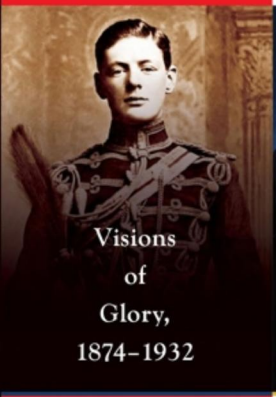
THE LAST LION

Winston Spencer Churchill



Visions of Glory, 1874–1932

WILLIAM MANCHESTER

175 YEARS LB

LITTLE, BROWN

THE LAST LION

Winston Spencer Churchill

Alone, 1932–1940

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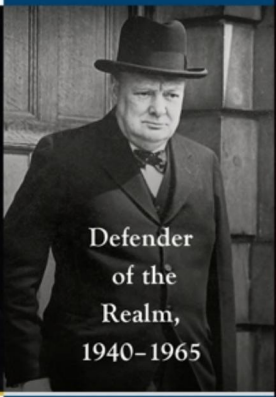

Defender of the Realm, 1940–1965

WILLIAM MANCHESTER AND PAUL REID

175 YEARS LB

LITTLE, BROWN

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The Last Lion

Winston Spencer Churchill

Visions of Glory

1874–1932

William Manchester

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To

MARY

and

CHARTWELL

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The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best, if he wins, knows the thrills of high achievement, and, if he fails, at least fails daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY *on Theodore Roosevelt New York City, December 5, 1961*

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Churchill entering the political wilderness
Adolf Hitler
Churchill leaving Lenox Hill Hospital

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CHRONOLOGY

1874	WSC born November 30 at Blenheim
1886	His father becomes chancellor of the Exchequer
	His mother is now a great Victorian courtesan
1888	WSC enters Harrow; gets lowest marks in school
1893	Admitted to Sandhurst on third try
1894	Commissioned cavalry subaltern, Fourth Hussars
1895	His father dies
	WSC covers the guerrilla warfare in Cuba
1896	Educates himself in India; discovers Macaulay and Gibbon
	Writes first book
1897	Sees heavy fighting in Khyber Pass
1898	Omdurman: WSC in the last cavalry charge
1899	WSC runs for Parliament; loses
	Captured in the Boer War
	His sensational escape
1900	Recommended for VC
	Elected to Parliament
	Tours United States, Canada
1901	Queen Victoria dies
	WSC's maiden speech
1904	Quits Tories for Liberals
1905	Becomes colonial under secretary
1907	Tours East Africa
1908	Promoted to cabinet
	Marries Clementine Hozier
	His alliance with Lloyd George
	They declare war on House of Lords
1910	WSC becomes home secretary

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	His welfare-state programs
1911	Battle of Sidney Street
	WSC becomes first lord of the Admiralty
	Father of the tank
1912–14	Irish Home Rule crisis
1913	WSC learns to fly, founds Royal Naval Flying Corps
1914	Outbreak of the Great War
	WSC commands defense of Antwerp
1915	The Dardanelles tragedy
	WSC dismissed from the Admiralty
	Learns to paint
	Commissioned and sent to the front
1916	As a lieutenant colonel, leads a battalion in trenches
1917	Cleared by the Dardanelles Commission
	Rejoins cabinet
	His tanks in action on the western front
1918	WSC in the trenches again
	Germany surrenders
1919	WSC becomes secretary for war and air
	Chief supporter of Russian anti-Bolsheviks
1920	Black and Tans in Ireland
1921	WSC becomes colonial secretary
	Lawrence of Arabia his adviser
	Founds Jordan, Iraq
	Supports Jewish homeland
	The Chanak crisis
	WSC founds Irish Free State
	Death of Marigold Churchill
1922	WSC buys Chartwell
1922–24	Loses three elections
	Turns Tory, wins
	Becomes chancellor of the Exchequer
1924	Warns of danger in Germany
1925	Returns Britain to the gold standard
1926	General strike
	WSC publishes *British Gazette*

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1929	Tours United States
	Loses fortune in Wall Street
1931	Quits Tory leadership over India
	Manhattan auto accident
	WSC sounds alarm over Nazis
1932	Enters the political wilderness

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THE French had collapsed. The Dutch had been overwhelmed. The Belgians had surrendered. The British army, trapped, fought free and fell back toward the Channel ports, converging on a fishing town whose name was then spelled Dunkerque.

Behind them lay the sea.

It was England's greatest crisis since the Norman conquest, vaster than those precipitated by Philip II's Spanish Armada, Louis XIV's triumphant armies, or Napoleon's invasion barges massed at Boulogne. This time Britain stood alone. If the Germans crossed the Channel and established uncontested beachheads, all would be lost, for it is a peculiarity of England's island that its southern weald is indefensible against disciplined troops. In A.D. 61, Queen Boudicca of the Iceni rallied the tribes of East Anglia and routed the Romans at Colchester, Saint Albans, and London (then Londinium), cutting the Ninth Legion to pieces and killing seventy thousand. But because the nature of the southern terrain was unsuitable for the construction of strongpoints, new legions under Paulinus, arriving from Gaul, crushed the revolt, leaving the grief-stricken queen to die by her own hand.

Now the 220,000 Tommies at Dunkirk, Britain's only hope, seemed doomed. On the Flanders beaches they stood around in angular, existential attitudes, like dim purgatorial souls awaiting disposition. There appeared to be no way to bring more than a handful of them home. The Royal Navy's vessels were inadequate. King George VI has been told that they would be lucky to save 17,000. The House of Commons was warned to prepare for "hard and heavy tidings."[1] Then, from the streams and estuaries of Kent and Dover, a strange fleet appeared: trawlers and tugs, scows and fishing sloops, lifeboats and pleasure craft, smacks and coasters; the island ferry *Gracie Fields;* Tom Sopwith's America's Cup challenger *Endeavour;* even the London fire brigade's fire-float *Massey Shaw*—all of them manned by civilian volunteers: English fathers, sailing to rescue England's exhausted, bleeding sons.

Even today what followed seems miraculous. Not only were Britain's soldiers delivered; so were French support troops: a total of 338,682 men. But wars are not won by fleeing from the enemy. And British morale was still unequal to the imminent challenge. These were the same people who, less than a year earlier, had rejoiced in the fake peace bought by the betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich. Most of their leaders and most of the press remained craven. It had been over a thousand years since Alfred the Great had made himself and his countrymen one and sent them into battle transformed. Now in this new exigency, confronted by the mightiest conqueror Europe had ever known, England looked for another Alfred, a figure cast in a mold which, by the time of the Dunkirk deliverance, seemed to have been forever lost.

England's new leader, were he to prevail, would have to stand for everything England's decent, civilized Establishment had rejected. They viewed Adolf Hitler as the product of complex social and historical forces. Their successor would have to be a passionate Manichaean who saw the world as a medieval struggle to the death between the powers of good and the powers of evil, who held that individuals are responsible for their

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actions and that the German dictator was therefore wicked. A believer in martial glory was required, one who saw splendor in the ancient parades of victorious legions through Persepolis and could rally the nation to brave the coming German fury. An embodiment of fading Victorian standards was wanted: a tribune for honor, loyalty, duty, and the supreme virtue of action; one who would never compromise with iniquity, who could create a sublime mood and thus give men heroic visions of what they were and might become. Like Adolf Hitler he would have to be a leader of intuitive genius, a born demagogue in the original sense of the word, a believer in the supremacy of his race and his national destiny, an artist who knew how to gather the blazing light of history into his prism and then distort it to his ends, an embodiment of inflexible resolution who could impose his will and his imagination on his people—a great tragedian who understood the appeal of martyrdom and could tell his followers the worst, hurling it to them like great hunks of bleeding meat, persuading them that the year of Dunkirk would be one in which it was "equally good to live or to die"—who could if necessary be just as cruel, just as cunning, and just as ruthless as Hitler but who could win victories without enslaving populations, or preaching supernaturalism, or foisting off myths of his infallibility, or destroying, or even warping, the libertarian institutions he had sworn to preserve. Such a man, if he existed, would be England's last chance.[2]

In London there was such a man.

Now at last, at last, his hour had struck. He had been waiting in Parliament for forty years, had grown bald and gray in his nation's service, had endured slander and calumny only to be summoned when the situation seemed hopeless to everyone except him. His youngest daughter, seventeen-year-old "Mary the Mouse"—her family nickname—had been sunning herself at Chartwell, their country home in Kent, during the first hours of the German breakthrough, when the music on her portable radio had been interrupted by a BBC bulletin: "His Majesty the King has sent for Mr. Winston Churchill and asked him to form a government." Mary, who adored her father, prayed for him and assumed that he would save England. So, of course, did he. But among those who fully grasped the country's plight, that was a minority view. The Conservative party leadership, the men of Munich, still controlled the government—Lord Halifax, Sir Horace Wilson, Sir Kingsley Wood, Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, and, of course, Churchill's predecessor as prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, who detested him and everything he represented. Even George VI hadn't wanted Chamberlain to quit No. 10 Downing Street; he thought his treatment had been "grossly unfair." The King suggested Halifax as his successor. Labour's erratic Stafford Cripps had already come out for Halifax. That suited the Tory hierarchy, but only a coalition could govern the nation, and the National Executive of the Labour party, meeting in a basement room of the Highcliff Hotel in Bournemouth, sent word that they would serve under no Conservative except Churchill. So Chamberlain persuaded the reluctant King to choose the man neither wanted.[3]

Not that it seemed to matter much. Churchill had said that "the Germans are always

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General Maxime Weygand replied by asking what would happen if a hundred Nazi divisions landed at Dover. Churchill told him: *"Nous les frapperons sur la tête"*—they would be hit on the head as they crawled ashore. Visiting Harrow, he heard the boys sing an old school song rewritten in his honor:

> *Not less we praise in darker days*
> *The Leader of our Nation,*
> *And Churchill's name shall win acclaim*
> *From each new generation.*

He suggested a change. "Darker," he said, should be "sterner." These were no dark days, he told them. Indeed, they would be remembered as great days, provided this "island race" followed his watchword: "Never, never, never, never give in."[6]

And so he saved Western civilization when men considered its redemption worth any price. The Nazi stain was spreading into the Balkans, into the Middle East, into Brazil; the German-American Bund was staging mass rallies in Madison Square Garden; the *New York Times* reported in front-page headlines: URUGUAY ON GUARD FOR FIFTH COLUMN, NAZIS TAKE BOLD TONE IN ECUADOR, and ARGENTINE NAZIS RALLY. Men who think of themselves as indispensable are almost always wrong, but Winston Churchill was surely that then. He was like the lion in Revelation, "the first beast," with "six wings about him" and "full of eyes within." In an uncharacteristically modest moment on his eightieth birthday he said: "It was the nation and the race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion's heart; I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar." It wasn't that simple. The spirit, if indeed within them, lay dormant until he became prime minister and they, kindled by his soaring prose, came to see themselves as he saw them and emerged a people transformed, the admiration of free men everywhere.[7]

At the height of the Battle of Britain, when Hitler tried to win in the air over London what he had expected to gain in a negotiated peace, the prime minister's headquarters lay in a drab brick bunker two blocks south of Downing Street, beneath a stone government building which bears the plaque CABINET OFFICE / CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE. The bunker is still there—nothing in it, not even the pins in the maps, has been changed since V-E Day—and you can descend a cellar stair into the past, emerging into what was known as "the Annexe," or "the CWR," short for "Cabinet War Room." In fact there are many rooms, including a rather barren cell containing a desk bearing the microphone which the prime minister used for his broadcasts and the bed into which his wife could tuck him at night. All messages reached him here through the No. 10 switchboard; an aide could be put through anywhere in England by dialing the magic number: Rapid Falls 4466.

Churchill hated the Annexe's cramped quarters. Donning his zippered blue Siren Suit, as he called it (it looked like a workman's boiler suit; the staff called it his "Rompers"), he would mount the stairs to visit his family in their ground-floor flat, or

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stroll over to No. 10, or cross the street into St. James's Park to feed the ducks and pelicans in the lake despite reports, taken seriously, that German agents lurked there. At night he was even more incautious. During raids he would dart out after close hits to see the damage. Sometimes he climbed up to the roof and squatted there on a hot-air vent, counting the Heinkel III's as the searchlights picked them up. He wanted to be wherever the bombs were falling. It is a lie that he knew Coventry would be destroyed on November 14, 1940, and didn't alert the city because the Germans would have known their code had been broken. Sir John Martin was with him that evening. They were driving out of the capital when a motorcyclist stopped them; word had just arrived that the Luftwaffe was headed for London. So the prime minister ordered the car turned around. It was early morning before he knew that the real target had been Coventry.

All his life he was a man of extraordinary personal courage. As a youth he sought danger in Cuba, on India's North-West Frontier, on the Nile, and in South Africa. Each battle found him recklessly exposing himself to gunfire. In the Sudan in 1898 he was a subaltern and Herbert Kitchener was Anglo-Egyptian commander in chief (Sirdar), but he attacked Kitchener, in print, for "the inhuman slaughter of the wounded" and the desecration of the tomb of the Mahdi, the natives' idol. Then, in Natal, the Boers captured Churchill. He escaped and later rode a bicycle in civilian clothes through the Boer stronghold of Johannesburg, risking execution as a spy had he been caught. Elected to Parliament at the age of twenty-five, he defended the enemy in his maiden speech—and then savaged Britain's war minister, a senior statesman of his own party. At sea in 1943 he awoke Averell Harriman to tell him that a U-boat had them in its sights. He said: "I won't be captured. The finest way to die is in the excitement of fighting the enemy." After a moment's thought he added: "It might not be so nice if one were in the water and they tried to pick me up." Harriman, frightened, said, "I thought you told me that the worst a torpedo could do to this ship… was to knock out one engine room." Churchill grinned and replied, "Ah, but they might put two torpedoes in us. You must come with me… and see the fun."[8]

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Churchill among the ruins of the House of Commons, 1941

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never been invented. The world has shrunk since the Wrights got into the air; it was an evil hour for poor England." And addressing England as though it were a colleague—he was apt to do this—he said: "You came into big things as an accident of naval power when you were an island. The world had confidence in you. You became the workshop of the world. You populated the island beyond its capacity. Through an accident of airpower you will probably cease to exist."[11]

In a thousand little ways he revealed his preference for the past and his reluctance to part with it. Victorian expressions salted his speech: "I venture to say," "I am greatly distressed," "I rejoice," and "I pray"; so many of his memos began "Pray do," "Pray do not," or "Pray give me the facts on half a sheet of paper" that they became known among his staff as "Churchill's prayers." If it was time to leave Chartwell for London, and he wanted to know if his chauffeur was behind the wheel, he would ask: "Is the coachman on his box?" After the House of Commons snuffbox was destroyed in the Blitz, he replaced it with one from his family's ancestral home of Blenheim, explaining, "I confess myself to be a great admirer of tradition." He frankly preferred "the refinements of Louis XIV" to the modern "age of clatter and buzz, of gape and gloat." He also thought that "bad luck always pursues peoples who change the names of their cities. Fortune is rightly malignant to those who break with the customs of the past." Accordingly, Istanbul was Constantinople to him; Ankara was Angora; Sevastopol was Sebastopol; and in a directive to his minister of information dated August 29, 1941, he wrote: "Do try to blend in without causing trouble the word Persia instead of Iran." As for Cambodia and Guatemala, they didn't exist for him; he had got this far without having heard of them and saw no need to change now. He spoke of Sir Walter Raleigh, Henry VIII, and James I as though they were his contemporaries. Anthony Montague Browne recalls walking into Churchill's office after Harold Macmillan had been chosen over R. A. ("Rab") Butler as the new Conservative leader. Churchill was muttering, "Intelligent, yes. Good looking, yes. Well-meaning, yes. But not the stuff of which Prime Ministers are made." Montague Browne asked: "But would Rab have been any better?" Churchill looked at him blankly. He said: "I was thinking of Melbourne."[12]

Like Melbourne and all other Victorian prime ministers, Churchill never attended Parliament, or called at Buckingham Palace, wearing anything but a frock coat. It was sometimes difficult for those around him to remember that he had fought his first election in the nineteenth century and had been, by the time of the old Queen's death, one of the highest-paid newspaper reporters in the world. Some thought his viewpoint and attitudes reached even farther back in history; Harold Laski called him "a gallant and romantic relic of eighteenth-century imperialism." Churchill replied: "I like to live in the past. I don't think people are going to get much fun in the future." The older he grew, the stronger the bond he felt between himself and others who had reached manhood before the turn of the century. When he was told that a Londoner over seventy-five years of age had been arrested in Hyde Park for making improper advances toward a young girl in subzero

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weather, he chortled: "Over seventy-five and below zero! Makes you *proud* to be an Englishman!"[13]

But to those who chided him for being preoccupied with earlier ages, he answered: "The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward. This is not a philosophical or political argument—any oculist can tell you it is true." Certainly it was true of him. He was no mere fogy. Clement Attlee, his great Labour adversary, compared him to a layer cake: "One layer was certainly seventeenth century. The eighteenth century in him is obvious. There was the nineteenth century, and a large slice, of course, of the twentieth century; and another, curious, layer which may possibly have been the twenty-first."[14] Churchill may have lacked sympathy for inventive contributions to warfare, but he understood them and even anticipated them. In World War I he was the father of the tank. As early as 1917 he conceived of vessels which would serve as landing craft for tanks. In the late 1930s he became interested in rockets and showed friends graphs illustrating their ballistic characteristics. And in the war against Hitler his genius was responsible for "Window," strips of tinfoil dropped by bombers to confuse enemy radar; "Pluto," a pipeline under the ocean; "Gee," a device for guiding pilots; and the artificial harbors used at Normandy.

All these, of course, were weapons. Martial strains reverberated throughout his career as a kind of background score. In the House his rhetorical metaphors were those of the battlefield—events marched, political flanks were turned, legislative skirmishes fought, ultimata delivered, and opponents told to surrender, to strike their colors, to lay down their arms. More than half of the fifty-six books he published were about war and warriors; the two he most regretted not having found time to write were biographies of Caesar and Napoleon. Partly this was because he knew that peace hath not her heroes, and he meant to be heroic. In part it was because of his combative spirit. He agreed with George Meredith: "It is a terrific decree in life that they must act who would prevail." There is no doubt that he enjoyed peril and delighted in battle. In his last days he said that 1940 and 1941 had been the best years of his life, despite the fact that for other Englishmen they had been incomparably the worst.

It is equally true that throughout his life he retained the small boy's glee in making mischief, in dressing up, in showing off. He was probably the only man in London who owned more hats than his wife—top hats, Stetsons, seamen's caps, his hussar helmet, a privy councillor's cocked hat, homburgs, an astrakhan, an Irish "paddy hat," a white pith helmet, an Australian bush hat, a fez, the huge beplumed hat he wore as a Knight of the Garter, even the full headdress of a North American Indian chieftain. He had closets full of costumes. When his grandchildren visited him, he appeared as an ape, snarling. Dressing for dinner when he traveled abroad, he wore the decorations awarded him by whatever country he was visiting—his favorite was the Danish Order of the Elephant—together with his sash. If nothing else was suitable, he would don his uniforms as RAF air commodore, as colonel of the Queen's Own Fourth Hussars, as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, or as Elder Brother of Trinity House, England's first lighthouse and pilotage authority, chartered by Henry VIII in 1514. His fame had eclipsed the medals; his figure had outgrown the uniforms; it didn't matter. Once in Strasbourg Lord Boothby entered wearing a Légion d'Honneur rosette. Churchill glared, pointed at it, and demanded:

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Burmese. Emerging nations have acquired independence only to cross the frontiers of their newly independent neighbors. Cuba became a missile base, then a port nursing Soviet submarines. Even the remote, barren Falkland Islands saw Britons and Argentinians slay one another. The United States has seen no fighting on its mainland, but American soldiers and airmen have died in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Sicily, Italy, North Africa, China, the Pacific islands, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia, and U.S. warships lie rusting on the bottom of every ocean. Russia and the West are locked in a truce of terror, held in check only by the fear of mutual annihilation.

Having accepted what was unacceptable to others, Churchill devoted his remarkable gifts to martial arts at an early age. His aim was always victory, but victory at the least possible cost in suffering, at the lowest price in casualties. The proper course for Britain, he reasoned, was to follow the principle of Chatham—the Elder Pitt—and hold continental enemies in the grip of English sea power, sapping their strength at the distant fringes of their dominions. In 1915 this led to the most controversial, most misunderstood decision of Churchill's career. He meant to break the stalemate in France by forcing the Dardanelles, the narrow strait between the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean which separates Europe and Asia, knocking Turkey out of the war and joining British and French forces with their Russian ally. Because of blunders in the field, the stratagem failed. That failure, which drove him from office and nearly ended his career, haunted him all his years. Today the wisdom of his plan then is obvious. "In the whole of the First World War," Attlee has written, there was "only one brilliant strategical idea—and that was Winston's: the Dardanelles."[17]

Still, in the age of nuclear weapons, which Churchill did not anticipate, even the most humane of warriors is suspect. The London *Observer* declared in 1951: "Any consideration of Mr Churchill's career as a whole brings one up against the extraordinary fact that, for all its majestic scope, it remains to this day tragically unfulfilled and fragmentary. His political role has not been meteoric and disastrous, like Napoleon's or Hitler's. But neither has it been linked to a definite achievement, like Richelieu's or Chatham's, Washington's or Lincoln's, Bismarck's or Lenin's." An American is struck by the facility with which so many British intellectuals slight the man who saved their country. In fact, Churchill was more than an exponent of Mars. His ultimate goal was the "broad, sunlit uplands" of a time when all swords became plowshares. Even in the grim days after Dunkirk he looked westward and saw hope. If the British Isles were conquered by the Germans, he said, then the struggle would continue abroad "until, in God's good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the old." He had faith in eventual peace, and he believed he knew how it could be achieved: by combining the might of the English-speaking peoples in so strong a defense of the United States and the Commonwealth that the rest of the world would be held at bay, as it had been held by the British Empire in the relatively quiescent nineteenth century. Then, from that absolute base, freedom would expand outward. He cherished the possibility of a world order, a kind of Renaissance pageant to be accomplished, not by emerging states squabbling on United Nations Plaza in Manhattan, but by the Americans and the great powers of Europe, including Germany but not, significantly, the Russians, whom he "always looked on," in Sir Isaiah Berlin's words, "as a formless, quasi-Asiatic mass." His dreams of a tranquil global civilization in many ways resembled the exotic

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mysticism of Cecil Rhodes, Alfred Milner, and Joseph Chamberlain, but they never turned westward. To Churchill, the "Great Republic," as he called it, was the key. This, as he readily acknowledged, was partly because of his origins. The blood in his veins was as American as English. His mother was a New Yorker. He always kept a cast of her hand, molded in copper, on his desk. It was an exact replica of his own.[18]

He adored her and she neglected him. He later wrote: "She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly—but at a distance." She later told friends she ignored Winston until he grew older and became "interesting." That was an improvement on the attitude of her husband, who didn't even like his son, but young Winston's happiness among his nursery toys derived from neither parent but from his nanny, Elizabeth Everest—"Woom." He recalled: "My nurse was my confidante…. [At her death she was] my dearest and most intimate friend." Wrenched from her while still a child, he was sent to a brutal boarding school in Ascot, where the sadistic headmaster caned him until his back was a mass of welts. His treatment at the hands of the other boys was, if anything, worse. Toward the end of his life, in halting tones, he told his doctor about it. Sickly, an uncoordinated weakling with the pale fragile hands of a girl, speaking with a lisp and a slight stutter, he had been at the mercy of bullies. They beat him, ridiculed him, and pelted him with cricket balls. Trembling and humiliated, he hid in a nearby woods. This was hardly the stuff of which gladiators are made. His only weapons were an unconquerable will and an incipient sense of immortality. Already he was memorizing Macaulay's tale of a man with two comrades barring a bridge to an army:[19]

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods?"

Beginning at the age of seven, Churchill deliberately set out to change his nature, to prove that biology need *not* be destiny. Anthony Storr, the English psychiatrist and author of *Human Aggression*, concludes that he "was, to a marked extent, forcing himself to go against his own inner nature."[20] As a Victorian, Churchill believed he could be master of his fate, and that faith sustained him, but everything we have learned about human motivation since then underscores the immensity of his undertaking. W. H. Sheldon has delineated three dominant physiques, each with its concomitant personality traits. Of the three—ectomorphic (slight), mesomorphic (muscular), and endomorphic (fat)—Churchill clearly fell in the third category. His head was ponderous, his limbs small, his belly

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tumescent, his chest puny. His skin was so sensitive that he broke into a rash unless he slept naked at night between silk sheets. By day he could wear only silk underwear against his skin. Endomorphs are characteristically lazy, calculating, easygoing, and predictable. Churchill was none of these. He altered his emotional constitution to that of an athlete, projecting the image of a valiant, indomitable bulldog.

At times along the way he despaired. In 1893 he wrote, "I am cursed with so feeble a body, that I can hardly support the fatigues of the day." Yet he was determined to prove just as hardy as any mesomorph. In his teens he nearly killed himself while leaping from a bridge during a game of tag; he pitched down almost thirty feet and lay unconscious for three days. He fell again steeplechasing at Aldershot, and yet again when disembarking at Bombay, where he permanently injured a shoulder; for the rest of his active life he played polo, off and on, with his arm bound to his side. As a child he caught pneumonia. He suffered from chest ailments the rest of his life. He was allergic to anesthetics and periodically erupted in boils. Nevertheless, he refused to yield to human frailty. In his inner world there was no room for concessions to weakness. He never complained of fatigue. In his seventieth year he flew to councils of war overseas sprawled across a tick mattress on the floor of an unheated World War II bomber. During the ten years after V-E Day he suffered a heart attack, three bouts of pneumonia, two strokes, and two operations. Nevertheless, he continued to build the image of a tireless embodiment of machismo who ate, smoked, and drank, all to excess. It survives to this day. Actually, most of the stories about his alcohol intake are myth. It is true that he started each day with a scotch and soda. What is not generally known is that he made that drink last until lunch, and that the amount of liquor he put away over a twenty-four-hour day was surprisingly modest. You would never have known it to hear him talk. He wanted to be remembered as a two-bottle man, like Pitt, and he cultivated the yarns about his drinking with characteristic aplomb. Once he asked Frederick Lindemann—"the Prof," a scientific wizard who later became Lord Cherwell—how many boxcars could be filled with the champagne he had drunk in his lifetime. The Prof replied: "Only part of one." Churchill sighed. He said: "So little time and so much to achieve."[21]

In his most famous photograph he is seen glaring at the camera, his jaw jutting like the butt end of a ham, the incarnation of defiant Britain. The Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh, who understood him, caught the expression by a trick. Just before he triggered the shutter, he reached out and yanked Churchill's cigar from his mouth. What you really see in that picture is an endomorph rudely deprived of his pacifier. If you look closely, however, you may catch a glimpse of something else: a man ruled by his instincts. In triumphing over his physiognomy Churchill had become an aggressive extrovert, but at the same time he had developed into a rare type—C. G. Jung called it the "extroverted intuitive"—and it was that, not his surface toughness, which changed the history of the world. Jung wrote: "The intuitive is never to be found among the generally recognized reality values, but is always present where possibilities exist. He has a keen nose for things in the bud, pregnant with future promise…. Thinking and feeling, the indispensable components of conviction, are, with him, inferior functions, possessing no decisive weight: hence they lack the power to offer any lasting resistance to the force of intuition." That, or something like it, was what C. P. Snow had in mind when he wrote: "Judgment is a fine thing: but it is not all that uncommon. Deep insight is much rarer. Churchill had

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without strategic value. George C. Marshall said, “His planning was all wishing and guessing.” Actually, it wasn’t. Had the combined chiefs adopted his grand proposal to sail up the Adriatic and invade Europe through the Ljubljana Gap, some military historians believe, British Tommies and American GIs, not Russians, would have been the liberators of Budapest, Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw, with all that would have entailed for the postwar world. But by then his stock had fallen because he had championed so many impractical schemes.[24]

That had been the story of much of his public life. His career passed through three stages: from 1900 to 1915, when his star rose to a dizzy height; from then until 1940, when he achieved little and failed often; and from Dunkirk to the end, when he became a legend. The legend obscures what was a patchy record. Again and again he was rejected by his countrymen; he never won their love and confidence until they faced disaster. His following was limited to a few personal friends. He lost more elections than any other British politician of his time. Twice he switched parties, and although he wound up leader of the Conservatives, he spent three-quarters of his political life battling Tory leaders. His brilliance was recognized from the first, but he was regarded as erratic, unreliable, shallow, impetuous, a hatcher of “wildcat schemes.” In 1915, Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith observed of Churchill that “to speak with the tongue of men and angels, and to spend laborious days and nights in administration, is no good if a man does not inspire trust.” Instead, he inspired suspicion. His love of adventure, it was said, ran away with his discretion. He was put down as an opportunist, a swashbuckler, a man who was “jaywalking through life.” He was labeled a man incapable of party loyalty. In the House of Commons he wasn’t even a good listener; he “lacked antennae.” Once his mind was set, he wouldn’t budge an inch. Nor could he judge men. He was easily taken in by quacks and charlatans; in the words of Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal, “Winston was a bad picker.” By the 1930s it was generally felt that the people were wise to him at last, that he was a figure from the past, out of touch with reality. A newspaper editorial described him as a “genius without judgment.” Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who watched Germany rearm and crushed all proposals for British military expenditures, said that although Churchill had a “hundred-horsepower brain,” he didn’t know how to harness it. Harold Begbie wrote: “Mr. Churchill carries great guns, but his navigation is uncertain. His effect on men is one of interest and curiosity, not of admiration and loyalty. His power is the power of gifts, not character. Men watch him but do not follow him. He beguiles their reason but never warms their emotions.”[25]

Margot Asquith had sized him up in 1908 as a man of “transitory convictions.” Later, the Tories reached the same conclusion; they accused him of inconstancy, of veering opinions. In fact, it was the other way around. It was Baldwin and Chamberlain who were the trimmers, switching their policies when public opinion shifted. Except in the 1920s—when, as Baldwin’s chancellor of the Exchequer, he withheld criticism of some questionable policies—Churchill never changed at all. He could misjudge others, but his own principles were a rock. This, in fact, is what offended traditional party politicians. If one reads the letters he wrote as a subaltern, his dispatches as a war correspondent, his speeches as a young MP, his cabinet papers, his books, and his “Action-This-Day” memoirs of the early 1940s, it will be clear that his views, once formed, were immutable.

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Here and there one encounters surprises. In the Edwardian era he and David Lloyd George were the most effective champions of the working class in the cabinet. Churchill's sympathy for workmen had been engaged by the humble circumstances of Mrs. Everest, who had given him the love his mother withheld, and by reading early sociological studies of the desperate poverty in the lower classes. Despite his wealthy friends and relatives and his allegiance to the Empire, he denounced "our unbridled Imperialists who have no thought but to pile up armaments, taxation, and territory." He invented the excess-profits tax. Yet more than thirty years later he bitterly fought Labour's cradle-to-grave welfare legislation. The explanation is intriguing. He wasn't opposed to the substance of Labour's bills; what he found objectionable was the *way* the thing was being done. Labour held that the people had an absolute right to these comprehensive benefits. Churchill thought they should be gifts from a benign upper class to grateful lower classes. It was characteristic of him that in 1944, when Harold Laski proposed raising a fund as a token of the nation's gratitude to him, he demurred, then added: "If, however, when I am dead people think of commemorating my services, I should like to think that a park was made for the children of London's poor on the south bank of the Thames, where they have suffered so grimly from the Hun." Subscriptions were admirable. Taxes were an affront.[26]

His concept of magnanimity is among his more fascinating and, if you disregard the overtones of noblesse oblige, more endearing traits. He was always being excoriated in print or on the platform, and one of his sources of income was damage suits for libel or slander. He always won, and he always felt genuine pity for the loser. He wrote: "I have always urged fighting wars and other contentions with might and main till overwhelming victory, and then offering the hand of friendship to the vanquished. Thus I have always been against the Pacifists during the quarrel, and against the Jingoes at its close." It was a pattern with him. Defeat had to precede conciliation. He refused to negotiate until his adversary had capitulated. Revenge afterward, however, was to him unmanly and ungentlemanly. It was Kitchener's vindictiveness on the Nile, his total lack of generosity toward the routed natives, which infuriated young Churchill. After Chamberlain's fall, which was swiftly followed by his death, Churchill rose in the House of Commons to pay him tribute. He said Chamberlain's hopes had been foiled by events, then asked: "But what were these hopes in which he was disappointed?… They were surely among the most noble and benevolent instincts of the human heart—the love of peace, the pursuit of peace, even at great peril." He was a ferocious enemy of Germany in both world wars, yet after each he begged the British government—in vain—to dispatch emergency shipments of food to its starving people. However high he rose, the man who as a boy had been bullied and bruised could always identify with the underdog.[27]

In a profound sense, he himself always remained the underdog. All his life he suffered spells of depression, sinking into the brooding depths of melancholia, an emotional state which, though little understood, resembles the passing sadness of the normal man as a malignancy resembles a canker sore. The depressive knows what Dante knew: that hell is

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laying bricks at Chartwell or painting landscapes at Marrakesh. After the Dardanelles he crossed into France, fought in the trenches as a battalion commander, and set up his easel just behind the front line. And he always pursued acclaim. Depressives, more than most people, are dependent upon external sources of self-esteem. Churchill was never bashful about soliciting applause. As a youth, mailing a manuscript to his mother, he sought from her what she had not given him in childhood. He wrote: "Write to me at great length about the book and be nice about it. Don't say what you think, but what I… should like you to think." If friends suggested that this book or that speech might be improved, he reproached them: "You are not on my side." He expected total, uncritical loyalty. And he reciprocated. Brendan Bracken, one of the few who stood by him in the 1930s, said: "He would go to the stake for a friend."[30]

Nothing, however, could match the satisfaction of directing his hostility outward, toward a great antagonist, a figure worthy of massive enmity. But as the years rolled by and he approached old age, the possibilities of finding such an object became remote. The strain began to tell. Anthony Storr writes: "In day-to-day existence, antagonists are not wicked enough, and depressives suffer from pangs of conscience about their own hostility."[31] Then Churchill's prospects were dramatically altered. Adolf Hitler entered his life. It would be fatuous to suggest that the Nazi dictator's only significance for Churchill was as an answer to an emotional longing. Churchill was no warmonger. He was a statesman, a humanitarian, a thinker in cosmic terms; he would have been profoundly grateful if Hitler had strangled on his own venom. But the Führer's repeated lunges across the borders of peaceful neighboring states did arouse a Churchillian belligerence far beyond the capacity of ordinary men. His basic weakness became his basic strength. Here, at last, was pure evil, a monster who deserved no pity, a tyrant he could claw and maim without admonishment from his scruples. By provoking his titanic wrath, the challenge from central Europe released enormous stores of long-suppressed vitality within him. In the beginning Hitler responded in kind. He, too, was a hoarder of rage, and he was a great hater. He may have felt that Britain's prime minister met an ache in him, too. As it turned out, he needed Churchill the way a murderer needs a noose.

Hitler's archenemy was not a man of small ego. It is an egalitarian fiction that the great are modest. They haven't any right to be, and they aren't. He said to Attlee: "Of course I am an egotist. Where do you get if you aren't?" In 1940 he believed that he had been destined for the extraordinary role he must now play. He declared to Lord Moran: "This cannot be accident, it must be design. I was kept for this job." It didn't surprise him. Determined to prove himself unworthy of parental neglect, he had lived much of his life in a world of fantasy centered on the conviction that something special lay ahead for him. He wasn't vain; merely self-centered. As a young war correspondent in the midst of combat he called to the soldiers around him: "Keep cool, men! This will make great copy for my paper!" Later, he liked to lie in bed listening to recordings of his speeches. Once he and his valet had words. Afterward Churchill rumbled: "You were rude." His manservant, forgetting his station, said, "You were rude, too." Churchill pouted. After a moment he said: "But I am a great man." His idea of a good dinner, he said, was to dine well and then "to discuss a good topic—with myself as chief conversationalist." After one meal his son, Randolph, was trying to make a point. Churchill broke in with a comment of his own.

