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CHURCHILL

A LIFE

Featuring
a foreword
by Randolph
Churchill



MARTIN GILBERT

PREFACE BY RICHARD J. EVANS

'The greatest adventure story of the century' *Sunday Telegraph*

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CHURCHILL A LIFE

Sir Martin Gilbert CBE was Winston Churchill's official biographer, and a leading historian of the twentieth century. An honorary fellow at Merton College, Oxford, he was knighted in 1995 'for service to British history and international relations'. He died in 2015.

www.martingilbert.com

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CHURCHILL A LIFE

MARTIN GILBERT

Foreword by Randolph Churchill

Preface by Richard J. Evans



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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published by William Heinemann Ltd in 1991

Published by Pimlico in 2000

Published in Penguin Books 2024

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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: 978-1-804-94939-9

www.greenpenguin.co.uk



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For Natalie, David and Joshua

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Foreword to the 150th Anniversary Edition

by Randolph Churchill

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to provide the foreword for this new edition of Sir Martin Gilbert's magnificent one-volume biography of my great-grandfather. Thirty-three years since its original publication, it remains a thousand-page masterpiece of the biographer's art.

It was in 1962 that Martin joined the team of researchers helping my grandfather, Randolph, to write the official biography of Sir Winston Churchill. They assembled at Stour House, Randolph's home in East Bergholt, Sussex. There, in what Martin described as 'heavy filing cabinets in a specially built strongroom', were the fifteen tonnes of documents that would form the foundation of the biography.

My grandfather used to say that Martin worked 'like a tiger'. Not content merely to rely upon documents, he also interviewed aged politicians, soldiers, secretaries and others who had known Churchill. Randolph cherished the results of these endeavours, calling them 'lovely grub' and adding them to the vast monument he was building to honour his father.

When Randolph died in 1968, after the completion of two volumes, Martin was his natural successor, and took up the great task with a mixture of relish and trepidation. As he wrote to Isaiah Berlin a year after my grandfather's death:

It has not been easy taking up his work. But now that I have begun the actual writing of volume three, which covers the First World War, I feel a new upsurge of energy and inspiration. When I began to work for him I felt a certain trepidation mixed with a certain amount of awe; after six years the fear had been replaced by

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admiration and the awe by affection. And then he was gone, and neither the honour of having been chosen to carry on his work nor the excitement, variety, and interest of the work itself can ever obliterate the pain of his departure.

I recall Martin's name often being mentioned at home in the early 1970s as the official biography was proceeding at a stately pace. This vast project was not without its challenges – I distinctly remember my great-uncle Peregrine, the second son of Churchill's brother Jack, bemoaning its lengthiness and cost. But scholarship on that scale cannot be hurried, and the result – eight magnificent volumes – was more than worth it.

It was after I left the Royal Navy in the 1990s that I got to know Martin well and began to fully appreciate his brilliant scholarship and personal kindness. I still treasure the wonderful postcards he sent me from his Churchillian adventures around the world.

Martin was rightly proud of the official biography, but knew that even the most devoted Churchillian might find reading all eight volumes a forbidding prospect. Thus, he resolved to write a single-volume version of his 'Churchilliad'. In crafting *Churchill: A Life*, he mined the endless riches of the 'O.B.' and added much new material. The result was a masterful, detailed work that traced the arc of Churchill's life in an accessible and easily digestible way.

My father, Winston, knew the importance of what Martin had achieved. Three years after *Churchill: A Life* was published, as we celebrated the 120th anniversary of Churchill's birth, he wrote to him, 'I cannot tell you how greatly I appreciate the fact that, with more and more "Historians" foreswearing Truth and distorting History in pursuit of their commercial interest – or indeed to get published at all – you have been tireless in your searching after truth and impeccable in your presentation of it to the reader.'

When Martin died in 2015, aged seventy-eight, the sadness of his passing was eased by the memories of the wonderful life he led, and the knowledge that his more than eighty books and atlases ensured that his name would ring down the ages.

The Churchill family will forever be indebted to Martin for recording and preserving the record of Winston Churchill and his contemporaries so faithfully, so that readers can better understand his life and times and reach their own conclusions.

Preface to the 150th Anniversary Edition

by Richard J. Evans

In 1968, six years after he had taken a Fellowship at Merton College, Oxford, and just before he was appointed the official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill, Martin Gilbert tutored me in twentieth-century European History; I was to be his last undergraduate pupil. Martin was unlike any other tutor I had encountered. While conventional Oxford history tutors sent their students to textbooks for basic information, and monographs and articles in learned journals to bone up on the latest controversies and debates, Martin didn't bother with any of this, and sent me straight to the original sources instead. Rather than reading historical analyses of the Treaty of Versailles, for instance, he made me read the original Treaty itself, along with the diaries of men like Harold Nicolson, who was present at the negotiations, John Maynard Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, the Hansard record of the House of Commons debate on the Treaty – which I was shocked to discover was almost entirely taken up by furious arguments over Irish independence – and a number of obscure pamphlets by authors I'd never heard of. He then left me to make up my own mind about the question he'd set.

But when I presented my arguments to him in our weekly one-to-one tutorial in his rooms at Merton, he had another shock in store. He wasn't interested in them at all. I even complained about this to him at the end of our fourth or fifth meeting. 'What do you think about my arguments?' I asked him, somewhat petulantly. 'Oh, never mind about those,' he said dismissively. 'You'll change your mind by the time you get to Finals anyway.' Instead of discussing my own informed ideas, we discussed the documents he had set me to read. He clearly found the

original sources far more important than anything historians, including myself, had to say about them. He believed passionately that the historian's task was to seek the truth by going back to the original documents, not to engage in academic debate with people who may well have misinterpreted them or even ignored them altogether.

Being confronted with original material was indeed exciting and challenging. Martin gave me a taste for historical research that has never left me. Much more importantly, however, he taught me how to write. Each week, he would go through the essay I had handed him in advance and take it apart. He straightened out my English, shortened and simplified my sentences, and did his best to curb, not entirely successfully, my tendency to write overlong paragraphs. He taught me to balance the structure of my sentences and to create a sense of rhythm and direction in my essay. And he impressed upon me the need to avoid jargon and write in a clear, comprehensible style. He was the only tutor I had who paid any attention to how I wrote rather than what I wrote, and I'll always be grateful to him for that. Indeed, I have ever since then annoyed generations of my own students, particularly those writing PhD theses, by criticising their written English as much as Martin used to criticise mine. I hope he would have approved.

Much later, I realised that Martin had learnt his focus on good writing from the leading radical historian A. J. P. Taylor, his tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford, where Martin won a scholarship from Highgate School to read Modern History. Born in London on 25 October 1936, the grandson of Polish-Jewish immigrants who had fled the violent anti-Semitism of Tsarist Russia, Martin had spent his early years in Canada, where, like many other children, he had been evacuated in 1940 to escape the dangers of wartime air raids. When he returned to England after the war, the cataclysmic events of the years 1939–45 had already sparked in him an abiding interest in the war's origins and the international rivalries that had so dramatically disrupted his own life and that of millions of others. This met with a ready response from his teachers at Oxford, above all Taylor himself.

Taylor's influence on Gilbert was a lasting one, helping him achieve a mastery of the English language, which he wrote with an unrivalled clarity, wit and power. 'Read some A. J. P. Taylor,' Martin would tell me, 'to learn how to write.' His advice, based on the model of Taylor's own style, wasn't always sound: 'End every paragraph with a paradox,' he said for example. I tried it once or twice, but it seemed rather artificial and didn't work for me. Fortunately, perhaps, he didn't himself practise what he preached in this regard.

Martin's early work was in the field Taylor had made his own: the

history of international, and especially European, diplomatic relations in the twentieth century. He began with an iconoclastic study of *The Appeasers*, written with his first undergraduate pupil, the left-wing journalist Richard Gott. It followed Taylor's controversial attempt in *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961) to rescue them from 'the enormous condescension of posterity', to use the phrase made famous by another, very different English historian of the 1960s, E. P. Thompson; a volume of documents on *Britain and Germany between the Wars*, a short study on *The Roots of Appeasement* and a biography of the interwar pacifist Clifford Allen. Taylor's penchant for geopolitical determinism, most obvious in his book *The Course of German History*, was no doubt one of the influences behind Martin's wonderful series of historical atlases, with maps of absolute clarity and accuracy drawn by the cartographer Arthur Banks. I used to buy the atlases as they came out in cheap paperback editions, and I've always used plenty of maps in my own books, where they can sometimes convey at a glance what it takes several paragraphs of prose to put across.

Already by the time I met him, Martin had for six years been working as research assistant to Winston Churchill's cantankerous son Randolph, an irascible, hard-drinking journalist, whom Martin first encountered in the course of his own research for a book he was going to write, but in the end never finished, on English visitors to Nazi Germany. With Martin's help, Randolph rapidly completed the two opening volumes of the official biography, modelled very much on Churchill's own multi-volume account of *The Second World War*. But in June 1968, still only fifty-seven, Randolph suffered a fatal heart attack, leaving the vast enterprise unfinished. Tortuous negotiations followed between the publisher (Heinemann) and the copyright holder (Lord Hartwell, proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*) before Martin was appointed in June 1968 to complete Randolph's project. Martin soon realised he needed assistance, and started putting out feelers. He received a ready response when a recent Oxford History graduate, Susie Sacher, heard he was looking for someone and wrote to apply for the job. After an interview, she began working for him on a three-month trial and was appointed to the post. Initially her task was to comb the official government records, which had recently been released, but gradually their collaboration became more extensive. I already knew her through tutoring her in Modern European History when I was a postgraduate student and kept in touch with her during the following decades, after the two of them were married. Susie worked closely with Martin on the Churchill project, reading and editing the drafts as they were typed up; indeed in many ways the biography is their joint production.

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These volumes attest to Martin's huge appetite for facts and his

determination to get them right, his zest for documentary research, and his drive to ensure that no archive was left unvisited, no living friend, relative or colleague un-interviewed, and no aspect of his subject's life left unexamined. The eighth and final volume, covering the last years of Churchill's life, was published in 1988, and each volume was supplemented by companion volumes which printed a generous selection of the documents on which the central narrative was based. The last companion volume was only published in 2019. The volumes will last for a very long time indeed; they represent one of the great biographical enterprises of our time. They bear all the hallmarks of Martin Gilbert's very individual approach to history, already evident in his teaching, and exemplified to perfection in the single-volume version of the entire gargantuan enterprise presented here. The absence of footnote references in *Churchill: A Life* is a consequence of the fact that the sources on which it rests are already referenced in the eight-volume biography of which it is a distillation.

First published in 1991, Martin's remarkable single-volume biography of the greatest British statesman of the twentieth century is now made available to a new generation of readers on the 150th anniversary of Winston Churchill's birth. The biography was the greatest undertaking of Martin's career. His admiration for Churchill echoed that of A. J. P. Taylor – 'the saviour of his country', as Taylor called him in his classic volume in the Oxford History of England, *English History 1914–1945*. Among many other notable features of the book is its stress on Churchill's outstanding record as a social reformer, beginning before the First World War and continuing through the interwar period; the book shows powerfully that Churchill's later reputation as a pillar of Conservatism is not supported by the facts.

Demonstrating a faultless command of a gigantic array of sources, *Churchill: A Life* presents the story of its protagonist from cradle to grave, marshalling a vast quantity of facts, and staying very close to the sources throughout. It conveys the rich flavour of Churchill's own writings and speeches, telling the story of his own life very much from his own perspective. No biography is ever likely to get closer to its subject than this one. In the light of the fact that Randolph had already published the first two volumes in the series, Martin decided to continue in the same style. He noted that Randolph had taken the theme of the work from John Gibson Lockhart's seven-volume biography of his father-in-law, the novelist Sir Walter Scott: 'He shall be his own biographer.' This principle had inspired Randolph to include copious, often extensive quotes from his subject's own speeches and writings, a key feature of the present work.

Martin explained later that he aimed:

to explain exactly what he [Churchill] was trying to do, why he wanted to do it, how he set about it, and the way in which he confronted the various obstacles, whether of nature or of individuals, that were found along the way. I wanted to be able to establish the chain of events and circumstances within which he worked – the essential context that would show to what extent he was alone, part of a particular line of thought, ahead of his time, or (as was often the case) beset by critics who would not hesitate to resort to smears and innuendos in order to try to discredit him.¹

At the same time, however, *Churchill: A Life* shows its author characteristically uninterested in dealing with what other historians have written about Churchill or discussing the many problems of interpretation that its subject aroused during his very long and, in many respects, controversial life. What the book does do is present the reader with the evidence on which to reach an informed conclusion, showing with unrivalled clarity and intimacy how Churchill experienced the events in which he was involved. It corrects many misunderstandings and misapprehensions, and provides a mass of material with which politically motivated misinterpretations from right and left can be effectively countered. Without overt partisanship, it allows the reader to appreciate Churchill's life from his own point of view, and above all, to understand why he made the decisions he did and held the views which he articulated with such pungency and power.

Churchill's death in 1965 was a moment of national significance, signalling the end of the traditional social and cultural order that he had in some ways personified. It was among other things because we sensed this that I went with some of my school friends to his funeral, standing on Ludgate Hill with many others as the cortège made its way along the street to St Paul's Cathedral. The days when Winston Churchill was a leading figure – and during the Second World War *the* leading figure in British politics – now seem, 150 years after his birth, almost impossibly distant. Martin Gilbert's magnificent chronicle of his life provides us with a powerful, richly detailed and compellingly readable reminder of why he was important, and for readers unfamiliar with his story, an explanation as to why he is still venerated by so many as 'the greatest Englishman'. He has not ceased, of course, to be controversial, as he was during his

¹ Martin Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill: A Historian's Journey* (London, 1994), p. 48.

lifetime. But his inspirational leadership during the Second World War ultimately throws everything else into the shade. And readers who may think of him as a racist, an imperialist and a warmonger may find themselves surprised by the very different portrait that emerges from this enthralling and authoritative narrative.

Historical Note to the 150th Anniversary Edition

by Richard J. Evans

The world into which Winston Churchill was born in 1874 was very different from our own. In the 1970s and 1980s, when Martin Gilbert was researching and writing his biography, events such as the Boer War and the rise of the Kaiser's Germany were still recent enough for most of his readers to have some familiarity with them, even if only through the recollections of their parents. The last surviving veteran of the Boer War indeed died as late as 1993. Older readers would still have remembered the reign of Queen Victoria, and Remembrance Day ceremonies were still attended by men who had fought in the First World War. More than three decades after this book was first published, however, this is no longer the case, and it seems necessary to provide some historical background to Churchill's life and times for readers unfamiliar with a historical milieu that is now beyond the recollection of all but the oldest of them.

To begin with, Britain in the late Victorian era right up to the 1940s was the centre of a vast global empire, built on the economic supremacy of what was the world's first and most powerful industrial and trading nation, founded on an absolute domination of the seas. Most European trade was carried in British merchant ships; other economies, including those for example of Latin America, were subordinate to British economic interests; and Britain exercised formal power, to a greater or lesser degree, over Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India – the latter being the 'jewel in the crown' of the British Empire. Imperial administration was a central concern of British politics from the 1880s, when the 'Scramble for Africa' added vast tracts of territory to the list of British

possessions. Nowhere was this more true than in Sub-Saharan Africa. Significant parts of this vast region had been annexed by Britain, but Dutch-speaking settlers, known as Boers, had spread northwards from the Cape of Good Hope and established their own self-governing republics in a victorious war against the British in 1881. The discovery of large reserves of gold transformed the economic importance of the region, and tensions erupted in 1899 in the Second Anglo-Boer War, which eventually ended in victory for the British in 1902.

This was the backdrop to Churchill's early adulthood in the British Army, as explored in the earlier part of this book. The vast extent of Britain's global empire inevitably generated conflict in many parts of the world, including frontier wars in India, a campaign against Islamist insurgents in British-controlled Egypt and Sudan, and above all, the Second Anglo-Boer War. Churchill's involvement in these reflected his unthinking assumption that the British Empire was a force for good and needed defending. For him, as for many Victorians, Britain was fundamentally a progressive country that occupied a higher plane of civilisation than many others, and he believed that it was Britain's God-given mission to fight against barbarism and ignorance, especially perhaps in Africa and the Indian subcontinent. At times, this could spill over into what could seem to many twenty-first-century readers as outright racism, though Churchill was also quick to condemn imperialist atrocities, such as the massacre of peaceful Indian protestors in the Punjabi city of Amritsar by British troops in 1919.

At home, the British political system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was very far from being a democracy. Only a minority of the adult population had the right to vote in parliamentary elections: women were disenfranchised and most working-class men were still excluded. Politics was still dominated by a small elite drawn from the landed aristocracy, the class to which Churchill belonged, so his entry into the House of Commons was more or less assured. Once elected, his abilities, as well as his connections, smoothed the way into government. British politics at the time was dominated by two main parties – the Conservatives, who had been in government for most of the previous twenty years, and the Liberals. But three issues were causing problems for both.

First, there was Ireland. At this point, the whole of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom and sent a large number of MPs to Westminster. The rise of Irish nationalism had put Irish self-government ('Home Rule') on the agenda, but Conservative and 'Unionist' resistance, reflecting the strong objections of Irish Protestants to being ruled by the Catholic majority, had prevented it from passing into law. The Conservatives relied heavily on the House of Lords, which consisted entirely of

hereditary peers, who had the power to block laws they disliked. Linked to this problem was a second issue, that of social and economic reform, with radical Liberals pressing for the creation of a welfare state fit for an industrial society. Conservative recalcitrance on this issue pushed Churchill into the Liberal Party from 1904, where he became a supporter of liberal social welfare policies. A Liberal government led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman came to power in 1906, and Churchill later joined the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, where he advocated the improvement of workers' rights. The 1909 'People's Budget' introduced by Welsh radical Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George was rejected by the Lords, causing a Constitutional crisis that ended with Parliament reducing the Lords' powers so that they could only delay legislation, not block it entirely. A third domestic issue was Free Trade, where the reintroduction of import duties, abolished in the mid-nineteenth century, was advocated by Conservatives, and some Liberals, alarmed by the rise of German industrial power.

The Free Trade question merged into foreign policy where Imperial Germany, united as recently as 1871 following a series of short wars provoked by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, had begun building a High Seas battle fleet at the turn of the century aimed at challenging the superiority of the British Royal Navy. It was conflicts on land, however, that sparked the outbreak of the First World War on 1 August 1914. Keen on obtaining direct access to the Mediterranean, Tsar Nicholas II's Russia posed a clear threat to the Turkish Empire, ruled by the Ottoman dynasty, whose dominion stretched across the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. The Ottomans' Balkan possessions had declared independence from Turkey, and another multinational empire, Austria-Hungary, felt threatened by one of these small states, Serbia, which it regarded as the instigator of the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne in June 1914. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Russia backed the Serbs, Germany supported Austria-Hungary, France backed Russia, and Britain came in behind France. The European continent was plunged into a war which spread across the globe as Europe's colonial possessions were drawn into it. The First World War had begun. It was to last until November 1918.

Unsurprisingly, Turkey declared for Germany, since Russia was on the Allied side. Churchill and others regarded it as the weakest of the enemy powers, and pushed successfully for an Allied invasion of its territory at Gallipoli, close to the Ottoman capital at Istanbul. The invasion was a disaster for the Allied Expeditionary Force, and Churchill carried much of the blame. In the end, however, the Ottoman Empire was defeated, along with Germany and its allies, and its Middle Eastern territories were

handed over to Britain and France as ‘mandates’ of the newly formed League of Nations – the predecessor of today’s United Nations. These territories included Palestine, where conflict was growing between Arab inhabitants and increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants seeking a homeland in the face of hostility in Europe and other parts of the world. Further conflict erupted between Greeks and Turks as the Ottoman Empire broke up, resulting in violent population transfers between Greece, which had been independent of Turkey for a century, and what remained of the Empire.

A number of other conflicts continued or flared up in the aftermath of the First World War, notably in Ireland, where a civil war broke out between adherents of a partial break with Britain and advocates of a total rupture; it was resolved in 1922 by the creation of an independent Irish Free State. Further problems were posed for British politics by the growing movement for independence in India, led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, which seemed increasingly unstoppable, though it was not until 1947 that India became fully independent, alongside the separate Muslim state of Pakistan. The interwar years (1919–39) were a time of upheaval in British politics too, as the extension of the franchise to include women, partially in 1918 and fully in 1928, along with bitter internal divisions, reduced the Liberal Party to a rump and turned the Labour Party into the main opposition to the Conservatives.

It was events in Europe itself, however, that came to dominate the 1930s. Following Germany’s 1918 defeat in the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles imposed compulsory disarmament on Germany, enforced reparations on the country for the damage caused by its invasion of France and Belgium, and reduced its territory by around 13 per cent, particularly in the east, where it created a new state, Poland, and gave it a land corridor to the Baltic. A second new state created out of the defeated Austrian Empire was Czechoslovakia. Both countries contained large minorities of ethnic Germans. The world economic collapse that began in 1929 caused mass bankruptcies, bank failures and unemployment in Germany, where the democratic political system, introduced by a revolution in 1918, fell apart as a result. Many German voters blamed democracy for the country’s troubles, and in 1933 the Nazis, a far-right nationalist, militarist and extremist party led by Adolf Hitler, came to power as the largest political party, with just over a third of the vote and the backing of the conservative President von Hindenburg. Hitler made it clear that he intended to overthrow the peace settlement and began rearming Germany with the ultimate intention of waging war against France, Poland and Russia (which had now become the Communist-run Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) to establish German domination of Europe. He

combined this with a vicious persecution of Germany's tiny Jewish population, which he blamed, wrongly, for the country's woes. Churchill was one of the first British politicians to understand the threat Hitler posed, but his warnings only deepened the political isolation he was experiencing in the 1930s, as a Conservative-led government pursued a policy of appeasing Hitler in the mistaken belief that this would lead him to moderate his policies.

Guided by the Conservative Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, the British government forced Czechoslovakia to allow the German-speaking minority on its western borders (the 'Sudetenland') to secede and join Nazi Germany. Although war was averted for the time being, Hitler continued to pursue his aggressive policies and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. This gave the lie to Hitler's claim that he was only pursuing the aim of national self-determination for all Germans, and prompted the British government to issue a warning that if he invaded Poland, Britain would intervene. Ignoring this threat, Hitler went ahead, and Britain, with its ally France, declared war in September 1939. Churchill was vindicated. A few months into the war, the indecision and failures of Chamberlain's government led to Churchill's appointment as Prime Minister in May 1940.

To understand how the Second World War progressed, it is important to recognise the sheer scale of Hitler's ambition: his ultimate aim was nothing less than the conquest of the whole of Europe, and then, together with his allies Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan, to use control of the continent as the springboard for a war with America and world domination. He believed this could be achieved because the Germans were racially superior to other peoples and endowed with a willpower that could overcome any obstacle. But the combined resources of the United States of America, the Soviet Union and the British Empire were far too great, ensuring Germany's defeat in May 1945.

The war would transform the global balance of power. Japan's initial victories over the Western powers in Asia had shaken Britain's hold on its colonies, already weakened by concessions they made to ensure support. 1947 saw India become independent, followed in the 1950s and 1960s by most other British colonies. In domestic politics, popular expectations of change led to Churchill's defeat in the 1945 election. However, the fact that a government of national unity had held power during the war, coupled with Churchill's own long-term commitment to social and welfare reform, brought a widespread consensus to British politics that still endured at the time of Churchill's death in 1965.

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Preface

It is my aim in these pages to give a full and rounded picture of Churchill's life, both in its personal and political aspects. His career has been the subject of countless books and essays, in which he has sometimes been cavalierly, sometimes harshly, judged. I have sought to give a balanced appraisal, based on his actual thoughts, actions, achievements and beliefs, as opposed to the many misconceptions that exist.

The record of Churchill's life is a particularly full one, for which a vast mass of contemporary material survives. It is therefore possible, for almost every incident in which he was involved, to present his own words and arguments, his thinking, his true intentions, and his precise actions.

