dinner at the Embassy [Club]. How bourgeois these Wellingtons are! . . . I hate them . . . Gerry actually fell asleep at the play. He looked too awful, bloated, inflated and selfish . . . yet I cannot keep away from him. He is annoyed at a *mot* of Paul's . . . he asked: 'Why did Chips leave Chicago and come to live in London?' . . . Paul quickly answered: 'To introduce the Duke of Wellington's family and the Howards to English society.'

SATURDAY 7TH JULY

Gerry [Wellesley] motored me to Polesden Lacey . . . Mrs Ronnie Greville's,⁵ where I am for the weekend. A fashionable party here, but not at all my stunt . . . Mrs

- 1 Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt III (1873–1942), of New York, was a soldier and yachtsman: in 1896 he married, greatly against his father's wishes, Grace Graham Wilson (1870–1953).
- 2 The former Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.
- 3 Princess (Victoria Alexandra Alice) Mary (1897–1965), only daughter of King George V and Queen Mary. She married Henry George Charles Lascelles (1882–1947), by courtesy Viscount Lascelles, who in 1929 became the 6th Earl of Harewood. She was created Princess Royal in 1932.
- 4 Norah Mary Madeline Bourke (1873–1948), garden designer, married in 1895 Harry Lindsay (1866–1939).
- 5 Margaret 'Maggie' Helen Anderson (1863–1942), daughter of William McEwan, Scottish brewing magnate. She married in 1891 Ronald Henry Fulke Greville (1864–1908), who became a Conservative MP, a close friend of Queen Mary, she was one of London's leading hostesses before and after the Great War, with weekend parties at Polesden Lacey, near Dorking in Surrey. Although always referred as Mrs Ronnie Greville, she had become Dame Margaret Greville in 1922.

Greville is a perfect hostess. She even plays golf despite her massive form, with the professional. The house is too luxurious and constipated . . . it cannot digest so much rich furniture, rare tapestries, buhl¹ and *objets de vertu* . . .² and food that must make Lucullus³ jealous in Paradise. The Yorks honeymooned here . . . what strange spell does Mrs Greville cast on royalties? I suspect it is her large fortune to which there is no heir . . . or her colossal jewels??⁴

TUESDAY 10TH JULY

Lunched with Lady Cunard, later Paul of S picked me up and went to Roehampton to watch indifferent polo . . . In the evening we went to the Duchess of Norfolk's ball, crowded with all the Catholics in the Kingdom and some of the *grand monde*. There was also a reception at St James's Palace given by the Prince of Wales as a compliment to all the people who had entertained him during the last year. We youngish ones were not asked.

WEDNESDAY 11TH JULY

Dined at Holland House,⁵ a large party. We met on the terrace, it was still broad daylight and it seemed so peaceful and distinguished, far from the noise and heat of London . . . I enjoyed dinner wildly and was overflowing with high spirits. I was next to Baba Curzon. Later Tony Ashley⁶ and I made a round of the brothels, even visiting the famous 'Mrs Fitz'⁷ in Clarges Street . . . No. 28. She is the Mistress Quickly of modern times, and much adores a title or a smack of the quality. But the brothels were hotter, stuffier and more unattractive than the ball to which we returned in despair and boredom . . .

THURSDAY 12TH JULY

Dined at Lady Dalhousie's . . . a large, youngish divine party. I was next to Lady Cranborne.⁸ We played bridge. The Dalhousies are quite the most delightful

1 Richly ornate French furniture of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries designed by André Charles Boulle (1642–1732), the leading cabinet maker specialising in marquetry, one of whose main patrons was Louis XIV.

2 An antique object of especially fine workmanship.

3 Lucius Licinius Lucullus (118–57 BC) was a Roman politician and gastronome.

4 The jewels, including some allegedly owned by Marie Antoinette, were left in 1942 to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Consort.

5 London house of the Earl of Ilchester.

6 Anthony Ashley-Cooper (1906–47); by courtesy Lord Ashley, son of the 9th Earl of Shaftesbury, whom he predeceased.

7 Clearly one of the more bespoke prostitutes of the age.

8 Elizabeth Vere Cavendish (1897–1982), married in 1915 Viscount Cranborne.

family in London with their quiet country charm and old-fashioned Scotch modes of thinking.