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Randolph tried to pick up the thread of his argument. His father barked: "Don't interrupt me when I am interrupting!" In 1945, after the collapse of the Third Reich and his electoral defeat, he said: "For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself."[32]

Some of the most moving passages in his historical accounts pay tribute to England's common man, but he never really understood his constituents' minds, and in fact he didn't much care. During one campaign he described his audience as "a sea of hard little hats on hard little heads." Lloyd George, who cared very much about the voters' dreams, was saturated with class consciousness; Churchill, as Attlee once observed, would have been content in a feudal society. He never grasped the revolution of rising expectations in the Birmingham mills and the bazaars of New Delhi. He thought Labour unfit to govern, and his early appeals for laborers' votes were almost absurd in their condescension. (In 1900 he told them: "I like the British working man and so did my father before me.") This insensitivity is one explanation for the periodic eclipse of his political fortunes. It is indeed singular that a man so remote from commonality, so completely out of touch with his times, could have become a national hero. Eventually he became beloved for his courage, his humor, his bulldog image, and such touches as his V-for-Victory sign, his ritualistic circumcision of cigars, and his deliberate mispronunciation of *Nazis*—it came out of the Churchill euphonium as "Nahrzees." But he never mastered the British political mood. Instead, he repeatedly misjudged it. Except in national emergencies, at the hour of fate or the crack of doom, he was largely ignored. People didn't identify with him because he never reciprocated.[33]

In his personal life he was the complete patrician. F. E. Smith said: "Winston is a man of simple tastes. He is always prepared to put up with the best of everything." Churchill's wife, Clementine, told Lord Moran that at home "Winston is a pasha." If no servant responded when he clapped his hands upon entering the house, he would immediately call for his valet. The valet dressed him right down to the pulling on of his socks, and ran his bath—twice a day—almost to the brim, at a precise temperature. Churchill's nanny had begun ministering to him; she had been succeeded by his manservants, batman, wife, secretaries, footmen, doctors, and attendants. He was inconsiderate of them; impatient, arrogant, unfeeling. Why did they put up with it? Dr. Storr suggests that "men who demand and need a great deal of attention from others are manifesting a kind of childlike helplessness, which evokes an appropriate response, however difficult they may be." Churchill could be very difficult. When a plane was preparing to land and the NO SMOKING sign flashed on, he would light up a cigar. If he found himself driving in a traffic jam, he wheeled his car out on the shoulder or sidewalk and drove to the head of the line. He rarely traveled with fewer than sixteen pieces of matched baggage. Once, according to Vincent Sheean, he arrived by himself at Maxine Elliott's Riviera villa and told her: "My dear Maxine, you have no idea how easy it is to travel without a servant. I came here all the way from London alone and it was quite simple." She murmured: "Winston, how brave of you."[34]

Reminiscing, he once said: "I was not twenty at the time of the Cuban War, and was only a Second Lieutenant, but I was taken to an inspection at West Point and treated as if I had been a General. I was brought up in that state of civilization when it was everywhere

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accepted that men are born unequal." This explains, in foreign affairs, the ferocity of his attacks on bolshevism well into the 1920s, long after his intransigence had become embarrassing to the government, and in domestic politics it accounts for his distrust of Labour. Late in life he read that Christopher Mayhew, one of Attlee's junior ministers, had walked out during the arena scene in the film *Quo Vadis*. Winston ordered the picture screened at Chartwell and intently watched the scenes of mayhem in the arena. After it was over, he rose and told his family: "Do you know why Mr. Mayhew walked out? It was because his socialist, egalitarian principles were outraged. There was one poor lion who hadn't got a Christian."[35]

But if Churchill's blind spots are often attributable to his aristocratic heritage, so are many of his successes. His career would have been impossible without preferential treatment. His name, not academic competence, got him through Harrow and Sandhurst. Then his mother, finally taking an interest in his affairs, began pulling strings for him. There were a great many available to her. She had been intimate with many influential men in America, on the Continent, in the British establishment; even in the royal family. Theoretically, her son was subject to army discipline in his youth. Actually, he moved around the world as he pleased. There is a stunning line in his book *The River War:* "With the design of thereafter writing this account, I moved to a point on the ridge which afforded a view of both armies." Here are two mighty forces preparing to do battle, and here is a lowly subaltern riding off to get the best perspective. A fellow war correspondent in South Africa pointed out that Churchill had the assurance, arrogance, and bravado that one found in the British ruling classes, "the conviction that he belongs to the best group in the world." He never doubted it. Nor did his mother. In 1900 other Englishwomen yearned to see their sons, off fighting the Boers. Jennie Churchill simply outfitted a hospital ship and sailed down to Cape Town to see how Winston was doing.[36]

She didn't pay for the vessel herself. She raised the funds by subscription. Her name wasn't even among the subscribers'. She couldn't afford it. She was always just a jump ahead of her creditors. So, for most of his life, was her son. To be sure, neither of them ever came close to a soup kitchen. Winston often complained of being broke, but that did not mean to him what it meant to most of his countrymen. He had expensive tastes, and he always indulged them. Consequently, he was often short of funds. In the desperate 1930s he was reduced to writing, for *Collier's* and other popular magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, such pieces as "The American Mind and Ours," "Is There Life on the Moon?" and "Under the Microscope." (His most striking idea was an article to be titled "Will There Be a Woman Prime Minister?" Editors vetoed it on the ground that it was too fantastic.) He would ask editors for payment, "if possible, by Monday morning." Six months before Munich, when he was waiting in the wings to stride out on the stage of history, he was so deep in red ink that he contemplated resigning from Parliament. He—and all he represented—was saved only when a wealthy friend settled his debts. On August 31, 1939, he wrote his publisher, "I am, as you know, concentrating every minute of my spare life and strength upon completing our contract. These distractions are trying." The distractions were German troop movements along the Reich's eastern border. That night, as he stood at his high desk in Chartwell, correcting proofs, Hitler invaded Poland.[37]

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antenna in the waters of negativity"). It made Sir Herbert wince, but its author won the Nobel Prize in literature.[39]

Churchill's feeling for the English tongue was sensual, almost erotic; when he coined a phrase he would suck it, rolling it around his palate to extract its full flavor. On first meeting Violet Asquith he told her that words had "a magic and a music" all their own. That was what troubled Lloyd George, another critic of his rhetoric; he protested that to call Mussolini's conduct in Ethiopia "at once obsolete and reprehensible," as Winston had, was meaningless. Unchastened, Churchill replied, "Ah, the b's in those words: 'obsolete, reprehensible.' You must pay attention to euphony." He said, "I like short words and vulgar fractions." When short words hit hard he used them. Needing military equipment after Dunkirk, he told the United States, "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." He did not declare that the Allies had "consented to a coalition" or "agreed to cooperate." Instead, they had "joined hands." But on other occasions he did not hesitate to dip into his enormous vocabulary. Once he dictated a note to the Admiralty: "Must we have his lugubrious ingemination of the news of our shipping losses?" At first the sea lords thought his secretary had mistyped "insemination." Then they consulted the *Oxford English Dictionary* and found that *ingemination* means "redundancy."[40]

Like all writers, he had his favorite words: *unflinching, austere, somber, squalid.* He said *aircraft,* not *aeroplane,* and *airfield,* never *aerodrome.* He also liked to gather his adjectives in squads of four. Bernard Montgomery was "austere, severe, accomplished, tireless"; Joe Chamberlain was "lively, sparkling, insurgent, compulsive." He would open a speech with a sluggish largo tempo, apparently unsure of himself; then he would pull out his organ's Grand Swell and the Vox Humana, and the essence of his prose would be revealed; a bold, ponderous, rolling, pealing, easy rhythm, broken by vivid stabbing strokes. It gained force by its participatory character. He himself was part of the great events he described; he could say, with Aeneas, "*Quorum pars magna fui*." It is an advantage given to few, and those few have usually bungled it, resorting, among other things, to euphemisms, which Churchill scorned. He derided bureaucrats who called the poor the "lower income group," or lorries "commercial vehicles," or homes "accommodation units"—once he astonished the House of Commons by bursting into song: "Accommodation unit, sweet accommodation unit, / There's no place like accommodation unit." One of his first acts when he took over as prime minister in 1940 was to change the name of the "Local Defense Volunteers" to the "Home Guard." Words like *adumbrated* and *coordination* do not appear in his work. Of an MP who strung together phrases of jargon, Churchill said: "He can best be described as one of those orators who, before they get up, do not know what they are going to say; when they are speaking, do not know what they are saying; and when they have sat down, do not know what they have said." Of another, who had been defeated at the polls, he said, "Thank God we've seen the last of that Wuthering Height."[41]

He loved books and wrote of them: "If you cannot read all your books, at any rate handle, or, as it were, fondle them—peer into them, let them fall open where they will, read from the first sentence that arrests the eye, set them back on their shelves with your own hands, arrange them on your own plan so that if you do not know what is in them, you will at least know where they are. Let them be your friends; let them at any rate be

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your acquaintances." But he hated verbosity. "This paper, by its very length," he told a cabinet meeting, "defends itself against the risk of being read." And he despised pedants. A junior civil servant had tortuously reworded a sentence to avoid ending with a preposition. The prime minister scrawled across the page: "This is nonsense up with which I will not put." His profound knowledge of Latin and Greek was acquired through translations; he had been a miserable classics student. Labour MPs, most of whom lacked public-school educations, objected to classical phrases in the House for the very sensible reason that they couldn't understand them. During a discussion of this Churchill rose to a point and began, "As to the chairman of this committee, he should be not *facile princeps*, but *primus inter pares*, which for the benefit of any…" He paused while the Opposition MPs, anticipating insult, struggled to their feet. Then he broke up the House by continuing, "… for the benefit of any Old Etonians present, I should, if very severely pressed, venture to translate." His insularity, his feigned ignorance of all foreign tongues, was a source of popularity with the masses and served as antidote to his elitism. He told Jack Seely, later Lord Mottistone, "Jack, when you cross Europe you land at Marsai, spend a night at Lee-on and another in Paree and, crossing by Callay, eventually reach Londres. *I* land at Marsales, spend a night in Lie-ons, and another in Paris, cross by Calase, and come home to London." He believed that of all languages, English was incomparably superior. On his tongue, it was.[42]

Throughout his youth, he once said, "it was my only ambition to be master of the spoken word." He glittered as a young MP, speaking after elaborate preparation but—like his father before him—without a note. Then one spring evening, in the middle of an address on a trade-union bill, he discovered that he couldn't recall a word of his peroration. Speechless, he sank down on the bench and buried his head in his hands. Thereafter, when delivering a major speech, he came armed with everything he was going to say, including the pauses and the pretended fumbling for the right phrase in the first few sentences and anticipating "Cheers, 'Hear, hears,' " "Prolonged cheering," and even "Standing ovation." He said accurately, "I am not an orator. An orator is spontaneous." William Hazlitt wrote that the first duty of an orator is to echo back the feelings of his audience. Pitt translated a Latin epigram: "Eloquence is like a flame: it requires fuel to feed it, motion to excite it, and it brightens as it burns." But Churchill was no echo; he needed neither fuel, motion, nor reflected glow. His speeches were one-way. Their luster owed nothing to his listeners. F. E. Smith said: "Winston has spent the best years of his life writing impromptu speeches." Many of them were written in the bathtub. Norman McGowan, one of his valets, was surprised on his first day to hear his master's voice rumbling from the bathroom. He put his head in and asked: "Do you want me?" Churchill rumbled, "I wasn't talking to you, Norman. I was addressing the House of Commons." Harold Nicolson congratulated him upon a remark to a small audience, apparently improvised as he left the podium. Churchill snapped, "Improvised be damned! I thought of it this morning in my bath and I wish now I hadn't wasted it on this little crowd."[43]

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Watching him build up to a quip was an entertainment in itself. Hugh Massingham recalls: "One always knew it was coming. His own laughter began somewhere in the region of his feet. Then a leg would twitch; the bubble of mirth was slowly rising through the body. The stomach would swell; a shoulder heave. By this time, the audience would also be convulsed, although it had no idea what the joke was going to be. Meanwhile, the bubble had ascended a little further and had reached the face; the lips were as mobile and expressive as a baby's. The rich, stumbling voice would become even more hesitant. And finally there would be the explosion, the triumphant sentence of ridicule."[45]

Like all true wits, he knew the tickling quality of the unexpected. One day in the White House, according to Harry Hopkins, Churchill stepped naked from his bathroom just as Roosevelt was wheeling his chair into the room. This was always happening to him; the maids in his household and at No. 10 had grown accustomed to his nudity. In this case FDR apologized and turned to go, but Churchill held up a detaining hand. He said solemnly: "The Prime Minister of Great Britain has nothing to hide from the President of the United States." Before the battle of El Alamein, he summoned General Montgomery and suggested that he study logistics. Montgomery doubted that he should become involved in such technical matters. "After all, you know," he said, "they say that familiarity breeds contempt." Churchill replied: "I would like to remind you that without a degree of familiarity we could not breed anything." On his seventy-fifth birthday a photographer said: "I hope, sir, that I will shoot your picture on your hundredth birthday." Churchill answered: "I don't see why not, young man. You look reasonably fit and healthy." On his eighty-fifth birthday a back-bencher in the House, assuming that Churchill was out of earshot, told the MP beside him: "They say the old man's getting gaga." Without turning, Winston said: "Yes, and they say he's getting deaf, too."[46]

More in character, his wit was usually aggressive. Sometimes he chose the rapier. Lady Astor neither gave nor asked for quarter, and she got none from him. At a dinner party she told him: "Winston, if I were your wife I'd poison your soup." He replied, "Nancy, if I were your husband, I'd drink it." But he was at his best baiting public men who crossed broadswords with him. It was Churchill who called John Foster Dulles "the only bull who brings his own china shop with him," and who coined the progression, "dull, duller, Dulles." The austere Sir Stafford Cripps was a favorite target. In North Africa in World War II the prime minister said: "Here we are, marooned in all these miles of sand—not one blade of grass or drop of water or a flower. How Cripps would love it." After Cripps gave up smoking cigars, Churchill remarked that he was sorry to hear it: "The cigar was his last contact with humanity." As leader of the Opposition, Attlee could hardly escape, though the Labour leader, with his strong ego, enjoyed Churchill's jabs at him. When Attlee was in Moscow, Churchill said of the Labour MPs he had left behind, "When the mouse is away, the cats will play." He called Attlee "a sheep in sheep's clothing," and "a modest man with much to be modest about," and he drove a sharp needle into Labour policy one day when he met him in the House's men's room. Attlee, arriving first, had stepped up to the urinal trough when Churchill strode in on the same mission, glanced at him, and stood at the trough as far away from him as possible. Attlee said, "Feeling standoffish today, are we, Winston?" Churchill said: "That's right. Every time you see something big, you want to nationalize it."[47]

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His niche in history—it is a big one—is secure. And so is his place in our affections. He will be remembered as freedom's champion in its darkest hour, but he will be cherished as a man. He was a feast of character, a figure emanating parochial grandeur like King David, and he also belonged to that rare species, the cultivated man of action, the engagé intellectual. Attlee said: "Energy and poetry… sum him up." But nothing sums him up. He was too many people. If ever there was a Renaissance man, he was it. In the age of the specialist, he was the antithesis, our Leonardo. As a writer he was a reporter, novelist, essayist, critic, historian, and biographer. As a statesman he served, before becoming His Majesty's first magistrate, as minister for the colonies and for trade, home affairs, finance, and all three of the armed forces. Away from his desk he was at various times an airplane pilot, artist, farmer, fencer, hunter, breeder of racehorses, polo player, collector of tropical fish, and shooter of wild animals in Africa. One felt he could do anything. That was why he seemed inevitable in 1940. Bernard Shaw said: "The moment we got a good fright, and had to find a man who could and would do something, we were on our knees to Winston Churchill."[48]

It is pointless to expect balance and consistency in genius. Churchill was not made like other men. Among his many traits was a kind of built-in shock absorber which permitted him to survive his repeated defeats and concomitant depressions. Going through his papers one is struck by his resilience, his pounding energy, his volatility, his dogged determination, and his utter lack of humility. He said: "I am not usually accused, even by my friends, of being of a modest or retiring disposition."[49] In the thousands of photographs of his face you will find every expression but one. He never looked apologetic. He had the temperament of a robber baron. As Walter Bagehot said of Palmerston, "His personality was a power." In World War I John Maynard Keynes singled out as his most striking virtue his intense concentration on the matter at hand—precisely the quality which, in the opinion of William James, identifies men of genius. In games he was a consistent winner. Like his distant cousin Douglas MacArthur, he was satisfied by nothing short of victory.

He was formidable, but he was also cherubic. That was what made him lovable even to those who recoiled from his benevolent despotism. He said, "All babies look like me." They did, and he looked like, and sometimes acted like, them. He enjoyed a child's anthropomorphism—finishing a book, he would put it aside and say: "I don't want to see his face again." His chief playthings were his seven-inch cigars, Romeo y Julietas and La Aroma de Cubas. Most of the time they were unlit; he liked to chew and suck them anyway, and when an end grew soggy, he would fashion mouthpieces—"bellybandos," he called them—from paper and glue. Mornings he worked in bed wearing a scarlet and green-dragon silk bed jacket, with papers strewn around him, and his play in the bath was an important part of his daily ritual; on long flights his luggage included a portable canvas bathtub. Dictating, or just puttering around his study, he wore a bright quilted dressing gown, which had been originally designed for a character playing Pooh-Bah in a production of *The Mikado,* and gold-embroidered slippers bearing his initials, a gift from

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Lady Diana Cooper. In his Siren Suit, Lady Diana recalls, he looked "exactly like the good little pig building his house with bricks."[50]

He was the absolute romantic. His paintings reflect this. There are no monotones—each stroke of his brush added shimmering light and color. And everything he painted or wrote, his very gestures, was invested with emotionalism. "I've always been blubbery," he said. No man wept more easily. His tears flowed at the mention of gallantry in battle, the thought of "invincible knights in olden days," victims of anti-Semitism, Canadian loyalty to the Empire, the death of George VI, Elizabeth II's kindnesses toward him, or the name of Franklin Roosevelt—"the best friend Britain ever had." He never tried to hold back the teardrops because he never knew any inhibitions. In the middle of a 3:00 A.M. wartime conference at Chequers, the prime minister's country home, his generals took a smoking break. One started playing "The Blue Danube" on a piano, and to their amazement their host, all alone, started waltzing dreamily around the floor. His feelings about his family were laced with sentimentality. His home was an independent kingdom, with its own laws, its own customs, even its own language. "Wow!" one of them would say in greeting another. When Churchill entered the front door he would cry: "Wow! Wow!" and his wife would call back an answering "Wow!" Then the children would rush into his arms and his eyes would mist over. Except when they lived at Chequers, their closest moments were at Chartwell. He tried never to miss a weekend there. It says much for his belief in privilege, and for his staff's unquestioning acceptance of it, that No. 10 observed two distinct standards at Christmas, 1940. He was asked if the staff would have any time off. He said, "Yes, an hour for divine services." Then they all applauded as he flourished his V sign and left to spend a working holiday with his family.[51]

The Churchill children were never spanked. The worst that could happen to them, according to Sarah, was banishment from his presence. Like many another great captain who has sent thousands of men to their deaths, he shrank from personal violence. This was most striking in his treatment of animals, even of insects. Since he detested fresh air—he had his bedroom windows sealed with putty—it was hard for bugs to get at him. But sometimes a bee, wasp, or moth flew in from another part of the house. "Don't kill him," he would tell his valet. "Make sure you put him out the window." Once, during a division in the House, Anthony Head, the first man out of the chamber, spied a ladybug on the carpet. Realizing that a thunder of MP feet would soon pass this way, he bent down to rescue it. At that moment the prime minister arrived and instantly grasped the situation. Taking charge, he said, "Put her out the window." But since the introduction of air conditioning the windows had been permanently locked. "Use the Chancellor's office," he said, "and report back to me." Head did, but when he returned Churchill was in conference with the French foreign minister. The secretary told him he could look in for a moment. Head did and told Churchill: "She escaped. I let her out through Macmillan's window. Nobody touched her." "Good, good!" the prime minister boomed. To this day Head wonders what must have passed through the foreign minister's mind.[52]

"Poor fox," Churchill said brokenly when an MFH presented him with a mounted fox head. En route to Chartwell one night, his car ran over a badger. He ordered the car stopped, picked up the shattered animal, and carried the dead, bleeding body home in the lap of his striped pants. He would cry over the death of a swan or a cat; would leave the

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Joyously human, anachronistic and wise, capable of willful misjudgment and blinding vision, dwarfing all those around him, he was the most benevolent of statesmen and the most gifted. Today the ordinary Englishman lives a better life than his fathers did, and for that he is largely indebted to Labour. But the extraordinary man has a harder time of it. He is trapped in regulations, his rise is impeded; his country pays a price. And even the masses seem to sense that while the socialists love ideas, Churchill, the unrepentant Victorian Tory, loved life. Since that love was balanced by a hatred of injustice, the average Briton owes him more than a higher standard of living. He owes him his very liberty.

"History," wrote Aristotle, "is what Alcibiades did and suffered." Social scientists impeach that, but Churchill never doubted it. Because the man was matched by his times, he achieved immortality and changed the world, for good or for ill—though not as he had expected or would have wanted, for he was not the only giant in the century. In the long reach of events the impact of the Churchillian era upon his island was decidedly mixed. Hitler lost the war but he didn't lose it to Britain alone. Churchill, in desperate need of allies, forged a coalition with the United States and the Soviet Union and then had to make concession after concession to them. They emerged in 1945 as superpowers, while Britain, formerly Great Britain, lost its Empire, lost its independent and decisive role in world affairs, and sank to the level of a second-rate power. Of course, that, too, was Aristotelian. Alcibiades routed the Spartans, but in the end he was dismissed and fled to Asia Minor, where he was murdered by Spartan agents. Tragedy is the wasting shadow always cast, sooner or later, by towering heroism. Therein lay the terrible grandeur in Churchill's funeral, a quarter-century after Dunkirk. The nation was bidding farewell both to a great Englishman and to the greatness of England. When his flag-draped coffin moved slowly across the old capital, drawn by naval ratings, and bareheaded Londoners stood trembling in the cold, they mourned, not only him and all he had meant, but all that they had been, and no longer were, and would never be again.

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PROLOGUE

LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY

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1817, that "the sun never sets upon the Union Jack." At any given moment, wherever dawn was breaking, Britain's colors were rippling up some flagpole. If one could have ascended high enough in one of those balloons which fascinated Jules Verne and were actually used in the Franco-Prussian War, the view of Britain's colonial sphere would have been breathtaking. Victoria reigned over most of Africa, both ends of the Mediterranean, virtually all that mattered in the Middle East; the entire Indian subcontinent, from Afghanistan to Thailand, including Ceylon, which on a map appeared to be merely the dot below India's exclamation mark but which was actually the size of Belgium; Malaya, Singapore, Australia, islands spread all over the Pacific and the Atlantic, and Canada. The Canadians, proud of their loyalty to the Queen, issued a stamp depicting a world map with the Empire's lands colored red. It was a study in crimson splotches. Although the British Isles themselves were dwarfed by czarist Russia, and were smaller than Sweden, France, Spain, or Germany, their inhabitants ruled a quarter of the world's landmass and more than a quarter of its population—thrice the size of the Roman Empire, far more than the Spanish Empire at full flush, or, for that matter, than the United States or the Soviet Union today.

To its classically educated patricians, London was what Rome had once been: *caput mundi*, the head of the world. The popular aristocrat Lord Palmerston said that colonies were multiplying so rapidly that he had to "keep looking the damned places up on the map." Disraeli said: "No Caesar or Charlemagne ever presided over a dominion so peculiar. Its flag floats on many waters, it has provinces in every zone, they are inhabited by persons of different races,… manners, customs." All this had been acquired by imperial conquest, and young Winston Churchill, writing for the *Morning Post* from a colonial battlefield on September 12, 1898, took note of "the odd and bizarre potentates against whom the British arms continually are turned. They pass in a long procession. The Akhund of Swat, Cetewayo brandishing an assegai as naked as himself, Kruger singing a Psalm of Victory, Osman Digna, the Immortal and the Irrepressible, Theebaw with his umbrella, the Mahdi with his banner, Lobengula gazing fondly at the pages of *Truth*, Prompeh abasing himself in the dust, the Mad Mullah on his white ass and, latest of all, the Khalifa in his Coach of State. It is like a pantomime scene at Drury Lane."[2]

All these suzerains lost, and all England rejoiced—loudly. The British were very vocal in their allegiance to their Empire. In public schools and public houses boys and men responded to "Three cheers for India!" and roared, to the music of "Pomp and Circumstance," Edward Elgar's patriotic hymn, composed in the last weeks of the old Queen's reign:

> *Land of hope and glory, mother of the free,*
> *How shall we extol thee, who art born of thee?*
> *Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set;*
> *God who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet;*
> *God who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet!*

On declamation days children recited, from Kipling:

> *Dear-bought and clear, a thousand year,*

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Our fathers' title runs.
Make we likewise their sacrifice,
Defrauding not our sons.

Music hall favorites were "The Death of Nelson," by S. J. Arnold and John B. Raham; "Annie Laurie," the great hit of the Crimean War; and, later, the rousing "Soldiers of the Queen." Today their great-grandsons wince at the public displays of patriotism, but the Victorians responded quickly to calls of Duty, the Flag, the Race, the White Man's Burden; the lot. Far from feeling manipulated—which they were; most Victorians gained nothing from the nation's foreign conquests—they memorized lines from W. E. Henley, the balladeer of England's colonial wars:

What if the best our wages be
An empty sleeve, a stiff-set knee,
A crutch for the rest of life—who cares,
So long as One Flag floats and dares?
So long as One Race dares and grows?
Death—what is death but God's own rose?

Her Britannic Majesty was "by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Queen, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India." In thatch-roofed villages of British North Borneo and the steamy jungles of Sierra Leone, her primitive vassals regarded her as divine and slit the throats of propitiatory goats before her image, usually a drab statue of a dowdy woman wearing a tiny crown and holding an orb and scepter. Elsewhere Anglican missionaries prevailed and read their Book of Common Prayer in hundreds of languages and dialects, from Swahili to Urdu, from Maori to Bugi, from Kikuyu to Mandarin, and even, in remote valleys on the Isle of Man, the ancient tongue of Manx. Information from Victoria's twenty-five turbulent tribal possessions in the Middle East reached Britain from their only contact with the outside world, Aden, on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, which had been acquired as a coaling station for the British fleet. There an Englishman perspiring beneath a gyrating punkah sent the Queen all the news she needed from the sheikhs: "They are content to be governed from London." No one in Whitehall paid much attention. The only resource the Arabs could offer the Empire was an unpleasant liquid, of limited value, called oil.

Most Englishmen were familiar with scattered facts about the Empire. They had only the haziest idea of where Borneo was, but they had seen its Wild Man exhibited in a traveling cage. They knew the silhouette of lion-shaped Gibraltar, knew the legend that if Gibraltar's monkeys vanished from its caves, the Empire was finished. (In the midst of World War II Churchill found time to replenish the Rock's supply of monkeys.) They were proud of the Suez Canal, then considered an engineering marvel, and they were under the impression that all Egypt belonged to them, too. That wasn't strictly true; Egypt still flew its own flag and paid homage to the sultan of Turkey, but after the Queen's fleet had pounded Alexandria into submission, the country was run by the British agent and consul general. Thomas Cook and Son, booking clerks for the Empire, reserved

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Shepheard's Hotel's best rooms for Englishmen on official business. Cook's also ran steamers up the Nile for English tourists, though pilots turned back short of the Sudan border in 1885, after fanatic tribesmen of the Mahdi butchered Chinese Gordon in Khartoum. This tiresome restriction ended in 1898 when Kitchener routed and humiliated the tribesmen under the critical eye of young Churchill.

The British public was aware of the tiny island of Saint Helena, in the middle of the Atlantic, because that was where imprisoned Napoleon spent his last years, but such possessions as Ascension isle, Saint Helena's neighbor, which provided the turtles for the turtle soup at the traditional banquets of London's lord mayor, and Tristan da Cunha, the most isolated of the Empire's outposts, twelve hundred miles south of Saint Helena, in the broadest and most desolate reaches of the Atlantic, were virtually unknown outside the Colonial Office. Yet if ordinary Englishmen were confused about details of their realm, they can scarcely be blamed. The Empire itself was the vaguest of entities. Legally, under the British constitution, it did not exist. It was a kind of stupendous confidence trick. By arms or by arrogance, Englishmen had persuaded darker races that Britain was the home of a race meant to dominate the world. Therefore they ruled by consent. So successful was this bluff that the Mother Country held its possessions with an extraordinarily thin line of bwanas and sahibs; in India, for example, the rule of the Raj was administered by roughly one member of the Indian Civil Service for every 200,000 subjects.

Unless one counts Ireland, England's first imperial conquest was Newfoundland, discovered by John Cabot in 1497. The East India Company was chartered in 1600, and thereafter explorers like Captain James Cook, roaming the South Pacific, were followed by missionaries and merchants who ruled and exploited the new lands. It is true that the newcomers introduced natives to law, sanitation, hospitals, and, eventually, to self-government, but Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby, neglecting her family while "educating natives of Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger," was deceiving herself about her country's chief imperial motive. Palmerston, under no such illusion, said it was the government's goal to "open and secure the roads for the merchant," and Joseph Chamberlain said Whitehall must "find new markets and defend old ones."[3] Expansion of Britain's maritime strength had led to settlements on America's east coast and the hoisting of the Union Jack over the West Indies. The conquest of India had begun with a small trading station at Surat, on the west coast. Canada had been an acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Company, a firm just as zealous in its pursuit of profits as the East India Company. Victorian Australia was built on the need for cargoes of gold and wool. And each new territory meant a further boost of England's entrepôt trade, expansion of markets for the coal of Wales, the textiles of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the steel of Sheffield and Birmingham. By Churchill's youth the nation's foreign trade had reached the astounding total of £669,000,000 a year.

As James Morris pointed out in his masterful *Pax Britannica*, the Empire's growth had been "a jerky process," a formless, piecemeal advance which leapfrogged across continents and was never static. Sometimes imperial possessions were lost—Manila and Java were once British, and so, of course, were the American colonies—but the realm always waxed more than it waned. The great prize, "the brightest jewel in the imperial crown," as Englishmen said then, was the Indian Empire, comprising the modern nations of India, Burma, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. It was the need to secure their ties

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… she
The weary Titan, with deaf
Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by.
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load,
Well-nigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

And yet the thing worked. In those days before the Wright brothers began the annihilation of distance, sea power was everything, and no other nation could match Britain's. Altogether there were 330 imperial warships, manned by over 92,000 tars, policing the world's waterways and keeping trade free. Spangling all oceans with their coaling stations and strategic forts, they were the strongest guarantee of the Empire's integrity, and their men spoke of its far-flung domains with the affectionate familiarity of men supremely confident of their national strength: the sacred Swami Rock in Ceylon was "Sammy Rock"; Barbados was "Bimshire"; Kuala Lumpur was "K.L."; Johannesburg was "Joburg"; Alexandria was simply "Alex." When the mighty British Mediterranean Fleet sighted Malta, the whole population turned out for the spectacle. The ships were painted silver, with tars in white in rigid formation on the decks; the procession was led by destroyers, followed by cruisers and then the battleships. Royal Marine bands played "Hearts of Oak" and the ships anchored with their prows pointing seaward, baring their teeth to any challenger.

Britannia ruled the waves, and Britons knew how important that was; every family with the means clothed its children in sailor suits and sailor dresses, their caps bearing the name of the Queen's latest battleship. And the warships were only part of it. The other part was the merchant marine. At the peak of its glory, England was launching a thousand merchant ships every year, most of them on the Clyde. More than half the world's maritime vessels flew the red ensign of British merchantmen; at any given moment they were carrying 200,000 passengers. The Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company's four-week voyage between the Mother Country and Calcutta, then India's capital, had become a legend. The worst part of the passage was the crossing of the Red Sea. Those who could afford relative comfort bought—for fifty pounds each way, not counting deck-chair rental—port-side cabins going out to India and starboard cabins for the trip home; in time "Port Out, Starboard Home" became the acronym *POSH*. Unfortunately the service was anything but posh. Kipling wrote that P & O crewmen behaved "as though twere a favour to allow you to embark."[5]

But if the crews seemed high-handed to their British passengers, all Britons had that reputation in other nations. Robert Laird Collier, an American touring England in the 1880s, wrote: "No people are so disliked out of their own country…. They assume superiority, and this manner is far from pleasant to other people…. They are overbearing, and haughty…. I have never seen among any people such rudeness and violation of good breeding…. As a nation they are intensely selfish and arrogant." In their "Splendid

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Isolation"—isolationism was British before it became American—Englishmen looked disdainfully across their Channel and said: "The wogs begin at Calais." Thomas Cook lectured the French on the cancan as a sign of national decadence, performed with "an unnatural and forced abandon," and when a dispatch from Africa reported a French colonial claim, Joe Chamberlain, the very model of an imperial statesman, scrawled in the margin: "Cheek!" England issued the first postage stamp, the "Penny Black," in 1847, and in an act of conceit undiminished by the fact that it was unintentional, the stamp bore a cameo of the Queen and nothing else—identification of the country seemed superfluous. Yet sometimes British contempt could be magnificent. Dressed to the nines, buttons glittering and collar starched, Captain William Packenham went ashore to deal with a gang of cutthroats who were massacring Armenians. The leaders of the pogrom gathered around him, glowering and fingering the edges of their bloody knives. Packenham stroked his beard and told the interpreter: "Let us begin. Tell these ugly bastards that I am not going to tolerate any more of their bestial habits."[6]

Britons were so sure of themselves. Like today's Americans, who are also disliked abroad, their dominance was the consequence of a cluster of accidents, among them their tremendous deposits of coal and iron ore—one-third of all the miners on earth were British—and England's role as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, Britain had naturally become the world's manufacturer, merchant, shipper, and banker—"the workshop of the world." Not only were Britons certain that they would keep all they had; they expected more and more—"wider still and wider." Already English economists were managing Siam's foreign trade. There were two British colonies, British Honduras and British Guiana, in Latin America. More important, Hong Kong and Weihaiwei were on the Chinese coast; in London, men speculated over when Victoria's other titles would be joined by "Empress of China." They also dreamed of a Cape-to-Cairo railway, just as Germans looked toward a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. Englishmen had expelled officious Chinese from Tibet, and the Indian Ocean was already an English lake. Southeast Asia's future was pretty much settled. The Bank of Persia was a British firm. In Italy, the cable car route up Mount Vesuvius was owned outright by Cook's. Constantinople had its own judge and jail for Englishmen. The inspector general of Chinese Customs was Irish, and the military adviser to the sultan of Morocco was a Scot. Foreign governments were told where and when to build new lighthouses, and if they weren't prompt, the British solved the problem in their own way; the P & O put one up in the Red Sea on Dardalus Reef—foreign soil—and hired Englishmen to man it.

London was not only the capital of the world; it was the largest metropolis history had ever known, bigger than most imperial possessions or even some European powers. As we shall see, in matters of sex the Victorians should be judged, not by what they said, but by what they did; during the century before Churchill's birth the population of the island tripled—then a reproductive record—and London grew from two million souls to five million. (It was also the favorite of expatriates. Over thirty thousand Germans lived there, over fifteen thousand Americans, and more Irishmen than in Dublin.) The advent of trains and steamships had seen London rise as England's greatest port and the largest exporter on earth. The clocks of the world were measured from Greenwich. The Near East and the Far East were so called because they were near and far from London. Lloyd's was the world's insurance agent, and had been for two hundred years. In the vaults beneath the

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Certainly the average Indian or African toiling beneath the Union Jack was far better off than the average Chinese under his warlords, but British colonial hotels still found it necessary to display notices reading: "Gentlemen are requested not to strike the servants." English soldiers arriving in imperial cantonments were coached in how to avoid inflicting blows on the face, where the bruises would show. And Africans were caned frequently, like unruly boys.[8]

Playing the role of an *Übermensch* wasn't always pleasant. You paid the price of the myth. In Calcutta it meant wearing a frock coat and top hat in the punishing heat. Even the white linen suits and cork topees worn inland could be cruelly uncomfortable. Emotional discomfort could be worse. For loving parents the hardest moment came when a boy reached his seventh birthday, time for him to be sent home to school, never again to be seen as a child. Health was also a problem. Every newcomer could expect to be laid low by diarrhea—"Delhi Belly." Old-timers suggested Cockle's Pills, and they seemed to work for some. Others suffered from intestinal upsets, off and on, throughout their colonial years, attended by the native "wet sweepers" who serviced the privies known as "gulkskhanas" or, more vulgarly, as "thunder boxes." It didn't help that snakes were said to slither inside sometimes and lurk within the thunder box, coiled there, waiting to bite the next visitor.

The penultimate sin for an Englishman, in all imperial possessions, was to go broke. If it happened, the hat was passed for passage home, and the penniless offender was dumped on the dock like trash, which was how he was regarded. Only cowardice was worse than indigence. Showing a yellow streak was the greatest threat to rule by consent of the ruled, the surest way to shatter the image, and the man guilty of it was lucky to escape unflogged. Absolute fearlessness was assumed. Death in battle was the noblest of ends. In Africa, men's eyes misted over and their voices grew husky in speaking of Major Allen Wilson's Last Stand on the bank of the Shangani River during the wars against the Matabele tribesmen in 1896. When Wilson and his thirty-two men had run out of ammunition, the story ran, they shook hands, sang "God Save the Queen," and stood shoulder to shoulder to meet their doom. There were many similar examples. The Last Stand—resistance to the last man—was in fact a kind of rite, a tableau vivant celebrated in Victorian yarns and ballads, and in Wilson's case by a famous painting, Allan Stewart's *There Was No Survivor,* depicting dauntless men veiled in gunsmoke, surrounded by their dead horses, with their leader stage front, bareheaded, a sublime expression on his face. Such accounts were particularly popular in *Chatterbox,* a magazine favored by genteel children; they were probably a secular expression of the evangelical Christianity which swept England in the 1870s and 1880s.

Chinese Gordon was the most heroic martyr. His hour of glory struck on January 28, 1885, when Winston was ten. According to one popular account, Gordon waited until the Arabs were storming his Khartoum palace. Then, knowing all was lost, it was said, he changed into his white uniform at daybreak and took up a position at the head of the stairs, "standing in a calm and dignified manner, his left hand resting on the hilt of his sword." Racing upward, one sneering Arab shouted, "O cursed one, your time has come!" Gordon, according to this version, "made a gesture of scorn and turned away." Moments later he was impaled upon a half-dozen spears. Queen Victoria wrote his sister: "*How* shall I write to you, or how shall I attempt to express *what I feel?* To *think* of your dear, noble, heroic

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Brother, who served his Country and his Queen so truly, so heroically, with a self-sacrifice so edifying to the World… is to me *grief inexpressible!*" What is peculiar about this is that Gordon's garrison, like Wilson's, had been wiped out. As there were no survivors, there had been no one to tell the world how either had actually ended.[9]

In India, Last Stand immortality was attained in Burma or on the North-West Frontier, among the Afghans and the warring tribes of the Waziris, the Mahsuds, and the Afridis. It was in Kabul, on September 3, 1879—the year Winston began reading *Chatterbox*—that Arabs invaded the British legation and put Sir Louis Cavagnari and his staff to the sword. Disraeli had assured the Commons that the position was impregnable, and Gladstone never let him forget it. Yet turning the brittle pages of old newspapers one has the distinct impression that the sentimental Victorians enjoyed their sobs. They erected statues of Sir Louis and went about rejuvenated. The following year they put up another after a gallant young officer named Thomas Rice Henn and eleven men forfeited their lives while covering the retreat of an entire British brigade. Wolseley wrote of Henn: "I envy the manner of his death…. If I had ten sons, I should indeed be proud if all ten fell as he fell."[10] Horatius had held the Sublician Bridge over the Tiber to the last, or so Macaulay had said, and now, over two thousand years later, soldiers of the Queen were inspired by a similar code of valor:

The sand of the desert is sodden red—
Red with the wreck of a square that broke—
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke,
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This famous stanza strikes an odd note. The typical British soldier, if he had any education at all, had attended a "Ragged School" for the poor, where there were no games and certainly no concept of fair play. Those were the legacy of the public schools—Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, Rugby, Shrewsbury—in whose forms the future rulers of the Empire were trained. The Victorian age was the Indian summer of homage, before wars, depressions, and nuclear horrors had destroyed faith in all establishments. The social contract was everywhere honored. England was guided by the self-assured men of the upper classes. They thought themselves better than the middle and lower classes, just as those classes assumed that they were better than the *fellahin* and the *dukawallahs*. In both cases the presumption was rarely challenged.

The selection of the Queen's proconsuls in the colonies was oligarchic, a product of what later generations would call "the old-boy network" or—to use an allusion they would have understood—a philosophic vision not unlike that of Er the Pamphylian in Plato's *Republic*, who, watching the souls choosing their destiny, saw the noblest pick power. There were two ways to enter the autocracy of colonial Britain. If you were recommended by your tutor at Oxford, say, or at Cambridge or Edinburgh, and were between the ages of

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twenty-one and twenty-three, you could make an appointment at the India Office, situated along one side of the Foreign Office quadrangle at the corner of Whitehall and Downing Street. There you were given the Indian Civil Service examination on subjects ranging from Sanskrit to English literature, and if you passed you were tested on another spectrum of topics, including Asian languages and horsemanship, a year later. Candidates who were accepted were off to Calcutta, Bombay, or Madras on the P & O, probably for good. The "Indian Civil," or "ICS," was a much stiffer hurdle than that at the Colonial Office, on another side of the quadrangle. Applicants there needn't be brilliant; indeed, those with a first-class degree were suspect. The emphasis was on "character" and the "all-rounder," on being "steel-true and blade-straight." You were interviewed by the colonial secretary's assistant private secretary, who never saw a British colony in his life. The atmosphere in his homey office was convivial, clublike, manly. One talked of mutual acquaintances, friends, headmasters, tutors, and engaged in similar rituals of self-reference. In this crucial stage it was important to have the backing of someone whom the interviewer considered a keen judge of men—someone like Benjamin Jowett, the cherubic master of Balliol College, Oxford. Jowett's maxims tell us much about his protégés. He said: "Never retract. Never explain. Get it done and let them howl." And: "We are all dishonest together, and therefore we are all honest." And, on Darwin's *Descent of Man:* "I don't believe a word of it." He was partial to peers and noble families on the ground that "social eminence is an instrument wherewith, even at the present day, the masses may be moved." If Jowett or his sort approved, a stripling just out of the university might find himself ruling a territory twice the size of Great Britain, acting as magistrate, veterinarian, physician, resolver of family quarrels, and local expert on crop blight. The similarity of officials' backgrounds gave the realm a certain cohesiveness. Morris observed: "All over the Empire these administrators, like members of some scattered club, shared the same values, were likely to laugh at the same jokes, very probably shared acquaintances at home…. Place them all at a dinner table, and they would not feel altogether strangers to each other."[11]

It was collusion, of course, and it could lead to highly unsuitable appointments, particularly when a great family wanted to rid itself of a black sheep. But most of the youths grew into shrewd men; the level of performance was very high. And many of them could scarcely be envied. Often they started out living in leaky mud huts, rarely seeing anything of their countrymen except for an occasional trader or missionary with whom, under other circumstances, they would have had nothing in common. They often had only the vaguest idea of the boundaries defining their territories, or the size of the populations for which they were responsible. In Uganda, six months was added to home leave because an Englishman had to walk eight hundred miles to reach civilization. While on leave he had to choose an English wife in a hurry, because it might be years before he saw another white woman. With grit, that quality much prized among the Victorians, he stuck it out, sometimes leaving a benign stamp on his tract of the wild. In Nyasaland, England's deepest penetration into Africa, you can still find natives who, because their overlord was Scottish, recite Christian prayers with a Scot's burr: "The Lor-r-r-d is my shepherd…"[12] It is difficult to condemn men who followed their star when the temptation to slacken was immense, who daily wore their quaint little uniform of white shorts and white stockings

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ordering tropical clothing until they docked in India, where they would also hire a tropical servant, the first of as many as twenty-five servants. Help was cheap, as Churchill had observed; a lower-middle-class mem who had slaved over a washtub at home would supervise a whole staff, and even British privates had bearers who polished their brass and boots and blancoed their webbing. Once ready for the next leg of his journey, the tyro would travel by train, chugging along at twenty miles per hour, his blinds securely locked at night, telegraphing ahead for a light breakfast (which he would learn to call *chota hazri*) and for lunch (tiffin). Detraining, he might cover as much as a hundred miles on horseback before reaching his appointed bungalow or, if he were a serving officer, his cantonment. By then he might be ready for his first trip to the thunder box, but if he still felt fit he would be introduced to the more welcome ritual of the "sundowner." This was the daily drink, and it was served in style by a bearer in a gown and turban. His tray would support a variety of paraphernalia: a carafe, linen napkin, gasogene, and ice bucket. Seasoned sahibs might add a nip of their quinine, as insurance against fever. Indeed, that is how the sundowner custom had begun, when men believed that alcohol was preventive medicine in the tropics.

It was an exotic, colorful life, and at a time when masculinity was valued, its greatest appeal was to men. The mems established their own conventions, their weekly At Homes and dances, their solemn talks with the C of E vicar, and, during the lawn tennis craze of the 1870s, a little exercise. But it was their husbands and the bachelors who thrived in India. They could retreat to their club, where women were of course forbidden, and they had polo, tiger hunting, golf, and all the glory, fireworks, and bunting that were manifestations of virile patriotism. If they were lucky and industrious, one day their names would appear on an Honours List. They were absolutely incorrupt, and the best of them were devoted to the natives in their charge. They adored their Queen, they knew that God was an Anglican, they believed in courage, in honor, in heroes. They could no more have identified with an antihero than with the Antichrist. In retrospect they all appear to have been gallant figures in one of history's greatest Last Stands. Of course, they didn't think of it that way. It never occurred to them that they, and all they represented, would one day be disowned, as the result of a national *défaillance,* within the lifetime of young Lieutenant Churchill, the polo star in Bangalore.