My own researches began in October 1962, when I started work as the junior member of Randolph Churchill's research team, a year after he had been asked by his father to undertake the writing of a multi-volume biography, and edition of supporting documents. At the time of his death in 1968, Randolph Churchill had taken his father's story up to the outbreak of war in 1914. I was asked to continue his work. My own final volume, the eighth in the series, ended with Churchill's death at the age of ninety.

The official biography, as it has become known, set out in detail the story of Churchill's life based upon five main sources, each of which I have returned to for this one-volume account; from these sources I have also drawn much new material, particularly for Churchill's earlier years, up to the First World War.

The first of these sources is Churchill's own enormous personal archive of political, Ministerial, literary and personal correspondence, now at Churchill College Cambridge. This contains private and public correspondence spanning the whole of his ninety years.

The second source is his wife Clementine's papers, including the many hundreds of letters which her husband wrote to her from the time of their

marriage in 1908 until his last years. This is under the custody of Churchill's daughter, Lady Soames, and gives a remarkable picture of every aspect of Churchill's personality.

The third source is the Government archive of Churchill's two Premier-ships, and of his official Ministerial work, which began in December 1905, and continued until his retirement from public life in April 1955. This archive, located at the Public Record Office at Kew, contains all the War Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff discussions for the Second World War, as well as the papers of his eleven Ministries during those years, and of the War Council on which he served in 1914 and 1915.

The fourth source is the private archives, some of them substantial, others fragmentary, of his friends, colleagues and opponents; those who had been in contact with him at different times throughout his life. These materials are to be found in many archives, libraries and private collections, in Britain and abroad. They show how he struck his contemporaries: what they said about him among themselves; how some detested him, and how others, from his earliest years, saw him as a person of exceptional qualities, and as a future Prime Minister.

The fifth source, which I myself built up during thirty years, is the personal recollections of Churchill's family, his friends and his contemporaries. These recollections come from people in all walks of life, among others from the pilots who taught him to fly before the First World War and the officers and men who served with him on the Western Front in 1916. I was fortunate to meet, and to get to know, his literary assistants of the pre- and postwar years, including Maurice Ashley, Sir William Deakin and Denis Kelly; his Private Secretaries, among them Sir Herbert Creedy, who was with him in 1919, and members of his Second World War Private Office, including Sir John Martin, Sir John Peck and Sir John Colville; also Anthony Montague Browne, who was with him from 1953 to 1965.

As Churchill's biographer, I was particularly fortunate to have been able to see him from the perspective of his secretaries, among them Kathleen Hill, who joined him in 1936, Elizabeth Layton and Marian Holmes, who worked with him during the Second World War, and Elizabeth Gilliatt, Lady Onslow, Jane Portal and Doreen Pugh, who were with him in his later years. So much of Churchill's life was spent at Chartwell; Grace Hamblin, who worked there since 1932, has been a guide to those years.

Several million words drawn from these five sources are edited and annotated in the volumes of documents published (and still being published) for each of the volumes of the multi-volume biography.

I have set out to provide enough material in this single volume for readers to judge for themselves Churchill's actions and abilities during his remark-

ably long career. It was a career often marked by controversy and dogged by antagonism; for he was always outspoken and independent, and expressed his views without prevarication, criticising those whom he thought were wrong with a powerful armoury of knowledge, and with vivid, adept and penetrating language.

Churchill's involvement in public life spanned more than fifty years. He had held eight Cabinet posts before he became Prime Minister. When he resigned from his second Premiership in 1955 he had been a Parliamentarian for fifty-five years. The range of his activities and experiences was extraordinary. He received his Army commission during the reign of Queen Victoria, and took part in the cavalry charge at Omdurman. He was closely involved in the early development of aviation, learning to fly before the First World War, and establishing the Royal Naval Air Service. He was closely involved in the inception of the tank. He was a pioneer in the development of anti-aircraft defence, and in the evolution of aerial warfare. He foresaw the building of weapons of mass destruction, and in his last speech to Parliament proposed using the existence of the hydrogen bomb, and its deterrent power, as the basis for world disarmament.

From his early years, Churchill had an uncanny understanding and vision of the future unfolding of events. He had a strong faith in his own ability to contribute to the survival of civilisation, and the improvement of the material well-being of mankind. His military training, and his natural inventiveness, gave him great insight into the nature of war and society. He was also a man whose personal courage, whether on the battlefields of Empire at the turn of the century, on the Western Front in 1916, or in Athens in 1944, was matched with a deep understanding of the horrors of war and the devastation of battle.

Both in his Liberal and Conservative years, Churchill was a radical; a believer in the need for the State to take an active part, both by legislation and finance, in ensuring minimum standards of life, labour and social well-being for all citizens. Among the areas of social reform in which he took a leading part, including drafting substantial legislation, were prison reform, unemployment insurance, State-aided pensions for widows and orphans, a permanent arbitration machinery for labour disputes, State assistance for those in search of employment, shorter hours of work, and improved conditions on the shop and factory floor. He was also an advocate of a National Health Service, of wider access to education, of the taxation of excess profits, and of profit-sharing by employees. In his first public speech, in 1897, three years before he entered Parliament, he looked forward to the day when the labourer would become 'a shareholder in the business in which he worked'.

At times of national stress, Churchill was a persistent advocate of conciliation, even of coalition; he shunned the paths of division and unnecessary confrontation. In international affairs he consistently sought the settlement of the grievances of those who had been defeated, and the building up of meaningful associations for the reconciliation of former enemies. After two world wars he argued in favour of maintaining the strength of the victors in order to redress the grievances of the vanquished, and to preserve peace. It was he who first used the word 'summit' for a meeting of the leaders of the Western and Communist worlds, and did his utmost to set up such meetings to end the dangerous confrontations of the Cold War. Among the agreements that he negotiated, with patience and understanding, were the constitutional settlements in South Africa and Ireland, and the war debt repayment schemes after the First World War.

A perceptive, shrewd commentator on the events taking place around him, Churchill was always an advocate of bold, farsighted courses of action. One of his greatest gifts, seen in several thousand public speeches, as well as heard in his many broadcasts, was his ability to use his exceptional mastery of words, and love of language, to convey detailed arguments and essential truths; to inform, to convince, and to inspire. He was a man of great humour and warmth, of magnanimity; a consistent and life-long liberal in outlook; a man often turned to by successive Prime Ministers for his skill as a conciliator. His dislike of unfairness, of victimisation, and of bullying – whether at home or abroad – was the foundation-stone of much of his thinking.

Churchill's public work touched every aspect of British domestic and foreign policy, from the struggle for social reform before the First World War to the search for a summit conference after the Second. It involved Britain's relations with France, Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union, each at their most testing time. His finest hour was the leadership of Britain when it was most isolated, most threatened and most weak; when his own courage, determination and belief in democracy became at one with the nation.

Martin Gilbert,
Merton College,
Oxford

23 January 1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all those who, over the past thirty years, have given me their recollections of Churchill. Those who are quoted in this volume were generous both with their time and their memories. I should like to thank Valentin Berezhkov, Harold J. Bourne, Sir John Colville, Ivon Courtney, Sir William Deakin, Sir Donald MacDougall, Robert Fox, Eve Gibson, Elizabeth Gilliatt, Grace Hamblin, Pamela Harriman, Kathleen Hill, Marian Holmes, Patrick Kinna, Elizabeth Layton, James Lees-Milne, Brigadier Maurice Lush, John J. McCloy, Jock McDavid, Malcolm MacDonald, Viscount Margesson, Sir John Martin, Trevor Martin, Anthony Montague Browne, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Sir John Peck, Captain Sir Richard Pim, Doreen Pugh and Lady Williams of Elvel (Jane Portal).

My most grateful thanks, for both insights and material over many years, are to Churchill's children; Sarah Lady Audley, Lady Soames, and Randolph Churchill, my predecessor as biographer.

In addition to those who helped me with recollections, I am grateful to all who answered my historical queries for this volume, or who provided me with extra documentary material. My thanks for this help go to Patricia Ackerman, Archivist, Churchill College Archives Centre; J. Albrecht, Ligue Suisse pour la Protection de la Nature; Larry Arnn, Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy; Jeanne Berkeley; Alan S. Baxendale; Dr David Butler; Julian Challis; Robert Craig; Henry E. Crooks; Michael Diamond; Dr Michael Dunnill; Felicity Dwyer, Researcher, *Daily Express*; Nicholas P. Eadon; Linda Greenlick, Chief Librarian, *Jewish Chronicle*; Irene Morrison, Scottish Tourist Board; David Parry, Department of Photographs, Imperial War Museum; Gordon Ramsey; Andrew Roberts; James Rusbridger; Matthew Spalding; Ken Stone, Metropolitan Police Historical Museum; Jonathan de Souza; Lord Taylor of Hadfield; Professor Vladimir Trukhanovsky; Mrs

M.E.Vinall, Personnel and Administration Manager, *Evening Standard*; Frank Whelan, researcher, *Sunday Call-Chronicle*; and Benedict K.Zobrist, Director, Harry S.Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

I am also grateful, for the use of previously unpublished Churchill material, to the British Library Manuscript Collections, Christie's Auction Rooms, the Hollinger Corporation, A. Rosenthal, Chas W Sawyer, John R. Smethurst, *The Times* Archive, Blenheim Palace Archive, and the National Trust Collection.

For copyright permission to reproduce the photographs, I should like to thank World Wide Photos Inc (number 5); the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library (numbers 6, 12, 21, 30, 63, 64, 72, 73, 74, 75, 88 and 136); Odhams Press (9); J. Bowers, Pretoria, (11); the Bettman Archive (14); Longmans Green (16); Syndication International, Photo Division, *Daily Mirror* (24, 25, 57, 60 and 81); *Die Woche* (28); Elliot and Fry (29), The Press Association (33, 36, 40, 55, 56, 77 and 129); *Daily Sketch* (37); *Tatler* (38 and 83); London News Agency Photo (41, 58); Major-General Sir Edmund Hakewill-Smith (43); Imperial War Museum (44, 45, 91, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 112, 113, 118, 121, 122, 123, 126 and 127); The Trustees of the Low Estate (49 and 89); Central Press Photos, Ltd (53); G. M. Georgoulas (51); Keystone Press (59, 90, 94, 102, 128, 130 and 140); The Topical Press Agency Ltd (61); Times Newspapers Ltd (62); Associated Press Ltd (65, 68, 70 and 84); Stefan Lorant (71); Fox Photos (76 and 85); *Daily Express* (79); *Punch* (80); H. Roger Viollet (87); United Press International (95, 106 and 141); J.J.Moss (105); War Office Photograph, photographer Captain Horton (114); Thomas Dalby (116); Viscount Montgomery Collection (117 and 125); Donald Wiedenmayer (119); Earl Alexander Collection (120, 132 and 133); Signal Corps Photo (131); Photo Heminger (134); Life Photo, photographer N.R. Farbman (135); Emery Reves (142). The remaining photographs are from the Broadwater Collection at Churchill College, Cambridge.

For their help in scrutinising the text and making important suggestions as to its content, I am exceptionally grateful to Sir David Hunt, Adam O'Riordan and Edward Thomas, each of whom has given me the benefit of his wide knowledge and critical scrutiny. Helen Fraser, Laura Beadle and the many others involved at William Heinemann in publishing this book, have always been helpful and encouraging, at the different and at times difficult stages of production; the copyediting and proofreading were expertly done by Lisa Glass and Arthur Neuhauser; Rachelle Gryn assisted in the discovery of important facts; Kay Thomson carried out myriad secretarial duties.

As with all my previous Churchill work, I am indebted to my wife Susie, for her contribution at every stage, and to every page.

1

Childhood

Winston Churchill was born in 1874, half way through the Victorian Era. That November, his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, then less than seven months pregnant, had slipped and fallen while walking with a shooting party at Blenheim Palace. A few days later, while riding in a pony carriage over rough ground, labour began. She was rushed back to the Palace, where, in the early hours of November 30, her son was born.

The magnificent palace at Blenheim was the home of the baby's grandfather, the 7th Duke of Marlborough. On his father's side he was a child of the British aristocracy, descended both from the 1st Earl Spencer and from the distinguished soldier John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, commander of the coalition of armies that had defeated France at the beginning of the eighteenth century. On his mother's side he had an entirely American lineage; her father, Leonard Jerome, then living in New York, was a successful stockbroker, financier and newspaper proprietor. A century earlier his ancestors had fought in Washington's armies for the independence of the American Colonies.

Almost a year before Churchill's birth, his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, had been elected to the House of Commons as Member of Parliament for Woodstock. This small borough, of which Blenheim was a part, had scarcely more than a thousand electors; it had long been accustomed to send members of the Ducal family, or their nominees, to Westminster. In January 1877 Churchill's grandfather, the 7th Duke of Marlborough, was appointed Viceroy of Ireland, with Lord Randolph as his private secretary. The two-year-old boy travelled with his parents to Dublin, together with his nanny, Mrs Everest.

When Churchill was four, Ireland suffered a severe potato famine, and an upsurge of nationalist ferment led by the Fenians. 'My nurse, Mrs Everest, was nervous about the Fenians,' he later wrote. 'I gathered these were wicked people and there was no end to what they would do if they

had their way.' One day, when Churchill was out riding on his donkey, Mrs Everest thought that she saw a Fenian procession approaching. 'I am sure now,' he later reflected, 'that it must have been the Rifle Brigade out for a route march. But we were all very much alarmed, particularly the donkey, who expressed his anxiety by kicking. I was thrown off and had concussion of the brain. This was my first introduction to Irish politics!'

As well as his nanny, the young boy acquired a governess while in Dublin. Her task was to teach him reading and mathematics. 'These complications,' he later wrote, 'cast a steadily gathering shadow over my daily life. They took one away from all the interesting things one wanted to do in the nursery or the garden.' He also recalled that although his mother took 'no part in these impositions', she had given him to understand that she approved of them, and 'sided with the governess almost always'.

Fifty years later Churchill wrote of his mother: 'She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly – but at a distance.' It was with his nanny that he found the affection which his parents did not provide. 'My nurse was my confidante,' he later wrote. 'Mrs Everest it was who looked after me and tended all my wants. It was to her I poured out my many troubles.'

In February 1880 Churchill's brother Jack was born. 'I remember my father coming into my bedroom at Vice-Regal Lodge in Dublin & telling me (aged 5) "You have a little brother",' he recalled sixty-five years later. Shortly after Jack's birth the family returned to London, to 29 St James's Place. There, Churchill was aware of the final illness of Disraeli, the former Conservative Prime Minister. 'I was always sure Lord Beaconsfield was going to die,' he later wrote, 'and at last the day came when all the people I saw went about with very sad faces because, as they said, a great and splendid Statesman who loved our country and defied the Russians, had died of a broken heart because of the ingratitude with which he had been treated by the Radicals.' Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, died when Churchill was six years old.

At Christmas 1881, just after his seventh birthday, Churchill was at Blenheim. It was from there that his first surviving letter was written, posted on 4 January 1882. 'My dear Mamma,' he wrote, 'I hope you are quite well. I thank you very very much for the beautiful presents those Soldiers and Flags and Castle they are so nice it was so kind of you and dear Papa I send you my love and a great many kisses Your loving Winston.' That spring Churchill returned to Blenheim for two months. 'It is so nice being in the country,' he wrote to his mother that April. 'The gardens and the park are so much nicer to walk in than the Green Park or Hyde Park.' But he missed his parents, and when his grandmother went

to London, he wrote to his father, 'I wish I was with her that I might give you a kiss.'

It was Mrs Everest who looked after the two brothers at Blenheim. 'When we were out on Friday near the cascade,' Churchill wrote to his mother shortly before Easter, 'we saw a snake crawling about in the grass. I wanted to kill it but Everest would not let me.' That Easter Mrs Everest took the two boys to the Isle of Wight, where her brother-in-law was a senior warder at Parkhurst prison. They stayed at his cottage at Ventnor, overlooking the sea. From Ventnor, Churchill wrote to his mother, 'We had a Picnic we went to Sandown took our dinner on the Beach and we went to see the Forts & Guns at Sandown there were some enormous 18 ton Guns.'

That autumn Churchill was told that he was to be sent to boarding school. 'I was,' he later wrote, 'what grown-up people in their off-hand way called "a troublesome boy"'. It appeared that I was to go away from home for many weeks at a stretch in order to do lessons under masters.' He was not 'troublesome' to everyone, however; Lady Randolph's sister Leonie found him 'full of fun and quite unselfconscious' when he stayed with her.

The boarding school was St George's, near Ascot. Churchill was sent there four weeks before his eighth birthday. Term was already half over; his mother took him there that first afternoon. The two of them had tea with the headmaster. 'I was preoccupied', he recalled nearly fifty years later, 'with the fear of spilling my cup and so making "a bad start". I was also miserable at the idea of being left alone among all these strangers in this great, fierce, formidable place.'

Unhappiness at school began from the first days. 'After all,' Churchill later wrote, 'I was only seven, and I had been so happy with all my toys. I had such wonderful toys: a real steam engine, a magic lantern, and a collection of soldiers already nearly a thousand strong. Now it was to be all lessons.' Severity, and at times brutality, were part of life at St George's. 'Flogging with the birch in accordance with the Eton fashion,' Churchill later wrote, 'was a great feature of the curriculum. But I am sure no Eton boy, and certainly no Harrow boy of my day,' – Churchill was at Harrow from 1888 to 1892 – 'ever received such a cruel flogging as this Headmaster was accustomed to inflict upon the little boys who were in his care and power. They exceeded in severity anything that would be tolerated in any of the Reformatories under the Home Office.'

Among the boys who witnessed these floggings was Roger Fry. 'The swishing was given with the master's full strength,' he later wrote, 'and it took only two or three strokes for drops of blood to form everywhere and it continued for 15 or 20 strokes when the wretched boy's bottom was a mass of blood.' Churchill himself was later to recall how during the floggings the rest of the boys 'sat quaking, listening to their screams'.

'How I hated this school,' he later wrote, 'and what a life of anxiety I lived for more than two years. I made very little progress at my lessons, and none at all at games. I counted the days and the hours to the end of every term, when I should return home from this hateful servitude and range my soldiers in line of battle on the nursery floor.'

Churchill's first holiday from St George's, after a month and a half at school, was at Christmas 1882. Home was now another house in London, 2 Connaught Place, on the north side of Hyde Park, where his parents were to live for the next ten years. 'As to Winston's improvement,' his mother wrote to his father on December 26, 'I am sorry to say I see none. Perhaps there has not been time enough. He can read very well, but that is all, and the first two days he came home he was terribly slangy and loud. Altogether I am disappointed. But Everest was told down there that next term they mean to be more strict with him.' Lady Randolph also told her husband that their elder son 'teases the baby more than ever'; to remedy this 'I shall take him in hand'. She ended her reference to her eight-year-old son, 'It appears that he is afraid of me.'

Churchill's first school report was a poor one. His place in the form of eleven boys was eleventh. Under Grammar it read, 'He has made a start,' and under Diligence, 'He will do well, but must treat his work in general, more seriously next term.' The report ended with a note by the Headmaster, 'Very truthful, but a regular "pickle" in many ways at present – has not fallen into school ways yet but this could hardly be expected.'

Anxiety at school went hand in hand with ill-health, which was another cause of concern to his parents. 'I'm sorry poor little Winston has not been well,' Lord Randolph wrote to his wife from the South of France on New Year's Day 1883, 'but I don't make out what is the matter with him. It seems we are a sickly family & cannot get rid of the doctors.' Four days later he wrote again: 'I am so glad to hear Winny is right again. Give him a kiss from me.' To cure whatever was wrong with the boy, the doctor advised a week by the sea, at Herne Bay.

Back at St George's, Churchill repeatedly and unsuccessfully asked his mother to visit him. Before term ended there was sports day. 'Please do let Everest and Jack come down to see the athletics,' he wrote, 'and come down your self dear. I shall expect to see you and Jack & Everest.' Lady Randolph did not take up her son's invitation, but there was a consolation. 'My dear Mamma,' he wrote to her when the sports day was over, 'It was so kind of you to let Everest come down here. I think she enjoyed her-self very much,' and he added, 'Only 18 more days.'

In Churchill's report that term there was praise for his History, Geography, Translation and General Conduct. The rest of the report was less complimentary: Composition was 'very feeble', Writing 'good – but so

terribly slow', Spelling 'about as bad as it well can be'. Under Diligence was written; 'Does not quite understand the meaning of hard work – must make up his mind to do so next term.' His place in the Division of nine boys was ninth; his place in the Set of thirteen was thirteenth.

That summer, while Churchill was at school, his grandfather, the 7th Duke of Marlborough, died. In deep mourning, Lord Randolph sought solace in travel. As Churchill himself was later to write, in his biography of his father, 'Lord Randolph hurried away with his wife and son to Gastein.' This visit, to one of the most fashionable spas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was Churchill's first visit to Europe. On the way there, father and son passed through Paris. 'We drove along together through the Place de la Concorde,' he told the citizens of Metz sixty-three years later. 'Being an observant child I noticed that one of the monuments was covered with wreaths and crêpe and I at once asked him why. He replied, "These are monuments of the Provinces of France. Two of them, Alsace and Lorraine, have been taken from France by the Germans in the last war. The French are very unhappy about it and hope some day to get them back." I remember quite distinctly thinking to myself, "I hope they will get them back".'

After he returned to St George's, the quality of Churchill's work was in contrast with his conduct. 'Began term well,' his report read, 'but latterly has been *very* naughty! – on the whole he has made progress.' According to the next term's report, History and Geography were 'sometimes exceedingly good'. The headmaster commented, 'He is, I hope, beginning to realize that school means work and discipline,' and he added, 'He is rather greedy at meals.'

In February 1884 Lord Randolph announced his intention of standing for Parliament for Birmingham, as Woodstock was among the hundreds of family boroughs about to be abolished. By going to an overwhelmingly radical area, he was intent on showing that 'Tory Democracy' was more than a slogan. In March the headmaster's wife visited the Midlands. 'And she heard,' Churchill wrote to his mother, 'that they were betting two to one that Papa would get in for Birmingham.' This was the first of Churchill's letters in which politics appears. The rest of the letter was about a school outing: 'We all went to a sand pit the other day and played a very exciting game. As the sides are about 24 feet high, and a great struggle, those who got out first kept a fierce struggle with the rest.'

Churchill's next school report showed that, while he was certainly clever, he was also extremely unhappy. History and Geography were both 'very good, especially History. But Conduct was described as 'exceedingly bad. He is not to be trusted to do any one thing', and his lateness for morning

school, twenty times in the forty day term, was described as 'very disgraceful'. The pages of the report-card reveal Churchill's torment, 'Is a constant trouble to everybody and is always in some scrape or other,' and, 'He cannot be trusted to behave himself anywhere.' But even the headmaster of St George's could not fail to notice that the nine-year-old boy had 'very good abilities'.

The following term Churchill's letters to his mother show how lonely he felt in that predominantly hostile world. 'It is very unkind of you,' he wrote early in June, 'not to write to me before this, I have only had one letter from you this term.' That summer term his school work was again praised; Grammar, Music and French were all 'good', History and Geography were 'very good'. His General Conduct was described as 'better – but still troublesome'. The headmaster commented, 'He has no ambition – if he were really to exert himself he might yet be first at the end of Term.'

When Churchill was nine and a half, his father gave him Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. 'I remember the delight with which I devoured it,' he later wrote. 'My teachers saw me at once backward and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal, but I was stubborn.' His school report that summer also gave evidence of continual problems with regard to discipline, commenting under Diligence: 'Fair on the whole. Occasionally gives a great deal of trouble.'

What that trouble was, the report did not say, but another St George's boy, Maurice Baring, who arrived at the school shortly after Churchill left, wrote in his memoirs that Churchill had been flogged 'for taking sugar from the pantry, and so far from being penitent, he had taken the Headmaster's sacred straw hat from where it hung over the door and kicked it to pieces'. This defiance had already become a legend.