FRIDAY 13TH JULY

Lunched with the Duke and Duchess of York in their tent at Lord's.¹ I found them as charming as ever but the heat was terrific and I fled to the Bath Club to swim

MONDAY 16TH JULY

. . . . I dined with many chaps at Buck's, and then hurriedly got into costume for the Sutherlands² ball. I went as a Bolshie with a red wig and beard. People were most caustic in their comments. Serge [Obolensky] and Bessborough³ were drunken waiters and upset soup and generally caused confusion before people realised who they were. The Prince and his equerry, Fruity [Metcalfe], came as coolies and no one knew them and everyone was rude to him. The Yorks were divine as a little Japanese couple in kimonos. There was one group in fantastic Pierrot costumes . . . I recognised Paul of S and Lady Curzon, and the Duchess of Sutherland and Princess Olga of Greece⁴ all of whom were dressed exactly alike. Many people had extra costumes upstairs into which they changed constantly. Lady Curzon at last emerged as a white peacock, a most dazzling and lovely affair . . .

MONDAY 23RD JULY

Lunched alone with the Curzons. He has nicknamed me the 'Wicked Boy', and everyone calls me that now. Later we bought a Sunbeam car for Hubert [Duggan] as tomorrow is his birthday.

1 For the first day of the Eton vs Harrow match.

2 George Granville 'Geordie' Sutherland-Leveson-Gower (1888–1963), by courtesy Earl Gower from 1888 to 1892 and Marquess of Stafford from 1892 to 1913, when he succeeded his father as 5th Duke of Sutherland. He married in 1912 Lady Eileen Gwladys Butler (1891–1943), daughter of the 7th Earl of Lanesborough.

3 Vere Brabazon Ponsonby (1880–1956), by courtesy Viscount Duncannon from 1906 to 1920, when he succeeded his father as 9th Earl of Bessborough. He was a Conservative MP from 1910 to 1920 and Governor-General of Canada from 1931 to 1935. He married, in 1912, Roberte Poupard de Neuflyze (1892–1979), daughter of baron Jean Poupard de Neuflyze.

4 Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark (1902–97), daughter of Prince Nicholas of Greece and Denmark and Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna of Russia (see footnote to entry for 16th–21st June 1924). She was granddaughter of King George I of Greece and great-granddaughter of Tsar Alexander I of Russia.

THURSDAY 2ND AUGUST

YACHT ATLANTIC, PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR

I have been here for several days with the Vanderbilts in their lovely graceful black yacht. It is all splendidly done, marvellous food and cocktails appear by magic at all hours. General Vanderbilt has a secret room called his laboratory but I think it is really his bolthole as he doesn't care much for his fellow creatures. We went to Goodwood races every day A lovely meeting in bad weather. Mrs V pleased as she collared the King several times in the paddock. Mrs Coats and Baba Curzon rented Ifold¹ from Cimmie Mosley and gave a joint Goodwood party, including both the P of W and Prince George. The Queen was very angry when she heard this as Prince George has pretended to be stopping with Lady Milford-Haven² and he brazenly came to the races every day. The Queen thanked Lady M-H for having him . . . she, surprised and not warned, stammered and the secret was out! No one knows the P of W is at Ifold where he has been nearly all week, everyone of the party having been pledged to secrecy. 'There is more in this than meets the eye!'

SATURDAY 4TH AUGUST

NAWORTH CASTLE³

A heavenly day on the Roman wall where we walked for hours and climbed amongst the ruins of old Hadrian's work and discussed the sins of Tiberius Paul's engagement to Princess Olga of Greece is officially announced.

SATURDAY 25TH AUGUST

CASTLE HOWARD⁴

A great barren ugly palace is this famous Castle Howard inside. The galleries are reminiscent of the Vatican with their hundreds of busts and statues of emperors and gods. The great library is an enormous narrow red room the length of the house and is hung with enough paintings to found a museum. Most of them came from France, along with those at Bridgewater House having been bought by Lord Carlisle and the Duke of Bridgewater of the time from the French royal collections broken up by the revolution. The house is uncomfortable in the extreme and is badly kept up. Everywhere there are signs of decaying magnificence.

1 Ifold House in West Sussex, demolished in 1936.

2 Countess Nadejda 'Nada' Mikhailovna de Torby (1896–1963), daughter of Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevich of Russia and Countess Sophie von Merenberg, and great-granddaughter of Tsar Nicholas I. She married in 1916 Prince George of Battenberg, who in 1917 became Earl of Medina by courtesy and who succeeded his father as 2nd Marquess of Milford Haven in 1921.