If you were passed back through a time warp and set down in Victorian London, your first impressions would depend upon where in the city you were, and under what circumstances. Henry James saw it at its most inhospitable, while riding in a "greasy four-wheeler to which my luggage had compelled me to commit myself" from the Euston train station to Morley's Hotel in Trafalgar Square. Night had fallen. It was a cold, damp March Sunday. Recalling the scene in 1888, James wrote: "The weather had turned wet…. The low black houses were as inanimate as so many rows of coal-scuttles, save where at frequent corners, from a gin-shop, there was a flare of light more brutal still than the darkness." He felt "a sudden horror of the whole place… like a tiger-pounce of homesickness which had been watching its moment. London was hideous, vicious, cruel,

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and above all overwhelming."[16]

The city itself was also overwhelmed, engulfed by changes with which it had not learned to cope, and which were scarcely understood. Some were inherent in the trebling of the population, some consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Particles of grime from factory smokestacks, blending with the cold fogs that crept down from the North Sea channel, produced impenetrable pea-soupers which could reduce visibility to a few feet —"London particulars," Dickens called them in *Bleak House*. They could be dangerous; it was in one of them that Soames Forsyte's wife's lover was run down by horses and killed. Much of London stank. The city's sewage system was at best inadequate and in the poorer of neighborhoods nonexistent. Buildings elsewhere had often been constructed over cesspools which, however, had grown so vast that they formed ponds, surrounding homes with moats of effluvia. Thoroughfares were littered with animal excrement. Gaslight was not yet the clear piped white light which arrived with the invention of the incandescent mantle in the 1890s. It was smokier, smellier, and yellower; some smudged lanterns dating from the reigns of George IV and William IV may still be found in Regent's Park. And the narrow, twisted streets were neither sealed nor asphalted. Victorians are often mocked for locking their windows, even in summer, but they had a lot to keep out: odors; dust; gusts of wind that could turn the open flames of candles or kerosene lamps into disastrous conflagrations.

In affluent neighborhoods windows were barred during most of the Queen's reign, for no policemen pounded beats until late in the century. James recoiled from the gin shops, but he didn't see the worst of it. The worst was in the blackened, brooding slums of Bluegate Fields, Cheapside, Wapping Docks, Bleeding Heart Yard, Mile-End Road, Maiden Lane, Paddington; St. Giles's, along Saffron Hill; Westminster ("the Devil's Acre"); Granby Street, beneath what is now Waterloo Station, with its bolt-holes for criminals; and Whitechapel, where the heaviest concentration of London's eighty thousand prostitutes lived and Jack the Ripper stalked his prey. At night the East End was eerie. Here the bricks which built the rising city were hardened in kilns like those in *Bleak House* and in Trollope's *Last Chronicle of Barset*, where fugitives found warmth at night. Workingmen were no longer paid in pubs, but that was where many headed when they had their money. There cheap gin, the curse of their class, fueled murderous fights and, by blurring judgment, converted men into easy recruits for criminal schemes—burglaries, typically, or pocket picking in Piccadilly. London's vast slums terrified respectable Londoners. Even the huskiest gentlemen refused to enter them without a heavy police escort.

The center of London was a hive of hyperactivity. If, like Henry James, you were an American who had spent his first night beneath Nelson's column and rose in the morning for a stroll along the Embankment, you might first become aware of a familiar quickness in the air. *"Mon Dieu, ces anglais, comme ils travaillent!"* wrote a French tourist.[17] London then had the push and bustle foreign visitors began to note in New York in the 1920s. You could hear it; Londoners called it "the Hum." This was the busiest metropolis in the world; men were all in a hurry, doing the world's work. And in this part of the city they *were* men. If you wanted to see women you would have to stroll toward the shopping district and its center, Piccadilly Circus, then named Regent Circus, with its beguiling

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asked mischievously: “Can you conceive of a bowlegged duke? Or is it possible for you to locate a pimple on the nose of a viscount? And no one, however diseased his imagination, ever pictured a baron with an ulcerated leg, or conceived of such a monstrous impossibility as a cross-eyed duchess.”[19] That was Yankee wit, but the plain fact was that you *could* tell. At least you could tell the difference between a gentleman and a man who was not. Partly it was a matter of genes. The Normans had introduced high cheekbones, Roman noses, an abundance of equine chin, and hooded, sardonic eyes to the Anglo-Saxon nobility. Diet was more important. Generations of malnutrition and, more recently, of stooping in mines or bending over looms had given workmen’s descendants slight stature, poor posture, and coarse complexion. They aged prematurely; they needed the attention of doctors they could seldom afford. The gentry were tall, fair, and erect. Although they may not have been godlike, they were certainly far healthier than their social inferiors, and by today’s standards, even the genteel were sick a great deal. The groaning tables on Victorian Christmas cards groaned beneath platters of food that would be condemned as unfit by modern public-health officials. Preventive medicine was in its infancy. The twentieth-century visitor to the Strand would be startled by the number of pitted faces there. Smallpox was still rife. There were far more pocked features among the workmen, however. They simply lacked the resistance to affliction. They also lacked running water. Cholera hit them harder; so did diphtheria; so did infant mortality. In all of London, more babies died than adults. We cannot even guess at the toll in the slums, but it must have been appalling.

Gentlemen, no less than ladies, could be identified by their clothing. They wore top hats, indoors and out, except in homes or churches. Cuffs and collars were starched, cravats were affixed with jeweled pins, waistcoats were white, wide tubular trousers swept the ground at the heel but rose in front over the instep, black frock coats were somber and exquisitely cut. Swinging their elegant, gold-headed canes, gentlemen swaggered when crossing the street, dispensing coins to fawning men who swept the dung from their paths. (These men were followed by nimble boys with pans and brushes, who collected the ordure and sold it in the West End for fertilizer.) Bowlers were worn by clerks and shopkeepers and caps by those below them. Switching hats wouldn’t have occurred to them, and it wouldn’t have fooled anyone anyway. Despite advances in the mass production of menswear, dry cleaning was unknown in the London of the time. Suits had to be picked apart at the seams, washed, and sewn back together. Patricians wore new clothes or had tailors who could resew the garments they had made in the first place. The men in bowlers and caps couldn’t do it; their wives tried but were unskillful, which accounts for their curiously wrinkled Sabbath-suit appearance in old photographs. Toward the end of Victoria’s reign games and cycling modified gentlemen’s dress. The Prince of Wales introduced the lounge coat. Short loose breeches and Norfolk jackets were worn on bikes, football players and runners and jumpers appeared in shorts, and cricketers and tennis players adopted long pants of white flannel. Except at regattas, none of this was matched in feminine fashions. Not only were bustles worn on the tennis court; a woman had to use her free hand to hold her trailing skirt off the ground. And the lower classes were unaffected because they had neither the money for fashions nor the time for sports.

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Social mobility, as we understand it today, was not only unpursued by the vast majority; it had never existed. For centuries an Englishman's fate had been determined at birth. The caste system was almost as rigid as India's. Obedience to the master had been bred in childhood, and those who left the land for the mills as the agricultural class seeped into the cities were kept in line by custom and the example of all around them. Successful merchants were an exception, and a significant one. They built mansions, bought coaches, and hired servants, yet they were never fully accepted by the patriciate. As late as the spring of 1981 a *New Yorker* writer attributed Britain's sagging economy to the fact that a stigma was still attached to men "in trade." Similarly, the British trade unions' twentieth-century truculence may arise from the lower classes' inability to transfer their allegiance from aristocrats to merchants. In Victorian England, the chimney sweeps, ragpickers, chip sellers, dustmen, coachmen, and sandwich-board men who hired out at one-and-six a day were no more rebellious than the serfs from whom they were descended. They did what they did well, and that was enough for them. Richard Harding Davis wrote from England: "In America we hate uniforms because they have been twisted into meaning badges of servitude; our housemaids will not wear caps, nor will our coachmen shave their mustaches. This tends to make every class of citizen look more or less alike. But in London you can always tell a 'bus-driver from the driver of a four-wheeler, whether he is on his box or not. The Englishman recognizes that if he is in a certain social grade he is likely to remain there, and so, instead of trying to dress like some one else in a class to which he will never reach, he 'makes up' for the part in life he is meant to play, and the 'bus-driver buys a high white hat, and the barmaid is content to wear a turned-down collar and turned-back cuffs, and the private coachman would as soon think of wearing a false nose as a mustache. He accepts his position and is proud of it, and the butcher's boy sits up in his cart just as smartly, and squares his elbows and straightens his legs and balances his whip with just as much pride, as any driver of a mail-cart in the Park."[20]

London's massed horsepower made a lively spectacle, bewildering and even frightening to visitors. Each morning some twenty thousand vehicles drawn by steeds lumbered and surged over the toll-free London Bridge—Tower Bridge would not be ready until 1894—and fanned out into the wakening city. The rigs varied. At this hour, in this tumult, you would see few private carriages. They sat parked in the West End and could be seen in large numbers only when they assembled for such liturgical upper-class ceremonies as the annual Eton-Harrow cricket match at Lord's, in St. John's Wood, where over six hundred of them were counted in 1871. Much of the bridge traffic carried essentials. There were convoys of carts bearing galvanized tanks, headed for neighborhoods which still had no running water. Produce and livestock accompanied them, including, once a year, sheep on their way to an enclosure near Kensington Palace. A contemporary account tells of the annual sheepshearing: "Thousands of sheep are brought from Scotland and distributed over London wherever grazing can be obtained. After the shearing, the sheep are kept awhile in the park for fattening, and thence gradually find their way to the butchers' shops."[21]

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In the city these wagons mingled with public transport and cabs. The first electric tramcar was built in 1883—electric lights had made their appearance two years earlier, for the Savoy Theatre's premiere of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*—but London wasn't introduced to trolleys until 1900. Before that, horse-drawn streetcars crawled along tracked paths in the center of the streets, maddening obstacles to the faster hansoms, growlers, and flys. Flys were usually rented. The Coupé and Dunlop Brougham Company in Regent Street would hire one out at seven shillings and sixpence for the first two hours. But the smartest and fastest way to travel was in the two-wheeled hansom cabs, "the gondolas of London," as Disraeli called them. Harnesses jingling, horses trotting briskly, and lamps and brass work polished to a blazing finish, there were over three thousand hansoms in London, charging a shilling for two miles and sixpence a mile over that, though the driver could charge more if he traveled beyond the "Four Mile Radius" from Charing Cross, which was (and still is) the geographic center of the city. The cabman sat high in the back, holding reins which passed through a support on the front of the roof, and the front of the cab was open except for two folding doors which came halfway up and protected the passenger from dust and mud. This feature was important. Trains had been so successful that other forms of transportation had hardly changed since Victoria's coronation. Country roads were surfaced with grass, earth, and stones. Downtown London's streets were cobbled, but unless you were in an enclosed coach you were lucky to arrive at your destination unstained.

Alighting at Charing Cross, a visitor from the 1980s would quickly become aware of a gamy tang in the air—blended aromas of saddle soap, leather, brass polish, and strong tobacco; scents of wood fires; the fragrance of baking bread and roasting meat manipulated by street chefs. All sorts of entrepreneurs were active on the pavements, and they fascinated Gustave Doré, who executed a series of engravings of them in the early 1870s: dog sellers, flower girls, flypaper merchants (who wore fly-studded samples on their dilapidated top hats), hardware dealers, tinkers, ragmen, knife grinders, ginger-beer men, apple sellers, oyster men, match vendors, "lemonade" men who mixed their chemicals on the spot in portable tubs, and some four thousand hawkers of oranges. The popularity of oranges was due less to their taste than to their smell. Even where sanitation existed, not all street odors were pleasant. Deodorants were unknown. The poor reeked, which was why they were unwelcome in Victorian churches. Nell Gwyn had carried oranges to cut the stench of sweat, vermin, and manure. Before that, the Elizabethans had used pomanders, small balls of pierced metal packed with fragrant herbs. To this day, London judges mount their benches bearing nosegays—hence the name—and once a year herbs are scattered in courtrooms.

Among the other peddlers were salesmen exhibiting great bolts of black broadcloth. The Victorians were very open about death. Today people die in hospitals, where children are "shielded" or "protected" from them; graveyards are landscaped like parks, and mourning is seldom worn. In those days a demise was an important, fascinating event. Typically it occurred in the home, in bed, with the whole family in attendance and little ones held up for a final embrace from the departing parent or grandparent. The pavement chapmen made garments of deep mourning available to the lower classes. Patricians bought their black, gray, and deep purple clothes and black ostrich feathers in Oxford Street shops devoted solely to that trade. Men draped sashed crepe "weepers" around their

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exploited that deference. The Queen was depicted holding a cup of Mazawatta Tea or presiding over the legend: " 'The Subject's Best Friend'—HUDSON'S DRY SOAP—Home and Clothes as Sweet as a Rose." The Prince of Wales was shown handing a glass of Bushmills Whiskey to the shah of Persia at the Paris Exhibition in 1889, and saying: "*This, your Majesty, is the celebrated Bushmills Whiskey which you tasted in England and liked so much*. I feel sure it will win the Gold Medal." A florist, pushing corsages, quoted the Duchess of York—without her approval; none of the luminaries were consulted—"She thinks the Flower Shield a most ingenious invention and wishes it success." Even the pontiff was identified as an admirer of a popular drink: "Two Infallible Powers. The Pope and Bovril." The soap manufacturers knew no shame. Sir John Millais, a successful artist, painted a portrait of a boy making soap bubbles with a clay pipe. The boy's bar of soap lay on the ground. To Sir John's astonishment, the picture was reproduced all over the country with "Pears" painted on the bar. In Berlin, Heinrich von Treitschke told a class: "The English think soap is civilization."[23]

One device the advertisers missed was the jingle, and this is puzzling, because Victorians loved melodies. Garibaldian organ-grinders stood on every downtown London street corner, bawling ballads. Gilbert and Sullivan were national figures. Not counting the Salvation Army and the military, there were over five thousand bands in the country, and on holidays Londoners crowded around the bandstands in their parks. This was the golden age of the music halls. Between 1850 and 1880 about five hundred new ones were built—with the city's fifty theaters, this meant that 350,000 Londoners were entertained every night—of which the most famous were the Alhambra, the London Pavilion, the Empire, and the Tivoli. Each hall had its portentous chairman, with his candle, his gavel, and his vast expanse of shirtfront; each encouraged its audiences to join the choruses. The stars were famous enough to endorse soap and whiskey, though unlike the eminent they expected their cut and got it. (Lillie Langtry got it and lost it; her signature was reproduced in an ad, and a forger copied it and cleaned her out.) High on the lists of sightseers arriving from the far reaches of the Empire were evenings hearing the "lion comiques": Harry Clifton singing "Knees Up, Mother Brown," George Layborne leading "Champagne Charlie Is My Name," Jenny Valmore whispering "So Her Sister Says," and Marie Lloyd:

Only fancy if Gladstone's there,
And falls in love with me;
If I run across Labouchère
I'll ask him home to tea.
I shall say to a young man gay,
If he treads upon my frock,
"Randy pandy, sugardy pandy,
Buy me some Almond Rock."

Henry du Pré Labouchère was an advocate of Home Rule for Ireland. And "Randy pandy" was Lord Randolph Churchill. Music hall performers were keenly aware of politicians and public events, of England's power around the world, of London's role as an imperial capital. Britain was hardly a democracy, at least as we understand it; only 16.4

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percent of the people could vote. But Britain's people counted because they, like the distant races toiling beneath the same flag, consented to be ruled as they were. Not the Queen, not peers, not the Commons, and not public-school men wrote the ditties that celebrated the nation's glory and defied those who sought to curb the growth of an Empire which they believed belonged to them. It was G. H. "the Great" Macdermott, the most celebrated of the music hall performers, who, singing the lyrics of George William Hunt, gave voice to their determination in the 1878 crisis which arose during the Russo-Turkish War:

> *We don't want to fight, but by jingo, if we do,*
> *We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money, too.*
> *We've fought the Bear before,*
> *And while Britons shall be true,*
> *The Russians shall not have*
> *Constantinople.*

The British soldier was given a small island for his birthplace and the whole world as his grave. Including Indian sepoys, there were about 356,000 soldiers in the army—at the time of Marcus Ulpius Trajanus, Rome's legions had numbered 300,000 men—including 55 line battalions scattered about India, Ireland, Hong Kong, Bermuda, Ceylon, Malta, Egypt, Gibraltar, Canada, Singapore, the West Indies, South Africa, Barbados, and Mauritius. Their epitaph may be found today on sinking gravestones: "For Queen and Empire." It is inadequate. They died for more than that. So vast an Empire, so vigorous a society, could have been neither built nor held without staunch ideological support, a complex web of powerful beliefs, powerfully held. Alfred North Whitehead defined a civilization in spiritual terms, and Christopher Dawson, in *The Dynamics of World History*, said: "Behind every great civilization there is a vision." What was the vision of imperial Britain?

Jingoism was part of it, or rather one of its outward manifestations, and it wasn't confined to the music halls. On the slightest excuse, Londoners in the city's rookeries hung out bunting and gay streamers, crisscrossing mews and alleys where washing was usually hung to dry. Behind the calls to honor, duty, and glory lay the Victorians' firm belief in obedience—absolute obedience to God, the Queen, and one's superiors, in the family as much as in the army. It was a time of pervasive authoritarianism. The Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon wrote of the Victorian wife that her husband "has many objects in life which she does not quite understand; but she believes in them all, and anything which she can do to promote them, she delights to perform."[24] Unquestioning submission to orders was taught to schoolboys as soon as they reached the age of awareness; they recited "The Death of Nelson," "Drake's Drum," "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Every story for Victorian children had a point, a moral; usually one of dutifulness. Winston Churchill was four years old when the most popular glorifier of discipline, G. A. Henty, published the first of his eighty novels for children. With loyalty went courage, as witness Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Alice, the Ugly Duckling, and Tom Thumb.

War was Henleyized, and such ancient institutions as the Crown, the aristocracy, and

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labour." Toilers in phosphorus factories suffered from "fossy jaw." A thousand miners were killed each year, and more than three thousand railway workers killed or maimed. The proliferation of moving parts was lethal, but mill owners airily dismissed the problem: "Workers *will* be careless." Protests were few and unheard. Writing in *The Uncommercial Traveller,* Dickens quoted a Shoreditch woman: "Better be ulcerated and paralyzed for eighteenpence a day… than see the children starve." Yet, astonishingly, she made no complaint. Like her Queen, she believed that all work, even drudgery, was sacred. The Victorians were never more Victorian than when they stood in church, or around a Salvation Army band, belting out "Art Thou Weary?"[26]

Though safer than mill hands, the middle classes drove themselves just as hard in pursuit of "respectability," which was not, as Shaw acidly noted, the same thing as morality. Gilbert's Pirate King sang that piracy was more honest than respectability, and in *H.M.S. Pinafore* the reproachful Captain Corcoran tells Buttercup that it would have been "more respectable" if she had gone ashore before nightfall. Respectability, in short, was largely a matter of appearances. It was fragile; the slightest lapse could shatter it. Those who retained it were, in G. M. Young's words, forever fearful that "an unguarded look, a word, a gesture, a picture, or a novel, might plant a seed of corruption in the most innocent heart, and the same word or gesture might betray a lingering affinity with the class below." Ridiculing the Victorians is easy, and nearly everyone who has written of them since their departure has done it. They were hypocritical, snobbish, maudlin, fanatical about "moral rectitude" and the superiority of the British "race," devoted to Augustan "order, regularity, and refinement of life."[27] The books on their shelves told you that they played their games according to Hoyle, toured England as directed by *Bradshaw's Weekly Guide to the Railways,* were instructed in housekeeping by Mrs. Beeton and guided abroad by Baedeker and Cook. Always deferential (Bagehot's favorite word), they dreamed that their daughters might marry someone in *Who's Who* or, even better, in Burke's *Peerage* and *Baronetage.* At the table they watched their tongues. Legs were "limbs," and anyone wanting to use such words as "disemboweled" or "pelvis" employed another language or remained silent.

Palmerston had pointed the way for those who obeyed the rules; he extolled the nation's social system as one "in which every class of society accepts with cheerfulness the lot which providence has assigned to it; while at the same time each individual is constantly trying to raise himself, not by violence and illegality, but by preserving good conduct and by the steady and energetic exertion of the moral and intellectual faculties with which his creator has endowed him." This sent them to public reading rooms, Mechanics Institutes, mutual improvement groups, and public lectures and displays. Not only did they intend to better themselves; they insisted that the lower classes follow their example, until Dickens protested: "The English are, so far as I know, the hardest worked people on whom the sun shines. Be content if in their wretched intervals of leisure they read for amusement and do no worse. They are born at the oar, and they live and die at it. Good God, what would we have of them!"[28]

Yet even Dickens believed that true love and marriage led to a horse and carriage—that respectability was rewarded by a rise in social standing. The nouveaux riches Victorians, with their sudden access to prosperity and power, were certainly naive, and

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often vulgar. They worshiped false gods (the theme of *Dombey and Son*) and they failed to meet the standards they set for themselves. But certainly that is loftier than the abandonment of all standards. The stars of social navigation which they tried to follow were stars—genuine ideals, even if unattainable. Their "civilizing mission" in far lands was not only well-meant; at its best it was also noble. The English way of life, which they believed was exportable, was at least as estimable as the way of life the Americans tried to export a century later, with less success. When the Romans conquered a province, the glories of Roman citizenship were slow to follow. The moment the Union Jack raced up a colonial flagstaff, speech was free and habeas corpus the right of all. Among distant people a parliament became a status symbol, like having a national airline today, but more admirable. And if the Victorians' system was flawed, they knew it. Believing in individual and collective reform, the best of their intellectuals, like the Americans who followed them, practiced vigorous, often savage, self-criticism. In the fine arts, London was a suburb of Paris and Berlin, but in literature it led the way. Carlyle, Dickens, John Ruskin, Samuel Butler, Herbert Spencer, and the contributors to *Yellow Book* were all Victorian rebels.

The chief difference between rebels then and rebels now is that they saw the world as rational, harmonious, teleological. Cartesians to a man, they believed that life was rational and mechanical and that progress was as inevitable as evolution and moved in the same direction. Their world, in Hans Koning's happy phrase, was "an unthreatened world." The earth seemed to be on the verge of being totally understood. Its flora, fauna, tides, and mountain ranges had been catalogued, measured, and minutely described. Some parts were still unexplored, but steamships would soon fix that. So the Victorian intellectuals felt a sense of confidence and optimism. They never doubted that the globe would always be dominated by Caucasian men. If the white masters differed among themselves, their governments would resort to arms. That prospect didn't alarm them. "Unwarlike," indeed, was a pejorative. It signified vitiation. The prime weakness of the darker races was their lack of martial spirit. Kipling urged England's youth: "Bite the bullet, old man, and don't let them think you're afraid." Not that there was much to fear; the Industrial Revolution had not yet caught up with weaponry. The Gatling and the Maxim were clever gadgets but, it was thought, without potential. Bloodshed in Britain's little colonial wars was relatively light. The eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* actually told its readers that "losses in battle are… almost insignificant when compared with the fearful carnage wrought by sword and spear."[29]

If any Victorian institution was cherished above all others, it was the home. "Home Sweet Home"—which sold 100,000 copies in its first year—was the most popular song of the century, even among workingmen who sang it in pubs because their own homes were unbearable. When an Englishman crossed his threshold he was in his castle, with almost absolute power over everyone within. That wasn't true of his wife, but if diaries and letters are to be trusted, she enjoyed their hearth even more than he did. It was a good

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thing they liked it. They hadn't much choice. Divorce usually meant ruin. It was almost impossible to obtain; a woman had to prove, not only that her husband was an adulterer, but that he was also guilty of desertion, cruelty, incest, rape, sodomy, or bestiality. Simple infidelity on his wife's part was all a man need show. However, the moment he picked up his decree, he was an outcast. Victoria dismissed one divorced member of her court even though he was the injured party. Often families turned a divorced relative's picture to the wall and spoke of him, if at all, as though he were dead.

Home was sanctuary, a place of peace and stability with sturdy furniture, in which evenings were spent reading aloud, whence the family departed for church and reunions with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, and where children were trained to assure the continuity of generations to come:

sic fortis Etruria crevit,
scilicet et facta est rerum pulcherrima Roma.

Keeping the Empire growing "strong and most beautiful" would be the solemn legacy of these children. Middle-class Victorian parents had no Rousseauistic illusions about youthful innocence; their young were never allowed to stray from adult supervision. The inference of repression is not necessarily justified. Children were taken to Punch-and-Judy shows, "suitable" plays in Drury Lane, and summer holidays at the seashore. But their lives revolved around the family. London evenings found them in the parlor, the boys in Norfolk jackets and the girls in beribboned bonnets and buttoned boots, joining in indoor games, handicrafts, watercolors, tableaux vivants, and, most colorfully, standing around the cheap upright pianos which began to be mass-produced in the 1870s, singing ballads. Over seven hundred publishers thrived in the city selling sheet music, including such favorites as "Danny Boy," "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls," "Yes, Let Me Like a Soldier Fall," "I'll Sing Three Songs of Araby," "Annie Laurie," "Oft in the Stilly Night," "Come into the Garden, Maud" (from Tennyson), selections from Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Sullivan's "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "The Lost Chord," which sold a half-million copies before Victoria's death.

The music would be read—and everyone with social aspirations could read music—by gaslight. By the 1880s gas had been installed in most middle-class neighborhoods. (Lower-class illumination was still provided by wax, oil, and tallow; penny-in-the-slot meters did not arrive until 1892.) The light flickered on gleaming brass coal scuttles and much that would seem stifling today: heavy repp curtains; reproductions of pre-Raphaelite paintings; patterned carpets, patterned wallpaper, even patterned ceilings; overstuffed Tavistock chairs with the new coiled springs; ebonized Chippendale music stools; and almost unbelievable clutter, with whatnots displaying bric-a-brac, ostrich feathers in vases, fans fastened to the walls, and marble-topped tables crowded with family photographs, china nodding cats, vases of flowers, and, on the mantel, a "Madeleine" clock in black marble with bronze columns from Oetzmann's which cost thirty-two shillings and sixpence.

All this required a great deal of dusting. That was the point of it. Keeping it clean, and polishing the brass knockers, bedsteads, taps, and andirons, required servants, and the number of servants was a sign of status. They were cheap. A clerk making seventy or

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Nightingale denounced "the petty grinding tyranny of a good English family. What I complain of… is the degree to which they have raised the claims upon women of 'Family.' It is a kind of Fetichism."[30] Miss Nightingale is one of the few women whose names have survived, an outrider of twentieth-century feminism. Another, who was actually more useful to her sisters, was Isabella Beeton, born within the sound of London's Bow Bells and therefore a cockney. Like Florence, Isabella was a human dynamo. Before her death at twenty-eight of puerperal fever, that assassin of Victorian mothers, she had given birth to four children, served as fashion editor for her husband's periodical, the *British Domestic Magazine*, and produced a tremendously successful volume of her own, her 1,111-page *Household Management*, with fourteen color plates and hundreds of black-and-white illustrations. (It weighed two pounds and cost seven shillings and sixpence.) By 1871, six years after her funeral, two million copies had been sold.

"Mrs. Beeton," as Englishwomen called the book, was to them what "Dr. Spock" became for American mothers four generations later. The needs it filled tell us a great deal about their circumstances. As wealth poured into England from its colonial possessions abroad, the waves of growing affluence enriched and complicated life in a nation arriviste. Brides had no precedents for orchestrating sophisticated social skills; their mothers, having lived in simpler times, were of little help. So Mrs. Beeton explained when to wear gloves, how to maneuver on the pavement so that gentlemen escorts walked on the street side, and what the French names for courses of food meant. The British were still an insular people. (A headline of the period was FOG IN THE CHANNEL, CONTINENT CUT OFF.) And serving as hostess at dinner parties was a wife's most important role. Ladies did not eat out until the Savoy Hotel opened in 1889, with César Ritz as the headwaiter. Entertaining was done at private residences only. Mrs. Beeton told her readers, in extraordinary detail, which wines to serve with meat and fish, when the ladies should leave the gentlemen to their brandy, and how to cope with a party of three dozen, counting the coachmen who had to wait for their masters and mistresses. She provided recipes, information on how much to order, and what to do with the leftovers. One entry was: "Bill of Fare for a Picnic for Forty Persons." It recommended, among other things, 122 bottles of refreshment for the entire group, including servants, coachmen, and lady's maids. The food was absurdly cheap, but the logistics were staggering. Moreover, this was a *middle-class* affair. The upper class entertained on a scale unmatched today. It was expected of them, which sometimes presented difficulties. Winston Churchill, born to a noble family, simply could not afford it. He had to live by his wits most of his life.

Upper-class hostesses had no need to plan picnics in the country. They were already there. They had London mansions, too, but the soul of the leisure class was in the land. It always had been. Chaucer wrote of his medieval franklin, or landowner, that "It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke, / Of alle deyntees men coude thinke." Arundel Castle, in Sussex, goes back even farther. It is mentioned in the will of King Alfred, who reigned

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eleven centuries ago. An ancestor of the present tenant, the sixteenth Duke of Norfolk, won it when an arrow from the bow of one of his archers pierced the eye of Harold in the Battle of Hastings. Socially, a duke in the country has always had the best of all possible worlds. In the British aristocracy the twenty-seven dukes are outranked only by members of the British royal family; the College of Arms advised a hostess, who was worried about seating arrangements for her dinner party, that "the Aga Khan is held to be a direct descendant of God," but "an English Duke takes precedence." The other degrees of the British peerage, in descending order, are marquess, earl, viscount, and baron, and though these don't carry as much weight as they once did, in Victoria's time to be titled, in most instances, still meant to be landed. On the estates of the nobility stood the great country houses, where England's three hundred ruling families celebrated the weekly three-night British holiday, which is popularly thought to have been a brainchild of the Queen's hedonistic Prince of Wales, but which was actually created by, of all people, Oliver Cromwell; in 1899 one of Cromwell's biographers, S. R. Gardiner, found that "Oliver… may be regarded as the inventor of that modified form of enjoyment to which hard-worked citizens have, in our day, given the name of 'week-end.' "[31]

But upper-class Victorians weren't hard-worked. Most of them didn't work at all. That was what set the upper class apart from the upper-middle class. The two mingled, but never as equals; as Lady Warwick explained to Elinor Glyn, "Doctors and solicitors might be invited to garden parties, though never of course to luncheon or dinner." The elite kept themselves to themselves. This small, select, homogenous patriciate, this "brilliant and powerful body," in Churchill's admiring phrase, passed most of their time by passing the port, sherry, and claret; by discussing cricket; by playing billiards, admiring their horses, and shooting grouse—a thousand grouse were felled in a single shoot attended by Churchill's mother. Unlike the French, they did not cultivate tête-à-têtes; Robert Laird Collier found that "they are poor talkers as a rule, and conversation seems to be a labor to most of them," that they "never express the least feeling in their social intercourse," and that "all the social talk is stupid and insipid." In an age which cherished the Latin motto *laborare est orare,* when Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* could be found in almost every middle-class home, an idle nobility seemed an affront to social critics. In Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* the likable figures are Floppy Fly and Daddy Long Legs, who are ejected from court because their legs are ill-made. Lewis Carroll depicted patricians as tyrants and muddlers. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* described the House of Lords as a body that "did nothing in particular and did it very well." But the ruling class was unperturbed. Ideas bored them. "As a class," Lady Warwick said, "we did not like brains." A contemporary work, *Kings, Courts and Society,* saw Britain comprising "a small, select aristocracy, booted and spurred to ride, and a large, dim mass, born, saddled and bridled to be ridden." On Sunday the weekenders gathered in the chapels found under every country-house roof and sang:[32]

The rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly
And orders their estate.

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spring to the Goodwood races in midsummer—that the great peers were to be found in their town houses. These were surrounded by barbered gardens, high walls, and gates manned by gatekeepers who fought off beggars and other street people. Sometimes they shot them. This aroused neighbors, who knew their station but believed a line should be drawn short of homicide. Actually, the very sites of many of the huge homes were outrageous. In Mayfair, Belgravia, Marylebone, and St. Pancras, streets maintained at public expense had been included within such walls, which meant that fire engines were blocked and buildings burned down. All attempts at legislation outlawing this extraordinary practice were defeated in Parliament.

In London the upper classes had their stylized rituals, most of them frivolous. Every morning after breakfast processions of victorias—low four-wheeled carriages with folding tops—debouched from the West End and trotted along Park Lane, gay harnesses tinkling and erect postilions wearing uniforms, glistening high boots, and varnished, high-crowned hats. Daughters were presented at court; the ladies, *en grande toilette,* wore three ostrich feathers in their hats if married, two feathers if not. Wasp-waisted, their gowns off the shoulder, skirts voluminous and rustling, the debutantes would be waited upon by uniformed members of the Corps Diplomatique, Gentlemen of the Household in full court dress, and Yeomen of the Guard in scarlet and gold. The fathers of the girls being brought out would be absent, loitering in their clubs: the Athenaeum, White's, the Carlton, the Reform, and the rest. They did not care to be "seen" then. But the sexes did mingle on other public occasions. Everyone enjoyed the royal enclosure at Ascot, gorging on champagne, strawberries, and lobster mousse. And—rowing being considered manly—it was rather a good thing to turn out for the Henley Regatta. Dress there was about as informal as it ever got for that class. Ladies appeared in blouses and long linen skirts; their husbands, in straw boaters, blazers, and flannels.

The best club in London was Parliament, which, by no coincidence, held its key sessions between Easter and August—in effect, the Season. At the time of Winston Churchill's birth, MPs were not only unpaid; they were expected to contribute generously to charities in their constituencies. So the upper class controlled both the Lords *and* the House of Commons. B. Cracroft, analyzing the House in his *Essays on Reform,* found that 326 members were patricians, including 226 sons or grandsons of peers, and a hundred others "connected with the peerage by marriage or descent." Over a hundred more belonged "substantially to the same class," which meant that three out of every four MPs were linked to each other and to the older generation in the Lords by blood as well as by conservative outlook. Between a third and a half of all cabinet members were from the upper house—six of Disraeli's thirteen ministers, five of Gladstone's fourteen. As we have seen, their hold on key posts in the Empire was even greater. Every viceroy of India was a peer by inheritance. In *Little Dorrit* Dickens wrote caustically of the Barnacle "clan, or clique, or family, or connection" that "there was not a list, in all the Circumlocution Office, of places that might fall vacant anywhere within half a century, from a Lord of the Treasury to a Chinese Consul, and up again to a Governor-General of India, but, as applicants for such places, the names of some or every one of these hungry and adhesive Barnacles were down."[35]

So the opening of Parliament, or a heralded debate in the Commons, was not unlike a family reunion. Broughams, landaus, barouches, victorias, and hansoms tingling their

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unmistakable bells clattered over the cobblestones of New Palace Yard and drew up in front of the Westminster Hall entrance. Men in striped trousers and frock coats descended carrying bulky red leather boxes stuffed with state papers, then disappeared into lobbies brightened by flaring gas jets. In the Strangers' Dining Room wives and daughters awaited them, wearing flowing skirts of tulle and hats as large as the displays at the Chelsea Flower Show. Gossip was exchanged, outcomes predicted, Liberals scorned by Tories or Tories by Liberals—it scarcely mattered, since their interests and social positions were virtually identical. The mighty seemed completely secure. Yet there were those who worried. Macaulay had warned against "the encroachments of despotism and the licentiousness of democracy." Bagehot said "sensible men of substantial means are what we wish to be ruled by" and cautioned that "a political combination of the lower classes… is an evil of the first magnitude…. So long as they are not taught to act together there is a chance of this being averted, and it can only be averted by the greater wisdom and foresight in the higher classes." The Queen, alarmed, let it be known that "a democratic monarchy is what she will never belong to."[36] Skittish patricians held their breath when the franchise bill of 1884 swept away 216 seats in rotten boroughs and increased the electorate. One man in five now had the vote—but at the next election the Conservatives were returned to power, with Lord Salisbury succeeding Disraeli. Salisbury was eminently a patrician of his time. A descendant of the two Cecils who had been Elizabeth I's and James I's chief ministers, he was a towering, massive man—acerbic, gauche, preoccupied, disdainful, and possessed of a penetrating intellect. He declined to live at 10 Downing Street, preferring his own more elegant London home, in the chapel of which he prayed each morning upon arising. He suffered spells of depression which he described as "nerve storms." It was Salisbury's firm belief that only uncontentious legislation should be brought before Parliament. If it was controversial, England wasn't ready for it.

In one of those little paragraphs that illumine the era, *The Times*, reporting on a public trial, noted that "Viscount Raynham, MP, and other gentlemen present were accommodated with seats on the bench."[37] Given the system, it is unsurprising that the judge moved over for men whose social rank was equal to, or more likely greater than, his own. The key word is "gentlemen." What was a gentleman? Even then the term was inexact, and it has been the despair of sociologists ever since. Some cases were easy. Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* was almost an archetype. In 1872 he lived in Burlington Gardens, in the house at No. 7 Savile Row—flats didn't become respectable till the mid-1870s—and he was a member of the Reform Club. His financial independence permitted him to be indifferent to public opinion (though not to his conscience and his fellow gentlemen) and his arrogance and eccentricity arose naturally from his absolute security. Other cases were marginal. You could be a gentleman in one place but not in another. In a small community the word would be applied to a physician, a lawyer, a country squire, a master of foxhounds, or just a man who had a little money and good manners. In London, or in the great country homes, that wasn't enough. Samuel Smiles to the contrary, the mantle did not fall upon every responsible, brave, selfless Englishman. If gentlemen were those who were treated as such—the best definition—the standards were usually higher than that.

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The high-born and members of the landed gentry were gentlemen by birthright. Stupidity—even illiteracy—did not disqualify them. But they were exceptions. It was generally understood that a "gentleman's education" meant Oxford or Cambridge, admittance to which was still largely limited to public-school boys. During their heyday, roughly from Waterloo to the outbreak of World War I, the self-contained public schools were the ruling class's boot camps. Their autocratic headmasters, Church of England clerics, taught austerity, loyalty, honor, and the virtue of "service." Theoretically this meant serving those not lucky enough to see the inside of a public school; in practice it came down to defending the established order. Since the tuition exceeded the annual income of the huskiest workman, the pool of applicants was limited, as it was meant to be, to the affluent. The teaching of Latin and Greek was thought useful in disciplining young minds, but the playing fields were at least as important. The Duke of Wellington had said that the schools should produce the kind of youth who could go straight from his sixth form to a convict ship and, with the help of two sergeants and fifteen privates, transport a shipload of convicted criminals to Australia without incident. Thomas Arnold of Rugby told his faculty: "What we must look for… is, first religious and moral principles; secondly, gentlemanly conduct; thirdly, intellectual ability." At Harrow it was said that a boy might spend fifteen hours a week at cricket or, if he took "every opportunity," twenty hours. Sports were believed to be peculiarly suitable to the building of character. A small boy learned to submit to the authority of older boys because they were physically stronger than he. As he moved up through the higher forms, it was reasoned, he himself matured and became a "natural ruler," a self-reliant gentleman, disciplined by what Irving Babbitt later called the "inner check." Thus, though his family may have had no aristocratic connections, he joined the gentry and was accepted as a member of the ruling class. Merchants couldn't make it, but their sons could.[38]

In a revealing aside, John Buchan wrote: "In the conventional sense, I never went to school at all." In fact, he had received an excellent education in a Glasgow day school, but socially that didn't count. Yet Buchan rose to become Lord Tweedsmuir, governor-general of Canada. So it was possible to bypass the Etons and Harrows. Even an American could do it; in 1879 Henry James dined out 107 times. There were a thousand little ways, some of them extraordinarily petty, by which one gentleman identified another. One's vocabulary was important. Mantelpieces were "chimney-pieces," notepaper was "writing paper," mirrors were "looking glasses." But there was a catch. If you worried about such things, your concern showed, and you were dismissed as a swot. The true gentleman emanated a kind of mystique. He always belonged wherever he was. If he was intellectual he did not hide it; in *Paracelsus* Browning had told him: "Measure your mind's height by the shadow it casts." And somehow he always recognized his equals, whatever the circumstances or attire. When two strangers meet in *Doctor Thorne*, Trollope says of one: "In spite of his long absence, he knew an English gentleman when he saw one." Even penury was no obstacle. At the end of Trollope's *Last Chronicle of Barset* Josiah Crawley meets Archdeacon Grantly. The archdeacon is about to become Crawley's daughter's father-in-law. Crawley is wearing seedy clothes and "dirty broken boots." He is suspected of being a thief. He is quirky and perverse. But he was a scholar at Oxford and has "good connections," and when he apologizes because he is too impoverished to provide a dowry, the archdeacon replies: "My dear Crawley, I have enough for both." Crawley says: "I wish

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risk would have been slight. For generations before Victoria's coronation the patriciate had tolerated promiscuity among its more hot-blooded members. Byron wrote his shortest and most eloquent poem as a testament to a titled woman who had taken leave of her husband for a nine-month romp with him:

> *Caroline Lamb,*
> *Goddamn.*

The Duke of Wellington had his pick of ladies when he returned from his various triumphs, and two of his bedmates expressed their appreciation to him in their memoirs. The duke's sister-in-law, Lady Charlotte Wellesley, the mother of four young children, left them to sleep with Lord Paget, himself the father of four children by his wife, Lady Caroline Villiers, daughter of Lady Jersey, who was the former "favorite," as it was then put, of the Prince of Wales. At Waterloo the duke made Paget his chief of cavalry. An aide protested: "Your Grace cannot have forgotten the affair with Lady Charlotte Wellesley?" The duke: "Oh, no! I have not forgotten that." Aide: "That is not the only case, I am afraid. At any rate [he] has a reputation of running away with everybody he can." Duke: "I'll take good care he don't run away with me. I don't care about anybody else."[*42] During the Regency, upper-class sexual conduct became particularly flagrant. It was then that ladies diverted themselves with the best-selling *Memoirs of Harriet Smith,* which opened with the gripping line: "I will not relate the exact circumstances by which at the age of thirteen I became the mistress of the Earl of Croydon."