That autumn Churchill suffered from yet another bout of ill-health. The Churchill family doctor, Robson Roose, who practised both in London and in Brighton, suggested that his health would improve if he went to a school by the sea; he suggested the school in Brighton at which his own son was a pupil. Roose offered to keep a watching eye on the boy. 'As I was now supposed to be very delicate,' Churchill later recalled, 'it was thought desirable that I should be under his constant care.' The new boarding school was run by the two Thomson sisters at 29 and 39 Brunswick Road, Brighton. Term began in September 1884. 'I am very happy here,' he wrote to his mother at the end of October. Two days later he wrote again, 'I have been very extravagant, I have bought a lovely stamp-book and stamps, will you please send a little more money.'

On November 30 Churchill celebrated his tenth birthday. Three days later his father left England for India, where he stayed until March 1885, absorbing himself in the problems of the sub-continent; he expected to be made Secretary of State for India if the Conservatives returned to power. His family saw him off. 'I should like to be with you on that beautiful ship,' Churchill wrote after his return to school. 'We went and had some hotel soup after you went, so we did not do amiss. We saw your big ship steaming out of harbour as we were in the train.'

That winter Lady Randolph's sister Clara wrote to the boy's American grandmother, 'Winston has grown to be such a nice, charming boy.' From his new school, however, his mother was sent in mid-December an alarming letter written by one of the Thomson sisters, Charlotte. She had just been called to see Churchill, who, she wrote, 'was in a trouble that might have proved very serious'. Charlotte Thomson went on to explain: 'He was at work in a drawing examination, and some dispute seems to have arisen between him and the boy sitting next to him about a knife the tutor had lent them for their work. The whole affair passed in a moment, but Winston received a blow inflicting a slight wound in the chest.'

Dr Roose was able to assure Miss Thomson that the boy 'is not much hurt, but that he might have been'. This was not the first time, Miss Thomson added, that complaint had been made of the other boy, who had a passionate temper. His parents would be asked to take him away from the school. Writing about the stabbing to her husband, Lady Randolph commented rather unsympathetically, 'I have no doubt Winston teased the boy dreadfully – & it ought to be a lesson to him.' Churchill returned to London for a few days with Dr Roose. It was then that Lady Randolph learned that the penknife with which her son had been stabbed 'went in about a quarter of an inch', but, she added in her letter to Lord Randolph, 'of course, as I thought, he began by pulling the other boy's ear'.

'What adventures Winston does have,' Lord Randolph wrote to his wife from Bombay. 'It is a great mercy he was no worse injured.'

The first term at Brighton ended a week before Christmas. No doubt in part because of the disruption caused by the stabbing incident, Churchill did not do too well, coming bottom of the class in French, English and Mathematics. The report noted, however, that he had shown 'decided improvement in attention to work towards the latter part of the term'. Churchill later wrote: 'This was a smaller school than the one I had left. It was also cheaper and less pretentious. But there was an element of kindness and of sympathy which I had found conspicuously lacking in my first experiences.'

Churchill spent the Christmas holidays of 1884 in London. His mother found it difficult to cope with him. 'I shall have Jack back before Christ-

mas,' she had written to her sister Clara shortly before the holiday, 'as I could not undertake to manage Winston without Everest – I am afraid even she can't do it'. Churchill returned to Brighton on 20 January 1885, writing to his mother on the following day: 'You must be happy without me, no screams from Jack or complaints. It must be heaven on earth.' Three days later he told her of a school success, 'I have been out riding today and rode without the leading rein and we cantered.'

As at Ascot, so now at Brighton, Churchill was eager for his mother to visit him. One opportunity was the school play. 'I shall expect to see you,' he wrote at the end of January, 'and shall be very disappointed indeed if I do not see you, so do come.' Lady Randolph did go, taking the five-year-old Jack with her. 'They were so happy together,' she wrote to her husband on the following day, '& Winny was wildly excited but I thought he looked very pale & delicate. What a care the boy is.' Her letter continued, 'He told me that he was very happy, & I think he likes the school.'

That term's report spoke of 'very satisfactory progress'. In English, French and Classics, in the class of ten, Churchill had come fourth. Under Conduct, however, he was placed twenty-ninth out of twenty-nine. Back at school after the holiday, there were many reminders of Lord Randolph's growing fame. 'I have been out riding with a gentleman,' Churchill wrote to his father that May, 'who thinks that Gladstone is a brute and thinks that "the one with the curly moustache ought to be Premier".' The driver of the electric railway that ran along the sea front had gone so far as to say 'that Lord R. Churchill would be Prime Minister'.

Churchill was learning to swim, he wrote to his mother that month, and 'getting on capitally'. He was also enjoying riding. As to study, 'I am getting on with my French and Latin but am rather backward with Greek.' He was, however, hoping to go on to school at Winchester, 'so I will try and work it up'.

The ten-year-old boy was excited that summer when he read an article about his father in the *Graphic*. It was, he informed his mother, 'very good indeed'. There was a photograph 'of Papa in the library with all the photographs and the ink-stand'. Six days later the Liberal Government was defeated in the House of Commons and Gladstone resigned. A new government was formed by the Conservative Leader, Lord Salisbury; Churchill's father was appointed Secretary of State for India.

Churchill's third term at Brighton came to an end that July. Although under Conduct he still came bottom of his class, thirtieth out of thirty, his position in the academic subjects was high. He was first in the Classics class of nine, and third in French. 'Very marked progress during the term,' Charlotte Thomson wrote. 'If he continues to improve in steadiness and application, as during this term, he will do very well indeed.' That summer

Churchill and his brother spent their holiday at Cromer by the North Sea. Their parents were again on holiday elsewhere. 'Do come and see us soon,' Churchill wrote to his mother in mid-August. Six days later he wrote again, 'Will you come and see me?'

Lady Randolph did not respond to her son's appeal, but she did arrange for a governess to give him lessons during the holidays. This was not to his liking. 'I am not enjoying myself much as the lessons always tie me down,' he wrote to his mother on August 25. Eight days later he wrote again: 'The weather is fine. But, I am not enjoying myself very much. The governess is very unkind, so strict and stiff, I can't enjoy myself at all.' The only solace was that in a few days' time his mother would come down for ten days. 'Then I shall be able to tell you all my troubles.' Ill-health had marred the holiday. At first, a rash on his legs had forced him to go about in a donkey-carriage. Most recently, he explained, his temper had been 'not of the most amiable, but I think it is due to the liver as I have had a bilious attack which thoroughly upset me, my temperature was 100 once instead of 98 & 2/5 which is normal'.

Back at Brighton for the autumn term, Churchill read in the local newspaper that his father had made a speech in the town. 'I cannot think why you did not come to see me, while you were in Brighton,' he wrote. 'I was very disappointed but I suppose you were too busy to come.' As Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph had authorised a military expedition against King Theebaw of Burma, who, having long refused to halt attacks on British traders and merchant ships, had imposed a Customs fine on a British trading company. Within ten days Mandalay had been occupied and the King taken prisoner. The future of Burma had now to be determined in the Cabinet room at 10 Downing Street. Lord Randolph, his son later wrote, 'was for annexation simple and direct'. Despite Lord Salisbury's hesitations, Lord Randolph's view prevailed; on 1 January 1886, as what he called 'a New Year's present to the Queen', Burma was annexed to the British Empire.

The Conservative Government was defeated in the Commons on 26 January 1886. The subsequent General Election, while securing Lord Randolph a seat in Parliament, gave the Irish Nationalists the balance of power at Westminster. Gladstone, nailing the Liberal flag to the mast of Irish Home Rule, formed a Government with Irish Nationalist support. The young Churchill, his finances once more in difficulties, is said to have remarked, 'We're out of office, and they're economising on me.'

That March, pneumonia brought the eleven-year-old Churchill almost to death's door. His temperature rose to 104. Lady Randolph hurried to Brighton, followed by her husband. 'I am in the next room,' Dr Roose

wrote to Lord Randolph on the evening of Sunday March 14, 'and shall watch the patient during the night – for I am anxious.' At midnight that Sunday the continued high temperature alarmed the doctor, 'indicating exhaustion' he told Lord Randolph at six on the following morning. 'I used stimulants, by the mouth and rectum, with the result that at 2.15 a.m. the temp had fallen to 101, and now to 100, thank God!' Roose added, 'I shall give up my London work and stay by the boy today.'

By midday on Monday March 15 Churchill's temperature had risen again. 'We are still fighting the battle for your boy,' Roose wrote to Lord Randolph at one o'clock that afternoon. 'His temperature is 103 now but he is taking his nourishment *better* and there is no increase of lung mischief. As long as I can fight the temp and keep it under 105 I shall not feel anxious.' The crisis continued but Roose was confident that the danger could be averted. 'Nourishment, stimulants and close watching will save your boy,' he wrote in his 1 p.m. bulletin, and he added, 'I am sanguine of this.'

At eleven that evening Roose sent Lord Randolph another note: 'Your boy, in my opinion, on his perilous path is holding his own well! The temp is 103.5 at which I am satisfied, as I had anticipated 104!' There would be no immediate cause for anxiety for at least twelve hours, 'so *please* have a good night, as we are armed at all points!' The danger was not over. 'We have had a very anxious night,' Roose reported on the following morning, 'but have managed to hold our own.' The boy's pulse still showed 'good power, and the delirium I hope may soon cease and natural sleep occur'. The left lung was still uninvolved. They could expect another twenty-four hours of 'this critical condition'. Roose added in a postscript, 'I have given you a statement of fact, your boy is making a wonderful fight and I do feel please God he will recover.'

By the morning of Wednesday March 17 Churchill was through the worst. 'Winston has had 6 *hours quiet sleep*,' Roose reported. 'Delirium has now ceased. Temp: 99, Pulse: 92, Respiration 28. He sends you and her ladyship his love.' Churchill was also eager to see Mrs Everest, who was waiting for the first opportunity to be with him. The doctor advised against this, however. 'Forgive my troubling you with these lines,' he wrote to Lady Randolph later on March 17, 'to impress upon you the absolute necessity of quiet and sleep for Winston and that Mrs Everest should not be allowed in the sick room today – even the excitement of pleasure at seeing her might do harm! and I am so fearful of relapse knowing that we are not quite out of the wood yet.'

Learning that the worst was over, Lady Randolph's brother-in-law Moreton Frewen wrote to her on March 17: 'Poor dear Winny, & I hope it will leave no troublesome after effects, but even if it leaves him delicate

for a long time to come you will make the more of him after being given back to you from the very threshold of the unknown.'

Slowly the boy recovered. His father went to Brighton twice to see him, once in March with grapes, and again in April when he brought him a toy steam engine. It was a time of considerable controversy for Lord Randolph. Gladstone had pledged the Liberal Government to introduce a Home Rule Bill, aimed at setting up a Parliament in Ireland with power to transact all exclusively Irish business. Lord Randolph's efforts were devoted to attacking and preventing the Bill, stressing the unease of the Irish Protestants at what would be a predominantly Catholic administration. On May 8 *The Times* printed a letter which he had written to a member of the Liberal Party in Glasgow, in which Lord Randolph declared that if the Liberal Government were to impose Home Rule on the Protestants of Ireland, 'Ulster will fight; Ulster will be right.' This phrase became a rallying-cry of the Protestants in the North.

By July Churchill was well enough to return to school. He was excited by the coming General Election. 'I hope the Conservatives will get in,' he wrote to his mother, 'do you think they will?' His father had already faced the electors, on July 2. 'I am very glad Papa got in for South Paddington by so great a majority. I think that was a victory!' Lord Randolph had polled 2,576 votes, as against 769 cast for his opponent. The election result centred upon the part to be played by Joseph Chamberlain, and his seventy-seven fellow breakaway Liberals, who, opposing Home Rule for Ireland, called themselves Liberal Unionists and supported the Conservatives. With that alliance Lord Salisbury formed his second administration. A new political party, the Conservative and Unionist Party, was in the making; fifty-three years later Churchill was to become its Leader.

Lord Randolph, who had greatly encouraged the Liberal Unionist breakaway, became Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was thirty-seven years old. Churchill, who had closely followed the election and its aftermath, was proud of his father's achievement. He was also happy at Brighton. 'I got gradually much stronger in that bracing air and gentle surroundings,' he later wrote. 'I was allowed to learn things which interested me: French, History, lots of Poetry by heart, and above all Riding and Swimming. The impression of those years makes a pleasant picture in my mind, in contrast to my earlier schoolday memories.'

Looking back at his Brighton days six years later, while he was a schoolboy at Harrow, Churchill's reflections were more prosaic. 'I have often thought of Miss Thomsons,' he wrote to a fellow-pupil, '& have arrived at the conclusion that many of the meals & most of the food were utterly damnable. Far be it for me however to speak ill of either Miss

Kate or Miss C. as I have always “cherished the most affectionate remembrances of both” – still, half a sausage – ugh!!!’

In one of his letters in the summer of 1886 Churchill told his mother, ‘I am very sorry to say that I am bankrupt and a little cash would be welcome.’ This was not his first appeal for money, nor was it to be his last; indeed, as his requests for more money began to proliferate, his mother’s letters filled with complaints about his financial extravagance. He was also becoming more and more interested in the world outside school; that September he told his mother of the Brighton municipality’s expenditure of £19,000 to enlarge the Parade, ‘I think it is a great waste of money.’ In the money values of 1990, it was £750,000.

Churchill’s letter about excessive public spending was written four days before Lord Randolph, speaking at Dartford in Kent, pledged himself to reduce Government expenditure. He was also working that autumn on plans to alter the basis of taxation in order, his son later wrote, to apply ‘much more closely than his predecessors that fundamental principle of democratic finance – the adjusting of taxation to the citizen’s ability to pay’.

That winter the son’s need for his father’s love was again disappointed. On November 10, three weeks before his twelfth birthday, he wrote to him, ‘You never came to see me on Sunday when you were in Brighton.’ This was the second time his father had been in Brighton but had not gone to see him.

In preparing his first budget, Lord Randolph sought to persuade both the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War to reduce their spending for the coming year, in order to further the cause of a more equitable taxation system, and to frustrate what his son was later to call ‘an ambitious foreign policy supported by growing armaments’. On December 20, when it became clear that the two Service Ministers were unwilling to cut their respective departmental spending, Lord Randolph wrote to Lord Salisbury, ‘I do not want to be wrangling and quarrelling in the Cabinet, and therefore must request to be allowed to give up my office and retire from the Government.’ As soon as Salisbury received this letter, he treated it as a letter of resignation and accepted it. Lord Randolph was devastated. He had intended his letter as a warning shot, perhaps the decisive shot, in his battle against the Admiralty and the War Office, not as a letter of resignation abruptly ending his career.

The deed was done; Lord Randolph was no longer Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was never to present a budget nor return to the Cabinet. Twenty years later Churchill published a detailed account of his father’s resignation. ‘Of course he hoped the others would give way,’ he wrote. ‘Undoubtedly he expected to prevail.’ His father’s mistake was to have ‘overlooked the anger and jealousy that his sudden rise to power had excited’.

The twelve-year-old boy was soon to experience that mood of public anger. As Lady Randolph explained in February 1887 to her husband, who was then in Morocco, 'Winston was taken to a pantomime at Brighton where they hissed a sketch of you – he burst into tears – & then turned furiously on a man – who was hissing behind him – & said "Stop that row you snub nosed Radical" !!!' Lord Randolph was so delighted at his son's loyalty that he arranged for him to be given a gold sovereign. 'We all of course looked forward to his reconquest of power,' Churchill later wrote. 'We saw as children the passers-by take off their hats in the streets and the workmen grin when they saw his big moustache.'

That summer Churchill fought a valiant battle to be allowed to go to London at the time of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It took him three letters to his mother to achieve his object. This was the first:

My dear Mamma,

Miss Thomson doesn't want me to go home for the Jubilee and because she says that I shall have no place in Westminster Abbey and so it is not worth going. Also that you will be very busy and unable to be with me much.

Now you know that this is not the case. I want to see Buffalo Bill & the Play as you promised me. I shall be very disappointed, disappointed is not the word I shall be miserable, after you have promised me, and all, I shall never trust your promises again. But I know that Mummy loves her Winny much too much for that.

Write to Miss Thomson and say that you have promised me and you want to have me home. Jack entreats you daily I know to let me come and there are seven weeks after the Jubilee before I come home. Don't disappoint me. If you write to Miss Thomson she will not resist you. I could come home on Saturday to stay till Wednesday. I have got a lot of things, pleasant and unpleasant to tell you. Remember for my sake. I am quite well but in a torment about coming home, it would upset me entirely if you were to stop me.

This letter was posted from Brighton on June 11. A second letter followed within twenty-four hours, 'I hope you will not disappoint me. Uncertainty is at all times perplexing. Write to me by return post please!!!' Churchill now enclosed a draft which he had prepared of the letter he wanted his mother to send Miss Thomson. 'Could you allow Winston to come up to London on Saturday the 18th for the Jubilee,' it read. 'I should like him to see the procession very much, and I also promised him that he should come up for the Jubilee.' **Copyrighted Material**

Churchill's draft letter made no mention of Buffalo Bill. But in his letter to his mother, he reminded her again of this aspect of his return to London. The show was to be at Earls Court, presented by Buffalo Bill Cody himself, with large numbers of Indians, cowboys, scouts, settlers and Mexicans. His second letter ended, 'For Heavens sake Remember!!!' His third letter, sent on June 15, was shorter: 'I am nearly mad with suspense. Miss Thomson says that she will let me go if you write to ask for me. For my sake write before it is too late. Write to Miss Thomson by return post please!!!'

Churchill's persistence was rewarded. Lady Randolph did as her son wished, and he went up to London, to celebrate the fiftieth year of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. It was clearly a boisterous visit. 'I hope you will soon forget my bad behaviour while at home,' he wrote to his mother on the day after his return to Brighton, 'and not to make it alter any pleasure in my summer Holidays.' He went on to point out that two other boys who had gone up to London returned even later than he had. As for his work: 'I am getting on capitally in Euclid. I and another boy are top of the school.' Four days later he reported that he was also getting on 'capitally' in Greek and Latin. In a letter on July 5 he reported the opinion of one master 'that I am getting on much better in my Greek'. This was important as 'Greek is my weak point & I cannot get into Winchester without it, so I am very glad I have made a start'.

Churchill hoped to spend his summer holidays in Paris 'or somewhere on the continent'. He suspected that his mother had an extra plan for him. 'My darling,' he wrote to her three weeks before the holidays were to begin, 'I hope you don't intend to make my Holidays miserable by having a Tutor.' She did; the tutor was to be his Greek master, the twenty-four-year-old James Best. Churchill was somewhat assuaged. 'Now as he is a Master here,' he wrote to his mother, 'and I like him pretty well I shall not mind him at all, on one condition viz. "Not to do any work". I give up all other conditions except this one.' Churchill added: 'I never have done work in my holidays and I will not begin now. I will be very good if this is not forced upon me and I am not bothered about it.'

Lady Randolph was determined her son should study during the holidays. But he was becoming skilled at putting his own point of view. 'I promise you I will be a very good boy indeed in the Holidays,' he wrote on July 14. 'Only *do* let me off the work because I am working hard this term & I shall find quite enough to do in the holidays. I am never at a loss for anything to do while I am in the country for I shall be occupied with "Butterflying" all day (I was last year). Do let me try it for a week.' Even if the tutoring was only for one hour a day, he told his mother, 'I shall feel

that I have got to be back at a certain time and it would hang like a dark shadow over my pleasure'.

But tutoring there was to be, though part of Churchill's holiday that summer was again spent with Jack and Mrs Everest on the Isle of Wight. On his return to Brighton he learned that his parents were to send him, not to Winchester, for which he had been preparing, but to Harrow. His earlier ill-health made Harrow more attractive, as it was on a hill. That autumn the headmaster, Dr Weldon, wrote to Lord Randolph, 'You may rely upon my placing him in a House where his health will be carefully watched.'

Churchill was pleased by the decision. 'I am very glad to hear that I am going to Harrow & not to Winchester,' he wrote to his father. 'I think I shall pass the entrance examination, which is not so hard as Winchester.' In Arithmetic, 'we are doing "Square Root" and have quite mastered Decimal fractions & Rule of three'. He was learning a second group of Greek verbs. At the end of term he would be playing Martine in Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui*. He was also learning his part in an extract from a Greek play, *The Knights* by Aristophanes, 'in which there are only two characters one of whom is myself'.

In preparation for the preliminary examination for Harrow, Churchill persevered with his Greek verbs, making steady progress. On his own initiative he wrote for advice to a boy who had been with him at Brighton and had gone on to Harrow. 'He wrote back & told me all about it,' Churchill informed his mother. As the examination drew near, his spirits rose, 'I am hoping to have the success that is due to a long term of hard work.' Jack and Mrs Everest were at Brighton, which also raised his spirits. The result was remarkable: in the first six papers he took, he came first in four, English History, Algebra, Ancient History and Bible History, and second in Geography. Two weeks later he came second in Arithmetic.

As the examinations continued, Lord Randolph went down to Brighton and took his son out to tea. His thirteen-year-old son was already planning his Christmas entertainment. 'We will not have a Christmas tree this year,' he wrote to his mother on December 13. 'But I think a good 3 guinea Conjuror and a Tea and amusements and games after tea would answer better.' For three guineas, Churchill pointed out, the conjuror 'gives ventriloquism and an hours good conjuring'. He would get 'a lot of addresses this time' of boys to invite.

On the following day Churchill's Christmas party plans came to nought. His parents were leaving for Russia in five days' time and would be away until February. 'I am very disappointed that I must spend my holidays without you,' he wrote to his mother on hearing the news from Miss Thomson, 'But I am trying to make the "Best of a bad job". We shall not

be able to have a party of course.' Returning to London, he spent his Christmas holidays without his parents. 'It is very dull without you,' he wrote to his mother on December 26. He also told her that he had won two school prizes, for English and for Scripture.

That Christmas, Mrs Everest was taken ill with diphtheria. 'It is very hard to bear,' Churchill wrote to his mother on December 30, 'we feel so destitute.' He and Jack had left Connaught Place and were being looked after by Dr Roose at 45 Hill Street, off Berkeley Square. Four days later the two boys were taken to Blenheim, where they stayed for a week. 'It has done them good,' their grandmother, the dowager Duchess, wrote to Lord Randolph on 8 January 1888, '& I keep Winston in good order as I know you like it. He is a clever Boy & really not naughty but he wants a firm hand. Jack requires no keeping in order.'

From Blenheim, the two boys returned to London, to stay with the Duchess at 46 Grosvenor Square. They were taken to see the new Gilbert and Sullivan, *HMS Pinafore* and to the pantomime *Puss in Boots*. But a governess was in attendance from ten till seven each day, and the Duchess discouraged too many evening outings. 'I fear Winston thinks me very strict,' she wrote to Lord Randolph on January 19, 'but I really think he goes out too much & I do object to late parties for him. He is so excitable. But he goes back to school on Monday. Meantime he is affectionate & not naughty.' He was also much concerned about Mrs Everest, 'Woomany' as he called her. 'It might have been so much worse if Woomany had died,' he wrote to his mother, who was still in Russia.

In a letter written to await his mother in London, Churchill asked for 'a good Latin-English & a good English-Latin dictionary'. A week later he asked for a Greek Lexicon. He had begun Virgil, 'which I like', and also Herodotus in the original Greek. He was confident he would do well in the Harrow entrance examination. 'I hear that Algebra is an extra subject and so I hope to score in that, as I am very fond of it.' By the end of term he would know the first book of Euclid 'perfectly, which will be more than I shall want. They only require Arithmetic, Vulgar Fractions & Decimal fractions & Simple & Compound Interest, which I know.' He had also made further progress in languages: 'I have learnt some Greek irregular verbs & a lot of French. I do so want to get in.'

In February, Churchill wrote to his mother, 'I am working hard for Harrow.' He was 'not very good at Latin verse but it is of little importance, prose being the chief thing in which I am rapidly improving'. He was learning the geography of the United States. 'When I come home you must question me.' He was also reading novels; when Rider Haggard sent him a copy of his latest book *Allan Quatermain*, Churchill wrote back that he liked it better than *King Solomon's Mines*. 'It is more amusing,' he explained.

Nine days before the Harrow entrance examination, Churchill told his father he was 'getting through the 2nd Book of Virgil's *Aeneid* all-right, I like that better than anything else'. He had finished another group of Greek verbs: 'I hope I shall pass. I think I shall.'