3 A property of the Earl and Countess of Carlisle in Cumberland.

4 Seat of the Carlisle branch of the Howard family in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

Old Lady Carlisle,¹ that demented and tyrannical old lady of the house of Stanley of Alderley, died last year,² having made her family, neighbours and the countryside miserable for fifty years. Many are the stories told of her eccentricity . . . how she caused thousands of gallons of old port and glorious champagne to be emptied into the park . . . how she bullied her husband and tyrannised over her children . . . how she dismantled Naworth Castle when she discovered it had been left to her eldest son and not to herself . . . how she set off from there to Castle Howard with vanloads of paper and pictures and furnishings which have accumulated dust ever since in the cellars of this Vanbrugh³ palace. Her will was her final act of folly and instead of making Carlisle rich as was his birthright, she divided her property amongst her daughters. They sat about a table and redivided everything as they thought best. Castle Howard was given to Geoffrey Howard,⁴ her youngest son who with his charming wife, Kitty Methuen, are my hosts. Carlisle was bought off with about £10,000 a year and the promise of a few pictures. He doubts whether any of the five Sir Joshuas⁵ here will be his. Geoffrey is a large, coarse, bald, ugly, badly made sinister-looking man with a glass eye. But in reality he is genial, intelligent and a *grand seigneur*. Once politically ambitious, he was destined perhaps for a Cabinet portfolio but with the fall of the Liberals from power he lost out and is settling down to middle age with his pretty young wife. Mrs Asquith⁶ told me once if she hadn't married 'Henry', Geoffrey Howard would have been her choice. The vast, un-dusted house abounds in treasures; one delightful room overlooking the terrace has for decoration some sixty Canalettos . . . The exterior of the house is splendid. A Vanbrugh, cold, classical and imposing. I prefer it to Blenheim; it is smaller and less magnificent. The park, with its Palladian love-temples and bridges is England at its best and is symbolic

- 1 Rosalind Frances Stanley (1845–1921), daughter of the 2nd Baron Stanley of Alderley, married in 1864 George Howard (1843–1911), who in 1889 succeeded his uncle as 9th Earl of Carlisle. He was a painter; she was a campaigner for temperance and women's rights. Channon does not exaggerate her personal qualities: her children described her as tyrannical and she ceased to be on speaking terms with some of them for years at a time.
- 2 She had actually died just over two years previously, on 12th August 1921.
- 3 Sir John Vanbrugh (1664–1726) was both an architect in the baroque style and a playwright, best remembered in the former vocation as the architect not just of Castle Howard (he was distantly related to the Howards), but also of Blenheim Palace.
- 4 Geoffrey William Algernon Howard (1877–1935) was Liberal MP for Eskdale from 1906 to 1910; for Westbury from 1911 to 1918; and for Luton from 1923 to 1924. He married in 1915 Ethel Christian 'Kitty' Methuen (1889–1932), daughter of Field Marshal Lord Methuen.
- 5 Paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), English portraitist.
- 6 Emma Alice Margaret 'Margot' Tennant (1864–1945), sixth daughter of Sir Charles Tennant, 1st Bt, married in 1894 as his second wife Herbert Henry Asquith (1852–1928), Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1905 to 1916, with his elevation to an earldom in 1925 she became Countess of Oxford and Asquith.

of the grand age when the great English landowners were an intermediate order between God and mankind.

FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER

Lovely, dignified old Naworth re-echoes with the laughter of youth. We rag all day and play sardines in the evening and are generally irrepressible. All my best-loved chaps are here . . . Gage, Gerry and now Serge Obolensky. We play tennis and golf and sometimes go to stuffy Lowther to shoot or to tea. Practical joking is on the tapis . . . and once it begins it never ends until the party breaks up or someone is hurt. The romance of the party is Alice Astor, who is deeply in love with Serge. Both Dalmeny¹ and Ivor Churchill² who at different times have courted her are here too.

. . . . Gerry Wellesley one evening pompously announced his departure for dawn of next day. We bet him that he would never be up. Taking Lady Massereene³ into our confidence, we tricked him into exchanging watches with her, and not before she had deftly removed the spring from hers. He bade us farewell and went to bed. I slipped to his room and pinned a notice 'Not to be called until 11.30' on his door. When he awoke next day after what he thought an interminable night he found a doctor (whom we had sent) at his bedside. He was furious as it was luncheon before he dressed. Ten happy days have passed in riotous fun and Serge and I leave tomorrow for Scotland

SATURDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER

GREYWALLS, GULLANE⁴

Serge and I after a few hours in Edinburgh in which to have our hair cut arrived here at this delightful Lutyens⁵ golf box on the sea, which Lady Curzon has taken for the summer. We found her alone with her children, very beautiful and loveable.

WEDNESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

We play golf all day and occasionally motor to North Berwick or Edinburgh. Lord Balfour and others come to luncheon. Lady Curzon ever the divine of hostesses

- 1 Albert Edward Harry Meyer Archibald Primrose (1882–1974), by courtesy Lord Dalmeny until 1929, when he succeeded his father as 6th Earl of Rosebery.
- 2 Lord Ivor Charles Spencer-Churchill (1898–1956), younger son of the 9th Duke of Marlborough and cousin of Winston Churchill.
- 3 Jean Barbara Ainsworth (1883–1937), married in 1905 Algernon William John Clotworthy Whyte-Melville Skeffington (1873–1956), 12th Viscount Massereene and Ferrard.
- 4 Built in 1901 by Lutyens (*vide infra*) for Alfred Lyttelton MP (1857–1913), Colonial Secretary from 1903 to 1905.
- 5 Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869–1944) was a leading architect of the time, who had designed the Cenotaph in Whitehall and was in the process of designing government buildings in New Delhi. He was knighted in 1930 and became a member of the Order of Merit in 1942.

has brought her milieu with her and this is a very sophisticated Scotch life. She leaves us sometimes to motor to Dalmeny to take tea with Lord Rosebery,¹ who she says is still seductive and gallant. When Irene Curzon arrived a few nights ago I dressed as an Oxford don and quite mystified her with sneezing and philosophical platitudes at dinner and abominable bridge after. She thought she had never met such a bore

FRIDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER

DUNTREATH CASTLE²

We motor eighty miles every day to Ayr races, usually in a downpour of rain. Ayr is my favourite meeting, it is so detached and different from the others. Oddly enough it is fashionable especially when the Scottish Derby is run. The members of the Caledonian Club appear in pink coats and top hats, Lord Bute³ has a private tent and Lord Lonsdale's⁴ party arrive in yellow phaetons with outriders. Today⁵ we went to Buchanan⁶ to the Montroses⁷ for tea. [It is] a glorious position for a castle with a wonderful view of Loch Lomond. The castle itself has been rebuilt recently with the old stone. The exterior has a look of Glamis,⁸ but the interior is frankly barbarously Victorian with paper lampshades. The Duchess is stately and very beautiful, though easily 65.⁹ She was a Graham and is an old friend . . . will she be my aunt I wonder? There were several masculine-looking daughters about, including the one married to the Cameron of Lochiel,¹⁰ with a flock of perfect children all in kilts and safety pins. The Duke showed us relics of the Great Montrose¹¹ . . . but conversation was difficult, only grouse and the weather being mentioned.

1 Archibald Philip Primrose (1847–1929) succeeded his grandfather in 1868 as 5th Earl of Rosebery, was created Earl of Midlothian in 1911, and was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1894 to 1895.

2 At Blanefield in Stirlingshire, seat of the Edmonstone family.

3 John Crichton-Stuart (1881–1947), by courtesy Earl of Dumfries until 1900, when he succeeded his father as 4th Marquess of Bute.

4 Hugh Cecil Lowther (1857–1944) succeeded his brother as 5th Earl of Lonsdale in 1882, and squandered the family fortune. He was known as 'the Yellow Earl' because of his fondness for the colour. He was the first President of the Automobile Association, which adopted the colour for its livery.

5 Presumably Saturday 22nd September.

6 Buchanan Castle, near Drymen in Stirlingshire.

7 Douglas Beresford Malise Ronald Graham (1852–1925), by courtesy Marquess of Graham until 1874, when he succeeded his father as 5th Duke of Montrose. He married in 1876 Violet Hermione Graham (1854–1940).

8 Glamis Castle, in Angus, Scotland, seat of the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne.

9 She was 69.

10 Colonel Walter Cameron of Lochiel (1876–1951), 25th Chief of Clan Cameron, had married Lady Hermione Emily Graham (1882–1978) in 1906.

11 James Graham (1612–50), 1st Marquess of Montrose, was a hero of the Royalist side in Scotland during the Civil War. He was hanged and his head placed on a stake in Edinburgh, but he was rehabilitated after the Restoration.

MONDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER

INVERMARK

Left Glasgow yesterday in the company of Lord Knebworth¹ and his sister Lady Hermione Lytton² and in the evening arrived at this enchanted spot. Lovely Invermark,³ miles from civilisation and smelling of heather and gorse, is tucked away here amidst the moors. Deer forests are behind us and the sky is full of grouse and the woods of pheasants and woodcock; a vigorous stream one-third water and two-thirds salmon is a few yards away; the children wear kilts and the ghillies talk an unknown language; plush dogs show lavender tongues; we live on venison and feel ourselves kings of the world . . . we are, in fact, in the Highlands. A divine party I found to welcome me. The Dowager Lady Airlie,⁴ as beautiful and as *dix-huitième* as ever, with her snowy white hair piled like an edifice over her lovely fair face with its dark lustrous flirtatious eyes. Her wasp-like waist, so tightly and so straitly laced, is at once the despair of more modern sirens and the desire of all men. She is a link with another, more exquisite wittier age, is this *grande dame* who along with the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Londonderry⁵ represents a dying order. She is the Queen's favourite lady-in-waiting and constant companion Antony Knebworth and I share a cabin a few yards from the lodge. Lady Dalhousie is a splendid hostess and makes us very happy. Ramsay is adored by the stalkers and beaters and the tenants. He has stepped so unobtrusively and so bravely into his father's [Lord Dalhousie's] shoes . . . it had been hoped he might have been well enough to come to Invermark this summer but I fear he has disappointed them.

TUESDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER

Oh! day of days, hours of humiliation, miles of crawling through fog and bog and wet, moments of sheer exhaustion and despair and sweat and mist and aching muscles. A tiny lunch that never tasted so good, washed down by cheering whiskey

- 1 Edward Antony James Bulwer-Lytton (1903–33), by courtesy Viscount Knebworth, elder son of the 2nd Earl of Lytton, whom he predeceased when killed in a plane crash. He was elected Conservative MP for Hitchin in 1931.
- 2 Lady (Margaret) Hermione Millicent Bulwer-Lytton (1905–2004) would marry in 1930 Cameron Fromanteel Cobbold (1904–87), who would serve as Governor of the Bank of England from 1949 to 1961 and Lord Chamberlain from 1963 to 1971. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Baron Cobbold in 1960 and became a Knight of the Garter in 1970.
- 3 A leading Scottish sporting estate, in Angus.
- 4 Mabel Frances Elizabeth Gore (1866–1956), daughter of Viscount Sudley, who succeeded his father as 5th Earl of Arran in 1884, married the 11th Earl of Airlie in 1886.
- 5 Edith Helen 'Circe' Chaplin (1878–1959), 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.

[sic], inarticulate conversations with silent stalkers . . . scenery unparalleled and in the distance, always elusive brown specks . . . then long secret approaches and the thrills of coming on the deer quietly grazing, the proud stags all unawares trusting to the alert hinds and at last a shot rings out, breaking the almost supernatural stillness . . . there is a stampede and the deer disappear, all but one. The beautiful great creature is dead before one gets to him.

Mine weighed 15½ stone and was a ten-pointer. The stalker quietly ripped him open and I watched fiendishly as his guts rolled out to stain the heather. Somehow the carcass was slung across a pony's back and we escorted it in triumph to the lodge where with triumph in my eye I was blooded by Ramsay and hailed as a conquering Nimrod by all.

MONDAY 1ST OCTOBER

ALLOA HOUSE¹

Left Invermark with great reluctance, never had such health and happiness been mine, and arrived at hideous Alloa at teatime. It is a monstrous place almost in the actual town of Alloa. There is always much *va-et-vient*² here and I found twenty people presided over with great charm by Lady Mar,³ who is so beautiful with deep blue eyes. Lord Mar⁴ is the world's worst arch bore and stone deaf as well. A deaf bore in a kilt, what could be worse? Mrs Keppel⁵ is here . . . Everyone passing to or from the Highlands seems to stop off here for a glimpse of our lovely hostess, whose touch in life is so delicate, and to play golf at Gleneagles. Prince George was to have come today but chucked and I have his room . . . next to Mrs Keppel, I feel like King Edward!

FRIDAY 5TH OCTOBER

MANDERSTON⁶

I moved to Greywalls yesterday and found autumn had come to join the Curzons there. It was cold and bleak and the house, emptied of its personal things, was like

- 1 Seat of the earls of Mar, on the edge of the industrial town of Alloa in Clackmannanshire, near Stirling.
- 2 Coming and going.
- 3 Lady Violet Ashley-Cooper (1868–1938), daughter of the 8th Earl of Shaftesbury, who killed himself six months after inheriting the earldom. She married the 12th Earl of Mar (*vide infra*) in 1892.
- 4 Walter John Francis Erskine (1865–1955), by courtesy Lord Erskine from 1875 to 1888, when he succeeded his father as 12th Earl of Mar and 14th Earl of Kellie.
- 5 Alice Frederica Edmonstone (1868–1947), daughter of Sir William Edmonstone, 4th Bt, married in 1891 George Keppel (1865–1947). She was a noted society beauty and hostess before and after the Great War, but is best known for having been the mistress of King Edward VII from 1898 until his death in 1910.
- 6 Manderston House, Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland, seat of the Miller family, but passed through inheritance to the barons Palmer.