The tradition has continued to flourish in the twentieth century, a colorful example being the beautiful and wanton Edwina Ashley, Lady Mountbatten. When Lord Louis Mountbatten was viceroy of India, negotiating the terms for Indian independence, the sessions went much more smoothly because the vicereine, with her husband's resigned knowledge, was sleeping with Jawaharlal Nehru. Earlier she had been even more headstrong. At one point she vanished from London society for four months. Friends in Park Lane found Louis extremely vague when asked his wife's whereabouts. Actually, he didn't know. Later he learned that Edwina had shipped aboard a fifty-ton trading schooner, bound for the South Seas, as an ordinary seaman. Night after night, as they cruised among the lush islands, she gratified herself with her fellow crewpersons.

Victoria's reign was a hiatus, not in extracurricular upper-class ardor, but in the flagrant practice of it. Her ascent saw the triumph of the puritans—of what Melbourne called "that d——d morality." In the 1840s and 1850s debauchery went underground. By the time of Winston Churchill's childhood and early youth it had become prudent to keep mum about your love affairs. Gladstone in a candid moment said he had known "eleven prime ministers and ten were adulterers"; nevertheless, he joined in the persecution of Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish MP who had been the lover of Kitty O'Shea with Mrs. O'Shea's husband's consent. In 1887 Sir Charles Dilke, at one time regarded as a future prime minister, was ruined by a divorce trial. He lost his cabinet post, then lost his seat, and eventually became a social pariah. One modern British scholar is convinced that "Disraeli slept his way to the top," but Dizzy was too crafty to be caught. Gladstone made a curious practice of prowling the London streets at night and holding long, intimate conversations with prostitutes. Sometimes he brought them home and Mrs. Gladstone

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gave them hot chocolate. It was assumed that he was trying to convince them to mend their ways. If so, he doesn't appear to have been discouraged by his failure to produce a single convert. Indeed, after these talks he always appeared beaming, animated, and flushed. No one thought that odd. Nor could anyone pass judgment on affairs of which they knew nothing. The key to successful extramarital sex, therefore, was discretion. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, perhaps the most outspoken woman in polite society, said dryly: "It doesn't matter what you do in the bedroom, as long as you don't do it in the street and frighten the horses."[43]

The difficulty lay in finding the bedroom. Mrs. Campbell also said, after maneuvering one man out of his marriage to a Churchill and up the aisle with her: "Ah, the peace of the double bed after the hurly-burly of the chaise longue!" It was all very well for a Forsyte to tuck away a common mistress in Chelsea, but that couldn't be done with a lady. In the city she was under observation all the time. Her gown, her coif, her bearing, gestures, and diction testified to her class, and she couldn't be seen outside her aerie. Her very presence in a hotel lobby would invite scandal. Thus the preference of the aristocracy and gentry for their homes in the country. London society was too ritualized; there was little privacy, unless you were an unmarried bachelor, like young Freud, who informed his housekeeper that he expected a woman for tea and was told: "Right, sir, I'll change the sheets on the bed."[44]

The servants knew of most dalliances. They even understood why there was one standard for their masters and mistresses and another for the rest of England. Victorian morality arose from the needs of the new middle class. As the lord chancellor explained when divorce courts were established in 1857, a woman lost nothing by her husband's infidelity and could absolve him "without any loss of caste," while "no one would venture to suggest" that he could pardon her adultery, which "might be the means of palming spurious children upon him." This was important; such children shared a middle-class legacy. In titled families it was meaningless. Only the legitimacy of the first patrician child counted. Professor McGregor writes: "The sexual waywardness of aristocrats… did not endanger the integrity or succession of family properties regulated by primogeniture and entail. Countless children of the mist played happily in Whig and Tory nurseries where they were no threat to the security of family property or to the interests of the heirs." Pamela Harriman, a Digby who was Winston Churchill's daughter-in-law before she married New York's former governor, takes the traditional light view of such sex: "They went to bed a lot with each other, but they were all cousins, so it didn't really count." It was their insularity that largely limited them to cousins; among the great families, Barbara Tuchman notes, "everyone knew or was related to everyone else…. People who met each other every day, at each other's homes, at race meetings and hunts, at Cowes, for the Regatta, at the Royal Academy, at court and in Parliament, were more often than not meeting their second cousins or brother-in-law's uncle or stepfather's sister or aunt's nephew on the other side."[45]

One area of scholarly inquiry being explored by today's sexologists is how the voluptuaries of the Victorian upper class led such colorful sex lives and produced so little issue. The average British wife then conceived ten times during her childbearing years. But the great thoroughbred beauties, who treasured their figures, carried far less often.

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known to everyone. General Sir Neville Bowles Chamberlain, for example, always slept with the Duchess of Manchester, and the Duke of Marlborough with Lady Colin Campbell. Of course, they didn't cross a bedroom threshold together. On Thursdays each of the hundred-odd guests was assigned a room; a tiny brass frame on the door held a card with his or her name written on it. Wise and worldly hostesses knew who should be paired with whom. Vita Sackville-West later described how they served as accomplices to Victorian and later Edwardian intrigue: "This question of the disposition of bedrooms always gave the… hostesses cause for anxious thought. It was so necessary to be tactful, and at the same time discreet. The professional Lothario would be furious if he found himself in a room surrounded by ladies who were all accompanied by their husbands. Tommy Brand, on one such occasion, had been known to leave the house on the Sunday morning…. Tommy's motto was 'Chacun a sa chacune.' Then there were the recognised lovers to be considered; the duchess herself would have been greatly annoyed had she gone to stay at the same party as Harry Tremaine, only to find that he had been put at the other end of the house…. It was part of a good hostess' duty to see to such things; they must be made easy, though not too obvious." After lights were out, shadowy figures would glide through the darkened hall and everyone would settle in for the night's pleasure. An hour before dawn the butler would appear in the hall bearing a gong. He would strike it once and depart. The same tiptoeing figures would reappear. Presently they would all meet at the breakfast table.[47]

Breakfast could be bewildering to outsiders. At the table you were expected to be brusque, even rude, to your companion of the night. "Pass the toast," you would say crossly, or "I want the salt." The upper class was always very direct ("I want to pee"), but this went beyond that. It was important to sort out your different roles, to let it be known that you weren't going to break the rules by being demonstrative, or eloping, or doing anything else rash. One-night stands were very rare, but now and then they happened. The story of one, involving a young Frenchwoman, survives. During an evening musicale a handsome gentleman propositioned her. She accepted, and a memorable night followed. Two hours later she was cracking a soft-boiled egg downstairs when he appeared, took a seat, and arranged his napkin. Still aglow with romance, she bestowed a tender smile upon him. He glowered and growled: "Are you going to hog the butter all day?" She was shocked, then enraged. Hurling the butter in his face, she flew upstairs, summoned her maid, packed, and demanded that she be driven to the station at once. She told their stunned hostess that she would never again visit *atroce* England. She didn't. She wasn't invited.[48]

The casual promiscuity of the English patriciate over the centuries suggests the need for caution in tracing the bloodlines of Winston Churchill. He himself, while researching his biography of the great duke—the income from which went far toward supporting his family in the 1930s, when pleas for resistance to Hitler made him a political pariah—found "disquieting" evidence of "a rather shady phase" in the 1500s, when the duke's

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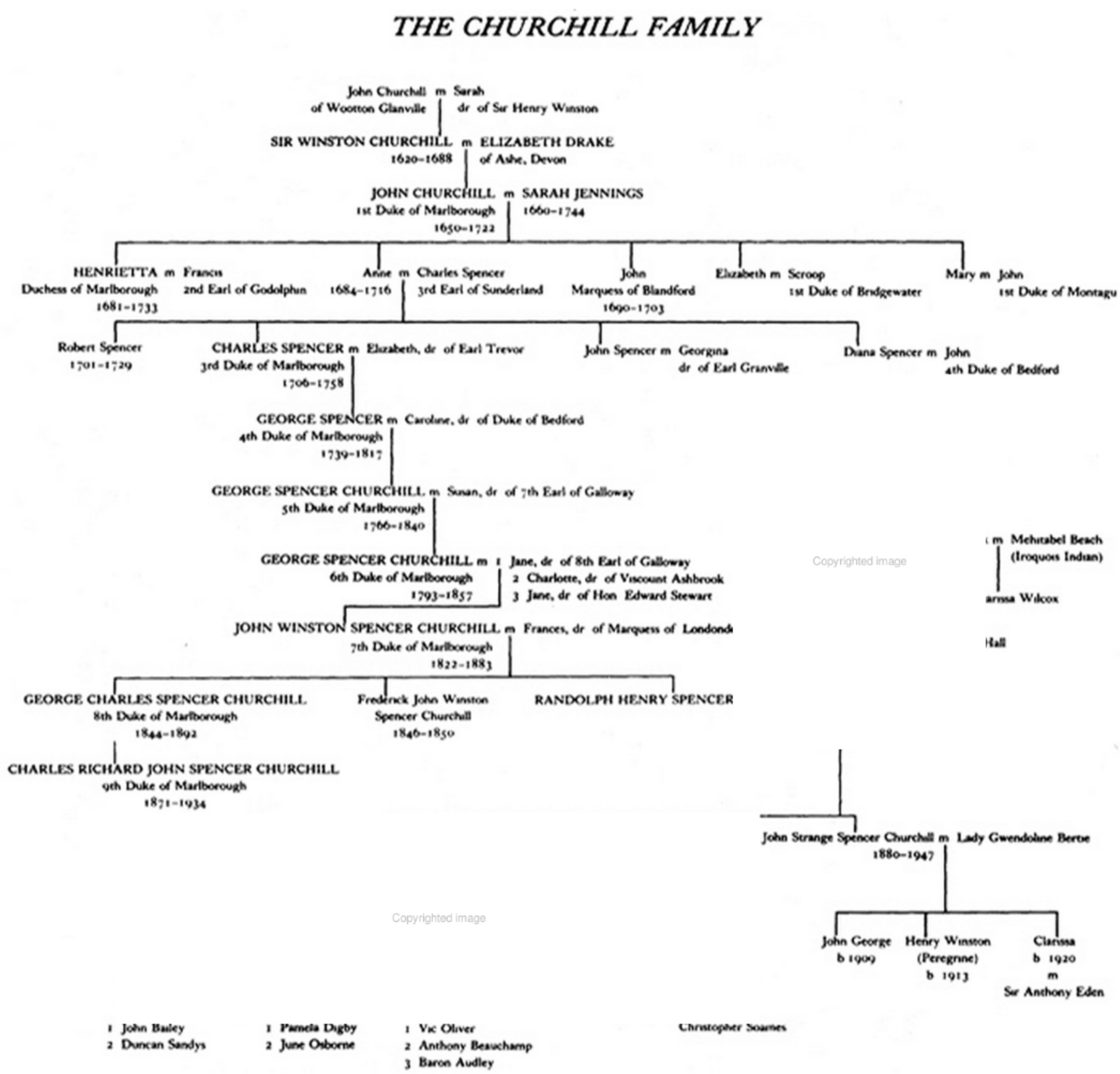
great-grandmother so forgot herself in the early years of her marriage that she presented the family blacksmith with a sturdy son. On a loftier scale, the duke's sister gave birth to a bastard son of James II, and the family genes were quickened by the passionate George Villiers, the first Duke of Buckingham and the confidant of two Stuart sovereigns, whose descendants included both Pitts and several mistresses and lovers in royal households. So although it is theoretically possible to trace our Winston Churchill's lineage back at least to 1066, here and there skepticism is advisable. As Sarah, the first duchess, said, upon reading an account of her husband's forebears, "This History takes a great deal of Pains to make the Duke of Marlborough's Extraction very ancient. That may be true for aught I know. But it is no matter whether it be true or not in my opinion"—the customary riposte when a defense of legitimacy became hopeless. Thus one should, as far as possible, stick to what can be confirmed.[49]



One may as well begin with the first Sir Winston Churchill (1620–1688), for whom his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson was named. A scholar, this earlier Winston left Oxford to bear arms for Charles I in the struggle between the Royalists and the Roundheads. Wounded after several ferocious battles, he found asylum in the castle of

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his mother-in-law, Lady Drake, a firm supporter of Cromwell and therefore above Puritan suspicion. After the Restoration, Charles II knighted Churchill. As Sir Winston he became MP for Weymouth, then a fellow of the Royal Society, meanwhile supervising the raising of five children who, because of their mother's bloodline, were descendants of Sir Francis Drake. One of the five was John Churchill, the future duke. John is one of the great figures in English history, glorious as a soldier, statesman, and diplomat. Though frequently the victim of court intrigue—in 1692 he was arrested, locked up in the Tower of London, and charged with high treason—he was always forgiven by William III and Queen Anne because of his remarkable military conquests. John fought ten campaigns on the Continent and never lost a battle, never even failed to take a fortress to which he had laid siege. His mightiest victory was at Blenheim, on the Danube, in Bavaria. On August 13, 1704, he and Eugene of Savoy risked everything, ignoring a formidable threat to their rear, and led the allied English, Germans, Dutch, and Danes to a historic triumph over the French. Blenheim is regarded as one of the world's ten most decisive engagements. John had become a duke in 1702. Now he was made a Knight of the Garter and given a palace, which he named after the battle.

This first Marlborough left no sons. The dukedom therefore passed through his daughters to his grandson, a Spencer. The Spencer family had become notable in 1504, when one of them acquired estates in Warwickshire and at Wormleighton and received a grant in arms. Henry VIII knighted him; our Winston Churchill became his direct male descendant through fifteen generations. In his *Memoirs of My Life and Writings,* Gibbon would write: "The nobility of the Spencers has been illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough; but I exhort them to consider the Fairy Queen as the most precious jewel of their coronet." Like many another historian, Gibbon skidded from time to time. There was no relationship between the poet and these Spencers. But they were remarkable in other ways. One served as ambassador to Spain and France. Another, a contemporary of Robert Walpole, England's first prime minister, was first lord of the Treasury between 1718 and 1721. A third, the second Earl Spencer, was first lord of the Admiralty in Nelson's great years. The next earl was one of the authors of the reform bill of 1832, and his son became viceroy of Ireland and then Gladstone's first lord.

In 1817, by royal license, the fifth Duke of Marlborough changed his family name to Spencer-Churchill. The arms were quartered beneath two crests, a griffin's head for the Spencers and a lion for the Churchills. The lion is the traditional symbol of England's greatness, and a duke outranks an earl, but for over a century the Spencers had outperformed the Churchills as servants of the Crown. One Duke of Marlborough became a mere brigadier of foot guards; another, during his fifty-eight years as master of Blenheim, simply collected pictures. During the Regency, two dukes succumbed to that gambling fever which afflicted so many members of the aristocracy in those raffish years. Rees Howell Gronow, a gossip writer of the early nineteenth century, told of a coach ride with a Marquess of Blandford (the title of the elder son of the Duke of Marlborough before his succession). The marquess produced a wad of fifty thousand-pound notes. He had just borrowed them. He said: "You see, Gronow, how the immense fortune of my family will be frittered away; but I can't help it; I must live. My father inherited five hundred thousand pounds in ready money and seventy thousand pounds a year in land; and in all probability when it comes my turn to live at Blenheim I shall have nothing left

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handle menials and that the rising merchants—he once told Harris that he regarded them as “jumped-up grocers from Ballarat and shopkeepers from Sydney”—would never learn. That evening he was eloquent; he was applauded; a fellow student handed him an enormous stirrup cup of champagne; he drank it off. It had been drugged. He awoke at daybreak with a ghastly taste in his mouth. He was in a strange room. The wallpaper, in his words, was “hideous—dirty.” He turned his head and sat bolt upright, gasping. There was an old woman lying beside him; “one thin strand of dirty grey hair” lay on the pillow. His hopeless questions to Jennings evoked the chilling horror and the pathos of his plight: “How had I got there? What had happened to bring me to such a den?” Did he remember anything? *Pas trop;* the stirrup cup, and now this. Rising quietly, he slid into his trousers. Abruptly, the hag awoke and grinned. She asked hoarsely: “Oh, Lovie, you’re not going to leave me like that?”[53]

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Lord Randolph Churchill at the time of his marriage

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Lord Randolph Churchill in his prime

Randolph vividly recalled that she had "one long yellow tooth in her top jaw that waggled as she spoke." Obviously, she expected to be paid—this was the ultimate master-servant relationship. Emptying his pockets, he threw all the money he had on the bed. Her leer grew. Speechless, he struggled into his waistcoat and coat and bolted. As he slammed the door he heard her call, "Lovie, you're not kind!" Then, said Randolph, "Downstairs I fled in livid terror."* He knew his peril; he made for the nearest doctor's office. There he was treated with a strong disinfectant, but three weeks later a venereal sore appeared on his genitals, followed by lesions elsewhere. He returned to the physician, who treated him with mercury, warned him to abstain from alcohol, and told him he had nothing to worry about. It was a lie. Victorian medicine, confronted with such symptoms, was helpless. Thus it was that at the height of the 1873 Season, even before his entrance into public life, the elegant twenty-four-year-old bachelor son of a duke, the cynosure of aspiring debutantes and their ambitious mothers, was a doomed syphilitic.[54]

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It was "unthinkable," the *London Standard* said, for the Prussians "to take the offensive."[56] General Helmuth von Moltke and his general staff disagreed. They had built their railroad grid with war in mind, had profited by William T. Sherman's brilliant use of railways in Tennessee, and had mastered the coordination of telegraph lines and troop trains. Three weeks after war had been declared, Moltke had efficiently mobilized 1,183,000 Germans, backed by more than 1,440 Krupp cast-steel cannon. The French, who regarded efficiency as a pedestrian virtue, weren't ready. They collided with massed battalions wearing spiked helmets and uniforms of Prussian blue singing "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Deutschland über Alles" and chanting *"Nach Paris!"* While their deadly artillery, outranging Louis Napoleon's obsolete bronze guns, flung shattering barrages ahead of them, they blazed a trail which would be followed by their grandsons in 1914 and their great-grandsons in 1940. Suddenly news reached the Champs-Elysées that half the French army was bottled up in the mighty fortress of Metz. At Sedan the other half, led by Louis Napoleon himself, laid down their arms and accepted humiliating surrender terms. Paris lay open to the invader.

Clara and her daughters fled to Cowes, the fashionable British seaside resort on the Isle of Wight. They moved back to Paris the following spring, taking a house in the boulevard Haussman, but the city had been devastated by the Commune, the leftist regime which had defied the Prussians and their own countrymen until starved into submission. Returning to Cowes, the Jeromes leased what Clara called a "sweet little cottage" and were frequently seen there and in London, attending balls, recitals, receptions, and musicales, and other highlights of the Season. Most weekends found them on the great country estates. Unlike the Frenchwoman whose naiveté spoiled a perfectly good English breakfast, they were not shocked by careless interpretations of the marriage sacrament. Clara's husband slept with many women in New York; she knew it, knew that he had sired several illegitimate children, and was indifferent. Her grandson Winston relished telling of a meeting between Clara and one of Leonard Jerome's mistresses; Clara said: "My dear, I understand how you feel. He is *so* irresistible." But a lady's sexual emancipation was possible only after matrimony. As long as the Misses Jerome remained single, they must also be maidens. At least one of them was straining at the leash. A photograph of the mother and her daughters, taken at about this time, shows her seated, facing left, regarding the world with a resolute jaw and eyes like raisins. Clarita, also seated, is holding her mother's hand and searching her face, as though for guidance. Leonie, standing, leans on her mother's shoulder for support. Jennie, however, doesn't seem even to be a part of the group. She was already known as "a great showoff." Here the show is well worth watching. Dark, vivacious, and magnificent, she stands alone, staring boldly at the photographer, her left arm outflung, the hand atop a furled umbrella, her hips cocked saucily. It is almost a wanton pose, the posture of a virgin who can hardly wait to assume another position.[57]

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Mrs. Jerome and her daughters (from left): Leonie, Clara, and Jennie

Their Cowes home was a "cottage" in the sense that the sprawling Newport châteaux were called cottages. Leonard was seldom there, but when he crossed the Atlantic—usually at the helm of his own yacht—he expected to find his family living in style. He was an American type peculiar to his time, a vigorous, handsome man, a brokerage partner of William R. Travers and a member of the New York Stock Exchange who repeatedly amassed, and then spent, enormous portfolios of wealth. As Winston told the story, "My grandfather would devote himself to work and in a short time make a fortune. Then he would give up the life completely, disappearing for a year or two, generally to Europe. When he came back to New York he might have lost the fortune he had made, and at once set about piling up another. Money poured through his fingers. He generally had an income of about £10,000, perhaps equal to £40,000 now. My grandfather thought nothing of spending $70,000 on a party, where each lady found a gold bracelet, inset with diamonds, wrapped in her napkin."[58]

In his careening career, Leonard seems to have succeeded at almost everything he tried. He founded the American Jockey Club, built a racetrack in the Bronx, supported an opera house, was for a time a part-owner of the *New York Times*, participated in politics, spent eighteen months as American consul in Trieste, gambled heavily and successfully, and was the first man to drive a team of racing horses four-in-hand down Broadway. Like many other Wall Street millionaires of that period, he held mixed feelings about the English aristocracy. He envied their power; Britain was a mightier nation than the United States, and an English peer was a great figure throughout the Empire and beyond. But Americans were also proud, especially self-made men. Having reached the top of a mobile

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society, they scorned those whose future had been assured at birth. After all, Britain's patricians and New York's financiers came from the same stock. Leonard was the great-great-grandson of a Huguenot who had arrived in what were then the American colonies in 1710. Leonard's wife's family had settled in Connecticut by 1650. There was one faint blemish in Clara's otherwise pure Anglo-Saxon blood, one which later delighted Winston: her grandmother had been an Iroquois Indian. But that merely made her more colorful. Both Leonard and Clara were descended from American officers who had fought in the War of Independence. One, a major in the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, had served with Washington at Valley Forge. To be sure, the Jeromes would be unlikely to place obstacles in the path of a titled British son-in-law. Palmerston had predicted: "Before the century is out, these clever and pretty women from New York will pull the strings in half the chancelleries in Europe."[59] Louisa Caton, the daughter of a Baltimore merchant, had been Lady Hervey-Bathurst and then, after her first husband's death, Duchess of Leeds. Minnie Stevens became Lady Paget; Mrs. Arthur Post, Lady Barrymore; Mary Leiter of Chicago, Lady Curzon and vicereine of India. And Consuelo del Valle, who had been Jennie's schoolmate, would soon be Duchess of Manchester. So a Jerome girl wouldn't find herself in altogether unfamiliar company. Leonard and Clara might have been pleased by the thought. At the same time, they would have bridled at the suggestion that she was marrying up.

The shipboard dance at Cowes aboard the cruiser *Ariadne* was considered a major social event and even a historic occasion, for the guests of honor were the future Czar Alexander III and his czarina, Maria Feodorovna. Today they are forgotten, part of the legacy which was destroyed with the last of the Romanovs, but one question asked that evening by an acquaintance of the Jeromes, by an obscure dandy named Frank Bertie, is memorable. Although Jennie had a full dance card, she happened to be standing alone, watching the bobbing Chinese lanterns and the entwined British and Russian flags overhead and listening to the Royal Marine band, when Bertie appeared at her elbow with a pale youth. Bertie said: "Miss Jerome, may I present an old friend of mine who has just arrived in Cowes, Lord Randolph Churchill." Jennie inclined her lovely head. Randolph stared. She was nineteen, at the height of her glory, bare-shouldered and sheathed below in a flowing white gown with flowers pinned to the bosom. After some hesitation, he invited her to dance. The quadrille proved to be beyond him; he tripped and suggested they sit this one out. They did. Her dance card notwithstanding, they sat out the next one, and then the next, talking of horses and mutual friends until Clara, wondering uneasily where her daughter might be among all these virile naval officers, sought her out. Before leaving, Jennie persuaded her mother to invite Randolph to dinner the following evening, accompanied by a British colonel for the sake of appearances. At the dinner Randolph seems to have tried hard to be clever, without much success. Afterward Jennie and Clarita played piano duets. Randolph whispered to the startled colonel: "If I can, I mean to make the dark one my wife." They left, and Jennie asked her sister what she thought of Randolph. Clarita wasn't impressed. She thought his manner pretentious and his mustache absurd. She doubted she could learn to like him. Jennie said: "Please try to, Clarita, because I have the strangest feeling that he's going to ask me to marry him." If he did, she said, "I'm going to say 'yes.' " Her sister laughed, but in three days, during a stroll in the

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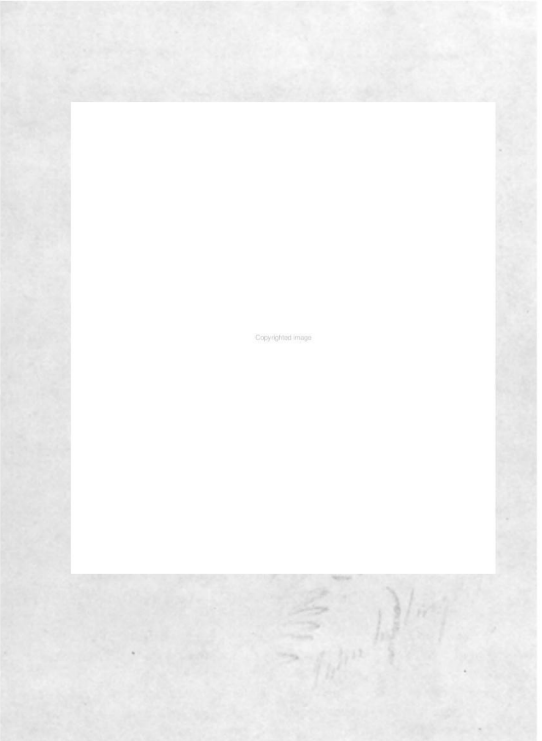

Jennie as drawn by John Singer Sargent

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It wasn't enough. At Blenheim the duchess was muttering angrily about "dollars and impudence." On August 25 Randolph's brother had written him: "I tell you that you are mad simply mad. I don't care if *la demoiselle* was the incarnation of all moral excellences & physical beauties on God's earth. My opinion is the same." If he wanted to run off with a married woman, George said, that would be one thing. "But my friend *le mariage!* It is a delusion and a snare like all the rest, and in this disagreeable addition [sic], that it is irrevocable…. You really only want to marry because you are in love with *an idea 'une phantasie….'* " Meanwhile, Randolph had written his father of his plans. He told him: "I love her better than life itself," then added with exasperating vagueness: "Mr. Jerome is a gentleman who is obliged to live in New York to look after his business. I do not know what it is."[62]

The duke meant to find out. He wrote Randolph: "I can't say that what you have told me is reassuring…. This Mr. J. seems to be a sporting, and I should think vulgar kind of man. I hear he drives about 6 and 8 horses in N.Y. (one may take this as a kind of indication of what the man is). I hear he and his two brothers are stock brokers, one of them bears a *bad* character in commercial judgement in *this* country, but which of them it is, I do not know, but it is evident he is of the class of speculators; he has been bankrupt once; and may be so again: and when we come to think of N.Y. speculators & their deeds look at Fisk and *hoc genus omne*."[63]

Randolph besieged Blenheim. A month later he wrote Clara that although his father still deplored "the suddenness & rapidity of the attachment formed… he wld give his consent if we were of the same mind in a year hence." Neither Randolph nor Jennie would agree to wait. They were both hot-blooded and impatient; with each passing day they wanted each other more. Weeks dragged on, and then months. Randolph's election to Parliament in February seems to have improved his standing in his father's eyes, and presently the duke, mollified if not reconciled, was getting down to the bedrock issue. It was money. He had decided to give Randolph £1,000 a year, which, with the £2,000 from Leonard, seemed ample for the couple. The issue was who should control it. Lawyers were consulted. The Churchill family's solicitors took the position that settling any money on the bride was inconsistent with English practice. The groom, they said, should get everything. Leonard offered a split between husband and wife, writing: "My daughter although not a *Russian* princess is an American and ranks precisely the same and you have doubtless seen that the Russian settlement recently published"—this was between the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna and Victoria's second son, the Duke of Edinburgh—"claims *everything* for the bride." It was now April 7, and Jennie and Randolph could scarcely control themselves. Indeed, as we shall see, they probably couldn't, and didn't. A compromise was reached involving settlements on children to be born of the union. On April 14, 1874, Randolph wrote his mother: "Things are now going as merrily as a marriage bell. I expect the settlements over tonight and they will be signed tomorrow."[64]

They were. The next day, Wednesday, April 15, the Reverend Dr. Edward Forbes united them during a ceremony in the British embassy in Paris—Paris, which had become civilized once more, having been Clara's suggestion. Present were the bride's parents, the groom's brother George, and Francis Knollys, private secretary to the Prince of Wales. Absent were the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. This was an extraordinary snub, for

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Another admission, which she preferred to keep from her husband's family, was that she was bearing their grandchild. Indeed, it is virtually certain that she had been pregnant for three months, and soon it would begin to show. Randolph had leased a house in Mayfair, at 48 Charles Street, off Berkeley Square; they planned to return to London and await the delivery there, explaining, when invited to Blenheim, that his political duties required his presence in town. But when Parliament rose, the duke and duchess would hear no excuses. Having accepted the marriage grimly, they wanted a long close look at their new daughter-in-law. As the weeks passed, they were pleasantly surprised. They found her charming. The increase in her girth appears to have been slight; the time for consulting the calendar hadn't yet arrived. Ironically, she no longer cared. Free of her cloying mother, she also felt free of her in-laws. By October she was her own woman, independent and headstrong. She would never change again. It would be characteristic of her that she would always do exactly as she pleased, flouting convention and tossing her head when met by disapproval. Expectant mothers—she was very heavy by now—were supposed to remain quiet and, so far as was possible, immobile. But she was her father's daughter; she had always been lively; she loathed inactivity, and gave it the back of her hand now. On Tuesday, November 24, she left the palace on a shooting party, stumbled in a field, and fell. Shaking off anxious hands, she said she was fine. On Saturday, as Randolph later wrote Clara, she took "a rather imprudent & rough drive in a pony carriage." That evening the annual St. Andrew's Ball was held in the palace. To the astonishment of everyone, including her husband, she appeared in a loose gown, holding a dance card. She was actually on the floor, pirouetting, when the pains started. Randolph wrote his mother-in-law: "We tried to stop them, but it was no use." It was, in fact, time to choose a birthplace. Her grandniece, Ann Leslie, afterward described Jennie's search for one. Attended by servants and by Randolph's aunt Clementina, Lady Camden, she stumbled away from the party—which seems to have proceeded gaily without her—and lurched "past the endless suite of drawing-rooms, through the library, 'the longest room in England,' " toward her bedroom.[66]

She didn't make it. She fainted and was carried into a little room just off Blenheim's great hall. Once it had belonged to the first duke's chaplain; tonight it was the ladies' cloakroom. Sprawling, she lay on velvet capes and feather boas, which were deftly drawn from beneath her when the ball ended and the merry guests departed. It was a long night, with servants hurrying in and out with poultices and towels. The pains, Randolph told Clara, "went on all Sunday." He had telegraphed the London obstetrician Jennie had consulted, but, Sunday train schedules being what they were, the doctor couldn't arrive until Monday. Thus, the historic role of delivering England's greatest prime minister fell to Frederic Taylor, a Woodstock physician. "The country Dr is… a clever man," Randolph reported, "& the baby was safely born at 1.30 this morning after about 8 [sic] hrs labour. She suffered a good deal poor darling, but was vy plucky & had no chloroform. The boy is wonderfully pretty so everybody says dark eyes and hair & vy healthy considering its prematureness."[67]

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Premature? *The Times* bought it. At the head of its birth notices it reported: "On the 30th Nov., at Blenheim Palace, the Lady Randolph Churchill, prematurely, of a son." But no one believed it, not the patrician friends of the family, chuckling over the announcement, nor even the yeomen of Woodstock who, the *Oxford Times* reported, rang "a merry peal on the church bells… in honour of the event." Winston was full-term. It was generally believed that sometime the previous February, during the maddening negotiations over the marriage settlement, Jennie had eluded her mother, divested herself of the incredible layers of clothing then worn by young ladies, and received Randolph's seed. Indeed, it was thought the duke and duchess had known Jennie was pregnant at the time of the wedding; that was why they had boycotted it. Sly allusions to the circumstances of his birth followed Winston all his life. He enjoyed them. He would reply: "Although present on the occasion, I have no clear recollection of the events leading up to it."[68] Of course, it is possible that his parents have been slandered. Periods of gestation do vary. He may have been premature. It would have been just like him. He never could wait his turn.

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ONE

HEADWATERS

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1874–1895

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them much kindness, dined sometimes with them."[2]

In London, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, was the key to social success. Since the Queen had withdrawn from fashionable gatherings after her husband's death, His Royal Highness and Alexandra, Princess of Wales, had assumed the social duties of royalty. Great prestige therefore accompanied acceptance into HRH's entourage. The "Marlborough House Set," to which the Randolph Churchills belonged, was simply a clique of HRH's friends and their wives or, in several instances, HRH's mistresses and their husbands. In their dissipation of leisure they seem to have been both vigorous and inane. They studied the finer points of the Venetian quadrille, the Van Dyke quadrille, and —Jennie's favorite—the cancan. At fancy balls, prolonged discussions examined the merits of holding one's partner's hand high, in the polonaise fashion. In Mayfair the Churchills gave grand dinners, hired expensive orchestras, spent fifteen pounds on masked-ball costumes, journeyed to Hurlingham to watch the pigeon shooting, and attended the Derby and races at Goodwood and Ascot. Later Jennie would remember how dinners, balls, and parties succeeded one another without intermission, and "how we all laughed at M. de Soveral, because he looked like a blue monkey and was always called the blue monkey," and laughed again when "the Grand Duke poured the chocolate sauce over his head," and applauded HRH's spectacular attire: "The doublet and cloak were of light maroon satin embroidered in gold, the large black felt hat… had a white feather, and the dress was completed with loose buff boots, steel spurs, and a long sword. On the left shoulder was a diamond star, and the Prince wore the Order of the Garter hanging from a blue riband round his neck. Fair cavalier curls flowing down his shoulder somewhat distinguished H.R.H. [and] were the finishing touch to a very splendid and perfect costume." In those giddy years, Jennie later recalled, they were confronted by only one serious misfortune: "it was no less than the sudden illness of the greatest hairdresser of his day."[3]

But a genuine crisis loomed in 1876. What HRH gave, HRH could take away. It was in his power to consign any member of his set to social oblivion. It happened to the Churchills. In his biography of his father, Winston wrote: "Engaging in his brother's quarrels with fierce and reckless partisanship, Lord Randolph incurred the displeasure of a great personage… London became odious to him."[4] Or vice versa. The fact is that Randolph had acted badly, as a consequence of his brother George's having acted badly and the Prince of Wales, impetuously. All of them had broken the thin membrane of contrived deceit which permitted adultery and civility to coexist. Since the details became public in subsequent divorce proceedings, it is possible to reconstruct the chain of events which led to the Churchills' exile and meant that Winston's first childhood memories would be of Dublin.