Churchill's confidence was not misplaced. On March 15 he sat, and passed, the Harrow entrance examination. But it had been a nerve-racking experience. When Churchill left Harrow by train for London, Charlotte Thomson informed Lord Randolph, he had 'a severe attack of sickness'. She had been worried about the effect of his 'nervous excitement' on his work and her fears had been realised. 'He has only just scraped through,' she wrote, having been 'terribly upset' after the morning examinations. It was the Latin translation that had been the problem; Churchill assured Miss Thomson 'over and over again', she told Lord Randolph, 'that he had never translated Latin into English so of course he could not do the piece of prose set on the paper. As I knew that he had for more than a year been translating Virgil and for much longer Caesar, I was rather surprised by the assertion but of course I did not contradict him.'

'I have passed,' Churchill wrote to his mother from Brighton on March 16, 'but it was far harder than I expected.' The Latin translation had been 'very, very hard' as was the Greek translation. There had been no Greek Grammar 'in which I had hoped to score' and no French. He was 'very tired now but that does not matter now that I know I have passed. I am longing to go to Harrow, it is such a nice place – beautiful view – beautiful situation – good swimming bath – a good gymnasium – & a carpentering shop & many other attractions.' There was yet another attraction to Harrow, 'You will often be able to come & see me in the summer, it is so near to London you can drive from Victoria in an hour & 15 minutes or so.'

Churchill's last month at Brighton was filled with thoughts of going home. 'I want to have Easter with you, tremendously,' he wrote on March 27. But that Easter his mother was again away from home; in vain he pleaded with her, 'Do come home soon.'

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2

Harrow

Churchill entered Harrow School in April 1888. As at St George's and at Brighton he was a boarder, seeing his parents only in the holidays, if then. 'I like everything immensely,' was his comment in his first letter home, written three days after his arrival. In his second letter, written the next day, he was proud that one of the masters had told him his entrance paper in Arithmetic was 'the best'.

During his first month at Harrow, Churchill joined the school cadet force, and, he told his mother, 'attended my drills punctually'. He also went with the cadet force to Rickmansworth, where there was a mock battle with Haileybury School. 'As I had not got a uniform I only carried cartridges,' he wrote home. 'I carried 100 rounds to give away in the thick of the fight, consequently my business enabled me to get a good view of the field. It was most exciting, you could see through the smoke the enemy getting nearer & nearer.' The Harrow boys were beaten, however, '& forced to retire'.

In his first essay at Harrow, Churchill wrote about Palestine in the time of John the Baptist, when the land 'lay at the feet of the Roman, who was then at the apex of his glory'. Of the Zealots, he wrote that they were 'always ready for a rebellion, ready to risk their lives, their homes, their all for their country's freedom'. As to the Pharisees: 'Their faults were many. Whose faults are few? For let him with all the advantages of Christianity avouch that they are more wicked than himself, he commits the same crime of which he is just denouncing them.'

Churchill was learning to shoot with the Martini-Henry rifle, the one used by the army. He was also learning a thousand lines of Macaulay for a form prize. 'Anyone who likes to take the trouble to learn them can get one,' he explained to his father, 'as there is no limit to the prizes.' On this occasion it was a thousand lines of *The Lays of Ancient Rome* which secured him a prize.

Churchill still yearned for his mother's visits, but sometimes they led to unhappiness of their own. 'Don't be cross with me any more,' he wrote at the end of June. 'I will try and work, but you were so cross to me you made me feel quite dull. I have kept my room quite tidy since you came.' And he added: 'Do come down Mamma on Saturday. I am not lazy & untidy but careless & forgetful.'

Lady Randolph did not visit her son that Saturday. He expected her to do so a week later, however, when he was singing in the school choir as a treble. 'I rank as one of the prominent trebles,' he explained, '& am in what is called the nucleus of the choir. Of course I am so young that my voice has not yet broken and as trebles are rare I am one of the few.' Despite this attraction Lady Randolph did not go down for Speech Day. Churchill had to be content with a visit from his aunt Lady Fanny Marjoribanks, whose son was also at Harrow and whose husband was a rising star on the Liberal benches.

The school songs Churchill sang on Speech Day roused his enthusiasm. 'The stirring patriotism these verses evoked,' his son Randolph later wrote, 'abided with him forever and was the mainspring of his political conduct.' When, at the height of the Blitz in 1940, Randolph accompanied his father to Harrow for the annual school songs, Churchill told him, 'Listening to those boys singing all those well-remembered songs I could see myself fifty years before singing those tales of great deeds and of great men and wondering with intensity how I could ever do something glorious for my country.'

Churchill himself was later to recall, in a speech to the boys at Harrow in October 1945, how he had also been 'much attracted' by the kettle-drum. Again and again he thought, 'If only I could get hold of this on one of these fine evenings.' But he was never allowed that opportunity. 'So I gave up that ambition and transferred my aspirations to another part of the orchestra. I thought, "If I cannot have the kettle-drum I might try to be the conductor". There was a great deal in the gestures, at any rate.' That could not be arranged either, while he was at Harrow, 'but eventually, after a great deal of perseverance, I rose to be conductor of quite a considerable band. It was a very large band and it played with very strange and formidable instruments, and the roar and thunder of its music resounded throughout the world.'

As part of the regular allowance of breaks, Churchill looked forward to going home for a weekend in July. But he was forced to stay at school. It was not that he was 'in any way wilfully troublesome', Henry Davidson, the assistant master, explained to Lady Randolph, 'but his forgetfulness, carelessness, unpunctuality, and irregularity in every way, have really been

so serious, that I write to ask you, when he is at home to speak very gravely to him on the subject'.

There were further complaints to come. 'Winston, I am sorry to say, has, if anything got worse as the term passed,' Davidson explained. 'Constantly late for school, losing his books, and papers and various other things into which I need not enter – he is so regular in his irregularity that I really don't know what to do; and sometimes think he cannot help it.' If he was not able to 'conquer this slovenliness', Davidson warned, 'he will never make a success of a public school'. It was very serious indeed that he had acquired 'such phenomenal slovenliness'. He had 'such good abilities' but these would be 'made useless by habitual negligence'. And yet, Davidson added, 'I ought not to close without telling you that I am very much pleased with some history work he has done for me.' That term Churchill was awarded a form prize for English History.

A new challenge in the autumn term was a school prize for reciting a thousand lines of Shakespeare. Churchill's letters to his parents show how eager he was to win it, but he lost it by only twenty-seven marks, telling them, 'I was rather astonished as I beat some twenty boys who were much older than I.' Then, just before his fourteenth birthday, he wrote with pride of winning a history prize for the second term running. He had also come top in Roman History and was doing well at Greek and Latin.

At home over the Christmas and New Year, Churchill's throat was swollen and his liver 'still bad', he wrote to his mother, who was again travelling during his holiday. Medicine six times a day, he added, 'is a horrible nuisance'. As he recovered he was told by Dr Roose that he must go to the seaside to recuperate fully. Once more he went to the Isle of Wight with Mrs Everest. Back at school, however, illness continued to impede his progress. In March he told his mother he was 'far from well & am in bed because I can hardly stand'. His solace was a visit from Mrs Everest. 'I do not know how the day would have passed but for Woomany,' he told his mother.

Churchill's qualities did not go unnoticed. In April, Welldon decided to take him into his own House, writing to Lord Randolph, 'He has some great gifts and is, I think, making progress in his work.' Lord Randolph had sent his son a bicycle. 'I rode eight miles with it,' he wrote to his father in May, 'it is a beautiful little machine.' He enjoyed his new House, telling his mother, 'All the boys are so kind and nice.' But illness again intervened when he fell off the bicycle and was concussed; he had to spend a week in bed. Once more Mrs Everest hurried down to Harrow, but Churchill wanted his mother to be with him. 'Can't you come instead?' he asked. 'I was rather disappointed at not seeing you as I fully expected to.' The fall had been a serious one. 'I am very tender all over my body,' he told his

mother, 'but feel cheery and not a bit dull, the time passes very quickly. Especially when I can have visitors.' His best piece of news was that the hospital nurse had gone 'and so I am alone with Woomany'.

As he recovered from his concussion, Churchill asked his father to come down for Speech Day. 'I don't think that you will be asked to make a speech,' he sought to reassure him. 'In fact I should think it will be very improbable.' Churchill added, 'You have never been to see me & so everything will be new to you.' It was more than a year since Churchill had entered Harrow. Lord Randolph did at last go down; while he was there he told Welldon he wanted his son to go into the Army Class, instead of the regular classes. Because the Army Class entailed extra lessons on the military subjects needed to enter a military academy, Churchill would have no opportunity to continue with those subjects taken by boys who wished to go to university, as he already hoped to do.

Churchill's results that term were such that there was no reason he should not eventually pass the University entrance examination. But Lord Randolph was emphatic that his son go into the Army, and therefore into the Army Class. Many years later Churchill reflected on his father's decision, recalling a visit of inspection which he had made one holiday to see his son's collection of nearly fifteen hundred toy soldiers. 'All the troops were arranged in the correct formation of attack. He spent twenty minutes studying the scene – which was really impressive – with a keen and captivating smile. At the end he asked me if I would like to go into the army. I thought it would be splendid to command an army, so I said "Yes" at once: and immediately I was taken at my word.'

Churchill added, wryly: 'For years I thought my father with his experience and flair had discerned in me the qualities of military genius. But I was told later that he had only come to the conclusion that I was not clever enough to go to the Bar.' Welldon arranged for Churchill to take the Army Class examination. He did badly in mathematics, making it difficult for him to contemplate going on to Woolwich, the academy for cadets seeking commissions in the Royal Artillery or Royal Engineers. Instead he would have to prepare for Sandhurst, the academy for would-be infantry and cavalry officers. 'I have joined the "Army class",' he wrote to his mother at the end of September. 'It is rather a "bore" as it spoils your half Holiday: however we do French & Geometrical drawing which are the two things which are most necessary for the army.'

As Churchill began the extra work which being in the Army Class entailed, he urged his mother to write to him. 'It is more than a fortnight since I heard from you,' he complained at the beginning of October. 'In fact I have only had one letter this term. It is not very kind darling Mummy to forget all about me, not answer my epistles.' One of Churchill's letters

to his mother, a month before his fifteenth birthday, was dictated to a school friend. 'Milbanke is writing this for me,' he explained, 'as I am having a bath.' Many years later other shorthand writers were to take dictation while Churchill the Prime Minister was in his bath.

Milbanke, who was killed in action in 1915 at Gallipoli, during the landing at Suvla Bay, was nearly two years Churchill's senior. 'When my father came down to see me,' Churchill later recalled, 'he used to take us both to luncheon at the King's Head Hotel. I was thrilled to hear them talk, as if they were equals, with the easy assurance of one man of the world to another. I envied him so much. How I should have loved to have that sort of relationship with my father! But alas I was only a backward schoolboy and my incursions into the conversation were nearly always awkward or foolish.'

Alone with his friends Churchill was far from inhibited or overwhelmed. 'Like other boys at Harrow,' another older boy, Murland Evans, later recalled, 'I was greatly attracted by this extraordinary boy. His commanding intelligence, his bravery, charm, and indifference to ugly surroundings, vivid imagination, descriptive powers, general knowledge of the world and of history – gained no one knew how, but never disputed – and above all that magnetism and sympathy which shone in his eyes, and radiated from a personality which – even under the severe repression of our public school system – dominated great numbers around him, many of whom were his superiors in age and prowess.'

Speaking of his future, Churchill told his aunt Lady Rodney, 'If I had two lives I would be a soldier and a politician. But as there will be no war in my time I shall have to be a politician.' He had become a voracious reader. One boy, finding him curled up in a chair reading, asked to see the book. It was Carlyle's *French Revolution*. But from his father there seemed little encouragement; Churchill's cousin Shane Leslie later recalled that when the boys staged plays at home Lord Randolph would remark, 'I shall preserve a stony and acid silence.'

That winter Churchill was put on 'report' by Welldon; each week his masters had to give an account of his progress. Even when it became clear that his progress was satisfactory and that the masters had 'no complaint' Welldon kept him on report. 'It is a most shameful thing that he should keep me on like this,' Churchill wrote to his mother, urging her to come down and speak to the headmaster direct. 'Please don't be afraid of him, because he always promises fair & acts in a very different way. You must stick up for me because, if you don't nobody else will.'

A week after his fifteenth birthday Churchill wrote proudly to his mother, 'I am working very hard.' So hard, in fact, that despite the extra work of the Army Class, he got his Remove into a higher division of the

fourth form. 'We were delighted to hear you had your remove,' his mother wrote on the eve of leaving for Europe yet again, '& do hope you will continue to work. You ought to feel much encouraged & full of ambition.'

Churchill had begun to study English under a master who taught it with enthusiasm and skill, breathing life into the normally dull topic of sentence construction. The master was Robert Somervell, 'a most delightful man', Churchill later wrote, 'to whom my debt is great'. Somervell's method, Churchill recalled, was to divide up a long sentence into its component clauses 'by means of black, red, blue and green inks', and teaching it almost daily as 'a kind of drill'; by this method 'I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence – which is a noble thing'.

'I am getting on capitally in my new form,' Churchill reported to his mother in January 1890. 'Papa said he thought singing was a waste of time, so I left the singing class and commenced drawing.' He studied drawing for an extra hour each week, in the evening, telling his mother that he had been drawing 'little landscapes & bridges & those sort of things' and was about to begin shading in sepia. An unexpected letter of encouragement came from his grandmother Duchess Fanny, who wrote: 'Am pleased to see you are beginning to be ambitious! You have a great example of industry in your dear father & of thoroughness in work.'

The Army Class, Churchill complained to his father that spring, 'takes me away from all the interesting work of my form & altogether spoils my term'. Nine-tenths of the boys in the Army Class would in any case go to a crammer before their Army Exam. All of them disliked the Army Class because 'it made them come out low in their form'. Harrow was 'a charming place but Harrow & the Army Class don't agree'. His protest was of no avail.

In May, Churchill began learning German. 'Ugh,' he wrote to his mother. 'Still I hope to be able to "Sprechen ze Deutche" one of these days.' This hope was never to be realised.

Half way through the summer term of 1890, Churchill was confronted by parental anger. His father had sent him five pounds, and had not received a thank-you letter until a week later. His half-term school report was also disappointing. These two facts combined to produce a formidable letter from his mother. 'You work in such a fitful inharmonious way,' she wrote, 'that you are bound to come out last – look at your place in the form!' Her letter continued: 'Dearest Winston you make me very unhappy – I had built up such hopes about you & felt so proud of you – & now all is gone. My only consolation is that your conduct is good & that you are an affectionate son – but your work is an insult to your intelligence. If you would only trace out a plan of action for yourself & carry it out & be determined to do so – I am sure you could accomplish anything you

wished.' There was more advice to come. 'The next year or two,' she warned, '& the use you make of them, will affect your whole life – stop and think it out for yourself & take a good pull before it is too late.'

Churchill made an effort to defend himself. The thank-you letter to his father had been written that same evening, he explained, but because of the lateness of the hour he had been forced to give it to someone else to post. 'He I suppose forgot & did not post it until several days had elapsed.' As to his bad report: 'I will not try to excuse myself for not working hard, because I know that what with one thing and another I have been rather lazy. Consequently when the month ended the crash came I got a bad report & got put on report etc, etc. that is more than 3 weeks ago, and in the coming month I am bound to get a good report.' There was plenty of time until the end of term 'and I will do my very best in what remains'.

The crisis passed; Churchill's work improved and his parents' anger was assuaged. That autumn he began to smoke, provoking further criticism. 'Darling Winston,' his mother wrote in September, 'I hope you will try & not smoke. If only you knew how foolish & how silly you look doing it you would give it up, at least for a few years.' There was to be an inducement to giving up smoking, 'I will get Papa to get you a gun & a pony.' Churchill deferred to his mother's advice. He would give up smoking 'at any rate for six months'. That September Duchess Fanny had further advice: 'Take care of yourself & work well & keep out of scrapes & don't flare up so easily!!!'

As Churchill approached his sixteenth birthday, he followed with alarm the spread of an influenza epidemic that, after ravaging much of Europe and Asia, spread, briefly, to Britain. The epidemic became the subject of a poem he wrote, in twelve verses, that was published in the *Harrovian* magazine. One verse read,

*O'er miles of bleak Siberia's plains
Where Russian exiles toil in chains
It moved with noiseless tread,
And as it slowly glided by
There followed it across the sky
The spirits of the dead.*

Another verse referred to the two German provinces he had visited with his father seven years earlier,

*Fair Alsace and forlorn Lorraine,
The cause of bitterness and pain
In many a Gallic breast,*

*Receive the vile, insatiate scourge,
And from their towns with it emerge
And never stay nor rest.*

The final verse rejoiced that Britain had not been as terribly affected as the Continents, and expressed his pride in the British Empire,

*God shield our Empire from the might
Of war or famine, plague or blight
And all the power of Hell,
And keep it ever in the hands
Of those who fought 'gainst other lands,
Who fought and conquered well.*

As his sixteenth birthday approached, Churchill worked on his Army preliminary examination. Curiously insensitive to the strains of such work, his mother let it be known that she was not satisfied with his progress. 'I hear that you are greatly incensed against me!' he wrote. 'I am very sorry. But I am very hard at work & I am afraid some enemy hath sown tares in your mind.' He had already explained that his earlier problems had arisen 'on account of my being put under a master whom I hated & who returned that hate'. He was now being taught 'by masters who take the greatest interest in me & who say that I have been working very well. If you will take my word of honour to the effect that I am working my very best, well & good, if not – I cannot do anything more than try.'

It was from one of his mother's friends, Lady Wilton, who signed her letters to him 'your deputy mother', that Churchill now received words of affection and encouragement. 'I'm sorry you have so much hard work before you,' she wrote ten days before his sixteenth birthday, 'but – if you face it – it will gradually appear less hard – & I'm sure you'll pass well.' The examination was to take place on December 10. 'I expect you will distinguish yourself,' Lady Wilton wrote in a second letter, adding, 'I will rejoice in it'.

In Geography, Churchill would have to answer questions about one particular country; which country, none of the boys knew. On the night before the exam he wrote the names of each of the twenty-five possible countries on scraps of paper, put them into his hat, closed his eyes, and drew one out. 'New Zealand was the one,' he wrote to his mother, 'and New Zealand was the first question on the paper.' This good luck, combined with Churchill's hard work over many months, was effective. He passed the examination in all subjects. 'I am very pleased to hear the good news,' Duchess Fanny wrote to him when the results were known. 'I hope it will

encourage you to continue to exert & distinguish yourself & make us all proud of you.'

Churchill and Jack spent the New Year of 1891 at Banstead, a house which Lord Randolph had rented near Newmarket racecourse. As their parents were yet again abroad, Mrs Everest looked after them. 'We have slaughtered many rabbits,' Churchill reported to his mother. 'About eleven brace altogether. Tomorrow we slay the rats.' His main effort at Banstead with Jack was to build a 'Den', a hut made of mud and planks, with a straw floor. Surrounded by a ditch which served as a moat, the Den was defended with a home-made elastic catapult that fired apples at any would-be intruder. Churchill took charge of the defences, using his brother Jack, and his two cousins, the five-year-old Shane Leslie and the six-year-old Hugh Frewen, sometimes as allies to be drilled and defended, sometimes as enemies to be repulsed.

Back at Harrow, Churchill continued to be troubled by ill-health, writing to his mother in May of how he had strained his abdomen, felt considerable pain, and was 'frightened'. His teeth were also giving him trouble. 'Poor old man,' Mrs Everest wrote, 'have you tried the heroin I got you – get a bottle of Elliman's embrocation & rub your face when you go to bed & tie your sock up over your face, after rubbing for a 1/4 of an hour, try it I am sure it will do you good.' To his mother Churchill signed himself, 'Your tooth-tormented – but affectionate son.' Her advice was that he should brush his teeth more often. From Mrs Everest came a warning about not going swimming in the Harrow pool as 'the wind is still east & treacherous'. Her kindly advice was continuous. 'Be sure,' she wrote that summer, 'you don't attempt to get into the train after it moves off dear. I always feel uneasy about that because you stand at the Book Stall reading & forget your train. Do be careful there's a dear boy.'

That May, Churchill also told his mother he had been in the 'deuce of a row' at school. To his father, who was in South Africa, he explained how he and four other boys, while out walking, had discovered a disused factory. 'Everything was in ruin and decay but some windows yet remained unbroken; we facilitated the progress of time with regard to these, with the result that the watchman complained to Welldon, who having made enquiries and discoveries, "swished" us.' It was not this episode, however, but another fault, that led to a further parental complaint. 'Mamma is in despair about your spending so much money,' Mrs Everest wrote in the second week of June. 'She is greatly troubled about it, she says you are always asking her for more money.' In his defence Churchill explained to his mother that he had to pay his repeated dentist bills and taxi fares to the dentist, as well as 'an old bicycle debt' and the 'window smashing stupidity'.

Churchill had been made a Lance Corporal in the school cadet force. There had been a 'sham fight' which he had enjoyed immensely, he told his father. 'I took the opera glasses you gave me and through them scrutinised the foe.' He was suffering that summer from pain in his gums. 'I am not able to go out,' he wrote to his father, 'as I am tormented with toothache which has now turned to an abscess, so my face is swelled to twice its normal size.' From Mrs Everest came advice about his teeth, 'Don't eat too many of those nasty pickles, they are poisonous things.' One tooth would have to go; it was finally extracted in London under the supervision of a leading authority on the use of anaesthetics in dental surgery. 'I remembered nothing,' Churchill told his mother, 'but went to sleep & snored throughout the whole performance.'

Churchill hoped to spend a week that summer at Banstead, in his Den. But Mrs Everest explained that 'the reason Mamma cannot have you home is the house is to be full of visitors for the race week'. He went instead to London, staying with Duchess Fanny at 50 Grosvenor Square. While he was in London his mother's friend Count Kinsky took him to the Crystal Palace, where they saw a fire-brigade drill specially performed in the presence of the German Emperor, William II. 'There were nearly 2,000 firemen & 100 engines,' Churchill told his brother. The Emperor wore a helmet 'of bright brass surmounted by a white eagle nearly six inches high, a polished steel cuirass & a perfectly white uniform with high boots'. After the march-past, Kinsky took Churchill out to dine. 'Very tolerable dinner,' he told Jack. 'Lots of champagne which pleased your loving brother very much.'

Welldon had suggested that Churchill go to France to improve his French for the Army examination. Churchill begged his mother to let him stay in England. 'I shouldn't see Jack nor you, nor Everest at all.' As for the examination: 'Really I feel less keen about the Army every day. I think the Church would suit me much better.' After much correspondence and heated argument it was agreed that he would not have to go to France; a governess would suffice. 'I can't tell you how happy I am that I am not to go abroad for the holidays,' he wrote to his mother. From Banstead came a letter from Jack; the Den was 'very hard to approach for huge thistles & stinging nettles are all round about, and the ditch is empty of water'. His French lessons over, Churchill set to work to clear the Den and make it defensible again. 'Here I am at Banstead,' he wrote to his father at the end of August, 'leading what to me is an almost ideal existence.'

The two brothers 'have been happy as kings riding and shooting', Lady Randolph wrote to her husband in mid-September, 'and lately they have had great fun building a house. We had ten there today'. Shortly before he had to return to school for the autumn term, Churchill had a bilious

attack, and remained in London for two extra days. Welldon demanded a letter of explanation. 'Don't say anything about the theatre,' Churchill warned his mother, 'or that would make him rampant. Merely say I looked tired & pale from the journey (as indeed I did) & that, combined with the fact that you wanted me to see a doctor induced you to "Keep me back".'

That term Churchill dropped German and began Chemistry. 'It is very interesting,' he told his brother, '& when I come home I will show you many wonders.' His mother was anxious to find a tutor who would travel abroad with him in the next holidays. 'On the whole he has been a very good boy,' she explained to Lord Randolph, 'but honestly he is getting a bit too old for a woman to manage. After all he will be seventeen in two months and he really requires to be with a man.'