On October 11, 1875, when Lord Heneage, Earl of Aylesford, left England with the Prince of Wales to hunt in India, his wife, Edith, Countess of Aylesford, moved to Packingham, the family seat, with their two daughters. George Churchill was living in a nearby inn. As heir to the dukedom, George bore the title Marquess of Blandford and lived more or less independently. Each evening he entered an unused wing of the hall, using a key which, in the words of the divorce court, he "had obtained… with the knowledge and sanction of Lady Aylesford, with whom he passed many nights." There

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was nothing indiscreet here. As a marquess, George was a suitable lover for a lonely countess. Unfortunately, the two of them couldn't leave it at that. In February they decided to leave the children with Edith's mother-in-law and elope. Edith imprudently wrote her husband, telling him this, and he hurried home from India. Meanwhile, the Duke of Marlborough sent one of his sons-in-law to persuade his son to abandon the impossible affair. The emissary reported: "I think that any steps you may take to influence Blandford to give up Lady Aylesford would be for the present at any rate entirely thrown away."[5]

Edith's brother then challenged George to a duel, and that brought Randolph, as George's brother, into the drama. Randolph told all interested parties that his brother could be called out by Lord Aylesford and no one else. Then he hired private detectives to watch both George and his challenger, "to prevent," he said, "a breach of the peace." Had he stopped there, his social position would have remained intact. But Randolph discovered that George's predecessors in Edith's bed included none other than the Prince of Wales. The breakdown in decorum was complete; Edith had saved HRH's love letters, which she turned over to Randolph. Incredibly, Randolph then called upon Alexandra, Princess of Wales, asking her to use her influence with the prince and see to it that Lord Aylesford canceled plans to divorce his erring wife. Whether he showed her the love letters is unknown, but he did tell friends about them, boasting that "I have the Crown of England in my pocket." Victoria heard of this; indignant, she wrote her son: "What a dreadful disgraceful business!" But her anger was a moonshadow on that of the prince. Enraged, HRH arrived home and wrote the Earl of Beaconsfield—Disraeli—that "Ld B. and Ld R.C." were spreading lies about him and that "it is a pity that there is no desert island to which these young gentlemen (?) could be banished." He then settled for the next best thing. Lord Blandford and Lord Randolph Churchill, he announced, were in Coventry. Not only would he refuse to see them; he would not enter the home of anyone who had entertained them. Socially they had ceased to exist. Jennie was grief-stricken. She wrote her husband: "*C'est trop fort*—my own darling dear Randolph I shd give anything to have you here tonight I feel so wretchedly." As for Randolph, Winston wrote, "The fashionable world no longer smiled. Powerful enemies were anxious to humiliate him. His own sensitiveness and pride magnified every coldness into an affront…. A nature originally genial and gay contracted a stern and bitter quality, a harsh contempt for what is called 'Society,' and an abiding antagonism to rank and authority."[6]

Even Randolph realized that he had gone too far, however. He turned the letters over to a royal emissary, Lord Hartington, later Duke of Devonshire. Hartington—who himself had been sleeping with another duke's duchess for thirty years—burned them in Randolph's presence. But HRH was unappeased. To untangle the mess, he sent another letter to Disraeli, the wisest man in the kingdom, begging his advice. Dizzy told Duchess Fanny, "My dear Lady, there's but one way: make your husband take the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland and take Lord Randolph with him. It will put an end to it all." Randolph, he said, could leave Parliament to serve as his father's unpaid secretary. At first the duke said no. He was loath to move from Blenheim to Dublin, which he regarded as a primitive outpost of Empire, and an expensive one at that, but he had never been able to deny Disraeli anything. As Winston once said, "He always did whatever Lord

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women do not project maternal images, and two notes she wrote Randolph when he was absent from Dublin reinforce the impression that she had grown no closer to her son. In the first she reported: “Winston is flourishing tho’ rather X the last 2 days more teeth I think. Everest has been bothering me about some clothes for him saying that it was quite a disgrace how few things he has & how shabby at that.” In the second she wrote: “Winston has just been with me—such a darling he is—‘I can’t have my Mama go—& if she does I will run after the train & jump in’ he said to me. I have told Everest to take him out for a drive tomorrow if it is fine—as it is better the stables shd have a little work.”[9]

The shabby clothes are insignificant, except in revealing what came first for Jennie; she wore a diamond in her hair but didn’t see to it that her son was dressed properly. But childish fears of being abandoned are easily aroused. Staying away on horseback until the entire household is fearful of an accident, and telling a little boy that you are about to leave on a train—information he does not need—are bound to unsettle him and leave scars afterward. It is in this context that his relationship with his nanny assumed such importance. Her role in his childhood cannot be overemphasized. She was the dearest figure in his life until he was twenty; her picture hung in his bedroom until he died. He wrote: “Mrs. Everest it was who looked after me and tended all my wants. It was to her I poured out my many troubles.” After reading Gibbon’s memoirs he wrote: “When I read his reference to his old nurse: ‘If there be any, as I trust there are some, who rejoice that I live, to that dear and excellent woman their gratitude is due,’ I thought of Mrs. Everest; and it shall be her epitaph.” An even more revealing tribute appeared in his second book, the novel *Savrola*. He wrote of the hero’s nanny:

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Jennie in Ireland, about 1877

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She had nursed him from his birth up with a devotion and care which knew no break. It is a strange thing, the love of these women. Perhaps it is the only disinterested affection in the world. The mother loves her child; that is maternal nature. The youth loves his sweetheart; that, too, may be explained. The dog loves his master, he feeds him; a man loves his friend, he has stood by him perhaps at doubtful moments. In all these are reasons; but the love of a foster-mother for her charge appears absolutely irrational.[10]

Why irrational? Childless women have maternal feelings, too; surely it is understandable that they should lavish affection on other women's children entrusted to them. Anthony Storr comments upon this passage: "Churchill is showing surprise at being loved, as if he had never felt he was entitled to it." This is part of the depressive syndrome. Most infants are loved for themselves; they accept that love as they accept food and warmth. But in Winston's case, as his son later observed, "The neglect and lack of interest in him shown by his parents were remarkable, even judged by the standards of late Victorian and Edwardian days." That anyone should love him became a source of wonder. The uncritical devotion of "Woom" (derived from an early attempt to say "woman") was inadequate. He could hardly have failed to sense that the woman was a servant. Affection from others had to be earned; eventually he would win it by doing great things. At the same time—and this would cripple his schooling—the deprivation of parental attachment bred resentment of authority. One might expect that his mother and father, the guilty parties, would be the targets of his hostility. Not so. The deprived child cherishes the little attention his parents do give him; he cannot risk losing it. Moreover, he blames himself for his plight. Needing outlets for his own welling adoration, he enshrines his parents instead, creating images of them as he wishes they were, and the less he sees of them, the easier that transformation becomes. By this devious process Lord Randolph became Winston's hero, and his mother, as he wrote, "always seemed to me a fairy princess: a radiant being possessed of limitless riches and power." His resentment had to be directed elsewhere. Therefore he became, in his own words, "a troublesome boy." His mother called him "a most difficult child to manage." Toward the end of their years in Ireland Jennie engaged a governess for him. He couldn't stand her. He kicked, he screamed, he hid. There is a story that one day a parlormaid was summoned to the Little Lodge room where he was having his lessons. The maid asked the governess why she had rung. Winston said: "*I* rang. Take Miss Hutchinson away. She is very cross."[11]

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Mrs. Everest

That was precocious. He was just approaching the age of assertiveness, with consequences which would not be realized until he was ready for boarding school. Most of his Irish memories were passive. There was the mist and the rain and the red-coated British soldiers and the breath-taking emerald greenery. There was the time in Phoenix Park when he ran away into the woods, or what he thought were woods; actually, he had just crept under some shrubbery. Once Woom organized an expedition to a pantomime show. When they arrived at the Theatre Royal it had burned down; the mournful manager said all he had left was the key to the front door. Already insatiably curious, Winston demanded to see the key and was awarded a black look. Another day the duke unveiled a statue of Lord Gough, and his grandson would remember "a great black crowd, scarlet soldiers on horseback, strings pulling away a brown shiny sheet, the old Duke, the formidable grandpapa, talking loudly to the crowd. I even recall a phrase he used: 'And with a withering volley he shattered the enemy's line.' "* Woom dressed him in a sailor suit and took him to a photographer. Freckled, redheaded, and pug-nosed, the likeness gives the impression of violent motion suddenly arrested, and in fact he was already hyperactive; from the time he had learned to talk his lips had been moving almost incessantly. Woom, the nanny-cum-chauvinist, kept him quiet with chilly tales about the "wicked Fenians." They were not wholly fanciful. The ancestors of the Irish Republican Army were active, and they were a murderous gang; two years after the duke's successor arrived in Dublin, his under secretary and a companion were hacked to death with long

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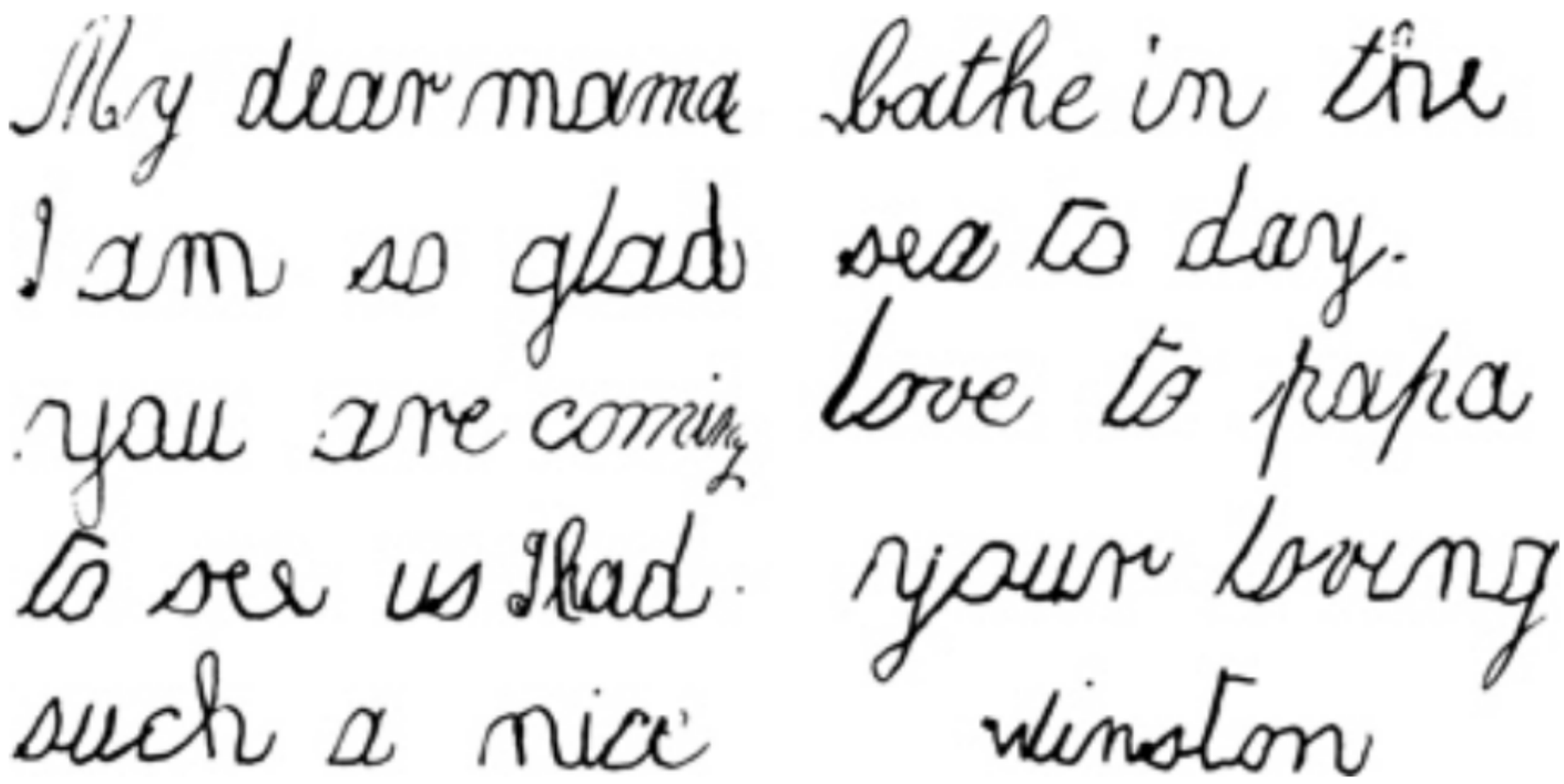
learned that, when in doubt about presents, a gift of tiny dragoons or lancers would be prized by him. He now had a brother, or half-brother, Jack. Six years separated them, however, and there appears to have been no attempt to find playmates for Winston. Woom took him to pantomimes, Drury Lane, Madame Tussaud's, and for walks in the park. But mostly he was alone. He loved it. The time flew—"It is the brightest hours," he wrote of these years, "that flash away the fastest."[14]

In *Cradles of Eminence*, their study of childhood patterns found in the lives of men who later distinguished themselves, Victor Goertzel and Mildred George Goertzel found that Winston's family provided "multiple examples of the qualities in parents and other relatives which seem to be related to the production of an eminent man. There was respect for learning, an experimental attitude, failure-proneness, a plentitude of opinionated relatives, and turbulence in the family life as a result of the erratic behavior of his irrepressible uncle and father. During the time that Winston was thought dull, he was, like other boys, evidencing qualities which presaged ability." But that was hindsight. It was no consolation to Woom. She worried about her charge. When not lost in thought, he was in constant motion, jumping up and down, leaping from chair to chair, rushing about, and falling and hurting himself. He seemed to have no sense of personal safety. His love of martial poetry was obsessive. He had a speech defect, and one miserable cold after another. But his interest in politics was, for a boy his age, decidedly precocious. When Disraeli sickened in March 1881 and died six weeks later, Winston could talk of nothing else. He later recalled: "I followed his illness from day to day because everyone said what a loss he would be to his country."[15] In one way, his anxiety for Disraeli was a boon to Woom. It gave him an incentive to read. She had given Winston a book, *Reading without Tears*. Soon he was forming letters. His first letter, undated, was to his mother:


My dear mama bathe in the
I am so glad sea to day.
you are coming love to papa
to see us I had your loving
such a nice winston

His second, also to her, was written on January 4, 1882, at Blenheim, where he was visiting his grandmother:

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My dear Mamma
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

Still at Blenheim—Jennie was in a frenzy of preparation for the Season—he learned on March 20 that his father was afflicted with a serious infection. He wrote another note: “My dear Papa, I hope you are getting better. I am enjoying myself very much. I find a lot of primroses every day. I bought a basket to put them in. I saw three little Indian children on Saturday, who came to see the house. Best love to you and dear Mamma. I am, Yr loving son Winston.” Very likely Woom helped guide his hand in these first attempts; his subsequent childhood correspondence, scrawled while he was away from her, is peppered with misspellings. But writing already came easily to him; his fluency would grow year by year, undiscouraged by the infrequency of replies from his parents. Arithmetic was another matter. His struggles with it seemed hopeless, and led to his only real battle with his nurse. He remembered afterward: “Letters after all had only got to be known, and when they stood together in a certain way one recognized their formation and that it meant a certain sound. But the figures were tied into all sorts of tangles and did things to one another which it was extremely difficult to forecast with complete accuracy. You had to say what they did each time they were tied up together. It was not any use being ‘nearly right.’ In some cases these figures got into debt with one another: you had to borrow one or carry one, and afterwards you had to pay back the one you borrowed.” He tried, he tried again, and again; he gave up, threw down his pad and paper and stamped on them. Patiently Woom explained. Impatiently he shook his head. He fled; she pursued him. He threatened to attack her with his toy soldiers. She wasn’t intimidated by that, but she did

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love & kisses
I
Remain
your
loveing
Son
W.L.S. Churchill

Mostly he wrote of trivia. “We went to hampton cort palace.” “We went to see the picture gallry.” “Give my love to my ants.” He had caught another cold, but wrote, “My cough is nearly well now.” Still another cold followed six months later; it hung on and on before he could report: “I am all wright and well. I have been allowed to go back into my own room.” It is doubtful that his mother had known he had a room. Certainly she didn’t know what it looked like. She never came. And he mourned her absence. That is the one thread that runs through his pathetic little correspondence: he desperately wanted visitors. “It was so kind of you to let Everest come,” he wrote in the summer of 1883, but Woom, and then Woom and Jack, seem to have been the only ones who came. Ascot was a short hansom ride from Mayfair—trains from Paddington were even quicker—but neither Jennie nor Randolph found the trip convenient. So his pathetic pleas were unanswered. He begged his mother to “come and see me soon,” to “Come & see me soon dear Mamma.” He wrote, “I am wondering when you are coming to see me?” and, “You must send somebody to see me.” The least she could have done was reply. She seldom did. On June 8, 1884, when he was nine, his accumulating resentment flared briefly: “It is very unkind of you not to write to me before this, I have only had one letter from you this term.” The back of one of his notes tells us something about her priorities. On it are scribbled lists of guests for two dinner parties. She had time to entertain “Sir R. Peel,” “Consuelo,” “Duke of Portland,” “Ld Marcus,” and sixteen others, but she couldn’t spare a few minutes to slake her small son’s thirst for a line or two of love. She planned feasts for her friends. Winston asked for bread, and she gave him a stone.[19]

Randolph, surprisingly, did send him a gift that year. It was a copy of *Treasure Island*. Winston devoured it and promised to be worthy of it: “I will try to be a good boy.” Most boys at St. George’s tried to be good, though, and without incentives from home. The penalties for failure were dire. Since the Churchills were not the only influential family to be gulled into sending their son there, we know a good deal about the school. It was an upper-class version of Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*. The regimen was fierce: eight hours a day of lessons, followed by football and cricket. There was fagging, and there were floggings almost every day, the chief whipper being the Reverend H. W. Sneyd-Kynnersley, a sadistic headmaster who would lay as many as twenty strokes of birch on a boy’s bare rump. Given Winston’s extremely sensitive skin, this must have been excruciating. Yet he became, and remained, the school’s chief rebel. He excelled in history, but refused to learn Latin verses he did not understand; in his words, “Where my reason, imagination or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn.” Pitted against authority for the first time in his life, he defied it, refused to curry favor, and was, as a consequence, beaten until he shrieked. He later wrote: “My teachers saw me at once backward and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the

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Form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal, but I was stubborn."[20]

His rebelliousness did not arise from the dignified resolution of a mature man standing on principle. Principles were indeed at stake, but he couldn't have known that. He was less than ten years old. His behavior was intuitive. To others he simply seemed a disobedient, mischievous little boy. Maurice Baring, who entered St. George's shortly after Winston left it, wrote: "Dreadful legends were told about Winston Churchill, who had been taken away from the school. His naughtiness appeared to have surpassed anything. He 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. His sojourn at this school had been one long feud with authority." His masters and even his schoolmates, with the conformity of youth, were appalled. Baring said: "The boys did not seem to sympathise with him. Their point of view was conventional and priggish."[21]

One afternoon Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, a political ally of Randolph's and a founder of the Tory Primrose League, called at Connaught Place and asked Jack if he was good. Jack said, "Yes, but brother is teaching me to be naughty." Actually, Jack would never be naughty. Though he was born of the same mother and shared the same family life, his development was the opposite of Winston's. He resisted nothing, accepted what he was given, turned inward, and grew up to be an inoffensive man from whom little was expected or given. Boys like Jack create no difficulties for their parents. He was the kind of son Jennie wanted, and the contrast with his sibling pained her. As early as December 26, 1882, she wrote Randolph at Monte Carlo—the familial Christmas rites, so beloved by other Victorians, seem never to have been celebrated at Connaught Place—"As to Winston's improvement 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." Sneyd-Kynnersley, she said, had assured her that the masters intended "to be more strict with him." She meant to try her own hand anyhow; "it appears that he is afraid of me." That was an odd admission from a mother, but perhaps it was true; a fearsome mother was at any rate preferable to maternal indifference. But she failed. Nothing intimidated him, certainly not St. George's. One riffles through his report cards there with mounting rage and amazement. It seems to have occurred to no one that a fresh approach might improve the behavior of this very difficult child. In his first accounting to Jennie the headmaster noted that Winston "has been *very* naughty." Then: "He is still troublesome." Next: "He is, I hope, *beginning* to realize that school means work and discipline." And then: "He is rather greedy at meals"—a peculiar description of a youthful appetite. After that, according to Sneyd-Kynnersley's comments, it was all downhill. His conduct was "very bad"; he was "a constant trouble to everybody and is always in some scrape or other"; he could not "be trusted to behave himself anywhere"; he had "no ambition"; he gave "a great deal of trouble." There is a sense of impending crisis in all this, and it crystallized when Winston, flayed beyond endurance, fled home to Mrs. Everest. Woom undressed him and recoiled when she saw his back and bottom crisscrossed with welts. She summoned Jennie, and the sight of his wounds told her what he, in the mute, tortuous language of a child, had been trying to tell her for two

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years. She immediately removed him from St. George's and entered him in a small school run by two maiden sisters in Brunswick Road, Brighton. It is unclear what, if anything, passed between her and the headmaster. Very likely Randolph knew nothing of the incident; his own letters show that he did not even know how old Winston was. But it is satisfying to report that two years later Mr. Sneyd-Kynnersley, aged thirty-eight, dropped dead of a heart attack.[22]

Brighton, with its sea air, chalybeate springs, colorful architecture, and general atmosphere of freedom, was a distinct improvement on St. George's, but Winston continued to play the imp. Any form of discipline still incensed him. The word *permissiveness* cannot be found in any dictionary of the time; as a concept it did not exist. Even if it had, Kate and Charlotte Thomson would have condemned it. They expected docility from their wards, and the record shows that they did not get it from their new boy; in his first term, when he passed his tenth birthday, his conduct was ranked twenty-sixth in a class of thirty-two. By the next term he was at the bottom, and there he remained. Charlotte Thomson wrote Jennie in her first report that "frequent absence from the schoolroom made competition with other boys very difficult." His dancing teacher, Vera Moore, later depicted him as "a small, red-haired pupil, the naughtiest boy in the class; I used to think he was the naughtiest small boy in the world." Even the indulgent Duchess Fanny, in whose Grosvenor Square home he spent holidays from time to time, wrote to Randolph: "Winston is going back to school today. Entre nous I do not feel very sorry for he certainly is a handful."[23]

Yet the Thomson sisters treated him with kindness and understanding, and he began to respond. At the end of his second term they noted "very satisfactory progress," and, after the third, "very marked progress." He was first in his classics class and near the top in English, French, and Scripture knowledge. He began to enjoy school: "We are learning Paradise Lost for Elocution, it is very nice." He was "getting on capitally in Euclid. I and another boy are top of the school in it we have got up to the XXX Proposition." In French they were rehearsing "Molière's '*Médecin Malgré lui*.' I take the part of 'Martine.' " In Greek, he wrote, "I have at last begun the verbs in 'μι' of which the first is 'ιστημι.' " He proudly wrote his mother: "I have got two prizes one for English Subjects & one for Scripture." He even wrote Jack, aged six: "When I come home I must try and teach you the rudiments of Latin." In later life he recalled: "At this school 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 strong contrast to my earlier schoolday memories."[24]

Collecting stamps, autographs, and goldfish, he began to share the interests of the other boys. He even tried sports—"We had a game of Cricket this afternoon, I hit a twoer, as the expression goes, my first runs this year"—though that didn't last long. He was now reading every newspaper he could find, poring over accounts of the Belgian conquest of the Congo, the Haymarket riot in Chicago, the death of Chinese Gordon, the erecting of

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to the Tower of London, where he delivered, with great relish, a lecture on medieval tortures. Pencil sketches of cannon and soldiers adorned the margins of his letters. His cousin Clare Frewen recalled in her memoirs that when the Churchills rented a summer house in Banstead, Winston erected a log fort with the help of the gardener's children, dug a moat around it, and, with Jack's help, built a drawbridge that could be raised and lowered. Then, she said, the children were divided into two rival groups and "the fort was stormed. I was hurriedly removed from the scene of the action as mud and stones began to fly with effect. But the incident impressed me and Winston became a very important person in my estimation." Shane Leslie, Leonie's son, remembered that "we thought he was wonderful, because he was always leading us into danger." There were the fort struggles, fights with the village children, and raids on the nests of predatory birds. In Connaught Place he had converted the entire nursery into a battlefield. According to Clare Frewen, "His playroom contained from one end to the other a plank table on trestles, upon which were thousands of lead soldiers arrayed for battle. He organized wars. The lead battalions were maneuvered into action, peas and pebbles committed great casualties, forts were stormed, cavalry charged, bridges were destroyed…. Altogether it was a most impressive show, and played with an interest that was no ordinary child game." It impressed Lord Randolph. One day he put his head in the door and studied the intricate formations. He asked his son, then in his early teens, if he would like to enter the army. In Winston's words: "I thought it would be splendid to command an Army, so I said 'Yes' at once: and immediately I was taken at my word. 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."[27]

On such slender evidence was so weighty a verdict reached. Winston was clearly ready for intellectual stimulation, and one might expect that he would have found it in the home of a lord who was also a member of Parliament and a charismatic MP at that. Instead, the boy's mind was fired by, of all people, Mrs. Everest's brother-in-law, John Balaam, a senior warden at Parkhurst Prison. British workmen in the nineteenth century, undiverted by mass media, often read deeply and thoughtfully. The family of Woom's sister Mary lived in the coastal town of Ventnor, on the Isle of Wight, and she took him there on holiday. It was the first time Winston had seen a humble English home. The experience was worthwhile for that alone, but the old warden, after holding the boy spellbound with tales of prison mutinies, produced a worn copy of Macaulay's *History of England*. He read passages aloud; Winston listened, rapt, to the cadences of the majestic prose. Later in India he remembered those evenings in the cottage on the sea. He acquired his own Macaulay and, in his words, "voyaged with full sail in a strong wind."[28]

Woom never let him down, but her health did. During the Christmas holidays at the end of 1887, while Jennie and Randolph were abroad, she contracted diphtheria, then a fearsome disease and often fatal. Dr. Robson Roose found two bad patches of false membrane in her throat and moved the two boys from Connaught Place to his own home. "It is very hard to bear—we feel so destitute," Winston wrote. "I feel very dull—worse than school." Duchess Fanny whisked them off to Blenheim, and Leonie telegraphed the news to their parents. Fanny, very much in charge, wrote to Randolph: "I fear you will

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have been bothered about this misfortune of Everest having diphtheria but she appears to be recovering & the 2 children are here safe & well." Blandford (George) offered to take them into his London house. Fanny wrote: "They leave here & go to Grovr Sq tomorrow so you might write (or Jennie might in your name) a line to B for having had them here. It has done them good & I keep Winston in good order as I know you like it. He is a clever Boy & not really naughty but he wants a firm hand. Jack requires *no* keeping in order. They will stay at 46 till you return."[29]

By January 12 Winston could write his mother: "Everest is much better—thanks to Dr Roose. My holidays have chopped about a good deal but… I do not wish to complain. It might have been so much worse if Woomany had died."[30] There seems to have been a tacit acceptance by the relatives of both parents that Randolph and Jennie were not really responsible for their children. As a consequence, Winston's awareness of his grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins deepened; they move in and out of his early life like characters in a Pirandello play. Had his immediate family been more self-sufficient, he might have been less conscious of his Marlborough heritage on one side and his American roots on the other. Jennie, by now, was indistinguishable from the titled Englishwomen of her social circle. She had no interest in Buffalo Bill. But her sisters were vibrant with the U.S. chauvinism of the time. Jennie, a purebred American, had become indifferent to the fact. Her son was half American, was constantly reminded of it by his maternal aunts, and never forgot it.

Winston's own illnesses, with one important exception, were normal for children of the time. He caught mumps ("My mumps are getting smaller every day the very thought of going home is enough to draw them away") and, later, measles, which—to his mother's intense annoyance—he passed along to her current lover, the dashing Austrian sportsman Count Charles Kinsky. The important exception was double pneumonia. All his life he would be plagued by recurrences of bronchial infections; his consequent indispositions would play a role in World War II. He was first stricken in his twelfth year, on Saturday, March 13, 1886. The danger was clear from the outset; Jennie and Randolph arrived separately in Brighton, and Dr. Roose, who kept a house there, remained by the boy's side, sending them bulletins after they had departed. These survive. At 10:15 P.M. Sunday he scrawled: "Temp. 104.3 right lung generally involved…. This report may appear grave yet it merely indicates the approach of the crisis which, please God, will result in an improved condition should the left lung remain free. I am in the next room and shall watch the patient during the night—for I am anxious." Infection of the left lung swiftly followed. At 6:00 A.M. Monday he wrote: "The high temp indicating exhaustion I used stimulants, by the mouth and rectum…. I shall give up my London work and stay by the boy today." Then, at 1:00 P.M.: "We are still fighting the battle for your boy…. As long as I can fight the temp and keep it under 105 I shall not feel anxious." At 11:00 P.M.: "Your boy, in my opinion, on his perilous path is holding his own well, right well!" Tuesday: "We have had a very anxious night but have managed to hold our own…. On the other hand we have to realise that we may have another 24 hours of this critical condition, to be combatted with all our vigilant energy." By Wednesday the worst was over. At 7:00 A.M. Roose scribbled: "I have a very good report to make. *Winston has had 6 hours quiet sleep*. Delirium has now ceased." Later in the day he wrote from the Brighton train station: "Forgive my

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as film stars do now; their photographs were displayed in shop windows and sold as pinups. Jennie's was among the most popular. She was also recognized as a gifted amateur pianist, always in demand for charity concerts. In addition there were her social schedules. It was a grand thing to leave each autumn on her annual tour of Scotland's country houses, grand to receive the Order of the Crown of India from the Queen's own hands, grand to be courted by Europe's elegant gallants. There were hazards, to be sure, but they merely added to the excitement. Ironically, the only public embarrassment to arise from Jennie's catholicity of friendships among the eminent had nothing to do with her role as a romantic adventuress. She cultivated both Oscar Wilde and Sir Edward Carson. Later this proved awkward when Wilde and Carson faced each other in the Old Bailey with the ugly charge of sodomy between them.

In short, Jennie had her priorities to consider, and while the frail child in Brighton was not at the bottom of the list, he scarcely led it. She wrote him, but except when he lay at death's door and propriety gave her no choice, she avoided the school. Pleas continued to pepper his letters: "Will you come and see me?" "When are you coming to see me?" "It was a great pity you could not come down Sunday," "*I want you to come down on some fine day and see me*," he would give her billions of kisses if she came. She never found time. He had the chief role in a class entertainment, and he wanted her in the audience —"Whatever you do come Monday please. I shall be miserable if you don't." He was miserable. Another entertainment was planned—"I shall expect to see you and shall be very disappointed indeed if I do not see you, so do come." He was very disappointed. They were going to perform *The Mikado*—"It would give me tremendous pleasure, do come please." He forwent tremendous pleasure. He ached for the sight of her—"Please do do do do do come down to see me…. Please do come I have been disappointed so many times." He was disappointed once more. Learning that a dinner party at Connaught Place conflicted with a school play, he begged her to cancel the dinner—"Now you know I was always your darling and you can't find it in your heart to give me a denial." Nevertheless, she found it in her heart to do just that.[35]

At times the breakdown in communications was total. He made elaborate plans for Christmas in 1887, only to discover at the last minute that both his parents were away on a seven-week tour of Russia. Jennie's sister Clarita—now called "Clara," like her mother—invited him to her home but then fell ill, so he spent the holiday with his brother, Woom, Leonie, and his uncle Jack Leslie. Once he wanted to write his mother but didn't have her address, didn't even know which country she was visiting. He was too young to travel in London alone, yet he couldn't even be sure there would be anyone to greet his train when he arrived: "We have 19 days holiday at Easter. I hope you will send some one to meet me at the station." Astonishingly, Randolph met an appointment in Brighton a short walk from the school but didn't bother to cross the street and call on his son. Winston found out about it. "My dear Papa," he wrote, "You never came to see me on Sunday when you were in Brighton." It happened again: "I cannot think why you did not come to see me, while you were in Brighton, I was very disappointed but I suppose you were too busy to come."[36] There was a note of resignation here. He was disappointed, but he was not surprised. His father was too busy. His father would always be too busy. Indeed, unlike his wife, he rarely wrote Winston. Jennie was a lax mother, but later, when her situation

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altered, she became a loving one. In Randolph's case that was impossible. Randolph actually disliked his son.

It is impossible to say exactly when a diagnostician told Lord Randolph Churchill that he was hopelessly afflicted with venereal infection and could not possess his wife without risking her health, too. Before meeting her he had passed through the first two stages of syphilis—the penile chancre and the body rash. After his wedding, according to Frank Harris, he told Louis Jennings that he had followed the physicians' medical advice for a while, "but I was young and heedless and did not stop drinking in moderation and soon got reckless. Damn it, one can't grieve forever. Yet I have had few symptoms since." He added, "The Oxford doctor and the London man said I was quite clear of all weakness and perfectly cured." Frank Harris asked Jennings if he thought Randolph's optimism unfounded. Jennings said, "I'm sure of it. He has fits of excessive irritability and depression which I don't like. In spite of what he told me, I don't think he took much care. He laughed at the secondary symptoms."[37]

Randolph's assumption that he had emerged from the sinister shadow of the disease was shattered in 1881, when, at the age of thirty-two, he suffered his first paralytic attack. His speech and gait were affected, though at first almost imperceptibly. The following year, however, he was mysteriously absent from London for seven months, and when he returned in October, gaunt and grim, he evaded all questions about where or why he had gone. The fact was that he had entered the third phase of syphilis; the deadly spirochetes had begun their invasion of his blood vessels and internal organs. Less than two months later, on December 12, the London newspapers announced that on the advice of his doctors he was sailing off again, to stay in Algeria and Monte Carlo until February. A remission brought him back, outwardly healthy, apparently his old self.

By now, however, Jennie, too, knew everything. Her source may have been Randolph; it could have been their family physician, Dr. Roose, who had made his own examination of her husband. Henry Pelling of St. John's College, Cambridge, observes: "The nature of Randolph's illness, once it had been diagnosed, was such that he could no longer claim his conjugal rights, and it is not surprising that Jennie began to seek the company of other men."[38] She may have begun to seek it earlier in their marriage. Indeed, one of her first admirers, Lieutenant Colonel John Strange Jocelyn, had found her receptive when the Churchills were still in Ireland. Jennie was Jocelyn's guest on his 8,900-acre Irish estate. She became pregnant in the summer of 1879, and when Winston's brother was born in Dublin the following February 4, he was christened John Strange Spencer Churchill.

That would not do; it was not done. Back in England, older and more experienced women counseled her in discretion. One disguise for affairs was to effect a lively interest in the arts and so encounter others similarly inclined. So she joined an artistic set called "the Souls." Reporting one of their parties at the Bachelor's Club, the London *World* told its readers: "This highest and most aristocratic cult comprises only the youngest, most

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beautiful and most exclusive of married women in London." Lady Warwick thought they were "more pagan than soulful." Sir William Harcourt said, "All I know about The Souls is that some of them have very beautiful bodies," and George Curzon wrote an ode to them called "The Belles"—a parody of "The Bells" by Poe—which ended: "How delicious and delirious are the curves / With which their figure swells / Voluptuously and voluminously swells / To what deed the thought impels." Marriage vows were certainly broken, but the fact was not advertised. After Ireland, Jennie never flaunted her lovers. Neither, however, was she furtive. She had superb legs, and she found a way to display them; *Town Topics* quoted a footman who had seen her dance the cancan at a ball: "She suddenly touched the mantelpiece with her foot, making a dreadful exposé." *Town Topics* also wrote that "Society has invented a new name for Lady R. Her fondness for the exciting sport of husband-hunting and fiancé-fishing has earned her the title 'Lady Jane Snatcher.' " Later she herself published an article slyly observing that some aristocratic wives could "live down scandals, whereas the less-favored go under, emphasizing the old saying, 'One may steal a horse while another may not look over the wall.' "[39]

She was a cunning thief, and at times piratical, but she learned to observe the rules. If a prospect was happy in marital harness, she did not tempt him to leave it. She was careful to point out that at the time she was meeting Paul Bourget he was "then unmarried." When another Frenchman married an American girl, she left his bed, though only temporarily; he implored her not to be puritanical, and perhaps because he was charming and a magnificent horseman, she returned. He was a diplomat, with a reputation to guard. That was important. She had an instinct for men who were dangerous. Sir Charles Dilke was attractive, engaging, and apparently on his way to high office. He seemed to have his pick of Souls. When Mrs. J. Comyns-Carr told Lady Lindsay that she was interested in Dilke, she was told: "There's a waiting list, you know." But Jennie wasn't on it. He sank to his knees and beseeched her to become his mistress. She refused, and described the preposterous scene to Lord Rosebery, who put it in his papers. Afterward, when Dilke was trapped in a public scandal woven of testimony about brothels, exotic sex, and some of Jennie's friends, her foresight was remembered. She always knew just when to stop. It was one of her many rare traits. Shane Leslie recalled: "She didn't seem to be like other women at all."[40]

Toward the end of her life, the novelist George Moore said that she had slept with two hundred men. That is absurd. She was far too fastidious for that, and only she would have known the figure anyhow. But though far from promiscuous, she had certainly led an active romantic life. Her lovers are known to include Kinsky, Henri Breteuil, Thomas Trafford, Baron Hirsch, Sir Edgar Vincent (later Viscount D'Abernon), Lord Dunraven, Herbert von Bismarck, Henri le Tonnelie, Norman Forbes Robertson, Hugh Warrender of the Grenadier Guards, a cavalry officer named Kinkaid Smith, the American Bourke Cockran, Bourget, William Waldorf Astor, Harry Cust, a soldier named Taylor, a man called Simon, an Italian named Casati, and Albert Edward of the house of Saxe-Coburg, eldest son of Queen Victoria, Prince of Wales and later King Edward VII.

Jennie was one of those favored ladies who, invited to dinner by His Royal Highness, found that she was the only guest. HRH usually made his royal conquests in a private dining room over a fashionable restaurant; one paneled wall swung down at the touch of a

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until his late forties, he resolved his relationship with her. It was otherwise with his father. Here the grave denied him any opportunity for reconciliation; his image of Randolph was arrested in time. The crucial years were 1884 to 1886, roughly from Winston's tenth to twelfth birthdays, when he was in Brighton and beginning to take a serious interest in current events. Randolph was in the news constantly. Paresis, which progresses very slowly, had only just begun to cripple him. Outwardly he was vigorous, witty, powerful; the most spectacular man of the day. Newspapers called him "Gladstone's great adversary," and described workmen smiling at his mustache and doffing their caps as his carriage passed by. Winston clipped these stories and cartoons of his father and pasted them in scrapbooks. He next memorized his speeches verbatim. To his father he wrote: "I have been out riding with a gentleman 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 said 'that Lord R. Churchill would be Prime Minister.'… Every body wants your Autograph but I can only say I will try, and I should like you to sign your name in full at the end of your letter. I only want a scribble as I know that you are very busy indeed."[43]

Long afterward he recalled that his father seemed to him "to own the key to everything or almost everything worth having." He could imagine nothing more exalted than to stand in the House of Commons, guiding the course of England and Empire. Taken to Marylebone swimming baths, he asked the attendant whether he was a Liberal or a Conservative. The unfortunate man replied that he didn't "bother myself about politics." Winston was outraged. "What?" he cried. "You pay rates and taxes and you don't bother yourself about politics?" He broke off his friendship with a playmate. The playmate's father asked his son why. The boy answered, "Winston says you're one of those damned Radicals and he's not coming over here again." Probably the man believed in nothing more rabid than Gladstonian liberalism, and possibly the bath attendant wasn't even allowed to vote, but a boy couldn't be expected to know that. He was his father's staunchest supporter. He yearned to battle for him. He was obsessed with his image. He had placed him on a high pedestal. He worshiped at the altar of a man he did not, in fact, even know.[44]

He tried to know him; tried, in his childish way, to draw Randolph into the family. "We had a Christmas tree and party here this year," he wrote, "which went off very well. My Stamp Book is gradually getting filled…. Jack had such a beautiful box of soldiers sent him from Lady de Clifford." Winston might have been a foreign correspondent sending word of developments from abroad, and indeed at times Randolph was a stranger to Connaught Place. Once he arrived home with a full beard—"a horrid beard so raged [ragged]," Jack wrote his brother at Brighton, and Jennie wrote that "his beard is a 'terror.' I think I shall have to bribe him to shave it off." Most of the time Winston could keep track of him in the newspapers. Apparently he did not find it peculiar that Randolph, who had been too occupied to visit him in Brighton, should have journeyed to speak to another school: "I went to see Grandmamma a fortnight ago, & she read me your speech on the Distribution of Prizes at the school of Art, it was just the sort of speech for school boys." Then, wistfully: "You had great luck in Salmon fishing. I wish I had been with you I should have liked to have seen you catch them."[45]

To a ten-year-old English boy in the 1880s, India was enthralling, and Winston was

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transported by news that his father was actually on his way there. "Will you write and tell me all about your voyage, was it rough at all?" he asked. "I wrote to you once when the ship stopped at Gibraltar. How nice for sailing all over the sea." Then, six weeks later: "I hear you have been out shooting at Calcutta and shot some animals. When are you coming home again. I hope it will not be long. I am at school now and am getting on pretty well. Will you write and tell me about India what it's like…. Will you go out on a tiger Hunt while you are there? Are the Indians very funny?… Try and get me a few stamps for my stamp album, Papa. Are there many *ants* in India if so, you will have a nice time, what with *ants mosquitos* [sic]…. I am longing to see you so much."[46]

At the end of this letter he again raised the question of autographs, asking, "Every body wants to get your signature will you send me a few to give away?" How anxious the other boys were is moot. We do know that later, at Harrow, subjects which interested schoolmates and those Winston thought should interest them were not always identical. It seems unlikely that many could have shared his passion for politics. Boys aren't like that now; they weren't then. But Winston was rapt in the world he had fashioned for himself, surrounded by scrapbooks, pastepots, scissors, and cuttings. His father thought he would have to go for a soldier, that he was too stupid for anything else. Yet politics already held him in its spell. He wrote his mother: "I am very glad Papa got in for South Paddington by so great a majority"—Randolph had polled 77 percent of the vote—"I think that was a victory. I hope the Conservatives will get in, do you think they will?" And three months later, on October 19, 1886, he wrote his father, "I hope you will [be] as successful in your speech at Bradford as you were at Dartford, and regularly 'cut the ground from under the feet of the Liberals.' " That winter he campaigned tirelessly among the other boys, bullying or cajoling them into making a Conservative commitment, and a handful yielded. The following May 24 he jubilantly informed Jennie that "about a dozen boys have joined the Primrose League since yesterday. I am among the number & intend to join the one down here, and also the one which you have in London. Would you send me a nice badge as well as a paper of Diploma, for I want to belong to yours most tremendously."[47]

It was an act of faith in his father's destiny, and it came too late. Not for the last time in his life, Winston had boarded a sinking ship. Randolph's political career had ended five months earlier.

Disraeli, whose memory the Primrose League was meant to perpetuate—it had been his favorite flower—had in his last days pointed Randolph out to a young colleague and said: "He can have anything he asks for, and will soon make them take anything he will give them." Gladstone had called him the greatest Conservative since Pitt. Lord Hartington had said that Randolph knew the House of Commons better than it knew itself; it always filled to hear him speak. Harris thought that "from his entrance into the House till 1886, it was Randolph's courage chiefly that commended him to the House of Commons. It may have been mainly aristocratic *morgue*, but Englishmen liked it none the less on that account." After a century which has seen countless changes in oratorical style, it is difficult to

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free lances concentrated their fire on Gladstone and his ministers, but they did not spare the Tories' shadow government. They dubbed Tory insiders "the Old Gang"; Salisbury's weaker colleagues were "the Goats." Nothing was sacred to the four, not even Disraeli's spirit. Dizzy's policy had been *Imperium* abroad and *Libertas* at home. Randolph challenged both. He attacked Gladstone's occupation of Egypt and embarrassed both Gladstone and Salisbury by squaring off against Charles Bradlaugh, a professed atheist who, when elected to Parliament by Northampton, refused to take the religious oath of allegiance. There was a fiery scene in the House on February 21, 1882, when Bradlaugh appeared, produced a book, identified it as "a Testament," and swore himself in. Randolph bounded up from his corner seat below the gangway and called the oath a farce. The book could have been anything, he said; "it might have been *Fruits of Philosophy*"—an appeal for birth control of which Bradlaugh was coauthor. After a series of complicated parliamentary maneuvers, Randolph persuaded the House to expel the member from Northampton. It was a brilliant coup, but it left a bad taste. Disraeli, wiser men knew, would never have permitted it. Then they remembered that Randolph, unlike his father, had never deferred to Disraeli—had, in fact, scarred him with the same rapier he was brandishing now.[50]

The week after his "chips" speech, Randolph stunned England by announcing that in the next election he would contest John Bright's Birmingham seat. This was carrying the battle into the very stronghold of liberalism, the home ground of the mighty Joe Chamberlain.[*] He had no chance of winning, but his audacity invigorated his party and brought it recruits in workmen's pubs, where spirit was admired. Winston, of course, was too young to appreciate this strategy. He wrote Jennie from Ascot: "Mrs Kynnersley went to Birmingham this week. And she heard they were betting two to one that Papa would get in for Birmingham." In fact, he polled 4,216 votes to Bright's 4,989. It was an impressive moral victory, and the next day an admirer stepped down in South Paddington, giving Randolph his seat. Randolph, by now, was the fighting heart of his party. As he moved from triumph to triumph, the House came to realize that eventually he would challenge Salisbury's role as Conservative leader. He was still in his thirties, his following in the country was growing, and he had a rallying cry: "Tory democracy." The party, he argued, needed new blood and wider popular appeal. *Democracy* was less than a charmed word among entrenched Tory diehards. The mere mention of it made Salisbury shudder, and he rejected Randolph's proposal to bring more rank-and-file members into the party's inner councils. The two split in 1884 in a struggle for control of the National Union of Conservative Associations. Winston, aged nine, wrote to Jennie, "Has Papa got in I hope he has. You must let me no if he does." Papa did get in; he and Salisbury then staged a public reconciliation, each giving a little. Salisbury was still the leader, but the challenger was inching closer. "Trust the people, and the people will trust you!" Randolph told an enthusiastic crowd in Birmingham that same year. It sounded selfless. It wasn't. Randolph had become a shrewd campaigner. The Liberals were winning elections, he concluded, because the workmen felt closer to them than to the aristocratic Conservatives. "But," he said, "my feeling is that this earl or that marquis is much more in sympathy with the working man than the greedy nonconformist butcher or baker or candlestick maker. I want you to seize my point because it explains what I have always meant when I speak of

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myself as a Tory-democrat. The best class and the lowest class in England come together naturally. They like and esteem each other. They are not greasy hypocrites talking of morality and frequenting the Sunday school while sanding the sugar. They are united in England in the bonds of a frank immorality."[51]

If this was devious, it wasn't a patch on his Irish policy, which had ripened slowly during the early 1880s and was held in abeyance, to be revealed at the right moment. As Randolph's gibes wore Gladstone down, Home Rule became the key issue in Parliament. In a close election between the two major parties, the Irish Nationalists would hold the balance of power. It says much for England's ignorance of Ireland that Randolph's three years in Dublin made him an expert on the country in the eyes of Parliament, even though his knowledge of the people was largely confined to glimpses from the saddle while foxhunting. Thus his exile there, which had been looked upon as punishment, turned out to be a political asset. Gladstone, whose whole career would eventually hinge on this one question, had spent only three weeks in Ireland. Yet he was on good terms with Parnell, the Nationalists' militant leader, and he regarded that as his trump card when, on June 8, 1885, his government fell over a minor budget bill. Salisbury formed a caretaker government, but both sides knew that was of small consequence. The main event was the imminent general election.

Gladstone had miscalculated. Unable to pry an acceptable Home Rule pledge from him, Parnell issued a "Vote Tory" manifesto. Salisbury, meanwhile, had appointed Randolph to his first office. Denying him a post was impractical; his strength had been evident for a year. He had been told in camera that he would become secretary of state for India—hence his trip there, to get ready—but a problem now arose, and it was revealing. Randolph was sulking. He refused to be sworn in until he had been assured that a rival, Sir Stafford Northcote, would be denied the office of leader of the House in the caretaker government. The Queen was shocked. She wired Salisbury: "With due consideration to Lord R., do not think he should be allowed to dictate entirely his own terms, especially as he has never held office before."[52] Salisbury sought a meeting. Randolph refused; he had taken his stand, and that was that. Yielding, the new prime minister sent the rival to the House of Lords as the Earl of Iddesleigh, and Randolph received his seals of office from the Queen. Then, to the astonishment of all London, the man who had denounced imperialism in Egypt launched the Third Burmese War and annexed the country. Aristocratic disdain for consequences was common, but this went beyond that. The first rumors about Randolph's unreliability and bad judgment spread through Parliament and beyond.

In effect, the election was a dead heat. The voters returned 335 Liberals, 249 Conservatives, and 86 Irish Nationalists. Salisbury and Parnell could lock the GOM in stalemate. But after the results were in, Gladstone's youngest son revealed that his father did in fact favor Home Rule. The Irish then swung behind him, and he was again prime minister. Randolph now played a deep game. He courted the support of Irishmen on both sides of the Home Rule issue. His fight against Bradlaugh had won him the admiration of Catholics; that was one reason he had fought it. Privately, he assured Parnell that he favored Irish self-government on the local level and would oppose the coercion bill, which permitted the arrest and detention of Irish suspects without trial. Publicly, however, he

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became the most eloquent of Unionists; that is, opponents of Home Rule. Speaking in Belfast's Ulster Hall, he told Irish Unionists—Protestants—that he would stick with them to the end. By now he had had a great deal of experience in demagoguery and had got into the way of it. He compared Gladstone to Macbeth before the murder of Duncan and predicted that if politicians "should be so utterly lost to every feeling and dictate of honour and courage as to hand over coldly… the lives and liberties of the Loyalists of Ireland to their hereditary and most bitter foes, make no doubt on this point: Ulster at the proper moment will resort to the supreme arbitrament of force; *Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right*."[53] This mischievous slogan was to be his chief contribution to history. It outlived him and his son. People are still dying for it in Northern Ireland.

Parliament rejected Gladstone's Home Rule bill in June 1886—a quarter of his Liberals defected—and the country went to the polls again. This time the result was a Conservative landslide. The Tories held a clear majority of 118 seats over the Liberals, Irish Nationalists, and Unionists combined. Salisbury was now prime minister with a clear mandate, but as Randolph's grandson wrote, "It had been Lord Randolph's victory. He had pioneered it, engineered it and executed it. His exceptional services to the Party had to be recognised. He was indispensable to it." Harris observed, "When the House met again Lord Randolph's power had grown: he had deposed Gladstone, had won a greater position in the House than Gladstone himself." Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, offered the post of party leader of the House by Salisbury, insisted on stepping aside for the Tories' most brilliant campaigner. He wrote: "I felt that Lord Randolph Churchill was superior in eloquence, ability and influence to myself; that the position of Leader in name, but not in fact, would be intolerable; and that it was better for the party and the country that the Leader in fact should also be Leader in name." Randolph was good in the job. He was always in his seat, always informed, always an able tactician. And he could be charming when he chose. Margot Asquith boldly invited both him and Gladstone to her Grosvenor Square home. Randolph, she recalled afterward, "had made himself famous by attacking and abusing the Grand Old Man with such virulence that everyone thought it impossible that they could ever meet in intimacy…. I was not awed by this but asked them to a luncheon-party; and they both accepted. I need hardly say that when they met they talked with fluency and interest, for it was as impossible for Mr Gladstone to be gauche or rude as it was for anyone to be ill at ease with Lord Randolph Churchill. The news of their lunching with us spread all over London; and the West End buzzed round me with questions: all the political ladies, including the Duchess of Manchester, were torn with curiosity to know whether Randolph was going to join the Liberal Party."[54]

And yet…

Everyone who had worked closely with Randolph knew that he had a dark underside. Certainly Salisbury was aware of it. He would have disputed Mrs. Asquith; he was always ill at ease with Churchill. He had found him rude, peevish, temperamental, and, much of the time, unapproachable. The four crosses he bore, he said, were "the Prime Ministership, the Foreign Office, the Queen, and Randolph Churchill—and the burden of them increases in that order." Randolph had been an exasperating colleague in the India Office the year before. Salisbury's friends were appalled, therefore, when he appointed him chancellor of the Exchequer, the second most powerful position in the government. Even Randolph's

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Jennie, and the three of them proceeded to the Strand Theatre. The play was Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, a theme of special interest to Jennie. She knew nothing of his letter. As they settled in the stalls, she mentioned the guest list for an official reception she was planning. He said enigmatically, "Oh, I shouldn't worry about that if I were you. It probably will never take place." Before she could ask him what he meant, the curtain rose, and when it fell on the first act, he excused himself, saying that he was returning to the club.[58]

Actually, he went to *The Times* and gave the editor copies of his correspondence with the prime minister, including a final, savage note from him to Salisbury. The editor read this last and said, "You can't send that." Lord Randolph said, "It has already gone." He then said he expected, in exchange for the scoop, editorial support from *The Times*. Nothing doing, the editor replied; indeed, the paper would attack him. That jarred Randolph, but not much; he was under the illusion that the party would rise up, depose Salisbury, and make him Salisbury's successor. He told a friend, "There is only one place, that is Prime Minister. I like to be boss. I like to hold the reins." In the morning he welcomed Harris to Connaught Place with the merry cry: "What do you think of it? More than two hundred and fifty Tory members come to attest their allegiance to me. I've won! The Old Gang will have to give in." But when Harris returned a few days later, Randolph said gloomily, "The rats desert the sinking ship."[59]

In fact, he had come closer to bringing Salisbury down than most commentators realized. It took the prime minister twelve days to find another Conservative willing to serve as chancellor. But with that, the crisis was over. Randolph was finished. In a moment of arrogance and folly he had gambled everything and lost. He was thirty-seven years old. He would never hold office again.[*] Jennie was bitter: "It was gall and wormwood," she said, "to hear Randolph abused in every quarter," often by men who owed "their political existence to him." Randolph himself wrote vainly, "What a fool Lord S. was to let me go so easily." For a time he affected gaiety. His appearances on the back benches became infrequent. He was seen more often at racecourses, where he entered horses from his own stable and bet heavily. He won often. "People smiled," wrote Harris, "as at the aberrations of a boy."[60]

Did you go to Harrow or Eton?" Winston wrote Randolph the following October. "I should like to know." It is extraordinary that he did not know already. Since 1722, Churchill boys—six generations of them—had been Etonians. But Dr. Roose urged a break in the tradition. Eton, hard by Windsor Castle, often cloaked and soaked in the fogs rolling off the Thames, was highly unsuitable for a boy with a weak chest. Randolph's brother had sent his son Charles ("Sunny") to Winchester. The cousins had been playmates; Sunny liked the school; it seemed the logical choice for Winston. On May 30, 1885, when he was ten, Winston wrote that he was "rather backward with Greek, but I suppose I must know it to get into Winchester so I will try and work it up," and as late as the summer of 1887 he was still bearing down on Greek because it was "my weak point &

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I cannot get into Winchester without it." But then Randolph and his brother quarreled. Their father had died. George was duke. Like his predecessors, he was improvident; to pay his debts he sold the family library, paintings, and jewels. Randolph denounced George with his customary venom and the two stopped speaking. Dr. Roose then recommended Harrow—"Harrow-on-the-Hill"—as best for Winston's health, and the boy was piloted in that direction. On October 8 Winston wrote his father: "I am very glad to hear that I am going to Harrow & not Winchester. I think I shall pass the Entrance Examination, which is not so hard as Winchester."[61]

It was characteristic of him in his teens that he always approached tests of his learning with breezy confidence and, in the breach, always performed wretchedly. In this instance Brighton may have been partly responsible for his failure. He had just won two more prizes there, in English and Scripture, but the level of instruction was perhaps not all it might have been: "A master here is going to give a lecture on Chemistry, is it not wonderful to think that water is made up of two gases namely hydrogdgen and nitrodgen, I like it, only it seems funny that two gases should make water." But to scapegoat the Thomson sisters would be unfair. The pattern continued until the end of his school days. He was not, as many have assumed, a victim of dyslexia. Nor could he have been as stupid as he seemed. Confronted with the testing ritual, he seemed stricken by the kind of paralysis that can afflict men in moments of unbearable stress, when the mind seems fathoms down, like some poor land creature entangled in the weeds of the sea. Later he would write poignantly of his entrance into "the inhospitable regions of examinations, through which, for the next seven years, I was destined to journey. These examinations were a great trial to me. The subjects which were dearest to the examiners were almost invariably those I fancied least…. I should have liked to be asked to say what I knew. They always tried to ask what I did not know. When I would have willingly displayed my knowledge, they sought to expose my ignorance. This sort of treatment had only one result: I did not do well in examinations."[62]

The explanation, of course, was hostility, and it angered his parents, who never dreamed that they themselves, by their rejection of him, might have been responsible for it. They assumed that he was lazy. But he really wanted to get into Harrow. He boned up weeks in advance; on February 28, 1888, he wrote Jennie, "I am working hard for Harrow," and a week later he wrote his father, "I am working hard for my examination which is a very Elementary one, so there is all the more reason to be careful & not to miss in the easy things." On Friday, March 16, a day of shocking weather—the roads, in his words, "were in a horrible condition mud & water & in some places the road was covered with water which reached up to the carriage step and extended for over 200 yrd"—Charlotte Thomson accompanied him to Harrow, where they were received by the headmaster, J. E. C. Welldon. Winston thought Welldon "very nice," but then he was led into a classroom and the ordeal was upon him. There were no questions about the subjects he felt he had mastered: grammar, history, French, geography. Instead, he was asked to translate passages in Greek and Latin. His mind went blank. He couldn't even remember the Greek alphabet. Then, as he recalled afterward, he found himself "unable to answer a single question in the Latin paper. I wrote my name at the top of the page. I wrote down the number of the question, 'I.' After much reflection I put a bracket round it, thus, '(I).'

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Welldon, then in his third year as head of the school, was personally popular. In appearance he resembled the twentieth-century British actor Jack Hawkins. One of Winston's classmates later wrote that the headmaster's "great massive form, as he swung into Fourth Form Room or Speech Room to take prayers or introduce a lecturer or ascended the pulpit to deliver one of his impressive sermons, produced a feeling of confidence."[66] Most important, in tracing Harrovian influences on Winston, were the school's patriotic songs:

So today—and oh! if ever
Duty's voice is ringing clear
Bidding men to brave endeavour—
Be our answer, "We are here."

And:

God give us bases to guard or beleaguer,
Games to play out whether earnest or fun;
Fights for the fearless and goals for the eager,
Twenty and thirty and forty years on.

In 1940 Churchill revisited Harrow and heard these stanzas again from another generation. Afterward he said: "Listening to those boys singing all those well-remembered songs I could see myself fifty years before, singing with them those tales of great men and wondering with intensity how I could ever do something glorious for my country." Here his memory was perhaps selective—songfests were not typical of his Harrow experience—but that is true of most Old Boy memories. Moreover, when one of their number becomes famous, many former schoolmates tend to edit their recollections, or even to distort them. It happens to old retainers, too. In the aftermath of Dunkirk, when Churchillian rhetoric seemed Britain's only shield against Nazi conquest, a reporter interviewed Wright Cooper, whose confectioner's store had been Harrow's most popular tuck-shop of the 1880s and 1890s. Cooper said:

Churchill was an extraordinarily good boy. He was honest and generous in a day when robust appetites were not always accompanied by well-lined pockets. My family lived over the shop, and when Churchill was downstairs we all knew it. Boys crowded round his table…. He was witty and critical and kept the other boys in roars of laughter. He was exceedingly popular and even the seniors sought his company. He was well behaved and had the ear of everyone. When his father or his mother came to see him, he used to book a table in the tuck shop, and that was a great occasion for him. He was extremely happy at Harrow and full of high spirits. I knew him well in the tuck-shop days and it is one of the proudest memories of my life that I should have known the Prime Minister when he was preparing for his great career.[67]

So much for the infallibility of eyewitnesses. It would be difficult to find a statement more riddled with falsehood. He wasn't a good boy; he was a disciplinary problem. He

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wasn't generous; he couldn't afford to be—"I am afraid I shall want more money," he wrote on his third day at the school, and he never had enough to cover his debts. Other boys disliked him; Sir Gerald Wollaston, a classmate, later recalled that those who "had not met him personally soon heard about him, and what we heard created a somewhat unfavourable opinion." Most seniors sought his company only when they wanted him to black their boots or make their beds; he had to fag for three years, performing menial tasks until he was nearly seventeen. Each of his parents visited him but once, and were never there together. And he was wretched most of the time. He himself said later that he was, "on the whole, considerably discouraged" during his Harrow years, and in another reminiscence he wrote that he had been "just a pack-horse that had to crop what herbage he could find by the roadside in the halts of long marches, a bit here and there."[68]

"High spirits," however, rings true. His letters attest to his misery, but he concealed it from his masters and the other boys. They saw him as an energetic, abrasive, insolent miscreant who, in Sir Gerald's words, "broke almost every rule made by masters or boys, was quite incorrigible, and had an unlimited vocabulary of 'backchat' which he produced with dauntless courage on every occasion of remonstrance." The most frequent target of his back talk was Harrow's ultimate authority figure, the headmaster. Once Welldon told him sternly, "Churchill, I have grave reason to be displeased with you." Winston instantly replied, "And I, sir, have grave reason to be displeased with you." Another time the headmaster, hearing reports that the boy was using bad language, called him on the carpet. He said: "Now, my boy, when was the last time you used bad language." Winston had developed a stammer—which should have triggered suspicions that his self-confidence was frailer than it seemed—and he replied: "W-ell, sir, as I en-entered this r-room, I tr-tr-tripped over the do-do-or m-mat, and I am afr-fr-aid I s-s-said D-d-damn." Pets were strictly forbidden, but he kept two dogs in a kennel on West Street. Parts of the town were out-of-bounds for Harrovians. He made it a point to trespass there. Once he tried to blow up an out-of-bounds building, Roxreth House on Bessborough Road, which was said to be haunted. Using gunpowder, a stone ginger-beer bottle, and a homemade fuse, Winston built a bomb, lit it, and lowered it into the gloomy cellar. When nothing happened, he peered down. At that instant it exploded. His face scorched and his eyebrows singed, he was rescued by a neighbor; she bathed him and sent him back to school. As he left he cheerily told her, "I expect this will get me the bag." He wasn't expelled, but he was birched. It wasn't the first time for him. Harrow wasn't Ascot, and Welldon was no sadist, but all public schools practiced corporal punishment then. Guilty Harrovians were birched before breakfast in the Fourth Form Room. In most cases it didn't come to that. Usually it was enough for the headmaster to warn a boy that unless he mended his ways, "It might become my painful duty to swish you." Winston, however, ignored these threats and was a frequent swishee. He didn't seem to care. Perhaps the Reverend Sneyd-Kynnersley had hardened him to beatings.[69]

Once he had a bad accident when playing and had to be confined to bed. Lord Salisbury heard about it from the father of another Harrow boy and asked how it had happened. "It was during a game of 'Follow the Leader,' " he was told. Salisbury muttered, "He doesn't take after his father." But that is precisely what he *was* trying to do. During his first day at the school he tried to engage a master in political debate. The

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master may have been embarrassed; by then Randolph had tumbled into public disgrace. But Randolph was still his son's idol. During his infrequent visits home, Winston begged his mother to introduce him to men prominent in Parliament. This, at least, was something Jennie could enjoy doing for her son. Invitations went out, and among the guests Winston met were three future prime ministers: Rosebery, Balfour, and Asquith. He later wrote: "It seemed a very great world where these men lived; a world in which high rules reigned and every trifle in public conduct counted; a duelling ground where although business might be ruthless, and the weapons loaded with ball, there was ceremonious personal courtesy and mutual respect." During the convalescence after his fall, Sir Edward Carson, one of Jennie's beaux, took Winston to dinner and then to the Strangers' Gallery overlooking the House of Commons. There the boy peered down and listened, in his later words, to "the great parties ranged on each side fighting the Home Rule controversy." Gladstone, he thought, resembled "a great white eagle, at once fierce and splendid." He also witnessed the Grand Old Man's tribute to Joe Chamberlain after the maiden speech of Joe's son Austen. "It was," the Grand Old Man said, "a speech which must have been dear and refreshing to a father's heart." The boy saw how moved Joe was: "He was hit as if a bullet had struck him." Winston was touched, too. He thought how proud his own father would be if he were elected to Parliament and spoke well. Back at Harrow, he stood before a mirror, trying to imitate Randolph's style and delivery. Except for his stammer, a speech impediment which was just becoming evident, and a certain guttural quality which was developing in his reedy adolescent voice, it went well.[70]

It went too well. He was modeling his tone and phrases after those of an embittered man who denounced "a government which has boycotted and slandered me" and used the language to inflict painful wounds on the men who, he thought, had betrayed him. In the mouth of an adolescent who was already thought odd by his peers, Randolph's studied invective and biting sarcasm were bound to alienate other boys. During his entire time at Harrow he made but one friend, an older boy, John—later Sir John—Milbanke. Even those who admired his nerve were put off by his truculence; one of them would recall in his memoirs how "this small red-haired snub-nosed jolly-faced youngster" darted up "during a house debate, against all rules, before he had been a year in the house, to refute one of his seniors." He was also becoming cheeky at home. In the kitchen he taunted Rosa Ovenden, the Churchills' cook, until she took a broom to him, shouting, "What the devil are you messing about here for? Hop it, copper-nob." Clara Jerome came to see her grandson and left describing him as "a naughty, sandy-haired little bulldog."[71]

In his first letter to Jennie from Harrow, he had told her: "I want to learn Gymnastics and carpentering." Later he also became interested in fencing, but most of the time he was alone, sawing and hammering with the intensity of purpose he would later show in laying bricks; collecting mulberry leaves for a colony of silkworms he kept; poring over his stamp album; or going on long walks with his dogs, sometimes accompanied by a town detective he had befriended. He hated cricket, hated football, hated field days. He liked boxing in the gym and swimming in Ducker, the school swimming pool, and might have developed warm relationships with other boys there, but he would only box with a master, and his manner elsewhere discouraged intimacy. After Churchill had become prime minister, J. E. B. Seely, by then Lord Mottistone, recalled setting eyes on him for the first

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early stage one comes across the Ablative Absolute…. I was often uncertain whether the Ablative Absolute should end in 'e' or 'i' or 'is' or 'ibus,' to the correct selection of which great importance was attached. Dr. Welldon seemed to be physically pained by a mistake being made in any of these letters…. It was more than annoyance; it was a pang." His French accent was atrocious. It would *always* be atrocious. During World War II he remarked that one of the greatest ordeals of the French Resistance was hearing him address them in their own tongue over the BBC.[*74]

He had scarcely settled in at Harrow when he was put "on reports." That meant that he had to acquire weekly accounts of his progress in each subject and discuss them with the headmaster. He begged his mother to come and "jaw Welldon about keeping me on reports for such a long time." For once Jennie came, but the headmaster was immune to her charm; Winston's status remained unchanged. The following week he wrote her: "It is a most shameful thing that he should keep me on like this…. I am awfully cross because now I am not able to come home for an absit [overnight leave] on Thursday which I very much wanted to do. I hope you don't imagine I am happy here. It's all very well for monitors & Cricket Captains but it is quite a different thing for fourth form boys. Of course what I should like best would be to leave this *hell of a* [italicized phrase underlined, then struck out] place but I cannot expect that at present."[75]

One member of the faculty who looked forward to seeing the last of Winston was H. O. D. Davidson, who, as his housemaster, was responsible for discipline and therefore his natural enemy. On July 12, when Winston had been enrolled less than three months, Davidson sent his mother an extraordinary complaint. He was a seasoned teacher, and had been a champion shot-putter at Oxford, but this thirteen-year-old boy was clearly beyond his competence. "After a good deal of hesitation and discussion with his form-master," he wrote Jennie, "I have decided to allow Winston to have his exeat ["day out"]; but I must own that he has not deserved it. I do not think, nor does Mr [Robert] Somervell, that he is in any way *wilfully* troublesome; 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." New boys, he conceded, needed "a week or two" to adjust to Harrow. But "Winston, I am sorry to say, has, if anything got worse as the term passed. 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. But if he is unable to conquer this slovenliness… he will never make a success of a public school…. As far as ability goes he ought to be at the top of his form, whereas he is at the bottom. Yet I do not think he is idle; only his energy is fitful, and when he gets to his work it is generally too late for him to do it well." Davidson thought it "very serious that he should have acquired such phenomenal slovenliness." He felt "sure that unless a very determined effort is made it will grow upon him." Winston, he concluded, "is a remarkable boy in many ways, and it would be a thousand pities if such good abilities were made useless by habitual negligence. I ought not to close without telling you that I am very much pleased with some history work he has done for me."[76]

Clearly there was something odd here. Winston, Davidson had conceded, was the ablest boy in his form. He was, in fact, remarkable. His grasp of history was outstanding.

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Yet he was considered a hopeless pupil. It occurred to no one that the fault might lie, not in the boy, but in the school. Samuel Butler defined genius as “a supreme capacity for getting its possessors into trouble of all kinds,” and it is ironic that geniuses are likeliest to be misunderstood in classrooms. Studies at the University of Chicago and the University of Minnesota have found that teachers smile on children with high IQs and frown upon those with creative minds. Intelligent but uncreative students accept conformity, never rebel, and complete their assignments with dispatch and to perfection. The creative child, on the other hand, is manipulative, imaginative, and intuitive. He is likely to harass the teacher. He is regarded as wild, naughty, silly, undependable, lacking in seriousness or even promise. His behavior is distracting; he doesn’t seem to be trying; he gives unique answers to banal questions, touching off laughter among the other children. E. Paul Torrance of Minnesota found that 70 percent of pupils rated high in creativity were rejected by teachers picking a special class for the intellectually gifted. The Goertzels concluded that a Stanford study of genius, under which teachers selected bright children, would have excluded Churchill, Edison, Picasso, and Mark Twain.

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courses, at least, deserved his best response. It was pointless to scold him, as Jennie did in her letters: "Your report which I enclose is as you see a *very* bad one. You work in such a fitful inharmonious way, that you are bound to come out last—look at your place in the form!… If only you had a better place in your form, & were a little more methodical I would *try* & find an excuse for you. Dearest Winston you make me very unhappy…. Your work is an insult to your intelligence." He could only reply: "I will not try to excuse myself for not working hard, because I know that what with one thing & another I have been rather lazy. Consequently when the month ended the crash came I got a bad report & got put on reports etc. etc…. My own Mummy I can tell you your letter cut me up very much…. I knew that work however hard at Mathematics I could not pass in that. All other boys going in were taught these things & I was not, so they said it was useless." Such sterile exchanges merely led him farther down the low road. Luckily there were three masters at Harrow who knew how to guide him upward. One taught math, the very subject Winston thought hopeless. In afterlife Churchill wrote: "All my life from time to time I have had to get up disagreeable subjects at short notice, but I consider my triumph, moral and technical, was in learning Mathematics in six months…. I owe this achievement not only to my own 'back-to-the-wall' resolution—for which no credit is too great; but to the very kindly interest taken in my case by a much respected Harrow master, Mr. C. H. P. Mayo. He convinced me that Mathematics was not a hopeless bog of nonsense, and that there were meanings and rhythms behind the comical hieroglyphics."[78]

Robert Somervell deserves a footnote in history. When Winston was about to go down for the third time, this perceptive young master—"a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great," Winston said of him—took over the remedial English class. His pupils were considered dolts too simple to learn Latin and Greek. They must continue to try, but Harrow would be satisfied if they mastered their own language. Usually such assignments fall to teachers who are inept themselves, and had that been true of Somervell, Winston's life might have taken a different turn. But not only was he not dull; he thought English inspiring, and his enthusiasm was infectious. In the words of Churchill: "He knew how to do it. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it." First they learned to parse sentences thoroughly. Then they practiced continuing grammatical analysis, using a system of Somervell's which appealed to the playful instinct in every boy: using a spectrum of inks, he would score a long sentence, breaking it up into subject, verb, object; relative clauses, conditional clauses, conjunctive and disjunctive clauses. Each had its color and its bracket. "It was a kind of drill," Churchill recalled. "We did it almost daily." Since Winston remained obdurate in his refusal to study the classics, he remained in Somervell's class for three terms. As a man he would write that he went through the drills "three times as long as anyone else. I had three times as much of it. I learned it thoroughly. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence—which is a noble thing. And when in after years my schoolfellows who had won prizes and distinction for writing such beautiful Latin poetry and pithy Greek epigrams had to come down again to common English, to earn their living or make their way, I did not feel myself at any disadvantage."[79]

At Harrow his lifelong fascination with words grew. He was thirteen, and Somervell was introducing him to literature. Except for best-sellers like Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*,

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few Harrovians read for pleasure. Winston was soon deep in Thackeray, Dickens, Wordsworth, and every biography he could lay his hands on. He knew what was good and found he liked it. Inevitably his vocabulary increased. In his letters he wrote of a toy given him by his aunts as "a source of unparalleled amusement," his funds needed "replenishing," welcome news was "pleasing intelligence." The bookseller Moore, who saw him almost daily, noticed that he was displaying "evidences of his unusual command of words. He would argue in the shop on any subject, and, as a result of this, he was, I am afraid, often left in sole possession of the floor."[80] At this point another teacher, L. M. Moriarty, Winston's fencing master, suggested that he drop in on him evenings at home to discuss essays and history. They talked, not only of content, but also of form, particularly essay techniques then being developed by Stevenson, Ruskin, Huxley, and Cardinal Newman. None of this was reflected in the report cards sent to Connaught Place, but the autodidactic pattern was forming. Winston was being taught to teach himself. He would always be a dud in the classroom and a failure in examinations, but in his own time, on his own terms, he would become one of the most learned statesmen of the coming century.

Aware of his growing intellect and increasing flair for expression, he was exasperated by his dismal marks. Welldon was also frustrated, and for the same reason. Shortly after Winston's fourteenth birthday, the headmaster told Seely that he had never seen a boy with "such a love and veneration for the English language."[81] When he received a sparkling paper from a Sixth Former who was a brilliant classicist but clumsy with his native tongue, Welldon called the boy in. He told him he didn't believe he had written the theme. Churchill, he said, was the only pupil who wrote that well. Confession followed. Welldon had uncovered a conspiracy. The Sixth Former had been translating Winston's elementary Latin assignments. Then he had sat at his desk with paper and pencil while Winston, pacing back and forth, dictated the theme. There is no record of disciplinary action, but the incident is striking. It is the first known instance of the technique Churchill would use in writing his greatest books. And it is a devastating comment on public-school values. Eloquent and lucid in living English, Winston was a scholastic failure because of his disdain for two languages which would be almost useless to him.

He was writing now, submitting further contributions to the school paper as "Junius Junior." They seldom appeared. He didn't fit here, either. A fellow Old Boy recalled: "From time to time he sent notes on current events to *The Harrovian;* these could not always be printed, but they were extraordinarily witty and well expressed, and often caused the editors to roar with laughter." This is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Krupp cannon which was sent to Saint Petersburg as a sample in the hope of stimulating sales. It fired so well that the Russians put it in a museum. Laughing editors spiked Winston's copy because they felt that passing their amusement along to their readers would be undignified. Of his contributions which were accepted, only one survives, a lugubrious poem inspired by an epidemic of influenza raging on the Continent:[82]

And now Europe groans aloud
And 'neath the heavy thunder-cloud
Husked in both song and dance:

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The germs of illness wend their way
To westward each succeeding day
And enter merry France.

The flu hit Winston during his first Christmas holidays from Harrow. On December 30 Randolph peevishly wrote his sister-in-law, "Of course the boys have made themselves ill with their Christmassing, & yesterday both were in bed with [Dr.] Roose and [Dr.] Gordon hopping in & out of the house. Jack is better this morning but Winston has a sore throat & some fever. I hope it is nothing but biliousness & indigestion." He and Jennie didn't hover around to find out. They left that day on a vacation of their own. Meanwhile, Winston worsened. Two days later he wrote his mother: "My throat is still painful & swelled—I get very hot in the night—& have very little appetite to speak of…. It is awful 'rot' spending ones holidays in bed or one room." Another letter followed a few days later. He was "tired of bed and slops." His new magic lantern didn't work. The "Dr says I ought to go to the seaside, & then *I shan't see you at all*." He calculated that "1 week at the seaside leaves 1 week & that 1 week you will be away. It is an awful pity. I don't know what to do." Woom knew. She bundled him off to her brother-in-law's cottage at Ventnor. Back at Harrow he wired her: "Am quite well."[83]

But he wasn't. Suffering a relapse the following month, he wrote his mother that he was "still far from well & am in bed because I can hardly stand. I am so weak as I have had very [little] food for 4 days." Woom had come, and Mrs. Davidson had told him that "she hopes you will let Woomany come [again] tomorrow, because she says the company will do me good. I do not know how the day would have passed but for Woomany. I have had another big poultice on my liver to-day to make it worse [sic]. I hope you will allow Woomany to come tomorrow as I shall certainly be very disappointed if she does not turn up." His need for his nurse is a thread running through his correspondence with his mother: "Thank you so much for letting Woom come down." "Do let Woom come down tomorrow." "Thanks awfully for letting Woom come down today." Mrs. Everest, for her part, wrote him faithfully, but she couldn't grasp his adolescent problems; she still thought of him as a small boy. She sent him "some fine flannel shirts to sleep in" and a new suit: "Winny dear do try to keep the new suit expressly for visiting, the brown one will do for everyday wear, please do this to please me. I hope you will not take cold my darling take care not to get wet or damp." And: "I hope you have recovered from the effects of your dental operation deary…. I hope you wear your coat in this wet weather & change your Boots when they are damp, that is what gives you tooth ache sitting in wet boots."[84]

Woom alone attended to his errands. She was anxious about his well-being and missed him terribly; in her long, gushing letters she told him again and again that she was always at his beck and call. She asked, "Did you get your luggage alright to Harrow this time it is always best to take it with you from the Station…. Have sent you 3 Black Waistcoats let me know dear also if you receive a small parcel of 2 shirts &c I sent off yesterday. I am sending you 1 dozen new Handkerchiefs on Monday with the hamper. Are

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unseemly exhibition of irresponsibility than in his letters from South Africa. They furnish the culminating evidence, if further evidence were necessary, as to the impossibility of Lord Randolph Churchill as the leader of men."[87]

Such a man, in such straits, is ever alert for slights. When Abbess won the Manchester Cup, again at twenty-to-one, Randolph harvested £2,202 in prize money plus his enormous winnings from his bets. He sent Winston a five-pound note. When instant gratitude was not forthcoming from Harrow, he was furious. Jennie wrote: "Your Father is very angry with you for not acknowledging the gift of the £5 for a whole week, and then writing an offhand careless letter." Of course, money wasn't what Winston wanted from his father. Welldon knew that, and he wrote Lord Randolph, tactfully suggesting that it might "perhaps not be disagreeable" to His Lordship and Her Ladyship to come to Harrow sometime and take "at least the opportunity of seeing what Winston's school life is like." Winston hoped they would come for Speech Day, when he would be honored for his feat of memory with Macaulay's *Lays*. He checked timetables and wrote his father: "If you take the 11.7 from Baker Street you will get to Harrow at 11.37. I shall meet you at the station with a fly, if I can get one…. You have never been to see me & so everything will be new to you." He wrote his mother: "Do try to get Papa to come. He has never been." Papa refused. The relationship between these two had long been doomed. Randolph had sent him a bicycle, but Welldon wrote Jennie the following month: "I am sorry to say Winston has fallen off his bicycle and hurt himself…. The Doctor calls it 'slight concussion.' " Later Winston wrote his mother that he had decided to have the bike fixed and then exchange it for a bulldog. Jennie didn't care—"Do as you like about yr bicycle"—but Woom foresaw trouble if Randolph found out: "What on earth is the good of your having a Bull Dog unless it is to keep us all in terror of our lives…. Besides His Lordship gave you the Bicycle & he would not like you to part with it." Winston found her argument persuasive. Offending his father was the last thing he intended. Randolph's African journey excited him. He wrote him in Johannesburg: "Have you shot a lion yet?" He was still Randolph's most loyal partisan.[88]

His father's criticisms of conditions in South Africa, brought on by commercial exploitation, were appearing in the *Daily Graphic*. Savage rebuttals of them had spread from the *Spectator* and the *Review of Reviews* to virtually every serious newspaper. Winston excitedly wrote him: "You cannot imagine what vials of wrath you have uncorded [sic]. All the papers simply rave. Shareholders, friends of the company, and directors from Sir Donald Currie to the lowest Bottle Washer are up in arms. *Truth*, the *Speaker*, *Standard* and others including even the *Harrow Gazette* devote a column to 'Lord Randolph's Grumbles.' The *Standard* quotes the *Speaker* & is particularly offensive. It states that—but oh I will not bore you with the yapping of these curs hungry for their money bags." Winston's vows of filial loyalty seem to have brought father and son to the brink of cordiality. Randolph replied to one of them, "You cannot think how pleased I was to get your interesting & well written letter." But the moment swiftly passed. It was like that flash of green in tropical sunsets just before the sun vanishes over the horizon. It lasts but a microsecond and is followed by total darkness. Randolph was approaching the last stages of his terrible disease. Ahead, for his family, lay horror.[89]

Jennie flourished during her husband's South African absence. She was deeply in

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love with Count Kinsky, and when not sleeping with him she spent virtually every moment entertaining friends. No. 2 Connaught Place was always full. Then, to her annoyance, the annual Eton-Harrow cricket match rolled around. Cricket still bored Winston, but the match at Lord's was an annual social ritual, a great occasion for the boys at both schools to wear top hats, ride around in glittering coaches with the aristocracy, and feast on strawberries and cream. To Winston's consternation, his mother told him that her social calendar was full; there was no room for him at the Connaught Place house. Indeed, there was no room for *her*. She had invited so many guests that she had been obliged to move in with her sister Clara at 18 Aldford Street. Unappeased, he wrote her: "Think how unhappy I should be being left at Harrow when 90 out of every hundred boys are enjoying themselves. You promised I should come…. I was terribly frightened when I got your letter this morning. The Possibility of my not being able to come being to my mind entirely out of the question. Could you not ask Grandmamma Marlborough to let me come stay with her (at least)…. My darling Mummy I am sure you have not been very much troubled about me this term. I have asked for no visits & I forfeited the pleasure of seeing you on Speech Day therefore I do hope you will endeavour not to disappoint me utterly with regard to July 11th and 12th." Two days later she replied: "Oh! dear oh! You silly old boy I did not mean that you would have to remain at Harrow only that I cld not have you here." She suggested that Clara might "put you up." That proved impossible, and Woom wrote him the next day: "Well my dearest the reason Mamma cannot have you at home is the house is to be full of visitors for the race week which commences on the Tuesday tomorrow week. But I don't see why you could not go from Friday till Monday because you could go by yourself." Since she herself would be billeted elsewhere, he could stay with her "and then perhaps Aunt Clara or some one would see you off to Harrow." That evening it was settled. He would stay with Duchess Fanny on Grosvenor Square.[90]

Actually, it turned out to be Winston's most memorable boyhood weekend. Despite Jennie's lack of maternal instincts, her strong erotic drive assured a constant string of sensitive suitors, some of whom sensed Winston's loneliness, understood his yearning for an affectionate father figure, and were eager to give him strong arms to lean on. On the morning of Friday, July 10, 1891, sixteen-year-old Winston arrived at Baker Street Station, watched the early innings at Lord's, took a hansom to Grosvenor Square, and lunched with Duchess Fanny. That evening John Milbanke took him to dinner at the Isthmian Club; afterward they attended the Naval Exhibition. ("Most beautiful models & guns of every description," Winston wrote Jack. "Got home at 11:45.")[91] His great treat, however, came the following day. Kaiser Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany's Second Reich and now in the fourth year of his reign, was visiting Queen Victoria, his grandmother. All London knew he would be appearing at the Crystal Palace, where a special exhibition awaited him, and that the public was invited. Count Kinsky decided to take Winston.