The 'woman' was Mrs Everest, to whom Churchill was as devoted as she to him. 'Fancy having a room all to yourself,' she wrote at the end of September, 'but my dearest Boy do let me impress it upon you to be careful of your fire & candle at night. Don't go to sleep and leave it burning by your bedside.' He should work hard that term, she advised, not only to please his parents but to 'disappoint some of your relations who prophesy a future of profligacy for you'.

Churchill did not depend only on his mother for his luxuries. 'I am going to sell my bicycle for a bulldog,' he wrote to her that term. 'I have known him some time & he is very tame & affectionate.' His father had told him he used to have a bulldog at Eton, 'so why not I at Harrow?'

Work that term went well. 'Mr Welldon told me since his return he has worked very hard,' Lady Randolph told her husband in October. But from Mrs Everest came a protest. 'I think you are awfully extravagant to have spent 15/- in one week,' she wrote, 'some families of six or seven people have to live upon 12/- a week. You squander it away & the more you have the more you want & spend.' Her letter ended: 'My poor sweet old precious lamb how I am longing for a hug – although you are not perfect I do love you so very much & I do so want you to have more discretion & judgment about spending your money. You do everything at random my Pet without thinking & it is a growing evil & unless you try & cure yourself of it you will have to suffer severely later on.'

That term Churchill had his first letter published; a two-sentence appeal for more convenient opening hours for the school library, it appeared in the school magazine, the *Harrovian*, on 8 October 1891. Six weeks later, in a much longer letter, he urged that greater use be made of the school gymnasium for special events. 'It is time there should be a change,' he wrote, 'and I rely on your influential columns to work that change.'

A week before his seventeenth birthday, Churchill went to London for the day. A postscript to his next letter home contained a reference to the

opposite sex. 'It was awfully bad luck having to go,' he wrote to his mother, 'just as I was making an impression on the pretty Miss Weaslet. Another 10 minutes and . . . !?'

During that day in London, Churchill learned that Mrs Everest was to leave Lady Randolph's employ. Jack was now eleven and a nanny was no longer needed. 'I do not feel very happy & cannot sleep,' Mrs Everest wrote to Churchill. 'But I suppose there must be something to bring us to our end.' He must remember, she added, to wear a coat 'this wet weather'. As for his younger brother: 'Please don't tell Jackie about my going away he will be so unhappy poor darling. What a cruel world this is.' Distressed at Mrs Everest's imminent departure, Churchill protested vigorously on Jack's behalf. It was eventually arranged that she would work for their grandmother, Duchess Fanny, at Grosvenor Square, where the two boys would still see her.

A week after his seventeenth birthday, Churchill wrote to his mother to say that he once more refused to go to France, this time during the Christmas holidays to learn French with a family in Rouen. The family had been chosen by Welldon. If he went, he explained, he would miss his father's homecoming from South Africa. If forced to go, 'I will do as little as I can and the holidays will be one continual battle.' Lady Randolph was not pleased by this threat. 'My dear boy,' she replied, 'I feel for you in every way & can quite understand your anxiety & desire to be at home for Xmas, but quite apart from other considerations, the tone of your letter is not calculated to make one over lenient. When one wants something in this world, it is not by delivering ultimatums that one is likely to get it. I tell you frankly that I am going to decide not you.'

Churchill did not give up the argument. 'You say that "You tell me frankly", very well Mamma I only told you frankly my intentions. You say it is for you to decide. I am required to give up my holidays – not you, I am forced to go to people who bore me excessively – not you.' He was 'very much surprised and pained to think that both you & Papa should treat me so, as a machine. I should like to know if Papa was asked to "give up his holidays" when he was at Eton.'

Towards the end of his letter, which covered three pages, Churchill wrote: 'I am more unhappy than I can possibly say. Your unkindness has relieved me however from all feelings of duty.' Lady Randolph was now much angered. 'I have only read one page of your letter,' she replied, 'and I send it back to you – as its style does not please me.' Upset, Churchill answered that he would never again write her a letter 'of any length, as in my letter's length I can perceive a reason for your not reading it'. He added: 'I expect you were too busy with your parties and arrangements for Christmas. I comfort myself by this.'

Both Welldon and Lady Randolph were emphatic that Churchill should study French in France that holiday. It was arranged that the recently appointed Modern Languages master at Harrow, Bernard Minssen, would accompany him, and that he would stay with Minssen's parents at Versailles. 'Mr Minssen will do everything for him, if he is docile and industrious,' Welldon wrote to Lady Randolph, 'but he will not let him waste his time and, if he is idle, he must be sent home.' Churchill would be allowed to accept only three social invitations a week, and Minssen would supply 'such pocket money as is necessary'.

Churchill stayed at Versailles for a month. 'The food is very queer,' he wrote to his mother in his first letter. 'But there is plenty, & on the whole it is good.' Minssen's parents were being 'very kind' to him. 'Of course,' he added, 'I would give much to return, if you wish it I will come tomorrow – but considering all things I am prepared to stay my month.' From Mrs Everest came a letter of encouragement: 'Cheer up old Boy, enjoy yourself & try to feel contented. You have very much to be thankful for, if only you consider, & fancy how nice it will be to be able to *parlez vous francais*.'

Life at Versailles did not prove too burdensome. Three of Lady Randolph's friends invited Churchill to meals; one of them, the Austro-Hungarian railway magnate Baron Maurice de Hirsch, took him to the morgue under one of the bridges over the Seine, to see the corpses which had been dragged out of the river that day. 'Only 3 Macabres – not a good bag,' Churchill reported to his mother.

As his month at Versailles came to an end Churchill hoped to persuade his parents to let him have a week off school, in order to be with his father, whom he had not seen for more than eight months. But it was not to be. 'The loss of a week now,' his father wrote from London in mid-January, 'means your not passing, which I am sure you will admit would be very discreditable & disadvantageous.' Father and son would still have 'a few days together' before school began, Lord Randolph noted, and after that the Easter holidays 'will soon be upon us, tho I must say I hope you will work like a little dray horse right up to the summer examination, only about four months off.'

Churchill worked extremely hard throughout the early months of 1892. He also began preparing for the school fencing cup. Money problems continued to beset him. 'I am getting terribly low in my finances,' he wrote to his mother in February. 'You say I never write for love but always for money. I think you are right but remember that you are my banker and who else have I to write to?'

In March, Lady Randolph went to Monte Carlo. 'I am very sick with you for going away like that,' Churchill wrote. 'He was only a few days away from the fencing competition. He was even more 'terrified', he told her,

to learn that she had been robbed of her purse at the Casino, 'for at the same moment I must put in a request for "un peu plus d'argent"'. He also had good news to impart: 'I have won the fencing. A very fine cup. I was far and away first. Absolutely untouched in the finals.'

Churchill was now preparing for the Public Schools fencing championship, but when he asked his father to come to Aldershot to watch him, Lord Randolph replied, 'It is Sandown races which I must go to.' As to Churchill's continual requests for money, 'If you were a millionaire,' his father complained that March, 'you could not be more extravagant.' Were he to get into the Army 'six months of it will see you in the Bankruptcy Court'. In his defence, Churchill pointed out that he had to pay each week for his own teas and breakfasts, for fruit, and for Saturday night biscuits; these alone used up his parents' allowance of a pound a week. This explanation, accurate in itself, did not entirely assuage his mother. 'Your wants are many,' she wrote at the beginning of May, '& you seem a perfect sieve as regards money.'

That month Churchill won the Public Schools fencing championship. 'His success,' wrote the *Harrovian*, 'was chiefly due to his quick and dashing attack, which quite took his opponents by surprise.' Preparation for the Army exam was now continuous. 'I am working awfully hard,' he told his mother, 'without rotting I have done at least 10 hours today.' But the work was in vain; when he took the Sandhurst entrance examination that July he failed. The minimum marks needed to enter the Cavalry were 6,457; Churchill obtained 5,100. Of the 693 candidates he came 390th. The results were not entirely discouraging; in English History he was eighteenth out of more than four hundred candidates who took the paper. 'I think your marks & place very creditable for your first try,' wrote his Army Class tutor, Louis Moriarty.

Churchill would have to take the examination again. 'If he fails again,' Lord Randolph wrote to Duchess Fanny, 'I shall think about putting him in business.' Using his Rothschild connection 'I could get him something very good.'

In the summer of 1892 Lord Salisbury's Conservative Government was defeated, and Gladstone once more became Prime Minister. Although Lord Randolph had long been excluded from Conservative counsels, it was thought, Churchill later recalled, that in opposition he would regain his Parliamentary ascendancy: 'No one cherished these hopes more ardently than I.' Such hopes were illusions. 'Although in the past little had been said in my hearing,' Churchill later wrote, 'one could not grow up in my father's house, and still less among his mother and sisters, without understanding that there had been a great political disaster.'

That August, at Banstead, Churchill startled his father by firing a double-barrelled gun at a rabbit which had appeared on the lawn right under his window. 'He had been very angry and disturbed,' Churchill recalled. 'Understanding at once that I was distressed, he took occasion to reassure me. I then had one of the three or four long intimate conversations with him which are all I can boast.' Lord Randolph explained to his son that older people, absorbed in their own affairs, were not always considerate towards the young 'and might speak roughly in sudden annoyance'. He then began to talk 'in the most wonderful and captivating manner about school and going into the Army and the grown-up life which lay beyond. I listened spellbound to this sudden complete departure from his usual reserve, amazed at his intimate comprehension of all my affairs. Then at the end he said, "Do remember things do not always go right with me. My every action is misjudged and every word distorted. So make some allowances."'

That autumn Jack joined his brother at Harrow, as he worked to take the Army exam again. 'I suppose,' wrote Lady Randolph that September, 'I have made too much fuss over you & made you out a sort of paragon. However it will be all right if you put your shoulder to the wheel this time.' Even the headmaster was helping. 'Welldon is very nice,' Churchill told his mother. 'He makes me do proses for him every evening and looks over them himself with me; a thing hitherto unheard of, as he of course is very pressed for time.'

The examination was to take place at the end of November, a day before Churchill's eighteenth birthday. 'His work this term has been excellent,' Welldon told Lord Randolph. 'He understands now the need of taking trouble, and the way to take it, and, whatever happens to him, I shall consider that in the last twelve months he has learned a lesson of life-long value.' Welldon added, 'It is due to him to say that of late he has done all that could be asked of him.'

When the results were announced Churchill was devastated to learn that he had failed again. All his marks had improved, but not sufficiently; he had obtained 6,106, only 351 short of the pass mark. In Chemistry he had come eighth out of 134 candidates. As Welldon had warned Lord Randolph, the standard, because of a rise in the permitted age of admission, was 'likely to be very high'. From his mathematics tutor, C.H.P. Mayo, came words of encouragement, 'A gain of 900 marks in so short a time is very pleasing and must make you feel confident about the examination in June.'

That November, Lord Randolph's elder brother Blandford, 8th Duke of Marlborough, died suddenly at Blenheim in the age of forty-eight. Blandford's son, Churchill's cousin Sunny, was now Duke of

Marlborough. He was not quite twenty-one. Were Sunny to die before having a son, Lord Randolph would become Duke of Marlborough, and Churchill, as the heir to the Dukedom, would be Marquess of Blandford.

Churchill was now eighteen. He still had to pass a third examination if he was to enter the Army. He was to take this third exam, not at school, but at a special crammers. His nine years as a schoolboy and a boarder at St George's, Brighton and Harrow had been a predominantly unhappy time, 'a sombre grey patch on the chart of my journey', he later called it. 'It was an unending spell of worries that did not then seem petty, and of toil uncheered by fruition; a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony.' All his contemporaries, he later wrote, and even younger boys, 'seemed in every way better adapted to the condition of our little world. They were far better at both games and at the lessons. It is not pleasant to feel oneself so completely outclassed and left behind at the very beginning of the race.'

'I am all for the Public schools,' was Churchill's comment in 1930, 'but I do not want to go there again.'

3

Towards the Army: 'A fresh start'

On 11 January 1893, diligent readers of *The Times* learned, from a small news item, that the elder son of Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill had 'met with an accident' on the previous afternoon. 'No bones were broken,' the newspaper reported, 'but he was very much shaken and bruised.' He had in fact fractured his thigh, though in the year before the first use of X-rays this was not known; indeed, it did not become known for seventy years, when this same thigh was X-rayed after a fall in Monte Carlo in 1963.

While seeking to evade his brother and a cousin during a holiday chase on his grandmother's estate in Bournemouth, Churchill, trapped on a bridge over a chine, and looking for a way to evade capture, had seen the slender top of a fir tree and jumped on to it. His grip failed him and he plunged down the ravine. It had been a twenty-nine-foot fall, on hard ground. For three days he lay unconscious. Then, in considerable pain, he was taken up to London. 'The doctors say I shall not be cured for two months yet,' he wrote to Jack in the first week of February. 'I pass the greater part of my time in bed.'

For the last month of his recuperation Churchill went back to the south coast, this time to Brighton, to the house of the 8th Duke of Marlborough's widow, Duchess Lily. She was 'kindness personified' he wrote to his father. While at Brighton he befriended a young Army officer, Hugh Wyllie; twenty-three years later Wyllie, then serving on the Western Front, was killed by a shell on the Menin road.

At the beginning of March, Churchill began work at Captain James's, a crammers in Lexham Gardens, in West London. 'I have issued orders,' James wrote to Lord Randolph, 'for your son to be kept at work and that in future he is to do the full hours. I had to speak to him the other day about his casual manner. I think the boy means well but he is distinctly

inclined to be inattentive and to think too much of his abilities.' Churchill had been 'rather too much inclined up to the present,' James wrote, 'to teach his instructors instead of endeavouring to learn from them, and this is not the frame of mind conducive to success.' James had been particularly annoyed when his new pupil 'suggested to me that his knowledge of history was such that he did not want any more teaching in it! The boy has very many good points in him but what he wants is very firm handling.'

That Easter, Churchill returned to Brighton. 'I am very glad to have Winston with me,' Duchess Lily wrote to Lord Randolph, 'for I have grown really fond of the boy. He has lots of good in him – and only needs sometimes to be corrected, which he always takes so smartly and well.'

While at Brighton, Churchill had sent a telegram to his father warning of an outbreak of fever at Harrow. He was worried that his brother might be in danger of catching it. 'Papa was so angry with you for telegraphing to him in that stupid way,' Lady Randolph wrote in rebuke. '*Of course* we all know about the fever from Jack & from Mr Welldon – & in any case to write was quite enough. You take too much on yourself young man, & write in such a pompous style. I'm afraid you are becoming a prig!'

Among Duchess Lily's dinner guests while Churchill was at Brighton was A.J. Balfour, the future Conservative Prime Minister. Lady Randolph was somewhat nervous of her son's social life. 'I don't want to preach dear boy, but mind you are quiet & don't talk too much & don't drink too much.' Churchill now followed his father's own speeches carefully, later recalling with sadness that 'he seemed to be hardly holding his own'. He hoped the time would eventually come when he would be able 'come to his aid', and he encouraged his father with enthusiastic comments on his speeches. 'If you will let me say so,' he wrote after reading the text of one such speech in *The Times*, 'I thought it better than anything you have done so far.' He also became a frequent visitor to the House of Commons, always able because of his father to find a place in the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery.

At lunch and dinner parties given by his parents in the spring of 1893, Churchill met two future Liberal Prime Ministers, Lord Rosebery and H.H. Asquith. On April 21 he was in the Gallery when Gladstone wound up the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. 'The Grand Old Man,' he later recalled, 'looked like a great white eagle at once fierce and splendid. His sentences rolled forth majestically and everyone hung upon his lips and gestures, eager to cheer or to deride.'

After a dinner at Grosvenor Square at the end of May, Churchill's uncle Edward Marjoribanks, then Liberal Chief Whip, spent half an hour explaining to him how the Liberals would overcome the opposition of the House of Lords. 'I wish you had been there to answer him,' Churchill wrote to his father, who was at a public meeting in Bradford, 'as I am sure there

was an answer though I could not think of it.' The Liberals were in fact unable to find a means of overcoming the Peers, who defeated the Home Rule Bill by 419 votes to 41. 'Overcoming the Peers' was to be Churchill's own battle cry fifteen years later.

A newly elected Conservative MP, Edward Carson, invited Churchill to dine with him in the House of Commons. Churchill asked his father if he could break off his work at the crammers to do so. That week Churchill was Carson's guest at a Home Rule debate. Twenty-one years later, when Carson himself took Lord Randolph's cry 'Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right' to the streets, Churchill was not only his opponent, but was prepared to use force against Carson's Ulster Volunteers.

At the end of July, Churchill took his third Sandhurst examination. On August 3, before the results were known, he prepared to leave London for Switzerland and Italy with his brother Jack and a tutor, John Little. They met at the station, where, to Churchill's surprise, Little congratulated him on his success. It was the first he knew of it. 'I looked in the paper', he told his father, '& found this to be true.' He was at last a soldier.

Churchill had raised his marks by 163, to 6,309. This was not quite good enough, by only eighteen marks, to get him into the infantry, but he came fourth on the cavalry list. From Dover, just before crossing the Channel, he sent telegrams announcing his success to his parents, his relations and his former headmaster. 'I was so pleased to get your wire today and to know you had "got in" !!' Duchess Lily replied that same day. 'Never mind the infantry: you will love the cavalry, and when Papa comes back we will get the charger.' She added, '*Don't* tumble down another precipice and hurt any more of your organs – for I will not be there to take care of you.'

'I cannot help saying how much I rejoice in your success,' wrote Welldon, 'and how keenly I feel that you have deserved it.'

As he travelled through Switzerland, Churchill sent his father two accounts of the holiday. In the first week of August he was at a hotel in Lucerne with 'lifts, electric light & fireworks (every Saturday)'. On the fourth day of the holiday Mr Little wrote to Lord Randolph, 'We have all got on very well together; although Winston is inclined to be extravagant.' On August 8 Churchill wrote to his father, 'I am looking forward to going to Sandhurst very much, & am very thankful I was lucky enough to get in.' Three days later he promised his father he would 'try & do well there, from the first'.

On August 14, when he was in Milan, Churchill received a letter from his father about the Sandhurst results. It was a letter neither of congratulation nor of praise. Unknown to his son, Lord Randolph was beset by an illness, diagnosed by his doctors as syphilis, that was undermining his health and his sanity. He could share none of the pleasure of Duchess Lily

or Dr Welldon at his son's success. 'I am rather surprised,' he wrote, 'at your tone of exultation over your inclusion in the Sandhurst list. There are two ways of winning in an examination, one creditable, the other the reverse. You have unfortunately chosen the latter method, and appear to be much pleased with your success.' In the failure to get into the infantry, Lord Randolph continued, 'is demonstrated beyond refutation your slovenly happy-go-lucky harum scarum style of work for which you have always been distinguished at your various schools. Never have I received a really good report of your conduct in your work from any master or tutor you had from time to time to do with.'

Showing all the anger that was to characterize the gradual collapse of his nervous system, Lord Randolph continued, 'With all the advantages you had, with all the abilities which you foolishly think yourself to possess & which some of your relations claim for you, with all the efforts that have been made to make your life easy & agreeable & your work neither oppressive nor distasteful, this is the grand result that you come up among the 2nd rate & 3rd rate class who are only good for commissions in a cavalry regiment.' There was more anger to come, the sign of a mind that was becoming slowly deranged, although the young Churchill had no idea of this. 'Now it is a good thing,' Lord Randolph continued, 'to put this business very plainly before you. Do not think I am going to take the trouble of writing you long letters after every folly & failure you commit & undergo. I shall not write again on these matters & you need not trouble to write any answer to this part of my letter, because I no longer attach the slightest weight to anything you may say about your own achievements & exploits.'

The next paragraph of Lord Randolph's letter was the harshest. 'Make this position indelibly impressed on your mind,' he wrote, 'that if your conduct and action at Sandhurst is similar to what it has been in the other establishments in which it has been sought vainly to impart to you some education, then my responsibility for you is over. I shall leave you to depend on yourself, giving you merely such assistance as may be necessary to permit of a respectable life. Because I am certain that if you cannot prevent yourself from leading the idle useless unprofitable life you have had during your schooldays & later months, you will become a mere social wastrel, one of the hundreds of the public school failures, and you will degenerate into a shabby unhappy & futile existence. If that is so you will have to bear all the blame for such misfortunes yourself. Your own conscience will enable you to recall & enumerate all the efforts that have been made to give you the best of chances which you were entitled to by your position, & how you have practically neglected them all.'

Lord Randolph had sent a similarly disturbed letter to Duchess Fanny, in which he wrote that the 'whole result' of the family's kindnesses to the

young boy 'had been either at Harrow or Eton to prove his total worthlessness as a scholar or a conscientious worker'. Churchill had of course never been to Eton; his father was already losing his grip on reality. Unaware of the cause, Churchill was crushed by his father's rebuke. 'When he showed me your letter,' Mr Little wrote to Lord Randolph, 'we had a long talk and he told me a good deal about his views of man and things. He was a good deal depressed.' Mr Little tried to help Churchill overcome the shock of his father's letter, pointing out that in going to Sandhurst he would begin what was 'practically a new page in his life', and that such opportunities for a new start occurred 'at most, but once or twice in a lifetime'.

'I am very sorry indeed that you are displeased with me,' the unhappy Churchill wrote to his father from Milan. 'As however you tell me not to refer to the part of your letter about the Examination I will not do so, but will try to modify your opinion of me by my work & conduct at Sandhurst during the time I shall be there.' Churchill sought to assure him, 'My extremely low place in passing in will have no effect whatever on my chance there.' To his mother he wrote that same day of what a disappointment it was to find that his father was 'not satisfied', and he added, 'After slaving away at Harrow & James' for this Exam, & trying, as far as I could, to make up for the time I had wasted, I was only too delighted to find that I had at length got in.' At Sandhurst he would begin with new subjects, 'in which I shall not be handicapped by past illness'.

'If I had failed,' Churchill told his mother, 'there would have been an end of all my chances. As it is, my fate is in my own hands & I have a fresh start.'

The holiday continued, with swimming in the baths at Milan and a visit to the cathedral. Then the trio went north to Baveno for an expedition in a rowing boat on Lake Maggiore. Then they went back to Switzerland, to Zermatt, before returning to England. Churchill was pleased that as a result of a number of last-minute vacancies he could go into the infantry after all. Lord Randolph had in fact used his influence to obtain a special commission for his son in the infantry, in the 60th Rifles. 'The future now is in your hands,' Lady Randolph wrote that September, 'to make or to mar it. I have trust in you to make it a success.'

Churchill's first letters from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, reveal his determination to make the best of his new career. 'Of course it is very uncomfortable,' he wrote to his father about his room: 'No carpet or curtains. No ornamentation or adornments of any kind. No hot water and very little cold.' The discipline was 'far stricter than Harrow. Hardly any law is given to juniors on joining. No excuse is ever taken – not even with a plea of "don't know" – after the first few hours, and of course no such

thing as unpunctuality or untidiness is tolerated.' There was, however, Churchill wrote, 'something very exhilarating in the military manner in which everything works; and I think that I shall like my life here during the next 18 months very much'.

Churchill quickly became absorbed in the professional world of the soldier. 'The work is very interesting and extremely practical,' he wrote to his father on his tenth day, 'Shot and shell of all kinds – bridges, guns, field and siege, mapping, keeping regimental savings bank accounts, inspecting meat etc', as well as the parades and drills. There were five subjects of study; fortification, tactics, topography, military law, and military administration.

Lord Randolph remained cantankerous, complaining on several occasions about the style of his son's letters to him. 'I am awfully sorry that Papa does not approve of my letters,' Churchill wrote to his mother. 'I take a great deal of pains over them & often re-write entire pages. If I write a descriptive account of my life here, I receive a hint from you that my style is too sententious & stilted. If on the other hand I write a plain and excessively simple letter – it is put down as slovenly. I never can do anything right.' Thus far, Churchill added: 'I have been extremely good. Neither late nor lazy, & have always had five minutes to wait before each parade or study.'

Churchill's letters to his parents were full of enthusiasm. 'Today,' he wrote to his father on September 20, 'we learnt to make all kinds of knots and to lash beams together. We have also been out making, or learning to make sketch maps.' He was shooting with both revolver and rifle. 'On Monday we have to go and fire with a new 12 pounder gun, which has just been issued to the Artillery.' After a month he wrote proudly to his mother, 'So far I have not been late for anything (& there are at least six engagements per diem).' From Mrs Everest came the same caring counsel he had received from her while he was at Harrow, 'Don't expose yourself to the sun this hot weather dear', and 'Don't run into debt or keep bad company.'