Charles Andreas Kinsky, son of an Austrian prince and a Liechtenstein princess, was then thirty-five, two years younger than Jennie. In appearance he was the apotheosis of what a man of the world should be. Tall, powerfully built, handsome, with a bristling mustache, he wore his top hat at a jaunty angle and, superbly tailored, glided across

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Kaffir who was in charge" tried to stop them by grabbing Kinsky's coattails. The count, "whom you know is immensely strong," grabbed "the blackguards hand" and crushed his fingers. At that "the Mulatto" dropped the coattails, swore, and told Kinsky he should think himself " 'd——d lucky' " that he wasn't pitched over the banisters. " 'By——' said Count Kinsky 'I should like to see you touch me.' 'You go and learn manners,' retorted the cad. 'But not from you' said Count K." Then the crowd howled down "the scoundrel" and "we went on our way angry but triumphant." It is an incident right out of *Chatterbox*, Nick Carter, or Karl May. The uppity ruffian of inferior race accosts our hero, is defied by him, and slinks away. Boys of Winston's class believed that sort of thing happened all the time, that it was the classic confrontation between the wicked and the just. And because Winston never entirely put away childish things, part of him would go on believing it to the end.[94]

The kaiser, whose image would later alter in Winston's eyes, was in all his splendor that night. Pyrotechnists opened their display with volleys of rockets. Next came "two great set pieces of Cornflowers & Roses (the Emperors Favourit Flowers) which afterward changed to the heads of the Emperor & Empress." Then the battle of the Nile was refought in the sky. "The ships actually moved & the cannonading was terrific. Finally L'Orient blew up." It was an ironic moment, though they did not appreciate it. That was how they saw war then: brilliant girandoles, flares, Catherine wheels, candlebombs, and whizbangs, celebrating the feats of daring of the intrepid Nelson and his "band of brothers" aboard the *Vanguard* while honoring the gallant French squadron who went down nobly—and apparently bloodlessly—when thirteen of Napoleon's men-of-war were annihilated and strewn across the waters of Abukir Bay. No horror, no agony, no bestiality; just puffs and streaks of blinding color against the serene night sky. No spectator was more deceived than the guest of honor, and Winston, grown to manhood, would be among those who had to cope with the consequences of his deception. But he himself had been dazzled, that evening; he too had believed in what the French called *la Gloire*. The day, he thought, had been perfect, and when the display ended "we went & got our coat & had each an American drink & then we went to our carriage. Count K. drives beautifully & we passed with our fast pair of horses everything on the road."[95]

If that was the high point of his Harrow years, the low point came five months later. Jennie was becoming increasingly exasperated with the reports from Welldon. Again and again she tried to convince Winston that his record now could affect his whole life, pleading with him to "stop and think it out for yourself and take a good pull before it is too late." Now from Paris, now from Monte Carlo, now from Mayfair ("I would go down to you—but I have so many things to arrange about the Ascot party next week that I can't manage it"), she implored him to tackle and master languages, his biggest bugbear. He was by turns contrite, confident that next term his marks would soar (which they never did), or teasing. His sense of timing was poor. When he learned that her purse had been snatched at Monte Carlo, he wrote carelessly: "C'est Dommage, because at the same

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moment I must put in a request for 'un peu plus d'argent.'… Don't go to that Casino. Invest your money in me, its safer…. You are a bird." She was not amused. She had also begun to find his company irritating. He was an awkward teenager; in a letter she described him as "just at the 'ugly' stage—slouchy and tiresome." Something drastic, she decided, must be done. A hint of what it would be came in a letter she wrote Randolph during Winston's Kinsky weekend: "Welldon says W should have special help for the French this summer."[96]

He was to be taught a lesson, and not just in French. Jennie and Welldon worked it out together. He would be sent across the Channel to learn the language by speaking with Frenchmen. The first plan was to board him with a family in Rouen. Winston objected violently: "No family! No family! Ugh!" he wrote Jennie. "I beg and Pray that you will not send me to a vile, nasty, fusty, beastly French 'Family,' " adding—a sign that he knew the company his mother was keeping—that "even if the worst comes to the worst you could send me to some of your friends & not to 'respectable creatures.' " That was in July, when he assumed that the distasteful experience would be behind him by autumn. Then the blow fell. He was told he would spend Christmas at the Versailles home of one of Harrow's French masters. He was accustomed, if by no means reconciled, to his parents' absence over the year-end holiday. But at least he could count on the company of Woom, Jack, his aunts, and his grandmother. Now he would be alone, in a foreign country, trying to cope with a language he detested. He fought back with everything he had. "Darling Mummy," he wrote on December 6, "I shall think it will be very unkind and unnatural of you… to do me out of my Christmas. Out of all this school not 5 boys are going away at all…. Mummy don't be so unkind and make me unhappy…. If you in spite of my entreaties force me to go I will do as little as I can and the holidays will be one continual battle."[97]

Jennie struck back savagely: "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." She told him that he was "old enough not to play the fool" for "the sake of a few days pleasure," and that "you can be quite certain my darling that I will decide for what is best, but I tell you frankly that *I* am going to decide not *you*." Replying, he reproached her for being "so sarcastic to me since it is I not you who have to make the sacrifice…. 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. You were asked to give up a short part of the year to take me abroad—you promised—refused & I did not press the point…. Please do have a little regard for my happiness."[98]

She returned this note without comment. He wrote again, asking why, and she told him: "I have read only one page of yr letter and I send it back to you—as its style does not please me…. My dear you won't gain anything by taking this line." It was now December 16, and he was close to panic. "Never," he wrote her, "would I have believed that you would have been so unkind. I am utterly miserable. That you should refuse to read my letter is most painful to me. There was nothing in it to give you grounds for rejecting it…. Oh my Mummy!" Next: "I am more unhappy than I can possibly say…. Darling Mamma if you want me to do anything for you, especially so great a sacrifice don't be so cruel to

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Your loving son Winny." Then, the next day: "Please don't be so unkind. Do answer my letter." Then, the day after that—with Christmas a week away—he made his last pitiful effort: "Darling Mummy do attend to my letter. I am so wretched. Even now I weep. Please my darling Mummy be kind to your loving son. Don't let my silly letters make you angry. Let me at least think that you love me.—Darling Mummy I despair. I am so wretched. I don't know what to do. Don't be angry I am so miserable…. Please write something kind to me. I am very sorry if I have 'riled' you before I did only want to explain things from my point of view. Good Bye my darling Mummy. With best love I remain, Ever your loving son Winston." It availed him nothing. Jennie was adamant. She booked second-class passage for him for a December 21 crossing and wrote Randolph, "I can't tell you what trouble I have had with Winston this last fortnight he has bombarded me with letters, cursing his fate and everyone. Of course it is a great disappointment to him not being home for Xmas but he makes as much fuss as tho' he were going to Australia for 2 years."[99]

Debarking, he telegraphed Woom: "Arrived safe. Good passage." Putting a brave face on what remained a desolate business, he jauntily wrote his mother, to convince her that his French needed no improvement: "We arrived at Dieppe où nous partook of de bon Café au lait. Le chemin de fer etait très incommode. Pour quatres heures I waited having nothing to do. Nous arrivames au gare St Lazare. J'ai déclaré ma boite des cigarettes. But they did not charge me anything nor did they open mon mal." He rode three hours on hired hacks ("chevaux de louage"); then his host, M. Minssen, met him with a spare mount and led him to his Versailles home at 18, rue de Provence. "M.M. rides very well & very hard at full gallop on the 'ard 'igh road. Les chevaux ne sont pas mal. Ils son véritablement rossés. Mme Monsieur M's mère ne dit rien que 'Son progrés est marveilleux.' 'N'est ce pas extraordinaire' etc. etc." Christmas was quiet at Versailles, but Minssen *mère* turned out to be English, so they had turkey and plum pudding. "Also," Winston acknowledged, "a little fun on Christmas Eve." He went to the theater to see Michel Stroghoff, learned to skate, rode a great deal—once, with M.M., for three hours: "The horses are very good considering." But his chief excitement was the "Bon Marche," which sold toy soldiers. He wrote Jack that the shop carried French and Russian infantrymen, artillerymen, and black cannon. "They were in all positions for loading & firing. Ramming home, etc. Only 7 francs=5/–." The soldiers were two francs for a dozen. "When I return we will have much fun and great games with the army." He was "longing to return…. I count the hours. I won't travel 2nd again by Jove."[100]

He wrote his mother daily, heard nothing from her, and protested: "It seems to me that with you 'out of sight is out of mind' indeed. Not a line from anybody. You promised to write 3 times a week—I have recd 1 letter." Jennie didn't even acknowledge his present to her. The fact was that she couldn't have received either letters or gift; she was away at Penn, the ancestral home of Lord and Lady Howe, preparing a party for the Prince of Wales. Winston's one letter had been from Mrs. Everest. He had picked a good time to be away, Woom said; the electricity had failed, there was no gas, so for five days she and Jack had lived in utter darkness "in this room with a candle until I am half blind." On Christmas Day she and the servants, in the tradition of the time, "drank to the health and happiness of Mamma and Papa"; then, after supper, "we went into the kitchen & they put

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Please do see what you can arrange for me."[103]

His father was in no mood to arrange any such thing. He was in a foul temper. The party at Penn had collapsed because the Duke of Clarence had chosen this extremely inconvenient moment to die, causing HRH to cancel all his social engagements. But even if Randolph had been in the best of spirits, he believed he had the best of reasons for pulling the rug from under his wife. He wrote Winston, "I think I will not try and get you an extra week because really every moment is of value to you now before you go up for your examination in June. The loss of a week now may mean your not passing, which I am sure you will admit would be very discreditable and disadvantageous…. I do pray you my dear boy to make the most of every hour of your time so as to render your passing a certainty…. I hope you will work like a little dray horse right up to the summer examination, only about four months off." Winston was bitter. He wrote: "How I have been tricked!" Jennie wrote him: "Papa showed me his letter to you. He won't hear of yr asking for an extra week. I am very sorry." So she should have been. Robert Rhodes James concludes that "behind Lady Randolph's vivid beauty and warm vivacity there lay an essentially selfish and frivolous character."[104] That is hard but just. Winston rightly felt betrayed. Yet his affection for her did not diminish. And such is the wonder of human relationships that soon she would reciprocate. Jennie was not a faithful wife, but in other ways she was a loyal one. As the final stages of Randolph's paresis overtook him—as he became less endearing each day—she would slowly transfer her devotion to her brilliant, eccentric elder son. Her passion would run deep and strong, and it would be of immeasurable benefit to him, though it could never be mistaken for maternal love.

The examination, a screening of candidates for admission to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, had been looming before Winston ever since his father's decision, based on a display of toy soldiers in a nursery, to make his son an army officer. Other Harrovians were following the same star—so many, indeed, that Welldon had created a special Army Class. Winston had joined it in September 1889, when he was fourteen. In effect these boys were cramming for military exams. Moriarty and another master decided early that Winston's math was too poor for Woolwich, the academy that prepared cadets for commissions in the artillery and engineers. Instead, they piloted him toward Sandhurst, which turned out subalterns of infantry and cavalry.

After four months in the Army Class, Winston had written his mother, "I am getting along capitally…. I am going up for my 'preliminary Exam' for 'Sandhurst' in June." His confidence, here as so often before, was wholly unjustified. Welldon withdrew his name, explaining to him that he wasn't ready for the test; among other things, his grasp of geometrical drawing was hopelessly deficient. But the headmaster gave him the green light six months later, and then Winston had three pieces of good luck. This was the last Sandhurst preliminary in which Latin was an optional subject. Second, an essay question dealt with the American Civil War, and Jennie's mother had seen to it that he knew a great deal about that long before he entered Harrow. The third stroke of fortune was

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remarkable. He had known there would be a map question, but did not know of which country. Therefore, he wrote the names of twenty-five countries on scraps of paper the night before the exam, put them in a hat, and drew one. He had picked New Zealand. He memorized it. And in the morning the geographical problem was: "Draw a map of New Zealand." So he passed all subjects, becoming one of twelve out of the twenty-nine Harrow candidates to succeed. He wrote his mother: "I have received congratulations from scores of boys and many masters. Dudley"—Dudley Marjoribanks, the son of Randolph's sister Fanny—"has not spoken to me. Vive la joie! He has not passed and is furious." Jennie wrote her husband: "I think you might make him a present of a gun as a reward. He is pining for one, and ought to have a little encouragement."[105]

No gun arrived, there was no pat on the back from Randolph, and the edge of Winston's enthusiasm for a military career was briefly blunted. He toyed with the notion of taking holy orders. In a postscript home he wrote: "Really I feel less keen about the Army every day. I think the church would suit me better." Looking back long afterward, he reflected that "I might have gone into the Church and preached orthodox sermons in a spirit of audacious contradiction to the age." But it had been a preposterous notion; while Churchill can easily be pictured in a pulpit, one cannot imagine him on his knees. As a boy, he would say in later life, he had to go to church every week and "this was very good. I had accumulated in those years so fine a surplus in the Bank of Observance that I have been drawing confidently upon it ever since. Weddings, christenings, and funerals have brought in a steady annual income, and I have never made too close enquiries about the state of my account. It might well even be that I should find an overdraft." He wrote trenchantly of World War I: "Religion, having discreetly avoided conflict on the fundamental issues, offered its encouragement and consolations through all its forms impartially to all the combatants." Toward the end of his life he said: "I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is ready to meet me is another question." To those who pressed him, he quoted Disraeli: "Sensible men are all of the same religion." Asked what that was, he quoted him again: "Sensible men never tell."[106]

But Disraeli had also said that "what we anticipate seldom occurs, what we least expected generally happens," and this was Winston's immediate problem in the summer of 1892, when he was seventeen. Having leapt over the preliminary hurdle, he assumed that he was as good as accepted by Sandhurst. Thus he was rudely shaken when, having taken the main entrance examination, he learned that he had flunked, and flunked badly. Not only had he failed to qualify for an infantry cadetship; his marks were also inadequate for the cavalry, which accepted lower performances. He had scored 39 percent in freehand drawing, 30 percent in Latin, and 28 percent in math, and had excelled only in English composition. Counting French, English history, chemistry, and geometry, he was 300 marks below the minimum and 700 below his cousin Dudley, who had caught up with the other successful applicants. Moriarty consoled Winston—"I think your marks and place very creditable for your first try"—but Welldon was brusque: "I feel it essential that in coming back to school you should come resolved to work not by fits and starts but with regular persistent industry." The headmaster considered recommending a free-lance tutor, then decided against it. Randolph, predictably, was disgusted. He was also unsurprised. On the few occasions he had questioned his son about his education, he had been

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tutoring. There was no disgrace in this. In 1870 Lord Dufferin's Royal Commission on Military Education had "earnestly" deprecated "the irregular system of 'cramming' " because, as one member explained, they feared that the acceptance "of such a large proportion of crammed candidates would cause the Army to lose its 'tone.' " Nevertheless, in Winston's day seven out of every ten successful candidates for admission to Sandhurst had been rigorously tutored. Spencer Coyle, in Henry James's story "Owen Wingrave," was a typical Victorian crammer. The character was inspired by Captain Walter H. James, who, Welldon wrote Lord Randolph, was "the most successful 'crammer' for the Sandhurst Examination." Randolph approved, and James then wrote him from 5 Lexam Gardens, London: "I shall be very happy to receive your son and should be pleased to see you at 12:30 on Monday next."[109]

Winston didn't keep the appointment. He was near death. In their study of boys marked for future greatness, the Goertzels found that among adventurous youths "there is almost always a history of accident-proneness." Sometimes the youthful Winston seemed to move from crisis to crisis, risking his life in pointless adventures. That was true of him that year. His second failure as a Sandhurst candidate had left him tense and distraught, which probably contributed to his flirtation with disaster. Randolph's sister-in-law, the "Duchess Lily," had given his family the run of Deepdene, her estate at Branksome Dene, near Bournemouth, for the winter. Its fifty acres of pine forest, sloping down to the Channel, offered endless opportunities for the daring games Winston loved to play in the woods. Each morning he briefed Jack and a fourteen-year-old cousin on his newest game plan while the servants, Woom among them, wrung their hands and prayed for the children's safety. In the wildest corner of the estate, a thicket was split by a deep cleft called the "chine." The chine was bridged by a crude fifty-yard bridge. The boys were playing fox and hare, with Winston the hare, when he found himself in the middle of the bridge with a foe at either end. He contemplated jumping down into the cleft. It was thick with fir trees; he thought he might leap to one and slide down, snapping off tiers of branches as he descended and thus breaking his fall. In his words: "I looked at it. I computed it. I meditated. Meanwhile I climbed over the balustrade. My young pursuers stood wonderstruck at either end of the bridge. To plunge or not to plunge, that was the question! In a second I had plunged, throwing out my arms to embrace the summit of the fir tree. The argument was correct; the data were absolutely wrong." He tumbled twenty-nine feet to hard ground and lay insensible. Jack and their cousin ran back to the mansion, crying, "He won't speak to us!" This was real trouble, and it brought his parents flying. Jennie arrived first; Randolph, who had been spending Christmas at one of Lord Fitzgibbon's interminable wild parties in Ireland, took the next express from Dublin. Dr. Roose appeared with Dr. John Rose, a Harley Street specialist. They found, among other things, that Winston had a ruptured kidney. He did not recover consciousness for three days. The physicians recommended three months in bed, Rose adding that "young Mr. Churchill should not return to hard study any more than he should take vigorous exercise."[110]

Unfortunately, abstinence from study was out of the question. Winston's last chance at Sandhurst loomed in June, and in Lexham Gardens Captain James sat waiting, pencils sharpened, textbooks open. Some forty years later Winston decided that he understood

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why this obscure half-pay officer had stood at the top of his small, curious profession. James, he wrote, had studied the minds of the men who drew up civil service examinations and could predict "with almost Papal infallibility the sort of questions which that sort of person would be bound on the average to ask on any of the selected subjects." His skill lay in anticipating such questions and how best to answer them. He was "really the ingenious forerunner of the inventors of the artillery barrages of the Great War," Churchill wrote. "He fired from carefully selected positions upon the areas which he knew must be tenanted by large bodies of enemy troops…. He did not need to see the enemy soldiers. Drill was all he had to teach his gunners. Thus year by year for at least two decades he held the Blue Ribbon among the Crammers."[111]

But he had never dealt with anyone remotely like Winston. The crammer represents everything the creative youth despises: drill, contempt for intuition, slavish fixation on meaningless, unrelated facts. Winston, in his own words, found himself in "an 'Alice-in-Wonderland' world, at the portals of which stood 'A Quadratic Equation,' " followed by the "dimchambers" inhabited by the "Differential Calculus" and then a "strange corridor" of sines and cosines "in a highly square-rooted condition." Of mathematical skills he wrote: "I am assured they are most helpful in engineering, astronomy and things like that. It is important to build bridges and canals and to comprehend all the stresses and potentialities of matter, to say nothing of counting all the stars and even universes and measuring how far off they are, and foretelling eclipses, the arrival of comets and such like. I am glad there are quite a number of people born with a gift and a liking for all this." He, however, was not one of them. The Goertzels found that most boys pregnant with genius have serious problems with school curricula and dull, irrational teachers. James was a distillate of these. He was concentrating on the courses Winston had found pointless, using the very methods Winston hated most. By March he must have wished that this exasperating boy had killed himself in his fall. Reporting to Randolph on March 7, he deplored his pupil's "casual manner." Winston was "distinctly inclined to be inattentive and to think too much of his abilities." He had been "rather too much inclined up to the present to teach his instructors instead of endeavouring to learn from them." In fact, "he suggested to me that his knowledge of history was such that he did not want any more teaching in it!… What he wants," he concluded, "is very firm handling." Unfortunately, James could not provide it for the moment. He was literally sick of Winston, "confined to my room."[112]

Staggering to his feet, he plodded on. But he deceived neither himself nor his ward's father. He was making little progress. In an April 29 report he gloomily warned his employer: "I do not think that his work is going on very satisfactorily." Although the boy "has good abilities he does not apply himself with sufficient earnestness to his reading" and "I doubt his passing if he does not do this." James delicately hinted at one difficulty. Randolph was making his last attempt at a political comeback, and his son could think of little else. The crammer realized that "at a time like the present it is difficult for him not to take an interest in current political topics, but if this be done to an extent which takes his mind away from his studies, the result is bad for the latter." Every attempt must be made to impress upon him "the absolute necessity of single-minded devotion to the immediate object before him, and the extreme desirability of thoroughness and detail [sic] attention

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to all he attempts."[113]

The break came sometime in May. Winston gave ground. He yielded as little as possible, but he knew what was at stake, and though the job revolted him, he set his jaw and made some progress. Not much; just enough. On June 19, James wrote: "Without saying that your son is a certainty I think he ought to pass this time. He is working well and I think doing his best to get on but, as you know, he is at times inclined to take the bit in his teeth and go his own course." The exam was upon them then, and this time Winston squeaked by. He came in too low to become an infantry cadet, but was admitted to the cavalry. He hadn't changed much, even under his crammer's pressure; most of the spring, when he should have been doing James's lessons, he had been reading English history for pleasure, with the jarring effect—jarring for James, who had abandoned attempts to drill him in history—that he far outscored every other candidate in that subject. When the list of those who had passed was announced, Winston had left on a hiking trip in Switzerland with Jack and J. D. G. Little, a young Eton master. He was in Lucerne when he learned he had made it. Immediately he wired his father and then wrote him from the Schweizerhof Hotel: "I was so glad to be able to send you the good news on Thursday. I did not expect that the list would be published so soon & was starting off in the train, when Little congratulated me on getting in. I looked in the paper & found this to be true." It was only fitting, he thought, that he should celebrate his achievement in such "a splendid hotel—lifts, electric light, & fireworks (every Saturday)."[114]

Other congratulations arrived from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, but there was an ominous silence from Bad Kissingen, where Lord Randolph and Jennie were taking the cure. Unknown to his son, Randolph had been counting heavily on an infantry cadetship. That would have relieved him of the cost of horses. It would also have brought a social dividend; a friend of his, the aged, royal Duke of Cambridge, commander in chief of the army, had promised, once Winston had been commissioned, to find a place for him in the crack Sixtieth Rifles. Now the humiliated father had to tell His Grace that his boy was too stupid to become an infantry officer. Jennie saw the storm gathering in her husband. She sent a warning to Lucerne: "I am glad of course that you have got into Sandhurst but Papa is not pleased at yr getting in by the skin of yr teeth & missing the Infantry by 18 marks. He is not as pleased by yr exploits as you seem to be!"[115] That was putting it gently. A week later, in Milan, Winston received an extraordinary letter from his father.

Randolph was surprised that he had expressed "exultation over your inclusion in the Sandhurst list" instead of being ashamed of "your slovenly happy-go-lucky harum scarum style of work." It was the same old story: "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. Always behind-hand, never advancing in your class, incessant complaints of total want of application, and this character which was constant in yr reports has shown the natural results clearly in your last army examination." Thus "you have failed to get into the '60th Rifles' one of the finest regiments in the army." Furthermore, as a cavalry cadet, "you have imposed on me an extra charge of some £200 a year." It got worse: "Do not think I am going to take the trouble of writing to you long letters after every failure you commit and undergo… I no longer attach the slightest weight to anything you may say about your

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certified as “officers and gentlemen.” The landscape was inviting: two lakes, athletic fields, rifle and revolver ranges, and, of course, parade grounds. As a “junior,” or plebe, he was assigned to “E” Company, led to the long, low, white stone building which would be his barracks for the next sixteen months, and measured for his cadet uniform, a gaudy costume featuring gold lace, pantaloons, and a pillbox cap. He studied the daily schedule he would be expected to meet, worried about his physical frailty, and wrote his mother, with a confidence he did not feel: “I suppose I shall get stronger during my stay here.”[119] His physique was in fact unimpressive. He was only five feet, six and a half inches tall, and his chest measured but thirty-one inches, with an expansion of two and a half inches—inadequate, unless he could improve upon it, for a commission. To succeed at Sandhurst he would summon strengths which, until now, had been unrevealed.

Even before the tailor had finished outfitting him, he had again incurred his father’s displeasure. Lord Randolph had decided to give him a ten-pound monthly allowance and little leave. “I wont have any running backwards & forwards to London,” he wrote Duchess Fanny. “He shall be kept to his work so that he may acquire the elementary principles of a military education.” But since his arrival on the post, Winston had discovered that his financial expectations required revision. He needed a batman to black his boots, pipe-clay his belt, clean his rifle, and carry away slops. He thought he ought to have a horse; other cadets had them. His room needed furnishing, and he not only wanted to visit the capital regularly—“going up to town,” as they said at Sandhurst—he also meant to join clubs there. His father would have none of it. To Duchess Fanny, Randolph explained: “I have demurred to ‘unrestricted leave,’ and have told him he can come to town when his mother is there. I have declined paying for horses…. Winston’s letters are generally full of requests for unnecessary things and articles.” The youth begged his mother to intervene. Without a horse, he said, he would be excluded from polo classes. “As to leave—it is very hard that Papa cannot grant me the same liberty that other boys in my position are granted. It is only a case of trusting *me*. As my company officer said, he ‘liked to know the boys whom their parents could trust’—and therefore recommended me to get the permission I asked for. However, it is no use trying to explain to Papa, & I suppose I shall go on being treated as ‘that boy’ till I am 50 years old.”[120] Actually, it would be only a short time longer. But Winston had been kept at such a distance from his family that he knew nothing of the tensions within it. He couldn’t understand the niggling over money. He was keenly aware of his father’s reentry into politics. He did not, however, grasp the futility of it.

In the summer of 1892, when Winston was beginning his struggle to enter Sandhurst, the voters narrowly rejected Salisbury’s Conservatives, giving Gladstone the chance to form his last government. His position in the House of Commons was fragile. Even with the support of eighty Irish Nationalists, the Liberal majority was only forty. In 1886 Joe Chamberlain had deserted the Grand Old Man on the question of Home Rule and joined the Ulster Unionists, whom he would eventually leave to become a full-fledged Tory. The

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cabinet differed sharply among themselves on key issues. Obviously the Tories would soon return. But Randolph didn't see it that way. He thought they needed his help. When Parliament met the following summer—the summer Winston scraped through his third examination—the political configuration looked like 1885 all over again. The GOM sat on the government bench, and Churchill, the master of invective, was preparing to display his brilliant talent once more. In Winston's words, "It was thought that he would in Opposition swiftly regain the ascendancy in Parliament and in his party which had been destroyed by his resignation six years before. No one cherished these hopes more ardently than I…. We all looked forward to his reconquest of power…. Although he was only a private member and quite isolated, everything he said even at the tiniest bazaar was reported verbatim in all the newspapers, and every phrase was scrutinized and weighed. Now it seemed that his chance had come again."[121]

Only rarely could Winston observe the parliamentary maneuvering from the Strangers' Gallery, and even then he deferred to his father's wishes, asking his permission to attend: "I have had a letter from Mr Carson inviting me to dine with him at the House on Friday evening. I have accepted as I have very little work on Saturday. If you would rather I would not go Please send me a line." He was fascinated by the civility between adversaries; at table "not only colleagues, but opponents, amicably interchanged opinions on the burning topics of the hour." Apart from newspapers, his sources of information on what was happening behind the scenes in the House were his mother and his father's brother-in-law Edward Marjoribanks, who, as Gladstone's chief whip, was on the other side. Political civility also prevailed within the family, though Winston enjoyed trying to pin Marjoribanks down. He wrote his father: "Uncle Edward has been here to dinner. He spent nearly half an hour after dinner explaining to me the methods by which the Opposition of the House of Lords was going to be overcome. I wish you had been there to answer him, as I am sure there was an answer though I could not think of it."[122]

Jennie and Uncle Edward gave him accounts of Randolph's progress. They said he was doing well, and in the beginning they were right. Even the *Spectator*, the Conservative organ, which had abused him so cruelly, reported: "The chief feature of this Session… has been the return of Lord Randolph Churchill to active political life, and his successful reassertion of himself as a force to be reckoned with in party warfare. Lord Randolph has seen his opportunity in the crusade against the Home-rule Bill… we rejoice that the party has recovered the services of a man with such excellent fighting qualities…. More than any of the Unionist leaders, Lord Randolph possesses the faculty of speaking to uneducated men in the style which they understand and admire…. We wish Lord Randolph every success."[123]

Suddenly it was all over. Although Home Rule passed the Commons, it was rejected by the Lords. The Grand Old Man, half blind and half deaf at eighty-five, rode up Birdcage Walk to the Queen who had never liked him and resigned. Randolph had been deprived of his prey. But even before then it had become evident that he, like Gladstone, was not the man he had been. Winston noted: "I could not help feeling that my father's speeches were not as good as they used to be. There were some brilliant successes; yet on the whole he seemed to be hardly holding his own. I hoped of course that I should grow up in time to come to his aid…. I thought of Austen Chamberlain who was allowed to

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holiday than my father talked to me in his whole life." He wrote of Lord Randolph that "only once did he lift his visor in my sight." Vacationing with his family in the country, Winston fired a double-barreled gun at a rabbit which had appeared beneath his father's window. Randolph raged at him; then, seeing that he had upset him, backed down and explained that old people, absorbed in their own affairs, sometimes spoke rudely to their children. 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."[126]

Winston's later view of Lord Randolph was ambivalent. To Violet Asquith he spoke of him with "glowing pride." He liked to call on Lord Rosebery, encouraging him to reminisce about Randolph, whom Rosebery had known well and Winston hardly at all, and Winston's two-volume biography *Lord Randolph Churchill* is a tribute to filial devotion. Yet he was bitter when he told Frank Harris that whenever he tried to open serious conversations with his father, he was snubbed pitilessly. He recalled: "He wouldn't listen to me or consider anything I said. There was no companionship with him possible and I tried so hard and so often. He was so self-centered no one else existed for him." Harris asked: "You didn't like him?" Winston replied: "How could I?… He treated me as if I had been a fool; barked at me whenever I questioned him. I owe everything to my mother; to my father, nothing." Actually, he owed him a great deal, much of which he could have done without, for when he himself entered politics he felt obliged to pay off Randolph's old scores. But there was no real love lost between them. In Winston's books one may trace a steady theme: great men are frequently products of boyhood loneliness. Three years after his father's death he wrote of the Mahdi, leader of Sudanese tribesmen: "Solitary trees, if they grow at all, grow strong; and a boy deprived of a father's care often develops, if he escapes the perils of youth, an independence and vigour of thought which may restore in after life the heavy loss of early days." And in his biography of the first Duke of Marlborough he observed that "famous men are usually the product of an unhappy childhood. The stern compression of circumstances, the twinges of adversity, the spur of slights and taunts in early years, are needed to evoke that ruthless fixity of purpose and tenacious mother wit without which great actions are seldom accomplished."[127]

It is difficult to resist the tide of Churchillian eloquence. Yet every author, as Cicero observed, is wise and forbearing in his own eyes. The fact is that at Sandhurst, as at Harrow, Winston could be a vexing son, though now his growing flair for seizing command of situations—and perhaps a ripening imagination—added a lively touch to his explanations. These were summed up in the remarkable case of the gold watch. When Winston settled in at the military academy, his father presented him with a fine watch, made by Dents'. Later, dropping into the London shop to see about his own timepiece, Randolph was "annoyed and vexed," in his words, to learn that Winston's watch had twice been sent back for repairs, first after it had been "dropped… on a stone pavement & broken," and, second, when it had been immersed in water, with the result that "the whole of the works were horribly rusty & that every bit of the watch had had to be taken to pieces." Mending it after it had been dropped had cost three pounds, seventeen shillings. At the time of Randolph's infelicitous visit it was still in the shop from the submersion. He scribbled off a furious note to Sandhurst. He "could not believe that you could be such a young stupid. It is clear you are not to be trusted with a valuable watch & when I get it

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back from Mr Dent I shall not give it back to you." Then he wrote the details to Jennie in Paris, adding that Winston "wont forget my letter for some time & it will be a long time before I give him anything worth having. I wanted you to know this as he may tell you a vy different story."[128]

Winston told a vy different story indeed. "The first accident," he wrote, "was not my fault at all." He hadn't been careless; quite the contrary. Shielding the Dent watch from harm had, it seemed, been a major concern of his, almost a mission. To that end, he had had a special leather case made for it. He was holding it in this protective case when a rude cadet ran into him, dislodging it from his grasp with such force that, to his horror, it crashed on the surface of the parade ground, emitting a discordant tintinnabulation, a knell of ruin. The dunking had been more complicated. Cadets' tunics, unlike waistcoats, lacked deep pockets. He had been strolling along the bank of Sandhurst's Wish Stream when he stooped to pick up a stick. Out popped the watch, sinking into six feet of water, "the only deep place for miles." Instantly he stripped and dove after it, trying again and again until exhaustion raised the possibility that he might drown. "The next day I had the pool dredged—but without result," he wrote. Therefore, obtaining official permission for a major effort, he borrowed twenty-three infantrymen, "dug a new course for the stream," rerouted it, acquired a fire engine from the nearest village, "pumped the pool dry and so recovered the watch." It was irresistible. Jennie wrote: "Oh! Winny what a harum scarum fellow you are!" Even Randolph relented: "You need not trouble any more about the watch. It is quite clear that the rough work of Sandhurst is not suitable for a watch made by Dent." He sent an inexpensive substitute.[129]

Bills, Winston's allowance, expenses—throughout 1893 Randolph was increasingly preoccupied with the disagreeable subject of money. To trim his budget, he sold the Connaught Place house and moved his family in with his mother in the ducal mansion on Grosvenor Square. With Jack away at Harrow, Elizabeth Everest stepped into a new role, becoming Duchess Fanny's housekeeper. Randolph continued to write for the *Daily Graphic*, but he still couldn't make ends meet. On October 6, when his elder son was entering his sixth week as a cadet, he wrote Jennie that "I am vy sorry but I have no money at the present moment & balance overdrawn at bank." He had some South African mining shares for which he had paid £10,000 two years earlier, and was putting them on the market, "but it is vy difficult to get 4½ for them now, & I must not sell more than £500. I will try & send you £105 to Hotel Scribe." He turned to his mother for help. The duchess, however, was having financial difficulties of her own. She, too, had to economize. She decided she needed less domestic help. She fired Mrs. Everest.[130]

If ever a servant was a member of a family, Woom was she. She had been with the Churchills for nineteen years, and she had few savings. Randolph knew that, because she had entrusted them to him; he had driven her down to the City in his private hansom and turned them over to Lord Rothschild at New Court for investment. The return was a pittance. By the time Winston learned of her dismissal, she had been gone for three months. Aghast, he wrote his mother, who replied that it was none of his business and she would refuse to read anything further he wrote her about it. He begged her to listen to him out of "common decency." He felt that if he allowed Woom "to be cut adrift without protest" he would be "extremely ungrateful—besides I should be very sorry not to have

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her at Grosvenor Square—because she is in my mind associated—more than anything else with home." She was an old woman; to be "packed off" in this way "would possibly, if not probably break her down altogether…. At her age she is invited to find a new place & practically begin over again…. I think such proceedings cruel & rather mean." Of course, the duchess had "every right to discharge a servant for whom she had 'no further use.' " But at the very least Woom should be kept on until she found another job or "be given a pension—which would be sufficient to keep her from want—& which should continue during her life." He told Jennie: "It is in your power to explain to the Duchess that she *cannot* be sent away until she has got a good place." He posted this letter on October 29. There was no reply. Randolph sent Woom seventeen pounds. Other "presents" followed from time to time, but apart from that, she had been discarded like a shabby cradle. Her sisters kept her from destitution. In the little time left her, she continued to write Winston and Jack faithfully, and to remember them with little gifts on their birthdays and Christmas.[131]

Winston had entered Sandhurst ninety-second in a class of 102. Immediately he had trouble with parade-ground drill—his officers were dumbfounded to find that he wanted to argue about commands—and was put in the awkward squad. But within a fortnight he had grown to love the life. He felt himself "growing up every week." Gone, he later wrote, were Harrow's "unending spell of worries that did not then seem petty, and of toil uncheered by fruition; a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony…. At Sandhurst I had a new start. I was no longer handicapped by past neglect of Latin, French or Mathematics." Instead, there were just five subjects to master: fortification, tactics, topography, military law, and military administration. In retrospect it seems inadequate preparation for England's greatest war leader. "We were never taught anything about bombs or hand-grenades," he would recall, "because of course these weapons were known to be long obsolete. They had gone out of use in the eighteenth century, and would be quite useless in modern war." And though Winston would be disdainful of the U.S. Military Academy when he visited there two years later, West Point without math would have been unthinkable even then.[132]

But Sandhurst was *fun*. He particularly liked the exercises in field fortification. They dug trenches, built breastworks, and revetted parapets with sandbags, heather, fascines, and "Jones' iron-band gabions"—cylinders filled with earth. Chevaux-de-frise were constructed, and *fougasses*, a kind of primitive land mine in which the charge was overlaid with stones. Using slabs of guncotton, they blew up simulated railroad tracks and masonry bridges; then they erected pontoon or timber substitutes. All the hills around Camberley were mapped. Roads were reconnoitered. Picket lines were established and advance and rear guards posted. It was like being back at Banstead with Jack and their cousins, building the castle with its moat and drawbridge and using the homemade elastic catapult to hurl green apples at the cow. In a revealing comment on his cadet days, Winston later said he thought it "a pity that it all had to be make-believe, and that the age

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identical public schools…. We… were, I'm afraid, terribly dull." Winston, though his social position was loftier than most, didn't think them at all dull. After the long dreadful years of being bullied and taunted, he was accepted here as a comrade, and he rejoiced.[136]

In his early cadet days his father had written him: "Mind you if you do well at Sandhurst & get good reports good positions in your classes & even the good conduct medal you would go to your regiment so much higher in credit & more thought of. So if you feel at times like giving way or falling off 'Don't.' " Winston had been getting these goads for twelve years. They hadn't worked then, and now they were unnecessary. In the examinations at the end of his first term, he scored near the top of his class, his strongest subjects being tactics and military law. Under "Conduct" the official verdict was "Good but unpunctual." He would always be unpunctual, always missing trains, ships, and, later, planes, until he reached a station so exalted that they all waited for him. But he excelled so in every other Sandhurst course that his tardiness was overlooked. His earlier status of public-school dolt was forgotten now that he was an admirable young soldier with a brilliant career ahead of him. This showed, he wrote, "that I could learn quickly enough the things that mattered." He was growing stronger physically. Furthermore, he was popular with his fellow cadets. Randolph, astounded by all this, lifted the restrictions on his leave, and Winston began entraining for Waterloo Station in London with his new friends.[137]

The imperial capital was then approaching its prime, and for privileged youths who knew they would inherit it one day, the city was a source of endless wonder and ebullience. The metropolis of the 1870s, when Winston had played in Mayfair and Hyde Park, had been transformed. London was gay; it was, by earlier Victorian standards, permissive. These were the 1890s, the Naughty Nineties, the Mauve Decade, the best time, Churchill would later write, in his entire life: "Twenty to twenty-five—those are the years!"[138] It was almost as though the capital was preparing for the momentous events which lay ahead. Popular institutions which would flourish in the next century, and which later generations of Englishmen would come to regard as the very essence of the British way of life, were just then arriving on the national stage. The first white-fronted J. Lyon's Teashop had just opened at 213 Piccadilly. Harrods had newly installed display windows. Marks and Spencer had opened their Penny Bazar ("Don't ask the price, it's a penny") at Cheetham Hill, Manchester, and were building a branch in London. Londoners of the upper and middle classes had plenty to spend; that year the capital of England's limited liability companies exceeded £1,000,000,000—one and a third times that of France and Germany combined. At the five-year-old Savoy, Auguste Escoffier had created the Peach Melba, honoring Madame Nellie Melba, who was singing Wagner's *Lohengrin* at Covent Garden. Piccadilly Circus was acquiring its fountain. In Langham Place, Queen's Hall had replaced old St. James's Hall as the home of the capital's orchestral music; it would be famous for its Promenade Concerts until Nazi bombers leveled it in 1941. The Tower Bridge had just been completed. Strolling along the Embankment from Westminster

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Bridge, the cadets from Sandhurst could see New Scotland Yard rising, a creation of the architect Norman Shaw, who contrived to give the police station the appearance of a French Renaissance château transplanted from the Seine to the Thames.

If they were in the mood for a play, the Sandhurst cadets could see Oscar Wilde's *Woman of No Importance* at the Haymarket Theatre, George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* at the Avenue, *Charley's Aunt* at the Royalty, and, at the St. James's, Arthur Wing Pinero's *Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, starring that acrobat of the chaise longue, Mrs. Patrick Campbell. The hit songs likeliest to be hummed by passersby in the street were Dvořak's "Humoresque"; or "Happy Birthday to You," a curious tune composed by a Kentucky kindergarten teacher; or, if the pedestrian had just returned from Paris, the theme of Debussy's *Après-midi d'un faune*. Lounge suits, worn with bowlers in winter and boaters in summer, were frequently seen here in the center of town, but in the West End the cadets' fathers were loyal to their frock coats and toppers. Women's fashions were another matter. The bustle had disappeared four years earlier. Leg-of-mutton sleeves had arrived, and so had separate blouses and skirts, a by-product of lawn tennis's popularity, though the blouses were worn with stiff collars. Hems were higher, always a source of pleasure for the coarser sex, and boys who could divert chaperons and make exceptional progress with a cooperative girl were delighted to find that knickers had replaced thick petticoats. This was a tribute, not to sexual emancipation, but to the bicycle craze, which dated from J. K. Starley's invention of the Rover "Safety" bike and J. B. Dunlop's patenting of the pneumatic tire. The most startling switch in women's appearance, which did nothing for anyone, was in hair and hats. During Jennie's youth, hair had been plaited and coiled in a knob at the back of the neck; bonnets were then arched over the knob and tied under the chin. Now hair was brushed forward from the back of the neck and massed on top. Hatpins became indispensable. Hatpin hats, floating on top of the coiffures, might be toques, miniature straw hats, or wide-brimmed picture hats. Many pins were required to anchor them. Keeping them in place discouraged motion, a handicap to a youth intent upon exploring his date's knickers, and the pins themselves were long and deadly, which, if push came to shove on a park bench, could be lethal.

Had Winston but known it, the change with the greatest significance for his future was the appearance on London streets of W. H. Smith's newsstands. Once Richard Hoe's steam-powered rotary "lightning" press had replaced flatbed presses, vast supplies of fodder were needed to feed it. The answer, a German discovered, was cheap groundwood pulp. Readers were ready. W. E. Forster's Compulsory Education Act of 1870, followed by compulsory schooling ten years later, had raised the entire nation's level of literacy. In 1858 only 5 percent of the army's recruits had been able to read and write. But by Churchill's time the figure was 85.4 percent. Civilians had made similar progress. Reading materials began to be available to them. The 1880s had brought free libraries; Parliament had then abolished the newspaper tax and the excise duty on paper. That cleared the way for what can only be called an explosion in journalism. W. T. Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was founded in 1892 and cost a penny, was one of the first eruptions. Others were the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Mail*, George Newnes's *Tid-bits*, and, from the Harmsworth Brothers, *Answers to Correspondents*, *Comic Cuts* (for children), the *Evening News*, and, the year after Winston left Sandhurst, the *Daily News*, which, at a halfpenny,

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words. They signaled flagrant vice in the West End and, among most educated Englishmen, a collapse of morals. In the upper classes extramarital coitus was acceptable, but sodomy and fellatio were literally unmentionable. Everyone knew that certain public-school boys became confused about sexual roles. You didn't talk about that. You didn't let the side down. But these new people were advertising it. "Art for Art's Sake" meant more than it said. Polite critics called it decadence, which was accurate, though hedonism, a broader term, was more applicable. What few grasped was that this was one of but three new forces which, by the 1890s, had evolved from the religious evangelism of Victoria's prime years. The other two were Anglo-Catholicism—"High Church," or "Ritualistic," Christianity—and rationalism. Rationalism was the wave of the future. Charles Booth had begun his nine-volume inquiry into London poverty when eleven-year-old Winston caught double pneumonia in Brighton. Booth was still at it, and now, while Cadet Churchill was galloping across the meadows around Camberley, Sidney and Beatrice Webb brought out their *History of Trade Unionism*. Conscience, until now the province of men of the cloth, had found secular forms of expression. When Randolph had gone up to Oxford, the brightest students had been preparing for the ministry. Hardly any were now. Church attendance had dropped sharply all over England. Family prayers in upper-class households, though still prevalent, began to decline. One casualty of this shift was the Victorian Sabbath. Sunday papers were frowned upon, and public restaurants were closed on that day, but it was difficult to defend the old values when all London knew of the Prince of Wales's showy Sunday dinner parties. Throughout the decade society receded from the old Sabbath observance. Museums and art galleries were thrown open on Sunday afternoon. The National Sunday League urged healthy Sunday recreation and organized Sunday railway excursions at cheap rates. The railroads, unwilling to haggle over old values when profits loomed, accommodated them.