Ill-health was still a burden and a worry; that October, after a three-quarter of a mile run with 'rifles & accoutrements', Churchill had to be helped off the parade ground and, he told his mother, 'have been bad ever since'. He had seen the doctor, who said there was nothing wrong 'except that my heart does not seem very strong'.

That autumn Churchill's relationship with his father improved, as did Lord Randolph's health, though this was only a temporary remission. 'I think Papa seems much better for his rest,' Churchill wrote to his mother, ' & much less nervous.' He had been 'very pleased to see me and talked to me for quite a long time about his speeches & my prospects'. Churchill was pleased when his father, in a renewed burst of political vigour, lashed into

Asquith during a speech at Yarmouth, calling Asquith's speeches 'a labyrinth of nonsense'. The Yarmouth speech, he told his father, was 'very good'. The relationship between father and son was closer than it had ever been. His son was 'much smartened up', Lord Randolph wrote to Duchess Fanny; at Lord Rothschild's house at Tring the guests 'took a great deal of notice of him' and yet he was 'very quiet & nice mannered'.

'What a comfortable house this is,' was Churchill's comment to his mother on Tring, comparing it with Sandhurst's 'dilapidated & tobacco-smelling rooms'. Lord Randolph now gave his son some extra money to pay his bills, and sent him two boxes of his best cigarettes. He also took him to the Empire Theatre and to the homes of his racing friends. Yet even at this time of closeness all was not well. 'If ever I began to show the slightest idea of comradeship,' Churchill later recalled, 'he was immediately offended; and when once I suggested that I might help his private secretary to write some of his letters, he froze me into stone.'

That winter Lady Randolph told her son that Duchess Fanny, who two years earlier had taken on Mrs Everest after Lady Randolph had no longer needed her, decided she would have to leave. She was to be dismissed by letter. 'If I allowed Mrs Everest to be cut adrift without protest in the manner which is proposed,' Churchill wrote, 'I should be extremely ungrateful – besides I should be very sorry not to have her at Grosvenor Square because she is in my mind associated more than anything else with home.' Mrs Everest was 'an old woman', he pointed out. She had been in Lady Randolph's employ for nearly twenty years. 'She is more fond of Jack and me than any other people in the world & to be packed off in the way the duchess suggests would possibly, if not probably break her down altogether.'

As intended, Mrs Everest was dismissed by letter. 'I think such proceedings cruel & rather mean,' Churchill wrote; she should not be sent away until she had found 'a good place' elsewhere; 'Dearest Mamma, I know you are angry with me for writing. I am very sorry but I cannot bear to think of Everest not coming back, much less being got rid of in such a manner.' His appeal was in vain; Mrs Everest left the family employ.

From Lady Randolph came a complaint; his father did not like him smoking cigars. 'I will not do so any more,' he promised. 'I am not fond enough of them in having any difficulty in leaving them off.' To his father, Churchill promised not to smoke 'more than one or two a day – and very rarely that'.

Churchill's time at Sandhurst was one of learning and comradeship. 'In contrast with my school days,' he wrote thirty-five years later, 'I had made many friends, three or four of whom still survive.' The fate of the others was to become a cause of sorrowful reflection. 'The South African War

accounted for a large proportion not only of my friends but of my company,' he explained, 'and the Great War killed almost all the others. The few that survived have been pierced through thigh or breast or face by the bullets of the enemy. I salute them all.'

On 30 November 1893 Churchill celebrated his nineteenth birthday. Ten days later he took his first Sandhurst examination in all five subjects. 'I have caught a cold in my teeth on both sides,' he told his father, '& have got a very bad toothache – which has made me lose a few marks in the examination.' He passed, however, with 1,198 marks out of 1,500. The tactics paper proved his best; he received 278 marks out of 300. That Christmas he stayed at Blenheim. His cousin Sunny and his American wife Consuelo, the Vanderbilt heiress, were 'very kind to me', he told his father on Christmas Day, while to his mother he confided a day later, 'I am enjoying myself here very much – though there is plenty of divine service.' He had been smitten while in London by 'the beautiful Polly Hacket'; the thought of seeing her again, he told his mother, was consolation for leaving Blenheim.

'Polly Hacket came for a walk this morning,' Churchill wrote to Jack on the last day of January 1894, '& we went and strolled Bond Street way.' Later that day he received a note from Miss Hacket herself. 'Did you really mean to leave all those lovely sweets for me,' she asked. 'It was too, too kind of you.'

That February, Churchill had a riding accident. 'Winston is very sorry for himself,' Lady Randolph wrote to Jack, 'he makes a great fuss over his "scraped tail" but he will have plenty of rest from riding when he gets back to Sandhurst.'

Back at Sandhurst, Churchill was taken more seriously ill. From his father came a sympathetic letter. 'That influenza was most unlucky,' he wrote. There was also paternal advice, 'Keep down smoking, keep down the drink & go to bed as early as you can.' Lord Randolph hoped his son would get good reports and positions. 'Well I have written you a regular lecture but it is all sound. The better you do the more I shall be inclined to help you.'

'Such a kind letter from Papa,' Churchill told his mother, to whom he wrote a few days later to report that he had been put head of the riding class. 'It was quite worth while getting up early and taking those lessons', he wrote to his father. Lord Randolph was so pleased that he sent his son a pound each for the men who had looked after him at the barracks. When, later that week, he told his father that Saturday and Sunday were 'terrible' days at Sandhurst, with nothing at all to do, his father replied: 'Why don't you read books on Saturday & Sunday – I will send you some.'

From Mrs Everest, now living at Grosvenor Gardens in North London, came words of guidance, 'Take plenty of open air exercise & you will not require

medicine.' As to character: 'Be a good Gentleman, upright, honest, just, kind & altogether lovely. My sweet old darling, how I do love you, be good for my sake.' That April, Churchill went to see her. 'I hope you will be kept from all evil & bad companions,' she wrote after his return to Sandhurst, '& not go to the Empire & stay out at night, its too awful to think of, it can only lead to wickedness & everything bad. I cannot bear to think of you being led astray like that.'

A week after this appeal Churchill did go to the Empire Theatre for an evening of fun before returning to the routine of riding and map-making. He also joined a voluntary signalling class. There was trouble, however, after he sent a letter to his father announcing his next visit to London. 'If you are always running up to town every week on some pretext or other,' Lord Randolph wrote, 'your mind is distracted from your work besides being an unnecessary expenditure of money.' Lord Randolph added, 'You are 20 & in November 21, & you must remember always that you are a military cadet and not a Harrow schoolboy.' In fact Churchill was nineteen, and would be twenty in November; the lapse was in keeping with Lord Randolph's recurring and now worsening illness. That April a Parliamentary commentator described him as 'bowed down with physical and mental suffering'. He could no longer finish his speeches; while speaking, his voice would become slurred and he would lose his train of thought.

Churchill was now so afraid of upsetting his father that, when he accidentally dropped his watch into a stream near a deep pool at Sandhurst, he at once took off his clothes and dived for it. He had cause to be concerned; it was a gold watch with the Churchill family arms in enamel on the back, which to his father's distress he earlier dropped on the pavement, denting the case. So now he plunged into the pool to retrieve it; but the bottom was so uneven and the water so cold that he could only stay in for ten minutes, and failed to find it. The next day he arranged to have the pool dredged, but without result. He then borrowed twenty-three soldiers from an infantry detachment, paid them to dig a new course for the stream, borrowed the College fire engine and pumped the pool dry. The watch was found. Churchill sent it at once to his father's London watchmaker, Mr Dent, for repair. By an unfortunate coincidence, Lord Randolph went to Dent that week and was told of the new damage to the watch. His anger was intense. 'I have written a letter to Winston he won't forget,' he told Lady Randolph.

Knowing nothing of the saga of how his son had retrieved the watch, Lord Randolph wrote: 'I would not believe you could be such a young stupid. It is clear that you are not to be trusted with a valuable watch & when I get it from Mr Dent I shall not give it to you back.' The irate father

went on to point out that Churchill's brother 'has had the watch I gave him longer than you have had yours'. In all 'qualities of steadiness, taking care of his things & never doing stupid things, Jack is vastly your superior'.

In reply, Churchill sent his father a full account of the search for the watch. 'I tell you all this,' he wrote, 'to show you that I appreciated fully the value of the watch and that I did not treat the accident in a casual way. The labour of the men cost me over £3.' Everything else his father had ever given him, he added, 'is in as good repair as when you gave it first. Please don't judge me entirely on the strength of the watch.' Lord Randolph gave the watch to Jack, who kept it all his life; but his health had again taken a turn for the worse, and within two weeks of his angry letter about the watch, he was advised by Dr Roose to give up public life 'at least for a while', as his nervous symptoms required rest. Churchill was also unwell again. 'Extraordinary headaches all week', he explained to his mother, had forced him to stay in the Sandhurst hospital. As soon as he was well enough, he went up to London. 'I went back and got a very good room at the corner of Jermyn Street,' he wrote to his brother on June 5, 'had an excellent dinner at the Berkeley, and then went on to the Empire.' He had lunched the next day with Polly Hackett, and intended to bring her down to Harrow to see him. He would also go to the Derby, 'However I am not going to bet.' On June 24 he wrote again: 'I had a very pleasant week at Ascot and saw all the races. I backed a couple of winners and a lot of Stiff uns but altogether paid my way.' So much for his intentions not to bet! He had also dined two nights in succession with Lord Wolverton, a Lord-in-Waiting, at Windsor, 'and rode in the Queen Anne's drive and back fourteen miles after dinner'.

Lord Randolph now prepared to travel round the world accompanied by his wife and also by a doctor, George Keith. Before his parents left England, Churchill applied for leave to go to London to see them off. As it was mid-week, his application was refused as a matter of routine. Lord Randolph at once telegraphed to the Secretary of State for War, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, pointing out it was his 'last day in England'. Permission was granted, but Churchill was not at Sandhurst when it arrived. He was making a road map on Chobham Common.

A messenger cycled at once from Sandhurst with an order for Churchill 'to proceed at once to London'. On the following day Lord Randolph was ready to leave. Lord Rosebery, then Prime Minister, was among those at the station to see him off. Churchill later recalled the leave-taking: 'In spite of the great beard which he had grown during his South African journey four years before, his face looked terribly haggard and worn with mental pain. He patted me on the knee in a gesture which however simple was perfectly informing. Then followed his long journey around the world. I

never saw him again, except as a swiftly-fading shadow.' Churchill had no idea how ill his father was. 'If Papa comes back all right,' he wrote to his mother in mid-July, 'I shall not regret your going away.'

With his parents in distant lands, Churchill sent Mrs Everest regular reports of his mishaps. 'I have heard from Winny,' she wrote to Jack, 'he says he is better & going about. I hope he is not going to do much of that sort of thing, falling off his horse he may easily be a cripple for life or even get killed poor dear old Boy he is so reckless.' In another letter, after she had seen Churchill in London, she wrote to Jack: 'Poor old boy he was not at all well, he had two boils on his hind quarters which were very painful he could hardly walk, also bad toothe ache, altogether out of sorts. He went back to Sandhurst in spite of his ailments though I waited with him till he left.' The problem, in Mrs Everest's view, was London, 'the late hours & late dinners & so on & no fresh air or exercise, it is utterly impossible to do without that.' A few days later she wrote again: 'Fancy Winny coming up to London every week. He seems to enjoy himself there.'

That August, Churchill again travelled in Europe with Jack and Mr Little. In Belgium, they visited the battlefield of Waterloo. At Antwerp they saw an American warship, the *Chicago*, and 'examined it', Churchill wrote to his mother, 'as closely as the authorities would let us'. On reaching Switzerland they went to Zermatt, where Churchill climbed Monte Rosa. 'More than sixteen hours of continual walking,' he told his mother. 'I was very proud & pleased to find I was able to do it and to come down very fresh.'

From Zermatt, Churchill, his brother and Mr Little went to Ouchy, below Lausanne. On the third day there Churchill went rowing on the lake with Jack, and, from the boat, they swam. As they did so, a strong breeze caught the red awning over the stern seats, blowing the boat away from them. In vain did Churchill, a good swimmer, try to reach the boat. Again and again, just as he thought he had succeeded, the boat was blown further away. Meanwhile, he later recalled, 'the breeze was freshening', and he and Jack, especially Jack, began to be tired. 'Up to this point no idea of danger had crossed my mind. The sun played upon the sparkling blue waters; the wonderful panorama of mountains and valleys, the gay hotels and villas still smiled. But now I saw Death as near I believe as I have ever seen him. He was swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind which continued to carry the boat away from us at about the same speed we could swim.'

Twice more Churchill nearly reached the boat. Each time, however, a gust of wind caught the awning and blew the boat further off. Then 'by a supreme effort I caught hold of its side in the nick of time before a still stronger gust bulged the red awning again'. Churchill quickly rowed back

for Jack who, he later wrote, 'though tired, had not apparently realized the dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us'.

Returning to Sandhurst, Churchill prepared for the final examination. Riding, at which he had become most skilled, was now his passion and joy. But when he wrote to his father asking to be allowed to go into the cavalry, Lord Randolph replied from California, 'You had better put that out of your head altogether at any rate during my lifetime during which you will be dependent on me.' The extra cost of the horses was the barrier. 'I still have hopes,' Churchill wrote to his mother that September, 'that when he sees how anxious I am, he will not force me into the infantry against my inclination.'

Lord and Lady Randolph had reached Japan, where Randolph's condition began to deteriorate. In London, Churchill was making his first foray into public controversy, joining the protests at the move to close the Empire Theatre because of the gathering of young people who, he later recalled, 'not only conversed together during the performance and its intervals, but also from time to time refreshed themselves with alcoholic liquors'. The foyer was also a favourite haunt of the 'Ladies of the Empire'.

In a letter to the *Westminster Gazette*, signed with his initials 'WLSC', Churchill argued that 'the improvement in the standard of public decency is due rather to improved social conditions and to the spread of education than to the prowling of the prudes'. He also wrote, quite unaware of the nature of his father's illness and its cause: 'Nature metes out great and terrible punishments to the "roué and libertine" – far greater punishments than it is in the power of any civilised State to award. These penalties have been exacted since the world was young, and yet immorality is still common. State intervention, whether in the form of a Statute or by the decision of licensing committees, will never eradicate the evil.'

Churchill accepted that both disputants at the Empire were anxious to see England 'better and more moral' but went on to stress that 'whereas the Vigilante Societies wish to abolish sin by Act of Parliament, and are willing to sacrifice much of the liberty of the subject into the bargain, the "anti-prudes" prefer a less coercive and more moderate procedure'. To try to improve things by repressive measures was 'a dangerous method, usually leading to reaction'.

This letter was published on October 18. On November 3 Churchill made a last effort to rally the anti-prude forces. 'Did you see the papers about the riot at the Empire last Saturday,' he wrote to his brother. 'It was I who led the rioters – and made a speech to the crowd.' His battle-cry that night was 'Ladies of the Empire, I stand for Liberty!' and he told his

fellow-protesters: 'You have seen us tear down these barricades tonight. See that you pull down those who are responsible for them at the coming election.' The battle, however, was lost, and the theatre was closed down. 'I don't quite know what your opinion on the subject might be,' Churchill wrote to his father, 'but I am sure you will disapprove of so coercive and futile a measure.'

Churchill's father was on his way from Hong Kong to India; a telegram from Dr Keith in the first week of November revealed that he was suffering fleeting delusions, and unable to speak properly. Much alarmed, Churchill persuaded Dr Roose to tell him how serious his father's condition was; he was told the symptoms but not their cause. 'I had never realized how ill Papa had been,' he wrote at once to his mother, 'and had never until now believed that there was anything serious the matter.'

Churchill now made every effort to ensure that the news was kept from his grandmother, who had already been shown several alarming bulletins. 'I would advise, if I might,' he wrote to his mother, 'that you and Keith would write nothing but good to the Duchess.' Bad news upset her greatly. 'She lives, thinks, and cares for nothing else in the world but to see Papa again – and has a week of misery after anything like an unsatisfactory report.'

At the end of November, when Lord Randolph was at Madras, Dr Keith telegraphed to Dr Roose with the terrible news that his patient had only 'about six months' to live. Roose showed this telegram to Churchill, who wanted to leave at once for India. 'I do not know how far distant the end of Papa's illness may be,' he wrote to his mother, 'but I am determined that I will come out and see him again.' He also suggested that his parents should return as quickly as possible to Egypt, or to the French Riviera, where he and Jack could join them. 'It must be awful for you,' he wrote to his mother, 'but it is almost as bad for me. You at least are there – on the spot & near him.'

Lady Randolph decided that her husband, increasingly delirious and incoherent, should be brought back to the South of France. On November 29, the day before his twentieth birthday, Churchill wrote to Jack: 'Papa & Mamma are coming home and will be at Monte Carlo by the end of December – so we shall be able to go out there and see them. The doctors think that if he keeps *perfectly* quiet he may yet get well – though he will never be able to go into Politics again.'

Churchill's time at Sandhurst was even then coming to an end. To his delight he came second in the Riding examination, out of 127 cadets. 'I hope you will be pleased,' he wrote to his father. But Lord Randolph was no longer able to take in what was happening around him; on reaching

Colombo he had to be put into a strait-jacket. From there he was taken to Cairo, and, too ill to seek recuperation in the South of France, he was brought back to London.

On December 24 Lord Randolph was back at Grosvenor Square. A few days later he was in such terrible pain that his family thought he was about to die. Alarmed by this news, the Prince of Wales asked his own doctor, Sir Richard Quain, to ask Lord Randolph's neurologist, Dr Buzzard the nature of the disease. Buzzard replied: 'Lord Randolph is affected with "General Paralysis" the early symptoms of which, in the form of tremor of the tongue & slurring articulation of words were evident to me at an interview two years ago. I had not seen him for a long while – a year or two, I think – previously, so that it is impossible to say how long he has been affected with the disease.' In layman's language 'General Paralysis' is a manifestation of syphilis that usually occurs ten to twenty years after primary infection.

At this distance in time it is never possible to be absolutely certain of the diagnosis, but Buzzard was a widely respected neurologist with great experience of the disease. His letter continued, 'You well know how much such cases vary as regards particular symptoms although they usually agree in leading to a fatal termination in the course of three or four years.'

Buzzard was not entirely without hope, telling Quain: 'Under regular feeding & rest his Lordship has greatly recuperated and can now converse – recognise persons & the room in which he lies and shews a fair amount of memory of past events. His articulation, however, makes it at times difficult to understand a word that he says. He has no delusions. The condition is rather one of mental feebleness. It is quite possible, I think, that his mental condition may become still clearer if his life be spared. But just as there have been successive assaults of paralysis on different parts so he may at any time, experience others, & the occurrence of one in a vital situation might produce sudden death. His heart is very weak. Or it is possible that he may sink into a state of increasing dementia with its accompanying physical troubles – slowly ending in death.'

'Physically he is better,' Lady Randolph wrote to her sister Leonie on 3 January 1895, 'but mentally he is 1,000 times worse. Even his mother wishes now that he had died the other day.' A few days later, waking from a deep sleep, Lord Randolph asked those around him when they would be leaving for Monte Carlo. He was told that they would start the next day. 'That's all right,' he said, then saw his son and asked him when and how he had passed the Sandhurst examination. Churchill had passed out twentieth in a class of 130.

Lord Randolph died on the morning of January 24, three weeks before his forty-sixth birthday. Three days later he was buried in the churchyard

at Bladon, just beyond the walls of Blenheim. 'Over the landscape brilliant with sunshine,' Churchill later recalled, 'snow had spread a glittering pall.'

Unaware of the terrible cause of his father's death, Churchill believed it was yet further proof that the Churchills died young. Both he and Jack had been premature. At Jack's birth it was thought he was dead. Three of Lord Randolph's brothers had died in infancy, a fourth brother, the 8th Duke, had died in his forties, like Lord Randolph. Churchill's own health had always been poor.

These were frightening facts; Churchill was not only driven forward to defend his father's memory and prove to himself that he was not the wastrel his father had accused him of being; he was also haunted by the prospect that he too might die young. 'Is it forty and finished?' he was to ask twenty years later. Never having seen Buzzard's letter to Quain, a letter first found and published by his son Randolph in 1967, Churchill never knew that his fear of dying young through hereditary weakness was misplaced.

In the summer of 1895, six months after his father's death, Churchill went back to Bladon to see the grave. 'The service in the little church was going on,' he wrote to his mother, 'and the voices of the children singing all added to the beauty and restfulness of the spot. The hot sun of the last few days has dried up the grass a little – but the rose bushes are in full bloom and make the churchyard very bright. I was so struck by the sense of quietness & peace as well as by the old world air of the place – that my sadness was not unmixed with solace. It is the spot of all others he would have chosen. I think it would make you happier to see it.'

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Second Lieutenant: 'I cannot sit still'

On 20 February 1895, four weeks after his father's death, Churchill entered the cavalry, being gazetted a Second Lieutenant with the 4th Hussars, then stationed at Aldershot. His commission was made out, according to custom, from Queen Victoria to 'Our Trusty and well beloved Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, Gentleman', and was signed by the Secretary of State for War, Campbell-Bannerman, who less than eleven years later was to give Churchill his first Ministerial office, as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The routine at Aldershot was not severe; it began at 7.45., Churchill wrote to his brother during his first week there, with 'Breakfast in bed'. For one hour a day he was in charge of a squad of thirty men 'and have to see the horses groomed, watered, fed & the men's rooms clean etc'. There was also two hours' riding school each morning, and a drill in the afternoon 'mostly spent in drilling the men myself'. This was followed by 'hot baths', dinner, billiards and bezique. 'I play a great deal of whist in the evenings,' he told his mother a few days later. He had also been to London, where his aunt, Duchess Lily, had agreed to pay for his horse.

After Churchill had been only two weeks at Aldershot, the electors of the Barnesbury constituency asked the twenty-year-old subaltern to address them. It was his first invitation to give a political speech, 'but after much communing with myself,' he told his brother, 'I wrote them that the honour was too great – or words to that effect.'

Accidents still beset the young man; in March he wrote to his mother: 'I have had the misfortune to smash myself up while trying a horse on the steeplechase course. The animal refused and swerved – I tried to cram him in – and he took the wings. Very nearly did I break my leg – but as it is I am only bruised and stiff.' He had struck his knee a 'resounding blow', he told Jack, 'but am now better and can hobble about on sticks'.

Having assured his mother that he would not take any further risks by steeplechasing, Churchill entered a Cavalry Brigade steeplechase under the name 'Mr Spencer'. The race in which he rode was the 4th Hussars Subalterns' Challenge Cup. 'It was very exciting and there is no doubt about it being dangerous,' he told Jack. 'I had never jumped a regulation fence before and they are pretty big things as you know.' His horse came third. Later there was a scandal when it emerged that the winner might not have been the horse it was stated to be; the race was declared null and void and all the horses which had taken part in it, including the one Churchill had ridden, were perpetually disqualified from further racing. All five subalterns were under suspicion of having participated in the deception, which, a year later, was violently denounced in the radical magazine *Truth*.

There was another unfortunate episode that spring, only three weeks after the steeplechase affair. A recently commissioned officer, Alan Bruce, who was about to join the 4th Hussars, and had been at Sandhurst with Churchill, was so unpopular with his fellow subalterns that, at a dinner to which five of them, including Churchill, specially invited him, he was told that he ought to leave the regiment. A year later this episode was also denounced in *Truth*, which called it a 'gross cavalry scandal'. According to the editor, the Radical MP Henry Labouchere, it was Churchill who, 'acting apparently as spokesman of the junior officers of the regiment', had informed Bruce he was 'not wanted'. Not long afterwards Bruce was asked officially to leave, and did so.

In two of his letters to his mother Churchill referred to this aspect of Army life, though not to his own involvement. 'When I see how some fellows who are disliked are treated,' he wrote that April, 'I feel very thankful I have been so fortunate as to make my own friends and generally find my footing.' Three months later he told her, 'If you aren't liked you have to go & that means going through life with an unpleasant stigma.'

At the end of April, Churchill was in London for the wedding of his widowed aunt, Duchess Lily, to Lord William Beresford. 'A most excellent breakfast which must have cost a great deal,' he wrote to his mother, 'and crowds to eat it, were the chief feature.' From London he went to the races at Newmarket, where the Prince of Wales had spoken to him. 'The whole world' had been in the stand, 'all most civil & agreeable'. Polo, too, was now at the forefront of his interests. 'It is the finest game in the world,' he wrote to his mother at the end of May, 'and I should almost be content to give up any ambition to play it well and often. But that will no doubt cease to be my view in a short time.'

In June, Churchill's friend Polly Hacker married Edward Wilson. Churchill had already befriended Wilson's sister Muriel, who was his guest

at Aldershot for the Queen's Birthday Parade. That month he joined the Bachelors' Club in London. 'I have had a great many invitations,' he told his mother, '& could go to a ball every night did I wish to – but field days & drills make me more eager for bed than anything else.' That June, Nasrulla Khan, son of the Emir of Afghanistan, visited England; when he inspected the troops at Aldershot, Churchill was chosen to be part of the escort of the Duke of Connaught. 'I was seven hours on horseback without dismounting or taking off my busby,' he told his mother, '& two more hours after lunch – but it was a great honour to have been selected.'

In the early evening of July 2 Churchill received a telegram at Aldershot announcing that Mrs Everest's condition was 'critical'. He set off at once for her house at 15 Crouch Hill, in North London. 'She knew she was in danger,' he later recalled, 'but her only anxiety was for me. There had been a heavy shower of rain. My jacket was wet. When she felt it with her hands she was greatly alarmed for fear I should catch cold. The jacket had to be taken off and thoroughly dried before she was calm again.'

From North London, Churchill hurried to the centre of town to engage a nurse and to see Dr Keith, who agreed at once to go to Mrs Everest's bedside. Churchill then took the midnight train back to Aldershot so as not to miss the early morning parade. As soon as the parade was over he returned to London, to Mrs Everest's side. But despite hopes that she might rally 'she only sank into a stupor,' Churchill told his mother, 'which gave place to death at 2.15 this morning'. The nurse had arrived only for the end. 'It was very sad & her death was shocking to see – but I do not think she suffered much pain.'

It was still early morning; Churchill took the train from London to Harrow to tell Jack the news, wanting to spare him the anguish of a telegram. 'He was awfully shocked,' Churchill told his mother, 'but tried not to show it.' Returning to London he made the necessary arrangements for Mrs Everest's funeral. He also ordered a wreath in his mother's name, as 'I thought you would like to send one'. As to Mrs Everest, he told her, 'I shall never know such a friend again.'

Mrs Everest was buried at the City of London Cemetery in East London on July 5. 'The coffin was covered in wreaths,' Churchill wrote to his mother that night, '& everything was as it should be.' The funeral over, he returned to Aldershot. 'Well my dearest Mummy,' he wrote that evening, 'I am very tired as I have been knocking about for two nights & have done all my duty here at the same time. I feel very low – and find that I never realized how much poor old Woom was to me.' Later he arranged for a stone to be put on her grave, the inscription states that it had been erected 'by Winston Spencer Churchill and John Spencer Churchill'.

'I felt very despondent and sad,' Churchill told his mother. 'It is indeed another link with the past gone, & I look back with regret to the old days at Connaught Place when fortune still smiled.' Lady Randolph did not even have a home of her own now; she was living in hotels and with relatives. 'I am longing for the day when you will be able to have a little house of your own,' Churchill wrote, 'and when I can really feel that there is such a place as home.' For him, Aldershot was home. 'I have a great many friends,' he told his mother, '& I know my ground.' There was much to do and see. On July 23 the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George V and Queen Mary, were present at the field day ' & I was asked to meet them at dinner'. He also had 'quite a long talk with the Duke of Connaught about the Election'.

It was the first General Election for nearly thirty years in which Gladstone was not the Liberal leader. 'For my part,' Churchill told his mother at the height of the campaign, 'I attribute the ruin of the radical party entirely to the absence of Mr Gladstone's sustaining power. Ever since '86 when the great split took place they have steadily declined – but his personality imparted to them a fictitious strength – just as fever animates a sick man. As soon as this departed the collapse ensued.'

Rosebery and the Liberals were defeated, and Salisbury became Prime Minister, at the head of a Conservative and Unionist administration. Leading places were given to Joseph Chamberlain and other Liberal stalwarts of a decade earlier. As to the defeated Gladstonian Liberals, 'a more disappointed & broken down party was never seen', Churchill told his mother. The Unionists, by contrast, 'come in with nearly every able man in both Houses in their Cabinet – with the House of Commons at their feet – & the Lords at their back – supported by all sections of the nation – unfettered by promises or hampered by pledges'. No Party had ever had 'such a chance'; it remained to be seen 'what use they will make of it'. But he ended his letter with a warning about the new Government's staying power: 'To my mind they are too strong – too brilliant altogether. They are just the sort of Government to split on the question of Protection. Like a huge ship with powerful engines they will require careful steering – because any collision means destruction.'

Protection, the Unionist demand for a tariff system to protect Imperial trade against foreign competition, was indeed to split the Party and bring it down. In this future political convulsion, Churchill, then a young Conservative MP, was to achieve political prominence as a leading opponent of tariffs.

At Aldershot, Churchill's life was still dominated by riding. 'We are now in the midst of manœuvres,' he wrote in his mother that August. 'Eight hours in the saddle every day – then two hours stables and then to polo

indefatigably.' And yet, he told her, politics already lured him: 'It is a fine game to play – the game of politics, and it is well worth waiting for a good hand – before really plunging. At any rate, four years of healthy and pleasant existence, combined with both responsibility & discipline, can do no harm to me – but rather good.' The more he saw of soldiering, 'the more I like it – but the more I feel convinced that it is not my *metier*. Well, we shall see.'

A week later Churchill told his mother that Army life was leading to a state of mental stagnation 'quite in accordance' with the spirit of the Army. 'From this "slough of Despond" I try to raise myself by reading & re-reading Papa's speeches – many of which I almost know by heart.' If he were to be quartered in London he was thinking of taking a tutor for one or two hours a week to study Economics or Modern History: 'I need someone to point out some specific subject & to direct my reading in that subject. The desultory reading I have so far indulged in has only resulted in a jumble of disconnected & ill-assorted facts.'

Lady Randolph, who did not entirely understand what her son had in mind, suggested he should make a study of the 'supply of army horses'. This, he replied, was a subject which, while having much to commend it to a cavalry officer, was 'more calculated to narrow and groove one's mind than to expand it'. Something 'more literary and less material would be the sort of mental medicine I need'. All his life, he explained, first at Harrow, then at Sandhurst and finally at James's, he had received a 'purely technical' education aimed at passing some approaching examination. 'As a result my mind has never received that polish which for instance Oxford or Cambridge gives. At these places one studies questions and sciences with a rather higher object than mere practical utility. One receives in fact a liberal education.'

Three months before his twenty-first birthday Churchill embarked upon a self-taught course of just such a liberal education. Although he was a cavalry officer with plenty of duties and riding commitments, and pleasures, he became a private undergraduate at his own university. The first of his teachers was Fawcett's *Manual of Political Economy*, published thirty years earlier. It was a book, he told his mother, 'essentially devoted to "first principles" – and one which would leave at least a clear knowledge of the framework of the subject behind – and would be of use even if the subject were not persevered in'. After Fawcett, he planned to read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Lecky's *European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*. 'These will be tasks more agreeable than the mere piling up of shoppy statistics.'

In the autumn of 1895 Lady Randolph acquired a London house, 35a Great Cumberland Place. If he were to be stationed nearer the capital,

Churchill wrote to his mother, 'I could live with you at 35 and soldier on a season ticket.' His letter continued: 'I do so look forward to having a house once more. It will be too delightful to ring the door bell of one's own front door again. Poor old Everest – how she would have loved to see us ensconced in a house again. She looked forward to it so much.'

In October 1895 Churchill decided to go with a friend, Reginald Barnes, to Cuba, where Spanish forces were trying to crush a rebellion of the islanders. To his mother, who was hesitant about his journey, he wrote, 'The fact is that I have decided to go.' Lady Randolph replied at once: 'Considering that I provide the funds, I think that instead of saying "I have decided to go" it may have been nicer & perhaps wiser to have begun by consulting me.' She would not put any obstacle in his way, 'But I suppose experience of life will in time teach you that tact is a very essential ingredient in all things.'

While preparing for the journey, Churchill went to see Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. With Wolseley's approval he and Barnes saw the Director of Military Intelligence, General Chapman, who gave them maps and information. For their part, Churchill told his mother, they had been asked to collect information and statistics on various points, '& particularly as to the effect of the new bullet – its penetration and striking power'. This request, he added, 'invests our mission with an almost official character & cannot fail to help one in the future'. There was also a less official side to the journey. 'I shall bring back a great many Havana cigars,' he told his mother, 'some of which can be "laid down" in the cellars of 35 Great Cumberland Place.' Before leaving he persuaded the *Daily Graphic*, for which his father had written while in South Africa, to let him send regular reports from the scene of the insurrection.

Churchill left England a month before his twenty-first birthday, on board the Cunard Royal Mail Steamship *Etruria*. It was his first transatlantic crossing. Proudly he told his mother that he and Barnes were never seasick and never missed a meal. But, he added, 'I do not contemplate ever taking a sea voyage for pleasure & I shall always look upon journeys by sea as necessary evils, which have to be undergone in the carrying out of any definite plan.' The shipboard concert, he wrote, was the occasion when 'all the stupid people among the passengers intend to perform and the stupider ones to applaud'.

New York was a delight to Churchill. 'Everybody is very civil and we have engagements for every meal for the next few days about three deep,' he told his mother. Her own cousins were all most helpful and friendly; one of them had engaged 'an excellent valet' for the two travellers. They

visited the American Army headquarters of the Atlantic Military District, and also West Point, the Sandhurst of the United States. The young Sandhurst graduate was horrified by the discipline at West Point. 'They are not allowed to smoke or have any money in their possession,' he told his brother, 'nor are they given any leave except two months after the first two years.' This was a 'positively disgraceful' state of affairs. 'Young men of 24 or 25 who would resign their personal liberty to such an extent can never make good citizens or fine soldiers. A child who rebels against that sort of control should be whipped – so should a man who does not rebel.'

While in New York, Churchill visited an American warship, the cruiser *New York*. The American sailors interested him more than the ship itself, 'for while any nation can build a battleship, it is the monopoly of the Anglo-Saxon race to breed good seamen', he wrote to his Aunt Leonie. 'What an extraordinary people the Americans are!' he exclaimed to his mother. 'Their hospitality is a revelation to me and they make you feel at home and at ease in a way that I have never before experienced.' On the other hand, he wrote, 'their press and their currency impress me very unfavourably'. The paper dollar with which he paid his fare across Brooklyn Bridge was possibly 'the most disreputable "coin" the world has ever seen', he told Leonie; he had reflected for some time on 'how to reconcile the magnificent system of communication with the abominable currency'. Paper money was a shock to him until he found the solution, 'The communication of New York is due to private enterprise while the State is responsible for the currency: and hence I come to the conclusion that the first class men of America are in the counting houses and the less brilliant ones in the government.'

'This is a very great country my dear Jack,' Churchill wrote to his brother on his fifth day in New York. 'Not pretty or romantic but great and utilitarian, there seems to be no such thing as reverence for tradition. Everything is eminently practical and things are judged from a matter of fact standpoint.' In a courtroom to which he had been invited to sit on the bench, the judge had been discussing the evidence with Churchill 'as it was given' and 'generally making himself socially agreeable – & all the while a pale miserable man was fighting for his life'. There had been 'no robes or wigs or uniformed ushers. Nothing but a lot of men in black coats & tweed suits. Judge, prisoner, jury, counsel & warders all indiscriminately mixed. But they manage to hang a man all the same, and that after all is the great thing.'

There was much to stimulate Churchill during his short visit; the essence of American journalism, he told his brother, was 'vulgarity divested of truth', but he did not wish to be over-censorious: 'I think, mind you, that vulgarity is a sign of strength. A great, rude, strong, young people are the Americans – like a boisterous healthy boy among enervated

but well bred ladies and gentlemen.' Enthusiastically he concluded, 'Picture to yourself the American people as a great lusty youth – who treads on all your sensibilities, perpetrates every possible horror of ill manners – whom neither age nor just tradition inspire with reverence – but who moves about his affairs with a good hearted freshness which may well be the envy of older nations of the earth.'

After a week in New York, Churchill and Barnes went by train to Florida. Their New York host, Bourke Cockran, in whose apartment they had stayed, obtained a private room for them in the train. As a result, their thirty-six-hour journey south was not 'as unpleasant', Churchill told his mother, 'as if we had had to travel in a regular compartment'. At Key West they took ship to Havana, where the British Consul-General introduced them to the Spanish military governor, who in turn telegraphed to the Spanish commander-in-chief that they had arrived.

On November 21 Churchill and Barnes left Havana by train to join the Spanish troops in the field. 'Our luck has been almost uncanny,' Churchill told his mother. 'We missed two trains that were both smashed up by the rebels by about half an hour. We went into a town in which every sort of dreadful disease was spreading, and finally, if without any particular reason I had not changed my position about one yard to the right, I should infallibly have been shot.' Added to all this 'I left a fiver to be put on "The Rush" at 8 to 1 and it simply romped home. So you see my dear Mamma – there is a sweet little cherub.'

Churchill's five despatches to the *Daily Graphic* were headed 'Letters from the Front' and signed with the initials 'WSC'. There was no doubt, he wrote in the first letter, written while he was still on the way to the front, that the Cuban insurgents 'possess the sympathy of the entire population, and hence have constant and accurate intelligence. On the other hand Spain is equally determined to crush them, and is even now pouring in fresh troops by the thousand. How it will end it is impossible to say, but whoever wins, and whatever may be the results, the suffering and misery of the entire community are certain.'

On November 23 Churchill reached the centre of the island. 'The more I see of Cuba,' he wrote that day, 'the more I feel sure that the demand for independence is national and unanimous. The insurgent forces contain the best blood in the island, and can by no perversion of the truth be classed as banditti. In fact, it is a war, not a rebellion.' On the following day a military column of about 2,700 men was formed by General Valdez to escort supplies through the mountains to the various Spanish garrisons. 'The General gave us horses and servants,' Churchill told his mother when he was back in Havana two weeks later, 'and we lived with his personal staff.'

November 30 was Churchill's twenty-first birthday. That day General Valdez led his force in search of the main rebel army. Churchill and Barnes went with him, camping that night in the open. On the following day, after marching to a new camp, the two Englishmen persuaded two Spanish officers 'to come with us and bathe in the river'. Their swim over, the four men were dressing on the bank when 'suddenly', as Churchill reported in his next despatch, 'we heard a shot fired. Another and another followed; then came a volley. The bullets whistled over our heads. It was evident that an attack of some sort was in progress.' Quickly dressing, one of the Spanish officers ran to collect fifty men, who drove off the attackers.

Churchill and Barnes returned to Valdez's headquarters half a mile away, where a larger skirmish was taking place. It too was repulsed. Then, just before midnight, Churchill reported, 'they came back and fired at us for about an hour'. Several Spanish soldiers were killed. 'One bullet came through the thatch of the hut in which we were sleeping and another wounded an orderly just outside.'

On the following day, December 2, which a year later Churchill was to call 'the most remarkable anniversary in my own life', the Spanish troops started off at first light. The mist, he wrote in his despatch to the *Daily Graphic*, 'gave cover to the rebel marksmen, who saluted us as soon as we got across the river with a well-directed fire'. Later that morning the column was forced to come to a halt as Spanish infantrymen moved forward. During the halt 'the enemy's bullets whizzed over our heads or cut into the soft ground underfoot'. The cavalry column moved forward. 'We attacked the enemy's positions,' Churchill told his mother, 'and advanced right across open ground under heavy fire.' Unfortunately, General Valdez, 'a very brave man in a white and gold uniform on a grey horse – drew a great deal of fire on to us and I heard enough bullets whistle and hum to satisfy me for some time to come'.

'There was a sound in the air,' Churchill wrote in his despatch, 'sometimes like a sigh, sometimes like a whistle, and at others like the buzz of an offended hornet.' Churchill and Barnes stayed close to the General throughout the action, with the result, Churchill explained to his mother, that they were 'in the most dangerous place in the field'. The Spaniards, he believed, were lucky not to lose more men than they did, 'but as a rule the rebels shot very high'. After ten minutes' heavy firing, the rebels retreated. No pursuit was attempted and the Spaniards then withdrew. 'Here you have a General of Division,' Churchill wrote in his fifth and final despatch, 'and two thousand of the best troops in the island, out for over ten days in search of the enemy, overcoming all sorts of difficulties, undergoing all kinds of hardships, and then being quite contented with taking thirty or forty rebels and taking a low grass hill which was destitute of the slightest importance.' At this rate of

progress 'it would take the Emperor William, with the German Army, twenty years to crush the revolt'.

In this final despatch Churchill reflected on the justice of the rebel struggle. Cuba had been 'overtaxed in a monstrous manner for a considerable period'. So much money was taken from the country by Spain that 'industries are paralysed and development is impossible'. Bribery and corruption pervaded the administration 'on a scale almost Chinese'. The entire Spanish administration was corrupt. 'A national and justifiable revolt is the only possible result of such a system.' Yet the rebel methods were the tactics of 'incendiarists and brigands – burning canefields, shooting from behind hedges, firing into sleeping camps, destroying property, wrecking trains, and throwing dynamite'. These, Churchill concluded, were 'perfectly legitimate in war, no doubt, but they are not acts on which States are founded'.

It was widely rumoured in Cuba, one British journalist wrote to Churchill, 'that your sympathies went over to the rebels'. This rumour was offset by the fact that Churchill and Barnes had accepted a Spanish military decoration, the Red Cross. Yet Churchill was certain, as he wrote in his final despatch for the *Daily Graphic*, that the Cubans would never be driven from vast areas of the countryside; what was needed was a Cuba 'free and prosperous, under just laws and a patriotic administration, throwing open her ports to the commerce of the world, sending her ponies to Hurlingham and her cricketers to Lord's, exchanging the cigars of Havana for the cottons of Lancashire, and the sugars of Matanzas for the cutlery of Sheffield. At least let us hope so.'

A year after his visit to Cuba, Churchill wrote to his mother: 'I reproach myself somewhat for having written a little uncandidly and for having perhaps done injustice to the insurgents. I rather tried to make out, and in some measure succeeded in making out, a case for Spain. It was politic, and did not expose me to the charge of being ungrateful to my hosts, but I am not quite clear whether it was right.'

In the second week of December Churchill left Cuba for the United States and home. Speaking in New York to an interviewer from the *New York World*, he remarked, about the Spanish troops, 'I make no reflections on their courage, but they are well versed in the art of retreat.' As to the future, 'I think that the upshot of it will be that the United States will intervene as a peacemaker.' In the event, the United States was soon to go to war with Spain, defeating the Spaniards on the island, leading to an independent Cuba in 1901.

'I am going to bring over excellent coffee, cigars and guava jelly to stock the cellars of 35a,' Churchill had written to his mother in his last letter from

Havana. He was true to his word, but on his return to England, the many satisfactions of his adventures were overshadowed by the widely-publicised accusation that while at Sandhurst he had committed 'acts of gross immorality of the Oscar Wilde type'. The accusation was made by A.C. Bruce-Pryce, the father of the officer-cadet who had earlier accused Churchill and his friends of having forced him to leave the regiment. Bruce-Pryce senior also alleged that another officer had been flogged by his fellow-subalterns for having committed a gross act of indecency with Churchill.

Churchill brought an action against Bruce-Pryce in the High Court. Within a month the father formally withdrew his accusation and paid £400 damages, the equivalent of more than £15,000 in 1990. The whole affair, Churchill's commanding officer, Colonel Brabazon, wrote to him, 'only shows to what lengths mendacity and malice will go'. The case of Bruce-Pryce's son did not go away so easily, however, being raised repeatedly by *Truth*, which also continued to fulminate about the steeple-chase episode of a year earlier.

Churchill's social life flourished; at Lord Rothschild's house at Tring, Asquith and Balfour were among the guests. 'Altogether, as you may imagine,' Churchill told his mother, 'I appreciate meeting such clever people and listening to their conversation very much indeed.' There was much talk about South Africa. In a recent speech the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, had said that it was only an 'anomaly' that the majority of the population of the Transvaal paid nine-tenths of the taxes but had no representation in the Boer Parliament. Churchill commented, 'It was for such an "anomaly" that America rebelled from England & a similar "anomaly" was the prime cause of the French Revolution.'

In February 1896 the United States began to press Spain to give up Cuba. 'I hope,' Churchill wrote to Bourke Cockran, 'the United States will not force Spain to give up Cuba – unless you are prepared to accept responsibility for the results of such action.' If the United States were to annex Cuba, however, 'though this would be very hard on Spain, it would be the best and most expedient course for both the island and the world in general'. But he would consider it 'monstrous' if all America did was to 'procure the establishment of another South American Republic' without maintaining 'any sort of control over its behaviour'. Above all, Churchill told Cockran, Britain and the United States must avoid a quarrel. 'Do please be pacific,' he wrote, 'and don't go dragging the 4th Hussars over to Canada in an insane and criminal struggle.'

Cockran had been angered by the British Government's arrest of a number of Irishmen found in possession of dynamite. 'I had the opportunity of talking to Mr Asquith on this subject,' Churchill told him, 'and I

said I would have released them in deference to the opinion of the Irish people.' Much impressed by Churchill, Cockran urged him to study sociology and political economy. 'With your remarkable talent for lucid and attractive expression,' he wrote, 'you would be able to make great use of the information to be acquired by study of these branches. Indeed I firmly believe you would take a commanding position in public life at the first opportunity which arose.'

That February the *Saturday Review* published an article by Churchill on Cuba. Lady Randolph sent a copy to Joseph Chamberlain, who was struck by what he called 'the best short account I have seen of the problems with which the Spaniards have to deal, & agrees with my own conclusions'. Chamberlain added, 'It is evident that Mr Winston kept his eyes open.'

In the summer of 1896 Churchill decided to go to Egypt, hoping 'to be a galloper' to the British commander-in-chief, General Sir Herbert Kitchener, in the struggle to retake the Sudan. When this scheme failed he asked the *Daily Chronicle* if he could go as their special correspondent to Crete, where the Greeks of the island were struggling for independence against Turkish rule. He also asked his mother to use her influence with the Secretary of State for War, Lord Lansdowne, to help him go to South Africa to join the forces then suppressing the native uprising in Matabeleland.

Not only was Lansdowne unable to help, but he warned Lady Randolph 'as a friend' that in view of the enquiry which was now to take place into the charges made against him by *Truth*, it might not be 'wise on Winston's part to leave England at this moment'. Lansdowne added, 'There are plenty of ill-natured people about, and it is just conceivable that an attempt might be made to misrepresent his action.' A month after Lansdowne's letter Churchill was still trying to get permission to go to Matabeleland. Although his own regiment was due to leave soon for India, the 9th Lancers were to go to Matabeleland at the end of August. 'This we will talk over on Friday,' he wrote to his mother at the beginning of the month, 'but my dear Mamma you cannot think how I would like to sail in a few days to scenes of adventure and excitement – to places where I could gain experience and derive advantage – rather than to the tedious land of India – where I shall be equally out of the pleasures of peace and the chances of war.'

Going to India with his 'unfortunate regiment', Churchill told his mother, was an 'utterly unattractive' prospect. Not to go to the war in Matabeleland was to let 'the golden opportunity' go by. By failing in that 'I feel that I am guilty of an indolent folly that I shall regret all my life'. A few months in Matabeleland would earn him the South Africa Medal and 'in all probability' the British South Africa Company's Star. 'Thence hot foot to Egypt, to return with two more decorations in a year or two – and

beat my sword into an iron despatch box.' Both Matabeleland and Egypt were 'within the bounds of possibility and yet here I am out of both. I cannot believe that, with all the influential friends you possess, and all those who would do something for me for my father's sake, I could not be allowed to go, were those influences properly exerted.'

Churchill begged his mother to use her influence: 'It is useless to preach the gospel of patience to me. Others as young are making the running now and what chance have I of ever catching up? I put it down here – definitely on paper – that you really ought to leave no stone unturned to help me at such a period. Years may pass before such chances occur again.' His frustration was intense; still only twenty-one, he feared that his whole Army service might be spent in barracks and far from any action. 'You can't realise how furiously intolerable this life is to me,' he told his mother, 'when so much is going on a month away from here.'

Matabeleland it was not to be; on September 11 Churchill sailed for India with the 4th Hussars, disappointed that his hope of action had failed. On October 1 he reached Bombay; three days later he was at camp in Poona. 'I have engaged a capital Indian servant,' he told his mother, 'who is indefatigable in looking after me and who has a very good character for honesty.' From Poona he went to Bangalore, where he was to remain for more than six months. The city, three thousand feet above sea level, was noted for its healthy climate. Churchill shared a spacious bungalow with two friends, Reginald Barnes and Hugo Baring. It was, he told his mother, 'a magnificent pink and white stucco palace in the middle of a large and beautiful garden'.

For servants, Churchill, Barnes and Baring each had a butler whose duties were 'to wait at table, to manage the household and to supervise the stables', a First Dressing Boy as valet, a Second Dressing Boy as his assistant, and a groom for every horse or pony. In addition, the three young officers shared the services of two gardeners, four washermen and a watchman. 'Such,' Churchill told his mother, 'is our menage.' His first letter also contained several requests; he wanted his mother to send him a card table, 'any books (very welcome)', his bicycle, a dozen shirts, and various items for butterflying – collecting-boxes, setting boards, a net, a box of pins and a 'killing tin'. As to his own 'indulgences', he wrote, 'I am teetotaller and practically non-smoker till sundown – drinking lemon squash – or occasionally – beer – which after all is but a temperance prescription.'

India was 'in every respect the exact contrast' of the United States, Churchill wrote to Jack. 'The obsequious native servants replace the uncivil "freeborn citizens". Labour here is cheap and plentiful. Existence costs but little and luxury can be easily obtained.' His own garden, he

added, was full of butterflies, 'Purple Emperors, White Admirals & Swallowtails and many other beautiful and rare insects. I shall be able to make a fine collection – with very little trouble – and much amusement.' In advising Jack, who was still at Harrow, to 'try and get hold of a certain amount of knowledge', Churchill confided: 'I only wish I had worked more. There are great pleasures in life – to those who know the Latin or the Greek tongues well. Of course at school one only sees the seamy and unattractive side of classics, the grammar & prosody – instead of the manners and customs.'

While he was at Bangalore, an article Churchill had written about Sandhurst was published in the *Pall Mall Magazine*. 'For those who enter the college direct from Eton or Harrow,' he wrote, 'or any of our public schools, the life at Sandhurst is a pleasing emancipation, profitable to experience, agreeable to recall. It is a time of merriment and sport, a time of high hopes and good friends, of many pleasures and of insignificant worries – a period of gratified ambitions and of attained ideals.'

From Churchill's former headmaster, Dr Welldon, came words of advice, 'There is no reason why you should not learn Latin (so far as it is unknown to you) or even Greek.' But it was not only study that concerned Welldon. 'Above all, my dear Churchill, think more of others than yourself, be ready to learn from those that are below you and keep your conscience as restful as you can.' The recent accusations which *Truth* was continuing to publish, had upset Welldon. 'I implore you,' he wrote, 'not to let your wild spirits carry you away to any action that may bring dishonour on your school or your name.' It was impossible, he added, 'that I should not hear of your follies and impertinences if you are guilty of them, and you will recognise that you put a severe strain upon my friendship if you ask me to treat you as a friend when other people speak of you with indignation or contempt'.

Angered that the hostile articles in *Truth* were continuing, Churchill wrote to his mother: 'It seems indeed hard that when we are away in a foreign land and unable to answer or even read immediately any misstatement he may make – such attacks should go on – and that the public should swallow all of them greedily. I enclose a letter from Mr Welldon, which evidently refers to this affair. He has apparently mingled with those – and I daresay they are not few – who have accepted Labouchere's version of the whole story.'

Life at Bangalore continued at a leisurely pace. Early breakfast, Churchill explained to his mother, was at five; parade at six; second breakfast, bath and 'such papers as there are' at eight, followed by an hour of stables; then 'no other engagement until polo at 4.15'. Then there was an interval which he filled 'by sleeping, writing, reading or pursuing butterflies',

followed by dinner and bed. But this pleasant life was disturbed when another of Labouchere's articles arrived, 'vicious and insulting' Churchill told his mother. The new article insinuated that the War Office had only been prevented from taking action against Churchill by pressure exerted on his behalf. 'The young officer who assumed the part of ringleader in the conspiracy to eject Mr Bruce from the 4th Hussars,' wrote *Truth*, 'belongs to an influential family, and all the influence at his back has been used to prevent an opening of the case.'

'A more mischievous suggestion it is hard to invent,' Churchill commented, 'and after our experience of what that influence was worth in another direction, it seems ironical.'

Since his earliest days, Churchill had been troubled by the inability to pronounce the letter 's', which he spoke with a slur, pronouncing it more like 'sh'. Before leaving London he had consulted Felix Semon, a leading physician for diseases of the throat. Semon's report reached him in India. 'He is sanguine,' Churchill told his mother, 'that practice and perseverance are alone necessary and that no organic defect exists.'

India, Churchill told his mother, was a 'godless land of snobs and bores'. But at the beginning of November, while playing polo at Secunderabad, he met Pamela Plowden, daughter of the British Resident in Hyderabad. 'I must say she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen,' he told his mother. 'We are going to try to do the City of Hyderabad together – on an elephant. You dare not walk or the natives spit at Europeans – which provokes retaliation leading to riots.'

The ride on the elephant duly took place, and a life-long friendship began. Fifty-five years later Churchill was to write to Pamela, 'I cherish your signal across the years, from the days when I was a freak – always that – but much hated & ruled out, but there was one who saw some qualities.'

While at Bangalore, an article which Churchill was sent about his father's abilities as an administrator gave him, he told his mother, 'a delightful morning's occupation and has made me equally low and despondent this evening'. A week earlier he had learned of a vacancy in the East Bradford constituency, scene of one of his father's great speeches a decade earlier. 'Had I been in England,' he wrote to his mother, 'I might have contested it and should have won – almost to a certainty. Instead of being an insignificant subaltern I should have had opportunities of learning those things which will be of value to me in the future.' Perhaps it was 'just as well that I am condemned to wait, though I will not disguise from you that life out here is stupid, dull & uninteresting'.

Churchill could not banish British political life from his mind. 'What a pity I was not home for East Bradford,' he told his mother. 'I see a soldier

got in.' The soldier, a Unionist, had beaten his Liberal opponent by just under four hundred votes. Had he come to India as a Member of Parliament, Churchill reflected, 'however young & foolish, I could have had access to all who know and can convey. As a soldier, my intelligent interests are supposed to stop short at polo, racing & Orderly Officer. I vegetate – even reading is an effort & I am still in Gibbon.' In another letter to his mother from Bangalore he again forecast that the power of the Unionist Party would be shattered when the 'landed interest (after all the most powerful element on the Conservative side) force Salisbury to raise the question of Protection!' The Liberal Unionists would then say to their Conservative partners, and 'rightly' in his view, that they could not follow the Party 'into the land of Protection'.

Churchill told his mother that the result of such a split in the Conservative and Unionist ranks would be the creation of a new Party led by Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Rosebery. Both men, he felt, would be 'worthy leaders of the Tory Democracy'. The extremes of both parties would be left in the cold, and the 'solid remnants' of the Conservative Party, 'peers, property, publicans, parsons & turnips', would lose their power. When the split did come seven years later, Churchill was quickly to emerge as a leading Free Trader in the Conservative ranks; he even tried to persuade Rosebery to return to active politics at the head of a centre party, but in vain. As for Chamberlain, far from leading the Free Trade forces as Churchill forecast, it was his advocacy of Protection that gave the Free Traders, Churchill among them, their main opponent.

Yet another article in *Truth* now plagued the young officer. Referring to the steeplechase race and naming Churchill, it alleged that he and the other four subalterns had deliberately conspired to obtain money by malpractice on the Turf. Churchill at once reminded his mother that the National Hunt Committee had long ago written to the War Office, 'expressly vindicating us from any charge of dishonesty or of dishonourable behaviour'. If these continuing allegations were not rebutted, he wrote, 'it would be fatal for any future in public life for me', and he wanted to take legal action. He would probably be exposed to attacks, he told his mother, 'even on the grounds of having helped to turn Bruce out', but the racing matter was 'more serious'. Until something was done to contradict it, 'I appear in a very unpleasant light.'

On November 30 Churchill was twenty-two. As action still eluded him he begged his mother to try to get him sent to Kitchener's Army in Egypt. 'I hear it is decided,' he wrote, 'to make a further advance this year'. Lady Randolph's task was to write direct to Kitchener. 'Two years in Egypt,'

Churchill told her three weeks later, 'with a campaign thrown in, would I think qualify me to be allowed to beat my sword into a paper cutter & my sabretache into an election address.'

Meanwhile, from Bangalore, Churchill told Jack that his roses had flourished; he now had 250 rose trees, 'so that every morning I can cut about three great basins full of the most beautiful flowers which nature produces'. But his much-prized butterfly collection, which included 'upward of 65 different sorts', had been destroyed 'by the malevolence of a rat who crawled into the cabinet and devoured all the specimens. I have however caught the brute and had him killed by "Winston" the terrier – and have begun again perseveringly.'

Unusually for a young soldier eager to see military action, Churchill deprecated increased military expenditure by the Government, writing to his mother, of a proposal by Lansdowne to spend more on the Army, that the strain of the taxation involved 'is not without its effect on the prosperity and happiness of the nation'. What Britain needed, in Churchill's view, was a fleet 'strong enough to render us superior to a combination of any two powers, & with an ample margin for accidents'. He would support taxation 'to almost any extent' to attain that end. Given Britain's 'unquestioned command of the sea' there was no part of the Empire 'which our present army could not protect – and without such command there is no part which two such armies could maintain'.

That December Churchill travelled to Calcutta, a five-day train journey, to play polo. 'I shall meet many people who will be amiable,' he wrote to his mother, 'and some who may be useful.' But when he reached Calcutta he found it 'full of supremely uninteresting people'. There had been a ball at Viceregal Lodge, but 'as you know, I do not shine on the parquet', so he had not gone. Each time he met the British residents of India, 'I immediately desire to fly the country. It is only in my comfortable bungalow, among my roses, polo ponies & butterflies, that I feel that philosophical composure which alone can make residence in India endurable.' Calcutta was 'bitterly cold after dark' and he had caught a chill. But he was glad to have seen the city 'for the same reason Papa gave for being glad to have seen Lisbon, namely "that it will be unnecessary ever to see it again"'.

Jack was now thinking of going to university. 'I shall envy you the enjoyment of a classical education,' Churchill wrote, 'and of the power to appreciate the classical works.' His own reading continued without interruption. Lady Randolph had sent him a twelve-volume set of Macaulay's works, which 'I shall shortly begin to read'. He had been 'lured' from completing Gibbon by Plato's *Republic* and Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom*

of *Man*. 'If only I knew Latin & Greek,' he wrote to his mother, 'I think I would leave the army and try and take my degree in History, Philosophy & Economics. But I cannot face parsing & Latin prose again.'

Winwood Reade had argued that in the world of reason, Christianity was no longer needed. 'One of these days, perhaps,' Churchill commented, 'the cold bright light of science & reason will shine through the cathedral windows & we shall go out into the fields to seek God for ourselves. The great laws of Nature will be understood – our destiny and our past will be clear. We shall then be able to dispense with the religious toys that have agreeably fostered the development of mankind. Until then, anyone who deprives us of our illusions – our pleasant, hopeful illusions – is a wicked man & should (I quote my Plato) "be refused a chorus".'

In February 1897 Churchill was made Brigade Major, 'a most important duty', he explained to his mother, 'and one which in England could never have been obtained under fourteen or fifteen years' service'. He was becoming 'a very "correct soldier"'. Full of zeal etc., and he added, 'Even in homoeopathic doses Responsibility is an exhilarating drink.' The Colonel of the regiment was consulting him 'on nearly all points', he wrote a week later. 'Though all is of course on a small scale, I cannot disguise from myself that it is an excellent training.' He had now been in the Army for two years. Of one thing he was 'certain', he told his mother, 'that unless a good opportunity presents itself of my obtaining a seat in the House of Commons, I should continue in the army for two years more'. Meanwhile, his reading included Hallam's *Constitutional History* and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

That February, the Greeks on the island of Crete raised the standard of revolt against their Turkish rulers. Britain supported the Turks, Lord Salisbury's government sending British warships to the Mediterranean, to stop help reaching Crete from Greece. Churchill's sympathies were with the Cretan insurgents, as they had been with the Cuban insurgents just over a year earlier. When his mother argued that it was right to help the Turkish authorities, he replied, 'We are doing a very wicked thing in firing on the Cretan insurgents & in blockading Greece so that she cannot succour them.' He admitted that 'the material arguments' were rather on the other side; that was 'bound to be the case', but there was more to it than material advantage. 'I look on this question from the point of view of right & wrong: Lord Salisbury from that of profit and loss.'

Salisbury's real purpose, Churchill told Lady Randolph, was to preserve the Turkish Empire so as to prevent the Russians taking Constantinople. 'The Turkish Empire he is determined to maintain. He does not care a row of buttons for the sufferings of those who are oppressed by that

Empire.' As to the Turkish capital, he argued, 'as surely as night follows day, the Russians are bound to get Constantinople. We could never stop them even if we wished. Nor ought we to wish for anything that could impede the expulsion from Europe of the filthy Oriental.' Russia's desire for Constantinople was 'the just aspiration of a mighty people. I would sooner face an avalanche. Seventy millions of people without a warm water port. Is it rational?'

Russia's presence in Crete, however, disturbed Churchill. 'I do not trust her. Such rectitude would not be human. She cannot be acting in good faith.' It was 'inconceivable' that Russia was acting disinterestedly. 'Never will I believe it.'

Churchill told his mother if he were in Parliament there were no lengths to which he would not go in opposing Salisbury's Government, 'I am a Liberal in all but name.' His views already excited the 'pious horror' of his fellow-officers. Were it not for Home Rule, 'to which I will never consent, I would enter Parliament as a Liberal.' He then outlined to his mother what was essentially a Liberal programme at home; extension of the franchise to every adult male, universal education, the establishment of all religions, and a progressive income tax. 'I will vote for them all.' In foreign affairs he advocated non-intervention in Europe, 'keep absolutely unembroiled – isolated if you like'. Defend the colonies with 'a mighty navy'. Create a system of Imperial defence. East of Suez, however, 'democratic reins are impossible. India must be governed on old principles.' And he added: 'There! That is the creed of Tory Democracy. Peace & power abroad – prosperity and progress at home.'

Churchill decided to return to England for a month's leave, but his mother's reaction stunned him. It was 'wild talk', she wrote, and 'absolutely out of the question, not only on account of money, but for the sake of your reputation.' She went on to explain: 'They will say & with some reason that you can't stick to anything. You have only been out six months & it is on the cards that you may be called to Egypt. There is plenty for you to do in India. I confess I am quite disheartened about you. You seem to have no real purpose in life & won't realise at the age of twenty-two that for a man life means work, & hard work if you mean to succeed.'

Many men at Churchill's age, Lady Randolph added, 'have to work for a living & support their mothers. It is useless my saying more – we have been over this ground before – it is not a pleasant one. I will only repeat that I cannot help you any more & if you have any grit in you & are worth your salt you will try & live within your income & cut down your expenses in order to do it. You cannot but feel ashamed of yourself under the present circumstances.' Unaware of the imminent arrival of this rebuke,

Churchill wrote to his mother, 'So far as I know I am in favour with God and man, but there are days when I feel I cannot sit still.'

Thanks to the further despatch of books from his mother, Churchill had begun reading the *Annual Register of World Events*, beginning with 1880. As he read, he annotated the Register's summaries of Parliamentary debates with thoughts and interventions of his own. The method he pursued, he told his mother, was not to read any particular debate 'until I have recorded my own opinion of the subject on paper, having regard only to general principles. After reading I reconsider and finally write', setting out in pencil, on small pieces of paper, his own views on each subject, which he then pasted into the volumes. He hoped by this method 'to build up a scaffolding of logical and consistent views, which will perhaps tend to the creation of a logical and consistent mind'. The facts of the *Annual Register*, he told his mother, would 'arm me with a sharp sword'. Macaulay, Gibbon, Plato and others 'must train the muscles to wield that sword to the greatest effect'.

One topic in the notes which he pasted into the *Annual Register* was education, on which he wrote, 'The object of Governments should be the equal education of the whole people, not the advantage of any one sect.' Nor should religious instruction be entrusted to the hands of any one sect. 'All are partisan. The Church of England equally with the others. I am in favour of secular instructors appointed by Government.' The campaign to give women the vote, however, was 'a ridiculous movement'. Votes for women should be avoided. 'Once you give the vote to vast numbers of women who form the majority of the community,' he warned, 'all power passes to their hands.'

In response to his mother's financial problems, the result of her own considerable extravagance, Churchill was sending her his horse Firefly, in the hope that she would be able to sell him. 'He is a great pet,' Churchill wrote, '& prefers above all things bread & butter or a biscuit.' Lady Randolph was still opposed to her son's plans to return, instead of staying in India '& showing that you can work & do something'. She so wanted to help him; if only she had some money she would do so. 'I am so proud of you,' she wrote, '& of all your great & endearing qualities. I feel sure that if you live you will make a name for yourself, but I know to do it you have to be made of sterner stuff, & not mind sacrifice & self denial.'

Churchill remained in India; that spring, while sitting in the rifle butts in charge of the markers at a rifle practice, he had a near escape, telling his mother how 'a bullet struck the iron edge of the target, flew into splinters & rebounded all over me'. One of the fragments struck his left hand just below his thumb, penetrating more than an inch. 'It is to the mercy of God, as some would say, or to the workings of chance or the

doctrine of averages, as others prefer, that I was not hit in the eye; in this case I should have been blinded infallibly.' After an 'abominable twenty minutes' of probing by the doctor, the splinter was extracted, '& since then I have had a bad time every morning when the wound has to be syringed. Knowing as you do my keen aversion to physical pain or even discomfort, I am sure you will sympathise with me.' Ever resourceful, and plucky, he played polo with the reins strapped to his wrist.

In mid-April, Turkey declared war on Greece. Churchill now had a new goal; he would go to the front as a correspondent. His mother must find a newspaper that wanted his reports. 'Lord Rothschild would be the person to arrange this for me,' he told her, 'as he knows everyone.' But to which side he should go: 'This my dearest Mamma must depend on you. Of course my sympathies are entirely with the Greeks, but on the other hand the Turks are bound to win – are in enormous strength & will be on the offensive the whole time. If I go on this side it will be less glorious but much more safe & as I have no wish to be involved in the confusion of a defeated army my idea is that they would be more suitable. You must decide. If you can get me good letters to the Turks – to the Turks I will go. If to the Greeks – to the Greeks.'

While awaiting his mother's answer, Churchill sailed from Bombay, hoping when he reached Italy to find that his mother had arranged everything. He expected the war to be 'short and sharp'. Very likely 'I shall be too late'. He was indeed too late; the Turks defeated the Greeks before his ship reached Italy. He therefore continued to London where, at Conservative Central Office, he asked the Party organizers to arrange some speaking engagements for him while he was on leave. This they did, with the result that on June 26 he made his first political speech, to a Primrose League meeting just outside Bath. It was his father who had founded the League, in order to perpetuate the memory of Disraeli and the values of Tory Democracy.

If it were 'pardonable in any speaker', the local newspaper reported Churchill as saying, 'to begin with the well-worn and time-honoured apology, "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking", it would be pardonable in his case, for the honour he was enjoying at that moment of addressing an audience of his fellow-countrymen and women was the first honour of the kind he had ever received'. He went on to praise the Government's Workmen's Compensation Bill, designed to protect workmen in dangerous trades from poverty if they were injured in the service of their employer. The Bill, he said, 'removed the question from the shifting sands of charity and placed it on the firm bedrock of law'.

The twenty-two-year-old speaker had been introduced to his audience as the son of Lord Randolph. In his speech he spoke enthusiastically of

Tory Democracy. The British workman had 'more to hope for from the rising tide of Tory Democracy than from the dried-up drain-pipe of Radicalism'. He hoped the labourer would ultimately become 'a shareholder in the business in which he worked', making him willing to stand the pressure of a bad year 'because he shared some of the profits of a good one'.

Turning to Imperial affairs, Churchill spoke of those who, even in the Jubilee year of 1897, said that the British Empire had reached the height of its glory and power 'and that now we should begin to decline, as Babylon, Carthage and Rome had declined'. Do not believe these croakers, he said, 'but give the lie to their dismal croaking by showing by our actions that the vigour and vitality of our race is unimpaired and that our determination is to uphold the Empire that we have inherited from our fathers as Englishmen' – here he was interrupted by cheers – 'that our flag shall fly high upon the sea, our voice be heard in the councils of Europe, our Sovereign supported by the love of her subjects, then we shall continue to pursue that course marked out for us by an all-wise hand and carry out our mission of bearing peace, civilisation and good government to the uttermost ends of the earth'.

'My speech went off all right,' Churchill wrote to his brother. 'The *Morning Post* had a very good report & everyone seems pleased.' From Bath he went to Goodwood for the races. 'I was on the lawns at Goodwood,' he later recalled, 'in lovely weather and winning my money, when the revolt of the Pathan tribesmen on the Indian frontier began.' He read in the newspapers that a Field Force of three brigades was being formed to fight the uprising. It was to be headed by General Sir Bindon Blood, who, when Churchill had met him at Duchess Lily's house, promised that if he ever commanded another frontier expedition he would let Churchill go with him. He at once telegraphed to the General to remind him of his promise. Then, before receiving a reply, he left London by train for Brindisi, where he joined the Indian mail boat *Rome*. As the ship neared Aden he wrote to his mother, asking her to send out his polo sticks, and also the collected speeches of Gladstone and Disraeli.

Three weeks after his speech at Bath, Churchill was back at Bangalore. His speech at Bath, he told his mother, 'is much appreciated out here. Everybody reading the *Morning Post*'. He added, 'One more favour. Indulge my vanity by sending me any favourable opinions you may hear.' While in England, he had outlined to his mother the plot of a novel which he had decided to write. 'I have been writing my novel every day,' he wrote to her from Bangalore on August 24. 'It is far and away the best thing I have ever done.' He had already written eighty pages; it was a political romance set in a hypothetical republic. 'I am quite enthusiastic about it.

All my philosophy is put into the mouth of the hero.' Churchill's letter to his mother crossed with one from Sir Bindon Blood, stating that his personal staff was filled, but advising Churchill to come up to the North-West Frontier as a Press correspondent, 'and when you are here I shall put you on the strength on the first opportunity'. One of Churchill's friends had done just this, the General explained; he was now attached to the force in place of an officer killed in action.

Churchill at once telegraphed to his mother to find a British newspaper willing to make him its correspondent. He then obtained 'with much difficulty' a month's leave, put aside his novel, asked his mother to send out the first volume of Gibbon's collected correspondence, and prepared for the five-day journey northward, with his horses. If he were stopped on the train, he told his mother, he would ride to the scene of the fighting. 'I have considered everything,' he told her as he began a train journey of more than two thousand miles, 'and I feel that the fact of having seen service with British troops while still a young man must give me more weight politically – must add to my claims to be listened to, and may perhaps improve my prospects of gaining popularity with the country.'

This letter was written late on the evening of August 29. On the following day Churchill's commanding officer at Bangalore wrote to Lady Randolph, 'I thought perhaps that you would like a line as your son started last night for the frontier.'