The lower classes couldn't afford the excursions, even at half price. Instead, they crowded into the music halls, which, responding to the new moral climate, permitted their comedians' humor to grow broader and broader. This was the halls' Augustan age. The stars, like their audiences, were mostly cockneys: Marie Lloyd, George Robey, Albert Chevalier, Little Titch, Dan Leno, Harry Champion. They sang "My Old Dutch," "Don't Dilly Dally," "Two Lovely Black Eyes," "Oh, Mr Porter," "One of the Ruins That Cromwell Knocked About a Bit," and England's greatest hit of 1892:

After the Ball is over, after the break of morn;
After the dancers' leaving, after the stars are gone;
Many a heart is aching, if you could read them all;
Many the hopes that have vanished, After the Ball.

Sometimes celebrities paraded across the stage: Eugene Sandow, the German strong man; Blondin, the tightrope walker; Captain Webb, the Channel swimmer. Audiences were intensely patriotic, cheering every glimpse of the Union Jack and, when the chairman thumped his gavel and gave them their cue, belting out "Tommy, Tommy Atkins," and "The Union Jack of Dear Old England." The best of the halls were in the heart of London. The Eagle, the Alhambra, and the Empire in Leicester Square were the most popular. It was in the Empire, of all places, that Winston Churchill delivered his first

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speech. The date was Saturday, November 3, 1894. He was defending prostitution.

Mrs. Ormiston Chant, a crusader against vice, had been eyeing the theater with disapproval for some time. The management, like those of most of the halls, had built a promenade beside the men's bar, and it was along this walk, as patrons emptied their glasses, that elegant doxies strolled back and forth, describing their specialties and citing their prices in stage whispers. Winston, now a Sandhurst senior, was not among their customers. He, like many of his peers, sublimated his sex drive and idealized women. He had a crush on Mabel Love, a performer at the Lyric, and at his written request she had sent him an autographed photograph; but his feelings for her were nothing if not chaste. His band of cadets regularly toured all London's great music halls, however, and he was stung when he read that, at Mrs. Chant's insistence, a "barricade" had been erected between the Empire and its promenade. Instinctively hostile toward authority, he wanted to lash out. He wrote, and then thrice rewrote, a speech which, Churchill the man would recall, was "a serious constitutional argument upon the inherent rights of British subjects; upon the dangers of State interference with the social habits of law-abiding persons; and upon the many evil consequences which inevitably follow upon repression not supported by healthy public opinion." Reading in the *Daily Telegraph* that champions of the harlots were forming an "Entertainments Protective League" to defend their dishonor, he resolved to join up. The meeting was held in a seedy London hotel. When he arrived by hansom, he found there was only one other member. The man said sadly, "It's very difficult to get people to do anything in England now. They take everything lying down. I do not know what's happened to the country; they seem to have no spirit left."[140]

Winston felt that someone had to speak for freedom. But organization needed funds. In the Strand he spotted the three golden balls hanging over Attenborough's celebrated moneylending shop and hocked his watch, reflecting that, "after all, the Crown Jewels of great kingdoms [have] been pawned on hard occasions." Three days later he rounded up fellow cadets out for lark, led them to the Empire, and found that the "barricade" was merely a canvas screen supported by a wooden framework. He had come prepared to incite a riot. The elements were there. The men already in the bar agreed with him and his friends that the barrier was a bloody shame. A silence spread among them, like the thickening in the air before a storm. One man poked a hole through the screen with his cane. A cadet gave it a shove. Someone else kicked it, and it moved. In a flash the whole crowd, suddenly excited and infuriated, rushed at the flimsy encumbrance and demolished it. Amid the din Winston shouted: "Ladies of the Empire! I stand for Liberty!" It turned out that there were no ladies present, soiled or otherwise; the prostitutes had prudently decamped. That ought to have been a letdown, but he felt flushed with victory. Leaping on a chair—his text, revised, was in his hand—he cried: "Where does the Englishman in London always find a welcome? Where does he first go when, battle-scarred and travel-worn, he reaches home? Who is always there to greet him with a smile and join him with a drink? Who is ever faithful, ever true? The ladies of the Empire promenade!"[141]

It was in vain. The London County Council, as licensing authority for the music halls, supported Mrs. Chant. Trollops were banned from all of them. Nonetheless, Winston felt a sense of achievement. He wrote Jack, at Harrow: "It was I who led the rioters—and made a speech to the crowd. I enclose a cutting from one of the papers so

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that you may see." After the council had acted he wrote a formal denunciation of its decision and sent it to his father, who, though he didn't know it, had strong personal reasons for favoring the suppression of tarts. "I am sure," Winston wrote him, "you will disapprove of so coercive and futile a measure." He wrote his aunt Leonie: "It is hard to say whether one dislikes the prudes or the weak-minded creatures who listen to them most. Both to me are extremely detestable. In trying to be original they have merely lapsed into the aboriginal. The 'new woman' is merely the old Eve in a divided skirt." He also wrote an open letter to the *Westminster Gazette*, submitting that the only way to lasting reform lay in "educating the mind of the individual and improving the social conditions under which he lives," but the editor refused to print it, hoping, perhaps, to conceal the identity of the crowd's ringleader. If so, he failed. Mandel Creighton, the bishop of London, found out. He wrote *The Times:* "I never expected to see an heir of Marlborough greeted by a flourish of strumpets."[142]

Winston, satisfied that he had at least drawn blood, continued to drop into music halls whenever he had a free evening. Shortly after he had been commissioned, he was at the Alhambra with a fellow officer when a flag-waving entertainer, inspired by a disagreement between Salisbury and the new czar over the Armenian crisis of 1896, sang:

Cease your preaching! Load your guns!
Their roar our mission tells,
The day is come for Britain's sons
To seize the Dardanelles!

Winston leaned toward his friend and asked: "Where are the Dardanelles *exactly?*"[143]

He reached the pinnacle of his Sandhurst days on December 2, 1894. Fifteen of the 127 seniors who had qualified to receive the Queen's commission were chosen to compete for the school's annual riding prize, and he was among them. He wrote his father, who was abroad with Jennie, "Well we rode—jumped with & without stirrups & with out reins—hands behind back & various other tricks. Then 5 were weeded out leaving only ten of us. Then we went in the field & rode over the numerous fences several times. 6 more were weeded out leaving only 4 in. I was wild with excitement and rode I think better than I have ever done before but failed to win the prize by 1 mark being 2nd with 199 out of 200 marks. I am awfully pleased with the result, which in a place where everyone rides means a great deal, as I shall have to ride before the Duke and also as it makes it very easy to pick regts when the Colonels know you can ride. I hope you will be pleased."[144]

It was unlikely. By the time this letter reached Randolph he was in no condition to express pleasure or displeasure. Winston knew, however, that his riding skills had reopened the sore subject of whether he should enter the cavalry or the infantry. Earlier in the year, when they had last exchanged views on the subject through Jennie, his father had still been strong for the Sixtieth Rifles. But Winston now wanted nothing to do with foot

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vagabond, a wanderer with no place to hang his top hat. Not that it much mattered. He was in a state of shock, trying to come to terms with the shattering fact that his father, whom he cherished despite the sad history of their relationship, was about to die.

By 1885, when Winston was ten, his father had entered the fourth syphilitic stage, the slow invasion of the nervous system, in which the microorganisms successively attack the membranes, the spinal cord, and, finally, the brain, producing general paresis—total paralysis. Lord Rosebery began to notice physical impairment in his friend early in the year. That summer other friends became disturbed. Dilke, Chamberlain, and Lord James put their heads together in September, shared observations, and broke up after realizing that it was beyond them. Labouchère sent Rosebery a note: "R. Churchill is in a very bad way…. He says he cannot sleep after 6 in the morning and breaks down if he does not go to bed early." In August and again in November Randolph was confined to his bed. He confided to Lord Dufferin that sessions in the House entailed strain "and the constant necessity of trying to say something new makes one a drivelling idiot."[147]

By now Dr. Roose had thrown in his hand. Although chiefly known in the West End for his successful treatment of gout, Roose had also researched neurasthenic diseases and was, for his time, an accomplished diagnostician. He had bluntly told Randolph that he believed his disease to be incurable, then sent him to Dr. Thomas Buzzard, a VD specialist, for another opinion. Buzzard shared Roose's pessimism. In the 1880s anyone who had reached the quaternary stage of syphilis was beyond hope. The two doctors proscribed alcohol and tobacco, and prescribed early bedtimes and doses of potassium iodide, mercury, and digitalis. They might as well have done nothing. Except for the digitalis, which fought the cardiac weakness accompanying the affliction, their drugs merely produced embarrassing side effects: hoarseness, dizziness, darkened skin, and progressive deafness—all of which were observed by Randolph's acquaintances in subsequent years and noted in their diaries and letters.

Paresis, though fatal in the end, is interrupted by frequent remissions, thereby encouraging false hope. It is also characterized by spells of feverish energy alternating with despair; by poor judgment, violent rages, and moodiness. In 1892, as general paralysis slowly approached, these were joined, in Randolph's case, by palpitations and slurred speech. Jennie was in torment. She was nursing her husband, keeping up a brave front, trying to pretend that life was normal, and wondering what to tell the children. Her sons were not only unaware that their father had an irremediable social disease; they didn't even know he was seriously ill. On the face of it this is inexplicable. Others watched Randolph's deterioration for ten years. But the boys rarely saw him. Most of what Winston knew about his father's activities now came from his mother. Randolph did write to him from time to time, and with hindsight we can trace his deterioration in those letters. Winston didn't, or couldn't. There had always been a wild streak in his father's scrawled notes to him anyhow. Those who saw Randolph more frequently, however, had long since despaired of him. It had been more than a year since his friends had been able

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to endure hearing him speak in Parliament. “R. C. terrible,” James wrote Chamberlain after one scene in the House. After another, *The Times* parliamentary correspondent wrote that “nothing more tragical has been seen in the House of Commons in our generation.” Randolph became completely unpredictable. In a shrewd moment he drafted an amendment to the Parnell Report, shifting responsibility for the witch-hunt from the government to one of his favorite bêtes noires, *The Times*. Louis Jennings was to speak first; Randolph was to follow. The House was full. Before the Speaker could recognize Jennings, Randolph was on his feet, denouncing the government in the crudest language members had heard there. Jennings never spoke to him again. Others left the chamber whenever he rose, not out of anger, but because they knew they could not suffer what they knew would follow. Rosebery said: “There was no curtain, no retirement. He died by inches in public.”[148]

The final symptoms were now evident. As his brain and spinal cord rotted, he became subject to unexpected attacks, facial tremors, tremors of the lip and tongue, abrupt changes in the pupils of his eyes, impaired vision, splitting headaches, lapses of memory, delusions, depressions, and dementia. At times he could not engage in coherent conversation. William H. Rideing, who sat at his right during a dinner party, later recalled: “Lord Randolph was plainly a doomed man. He shook as if in a palsy; his voice was woolly and stuttering, almost unintelligible.” On May 27, 1894, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt wrote in his diary: “Wednesday I called on Randolph Churchill in Grosvenor Square (his mother’s house) and had some political talk with him. He is terribly altered, poor fellow, having some disease, paralysis, I suppose, which affects his speech, so that it is painful to listen to him. He makes prodigious efforts to express himself clearly, but these are only too visible…. As he came to the door with me he tried again to explain to me what he wanted to tell me about Egypt, but broke down and said, almost in tears, ‘I know what I want to say, but damn it, I can’t say it.’ ” Frank Harris, another caller at 50 Grosvenor Square, wrote of Randolph that he was “appalled by his appearance. In a couple of years he had changed out of character, had become an old man instead of a young one. His face was haggard; his hair greyish and very thin on top; his thick beard, also half-grey, changed him completely…. As I took his hand and looked at him I felt sick: the deep lines on his face, the heavy gummy bags under his miserable eyes, the shaking hand…. A moment later he put his hand over his eyes and sat down heavily. ‘I have slept badly and I don’t feel well today,’ he went on in trembling, indistinct tones…. He filled me with pity and regret—such an end to such a great career!”[149]

Shortly afterward, Harris was a guest at one of Sir Henry Thompson’s “octave” dinners, so called because of the number of guests. He sat almost opposite Randolph. “His face was drawn and his skin leaden grey,” he wrote; “there were gleams of hate, anger, and fear in his eyes, the dreadful fear of those who have learned how close madness is.” After one course Randolph pointed at grouse on the sideboard and squealed, as if in pain, “E-e-e-e-e-e!” Sir Henry asked quietly, “What is it, Lord Randolph?” Randolph squealed “E-e-e-e!” again, pointing at the footman who was carving. “I want that—e-e-e! Some of that—e-e!” Sir Henry said, “It shall be brought back. I’m very glad you like it.” Served, Randolph ate greedily, then suddenly dropped his knife and fork and glared at each face in turn around the table. Harris was convinced he had seen “what I called ‘the malignant

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Lord Randolph in later years

She minded very much. The trip was a six-month ordeal for her. She wrote her sister Clara aboard ship on the Bay of Bengal, after a week in Rangoon: "I cant tell you how I pine for a little society…. And yet the worst of it is that I dread the chance even of seeing people for his sake. He is quite unfit for society…. One never knows what he may do. At Govt House Singapore he was very bad for 2 days and it was quite dreadful being with strangers. Since then he has become quieter & sometimes is quite apathetic but Keith thinks it a bad sign." She felt that it was "quite impossible for us to go travelling about in India. It means staying with people all the time & R is too unfit for it…. Dearest Clarinette I cannot go into all the details of his illness but you cannot imagine anything *more* distracting & desperate than to watch it & see him as he is." As if this weren't enough, she had received a further jolt in Burma. Of all her men, the one she had loved most deeply was Charles Kinsky. For years he had remained single, hoping that one day she would be free. Now he had given up; he had found another woman, a countess twenty years younger than Jennie: "I had a telegraph from Charles at Rangoon telling me of his engagement. *I hate it.*"[152]

Dr. Keith blew the whistle in Madras. On November 24 he wired Roose that their patient had begun to sink and the party would return to London as soon as possible. Six days later Keith wrote Randolph's sister Cornelia from Bombay: "I regret extremely that we have to come home but for everyone's sake I know it is the only thing to do. Lord Randolph is in no condition to continue his journey: it is the worst thing for him, he gets no pleasure out of it, and did he understand how he is he would be the last person to wish it…. It may seem that rather a cruel way has been taken to prevail on Lord Randolph to

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return but he really does not think about it much and it does not strike him in the way it would do if he were well. We ought to reach Marseilles on the 20th of next month and our subsequent movements must be entirely guided by Lord Randolph's condition. He stood the journey from Madras very well, it certainly did him no harm. I will write you again from Port Said."[153]

Winston's awareness of what was happening seems to have come to him in fits and starts. He would accept the situation, reject it, accept it again, and reject it again—the cycle was repeated over and over. Nearly a month earlier, before his parents had even reached Yokohama on the *Empress of Japan*, he had confronted Roose and demanded to know the facts about the state of his father's health. He wrote his mother on November 2, "I thought it was only right that I should know exactly how he was progressing. You see I only hear through grandmamma Jerome who does not take a very sanguine view of things—or through the Duchess who is at one extreme one minute and at the other the next. So I asked Dr Roose and he showed me the medical reports…. I need not tell you how anxious I am. I had never realised how ill Papa had been and had never until now believed that there was anything serious the matter. I do trust & hope as sincerely as human beings can that the relapse Keith spoke of in his last report was only temporary and that the improvement of the few months [sic] has been maintained. Do, my darling mamma when you write let me know *exactly* what you think." He suggested that she and Keith "write nothing but good to the Duchess" because "she lives, thinks, and cares for nothing in the world but to see Papa again."[154]

Six days later, after Keith had sent Roose his report from Japan, Winston had written Jennie: "I am very very sorry to hear that so little improvement has been made, and that apparently there is not much chance of improvement." Yet a few lines later he suggested, "If I were you I would always try and look on the bright side of things and endeavour perpetually to derive interest from everything." In addition, as we have seen, he had not only sent his father a cheery report on the Sandhurst riding competition but felt the world opening for him "like Aladdin's cave." And by then he had known the worst. Upon receiving Keith's Madras telegram, Roose had summoned Winston from Hindlip Hall and informed him that his father's life was approaching its end. On Christmas Eve his parents reached London. "For a month," Winston wrote in his biography of Randolph, "he lingered pitifully." Most of the time he was in a stupor. His son had by now become reconciled to the inevitable. He saw his father only as "a swiftly-fading shadow." In the early hours of Thursday, January 24, 1895, Winston was roused in the mansion of a neighbor, where he had been sleeping. "I ran in the darkness," he wrote, "across Grosvenor Square, then lapped in snow." It was all over. Three days later Randolph was buried in Bladon churchyard—the bells overhead, which had pealed merrily at Winston's birth, now tolled slowly—and a memorial service was held in Westminster Abbey.[155]

Behind him Randolph left disorder. His career had been one long strife, and it did not end at the Bladon grave. He had his defenders. The *Saturday Review* thought him "the greatest elemental force in English politics since Cromwell," and Sir Herbert Maxwell wrote in the *National Review:* "Reckless beyond all men's reckoning in prosperity, he was wont to be swift and dangerous when hard pressed…. Lord Randolph remained, to the last, first favourite among his party with a very large section of the people. No one can

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doubt that, who was in London during the closing weeks of his life, for one had only to lend an ear… to hear anxious discussion of the latest bulletins about 'Randy,' as he was affectionately called." But *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* was not observed by his enemies. Other obituaries described him as a man lacking in delicacy, subtlety, or decency—the *Outlook* said that he represented "the coarser qualities of his race… his defect was his lack of power of subordination." An officious young man from the Treasury even appeared at the Grosvenor Square portal and demanded the return of the robes Randolph had worn as chancellor of the Exchequer. His widow replied superbly—and prophetically—"I am saving them for my son." Jennie's demeanor was the subject of much comment. *Harper's Weekly* had reported on the fateful last trip: "Lady Churchill's devotion to her husband won for her the admiration of all who saw them abroad. Vigorous and active, and still a great beauty, she gave up every other pleasure to give him constant and loving care." That wasn't the half of it. She had vowed that the nature of his disease should remain forever secret. To Leonie she wrote that "up to now the General Public and even Society does not know the real truth, and after *all* my sacrifice and the misery of these 6 months it would be hard if it got out. It would do incalculable harm to his political reputation and memory and be a dreadful thing for all of us."[156] Nevertheless, there was some ill feeling toward her in her husband's family. Duchess Fanny felt that her mourning for Randolph was inadequate. There was some truth in this. Jennie was grief-stricken, but it was for Count Kinsky, who had been married just two weeks before she returned to England. The duchess extended her resentment to Winston, however, and that was unjust, for he was, and would continue to be, obsessed with the memory of his father. Seldom, indeed, has a man invested so little affection in a son and reaped such dividends of posthumous loyalty.

It is clear now that Randolph, had he lived, would have been a crushing burden for Winston's parliamentary ambitions. But the boy did not see it that way. He never would. At the funeral he felt that his task was "to lift again the flag I found lying on a stricken field." Over thirty years later he would write: "All my dreams of comradeship with him, of entering Parliament at his side and in his support, were ended. There remained for me only to pursue his aims and vindicate his memory." Unfortunately, aspiring politicians needed money—even ambitious cavalry officers needed it—and although his father had left an estate of £75,951, debts claimed most of that. Winston's pay as a subaltern would be £120 a year. Fortunately Jennie received $10,000 a year from the rental of the Jerome family home on Madison Square in New York, and she told Winston she would provide him with another £300. It wasn't nearly enough, but a dim plan was forming in his mind. He must take his father's place in Parliament. To be elected he would have to become famous. The quickest way to popular acclaim, he believed, was to acquire a reputation for military heroism. This, he knew, would be difficult. He wrote afterward: "In the closing decade of the Victorian era the Empire had enjoyed so long a spell of almost unbroken peace, that medals and all they represented in experience and adventure were becoming extremely scarce in the British Army." Still, there were always small wars here and there. Someone was always fighting someone else. He would shop around. There was nothing to stop him. Here, at least, he was realistic about Randolph's death: "I was now in the main the master of my fortunes."[157]

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reassured her that his participation was out of the question, but when another subaltern offered to lend him a charger, he couldn't resist. Afterward he wrote his brother: "It was very exciting, and there is no doubt about it being dangerous. I had never jumped a regulation fence before and they are pretty big things as you know. Everybody in the regiment was awfully pleased by my riding, more especially as I came in third. They thought it very sporting. I thought so too." Jennie was reproachful. So was Woom, and for the same reason. She wrote him: "I hope you will take care of yourself my darling. I hear of your exploits at steeple chasing. I do so dread to hear of it. Remember Count Kinsky broke his nose once at that."[160]

His mother had scarcely recovered from this, and he had hardly seen the last of the bull-lunged Jocko, when real trouble loomed, a scandal which could have ruined him. Alan Bruce, a Sandhurst classmate, was about to join the Fourth Hussars. He had been an unpopular cadet, as ill-adjusted there as Winston had been at Harrow. Winston and his new confreres in the officers' mess decided they didn't want him; they took him to dinner at the Nimrod Club in London and told him that his father's allowance of £500 would be inadequate. That was preposterous, and he said so. Since he had failed to take their hint, they discouraged him in other ways. The details are unclear, but it is not a pretty story. Bruce was accused of using foul language, of being familiar with enlisted men, of abusing regimental sergeants. The upshot was that he was asked to resign from the army. His infuriated father, A. C. Bruce-Pryce, persuaded the weekly review *Truth* to mount a press crusade against an "undisguised conspiracy formed against this subaltern before he joined to have him out of the regiment unless he consented to go voluntarily." That was the last way to engage the affections of those who had maneuvered Bruce's dismissal, and the incident would have been swiftly forgotten if Bruce-Pryce hadn't taken leave of his senses. He charged that Winston Churchill had been guilty of "acts of gross immorality of the Oscar Wilde type."[161]

Winston moved fast. He hired the Holborn solicitors Lewis and Lewis, who, four days later, issued a writ demanding damages of £20,000. Within a month he got £500, an apology, and a complete withdrawal: "I unreservedly withdraw all and every imputation against your character complained of by you in paragraph 2 of your Statement of Claim and I hereby express my regret for having made the same." *Truth* howled on, now charging that the point-to-point had been rigged, but the great reef had been skirted. Except for an absurd remark by Lord Beaverbrook—that Winston had told him he once went to bed with a man to see what it was like—nothing in Churchill's life offers the remotest ground for intimations of homosexuality. At the time, however, the barest rumor of it, unless instantly suppressed, could have been calamitous. As Brabazon wrote him, expressing "very great relief" at the outcome, "one cannot touch pitch without soiling one's hands however clean they may originally have been and the world is so ill natured and suspicious that there would always have been found some ill natured sneak or perhaps some d——d good natured friend to hem & ha! & wink over it—perhaps in years to come, when everyone even yourself had forgotten all about the disagreeable incident. You took the only line possible…. For malignant, preposterous as it was, it would have been impossible to have left such a charge unchallenged." Thus, with the colonel's sanction, the regiment regarded Winston as a martyr. The triumph of irony was complete. The

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Harrovian who had been at odds with his peers and a rebel against school authority was now accepted, and content with his acceptance, in an authoritarian sodality.[162]

Hubert Gough, later recalling his days at Aldershot as a subaltern in the Sixteenth Lancers, said: "We led a cheerful, care-free life; what duties we had to do… did not call for much mental effort. Afternoons were usually free for most officers." Winston's life there followed a relaxed routine. His batman brought him breakfast in bed. A subaltern's only obligations in a typical day were to spend two hours riding, an hour with the horses in the stables, and ninety minutes drilling. The rest of his time was his own. If he remained in barracks, Winston might play bezique for threepence a point, "a shocking descent from the shillings at Deepdene," he wrote, or whist, "a most uninteresting game and one at which I have but little luck." He liked games he could win. He described golf, one of his failures, as "a curious sport whose object is to put a very small ball in a very small hole with implements ill-designed for the purpose." Polo and steeplechasing occupied him more and more, though he paid for his recklessness; after one fall, which confined him to bed for three days, he explained to his mother that at a jump "the animal refused and swerved. I tried to cram him in and he took the wings. Very nearly did he break my leg, but as it is I am only bruised and stiff." Another young officer might have kept that information to himself. Winston didn't; he was still an egotistical, bumptious, rude youth. But these traits were common among young Victorian officers. Besides, he was witty, daring, generous, entertaining. Jennie had found the right word for him. He was *interesting*.[163]

Because Aldershot was only thirty-two miles from London, celebrities often visited to take the salute. Once the hussars rehearsed in the Long Valley under the scrutiny of a rising cavalryman, Captain Douglas Haig. It was "a very fine thing," Winston wrote, to see "a cavalry division of thirty or forty squadrons" maneuvered "as if it were one single unit…. When the line was finally formed and the regiment or brigade was committed to the charge, one could hardly help shouting in joyous wrath." As the grandson of a duke, Winston was chosen to escort the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Connaught, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, and the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary). Best of all were the "splendid parades when Queen Victoria sat in her carriage at the saluting point and… the whole Aldershot garrison, perhaps 25,000 strong, blue and gold, scarlet and steel, passed before her, Horse, Foot, and Artillery… in a broad and scintillating flood." The purpose of all this was obscure. Winston later wrote: "Certainly no Jingo Lieutenant or Fire-eating Staff Officer in the Aldershot Command in 1895, even in his most sanguine moments, would have believed that our little army would ever again be sent to Europe."[164]

Any member of England's ruling families was, by that very fact, welcome in the London mansions and country homes of the aristocracy. Even Lord Randolph, diseased and mad, had not been excluded. And his son was not only a Churchill; he was also an eligible bachelor. "A gay and lordly life," he wrote, "now opened upon me." He had "a great many invitations and could go to a ball every night should I wish to." The greatest affairs that Season were held in Stafford House and Devonshire House, and he was always present. "Everywhere one met friends and kinfolk," he wrote. "The leading figures of Society were in many cases the leading statesmen in Parliament." Present were "all the

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through a heavy shower, his jacket was wet; she told him he might catch cold and would not rest until he spread out the jacket to dry. He had to return to Aldershot by the midnight train for an early parade, and he was there when a telegram arrived from Emma. His old nurse's end was very near. Winston fetched Dr. Keith, engaged a private nurse, and hurried to Woom's side. She recognized him, but as she spoke she sank into a coma. He sat there, holding her hand, until she died at 2:15 the following morning. He wrote: "Death came very easily to her. She had lived such an innocent and loving life of service to others and held such a simple faith, that she had no fears at all, and did not seem to mind very much."[168]

He organized the funeral. Knowing that she had nursed the children of an archdeacon in Cumberland, he wired him, and the clergyman agreed to come and read the service. Winston didn't want to telegraph Jack; he went to Harrow and told him, and they traveled together to London's Manor Park cemetery. Jennie was in Paris and saw no reason to return, but Winston ordered a wreath in her name. He was surprised at the number of mourners. He wrote his mother: "All her relations were there—a good many of whom had travelled from Ventnor overnight—and I was quite surprised to find how many friends she had made in her quiet and simple life. The coffin was covered with wreaths & everything was as it should be." Afterward he paid for a headstone:

Erected in Memory
of
Elizabeth Anne Everest
who died 3rd July 1895
Aged 62
by
Winston Spencer Churchill
Jack Spencer Churchill

Then he made arrangements with the local florist for the upkeep of the grave. "I feel very low," he wrote Jennie, "and find that I never realized how much poor old Woom was to me." It was "indeed another link with the past gone—& I look back with regret to the old days at Connaught Place when fortune still smiled." Depressed, he made a pilgrimage to his father's grave in Bladon and wrote his mother, who had never been there, that he "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… I think it would make you happier to see it."[169] The real source of his solace, although he could not have recognized it, was that all his links with the past were well broken. Except for his hours in the nursery with Woom, his early years had brought him very little pleasure and much pain. But they had fashioned him into a strong young man possessed of immense drive, ready to mount the steep slopes of challenge ahead.

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TWO

STREAM

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1895–1901

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QUEEN Victoria's army, which would leave a lasting impression upon Churchill, was an eccentric, insular institution that had changed little since Waterloo, a battle some men still alive could remember clearly. The troops were led by patricians: Wellington had decreed that English gentlemen made "the best officers in the world, and to compose the officers from a lower class would cause the Army to deteriorate." Military leaders, it was held, should be men with "a stake in the country." Only WASPs need apply; there were few Disraelis or Rothschilds wearing epaulets. Apart from that, public-school boys were accepted if they were "sound," were "of the right sort," and came from "good families." (You could quickly identify those with classical educations; they swore "By Jove," an oath never heard in Other Ranks.) In endorsing an application, one colonel scrawled across it, "The son of a good soldier, his mother is a lady." It was common to note on reports as a recommendation: "A good man to hounds." Lord Roberts always checked the bloodlines of a man applying for an appointment, and according to the career officer Ian Hamilton, if Roberts thought the candidate "owned a good grandmother he would give him a trial."[1] Gentlemen were expected to guard zealously their regiment's "tone," a Victorian word freighted with class consciousness. The army counted on them to live by the gentleman's code, and if they didn't know what that was, they weren't commissioned in the first place. In some ways the code was peculiar. Gambling debts were always settled promptly, but those to tradesmen weren't. Six years after joining the Fourth Hussars, Churchill still hadn't paid the tailor who made his first uniforms. But once you were in, you could stay in forever. Some officers who had reached their eighties retained their commands. Nor were crippling wounds disqualifying. Two generals, Roberts and Wolseley, were one-eyed. Hamilton's wrist had been shattered at Majuba.[*] Lord Raglan had been one-armed. So was Samuel Browne, who invented the Sam Browne belt so he could draw his sword swiftly with his remaining hand.

By continental standards, the number of men in uniform was tiny. Asked what he would do if the British army landed in Prussia, Bismarck replied: "Send a policeman and have it arrested." There were no corps, no divisions, nor even brigades. Everything was built around the regiment. An infantry regiment might have a single battalion of seven hundred men divided into five or six companies. An entire cavalry regiment like Winston's—hussars, dragoons, or lancers—numbered from three hundred to five hundred men, led by its colonel, four majors, eight captains, and fourteen or fifteen subalterns. There were just thirty-one cavalry regiments in the whole of the British Empire. Seniority—which determined which outfit was stationed on the right in an attack—was jealously guarded in both the cavalry and the infantry. The Coldstream Guards went back to 1661, the Grenadier Guards to 1656, the Scots Guards to 1633, the Buffs to 1572, and the Honourable Artillery Company, which was neither a company nor confined to ordnance, to 1537. Each of them cherished drums and flags captured in battles, some long forgotten, and each dressed officers and ranks in absurd uniforms. *The Times* had reported on the regalia of the Eleventh Hussars: "The brevity of their jackets, the irrationality of their

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eleven shillings and fourpence per week, twopence less than the most exploited rural laborer in England. Edward Spiers quotes a recruiting sergeant: "It was only in the haunts of dissipation or inebriation, and among the very lowest dregs of society, that I met with anything like success."[4]

Yet these men had conquered an Empire. Under Victoria one regiment or another had been in action every year, somewhere on five continents, fighting from Aden and Afghanistan to Zululand and the Zhor Valley. They were almost always victorious. One reason was their sublime, unfathomable courage. Braver officers never led men into battle. They marched at the head of their columns, disdaining weapons for themselves, brandishing only cigars or swagger sticks. At the battle of Isandhlwana every officer had a horse and could have escaped with his life. Not one did; all remained and died with their men. Under fire, they refused to "bob"—to duck bullets and shells. An astonishing number actually enjoyed courting death. Of his first wound Wolseley wrote: "What a supremely delightful moment that was!" A captain in the First Royal Dragoons wrote his mother: "I *adore* war. It is like a big picnic. I have never been so well or happy." Chinese Gordon, seeing combat for the first time in the Crimea, found it "indescribably exciting."[5] If officers found themselves in peaceful billets, they looked for war elsewhere, took leave to get there, and paid their own expenses. The colonel commanding the Fourth Dragoon Guards enlisted as a private in the King's Own Scottish Borderers so he could join the storming of the Malakand Pass. The commander of the Tenth Hussars fought under the Turkish and Egyptian flags. Younghusband, having vanished from his post, was next seen standing rapturously in the middle of a Philippine bloodletting. And in November 1895 Second Lieutenant Winston Churchill went to embattled Cuba via the United States.

His motives were mixed. He wanted to see a real war. He was curious about New York, his mother's home. And he was bored. Anticipating its move to India, the Fourth Hussars had been giving its officers ten weeks' leave. They were expected to spend it yachting, racing, steeplechasing, and riding to hounds. The War Office assumed that, as gentlemen, they all had independent incomes and could afford such diversions. Being broke was bad form. The Manchester Regiment had the lowest status in the army because it was said that its officers could live on their pay. But a young cavalry subaltern needed a charger, two hunters, and three polo ponies. Buying them had exhausted Churchill's funds and his mother's patience. Therefore, as he put it, he "searched the world for some scene of adventure or excitement."[6] Spain was making its last attempt to quell the insurrection led by José Martí and Máximo Gómez, and 200,000 Spanish troops were tied down in Cuba. Both sides were murdering civilians and putting towns to the torch. That, and its proximity to America, appealed to Churchill. Moreover, he could manage some of the expenses. The *Daily Graphic*, which had published Randolph's letters from Africa in 1891, agreed to pay Winston five guineas for every dispatch from the front. He persuaded one of his regiment's senior subalterns, Reginald Barnes, to accompany him.

At that time there were no restrictions on officers' writing for the press. Brabazon had no objections to the trip. Neither had Jennie. She sent ninety pounds and wrote: "I understand all right—& of course darling it is natural that you shd want to travel & I won't throw cold water on yr little plans." Next Winston wrote Lord Randolph's old friend Sir Henry Wolff, now the British ambassador in Madrid, applying for permission

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from the Spanish military authorities to visit the war zone. It was granted instantly, almost eagerly. The fighting in Cuba had given Spain a terrible image. The press in both England and the United States ardently supported the rebels. This briefly became an issue. Churchill needed one more endorsement, from the War Office. He called on the commander in chief, Wolseley, who seemed embarrassed by the request and hinted that it would be better if Winston went without asking him; newspapermen might misinterpret his sanction of two British officers marching with the Spanish troops. But he couldn't deny a Churchill. He sighed, nodded, and, Winston wrote, added that "if I worked at the military profession he would help me in every way he could & that I was always to come and ask when I wanted anything." Then Wolseley sent Winston to his director of military intelligence. This officer, unlike his commander, saw no need for discretion. He provided Churchill with maps and a full briefing. In addition, Winston wrote, he and Barnes were "requested to collect information and statistics on various points and particularly as to the effect of the new bullet—its penetration and striking power. This invests our mission with almost an official character & cannot fail to help one in the future."[7]

On November 2 they sailed aboard the Cunard Royal Mail Steamship *Etruria*. The voyage was "tedious and uncomfortable… & I shall always look upon journeys by sea as necessary evils." But in New York they forgot their grievances. Originally they had scheduled three days in the city, and, aboard ship, had considered cutting this in half. Actually, they were there a week. The man responsible for this revision in plans was Bourke Cockran, a wealthy Irish-American lawyer, congressman, and power in the Tammany wigwam. Cockran was one of Jennie's men—at one time he had been her favorite—and like the rest he cut a remarkable figure, towering, leonine, with deep-set eyes and a massive forehead. His mobile features gave a contemporary the impression of "something Spanish, Celtiberian as well as Celtic."[8] His oratory was remarkable. Twice, in 1884 and 1892, his deep, resonant brogue had held Democratic national conventions spellbound. Churchill was to be one of his early conquests. Among the last was Adlai Stevenson, who modeled his rhetoric on Cockran's. In the early 1950s Churchill would astound Stevenson by quoting long passages from Cockran speeches.

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is a sign of strength. A great, crude, strong, young people are the Americans—like a boisterous healthy boy among enervated but well bred ladies and gentlemen." And New Yorkers, by their treatment of him, won his heart. "What an extraordinary people the Americans are! 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." He adored America's most popular song that year:[10]

> *When you hear dem a bells go ding, ling ling,*
> *All join 'round and sweetly you must sing,*
> *And when the verse am through, in the chorus all join in,*
> *There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight!*

But there is no doubt about which New Yorker impressed him most. He wrote: "I have great discussions with Mr Cockran on every conceivable subject from Economics to yacht racing. He is a clever man and one from whose conversation much is to be learned." Night after night, long after Barnes had retired, they sat in the flat's large library, sipping brandy, smoking cigars—Churchill's first—and talking, talking, talking. Jennie's intimate admirer introduced her son to the works of Edmund Burke. He told him: "Burke mastered the English language as a man masters the horse. He was simple, direct, eloquent, yet there is a splendor in his phrases that even in cold type reveals how forcibly he must have enthralled his visitors." Churchill was enthralled by his host's fire, vision, vigor, and, most of all, by his own mastery of English. In speaking, Cockran advised him, one should avoid scurrility, affectations, and cant. He said: "What people really want to hear is the truth—it is the exciting thing—speak the simple truth." All his life Winston would remember, and frequently quote, some of the phrases he heard by the fire in that Fifth Avenue apartment. Cockran said: "The earth is a generous mother. She will provide in plentiful abundance food for all her children, if they will but cultivate her soil in justice and peace." He also said: "In a society where there is democratic tolerance and freedom under the law, many kinds of evils will crop up, but give them a little time and they usually breed their own cure." Thirty-seven years later Churchill would write of Cockran: "I have never seen his like or, in some respects, his equal. His conversation, in point, in pith, in rotundity, in antithesis and in comprehension, exceeded anything I have ever heard."[11] By then Winston knew scores of great men. But even in 1895 he had met Rosebery, Salisbury, and Balfour. The difference was that they had all regarded him as his father's misfit son. In New York, for the first time, he found himself in the company of a distinguished man who treated him as a peer. Today Bourke Cockran's papers gather dust in the New York Public Library. He is forgotten in his own city. Yet a man who aroused young Churchill, and inspired Stevenson's gallant campaign in 1952, deserves remembrance.

Cockran seemed omnipotent in New York. At a word from him, the two English lieutenants had a private compartment for the thirty-six-hour train trip through

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Philadelphia, Washington, Savannah, Tampa Bay, and Key West, where they boarded the steamer *Olivette*. In the early hours of Wednesday, November 20, they sighted Havana and the rugged coast outlined against the deep blue horizon. Winston felt "delicious yet tremulous… I felt as if I sailed with Long John Silver and first gazed on Treasure Island. Here was a place where anything might happen. Here was a place where something would certainly happen. Here I might leave my bones." In his first dispatch as a war correspondent he wrote:

> High up on the cliffs, as the ship enters the narrows, one sees the fortress of El Moro, formerly a place of great strength, and commanding the channel to the port. It is now only used as a prison for political and military offenders, and an occasional place for execution. Here it was that the sentence of death on Lieutenant Gallegos was carried out in May last. This officer had the charge of a small post with some fifty soldiers, and was unfortunate enough to be breakfasting in a café when the insurgents happened to pass.[12]

A carriage carried them to the Gran Hotel Inglaterra and then to the office of Alexander Gollan, the British consul general. Everything had been arranged. In the morning they would leave the capital for a twelve-hour train trip to Santa Clara, the headquarters of Captain General Arsenio Martínez de Campos. Unfortunately, they could not be guaranteed a safe passage. Rebels frequently used passing trains for target practice. Sometimes they set them afire, or blew up the tracks. Winston was excited. He told readers of the *Graphic* that the train preceding theirs, carrying a Spanish general, "had been thrown off the line a few miles beyond Santo Domingo, and… fifteen of its occupants had been severely injured." Their train, however, completed the trip without incident. "Marshal Campos, to whose headquarters we went, received us very kindly, and readily gave us the necessary passes and letters."[13]

Campos turned them over to Lieutenant Juan O'Donnell, son of the Duke of Tetuán. The lieutenant was fluent in English. Unfortunately, he had a sad tale to tell. Churchill was introduced to the most exasperating problem of correspondents covering a guerrilla war—finding the front. A Spanish mobile column was camped twenty miles away, pursuing a force of four thousand insurgents, but the jungle between here and there was "infested by the enemy." To get there, Churchill and Barnes must take another train to Cienfuegos, proceed by steamer to Tuna, and then travel, again by train, to Sancti Spiritu. "Though this route forms two sides of a triangle, it is—Euclid notwithstanding—shorter than the other, and we shall catch the column there."[14]

Altogether he filed five "Letters from the Front" for the *Graphic*, each of which ran under the head "The Insurrection in Cuba," was by-lined "From Our Own Correspondent," and concluded with the initials "WSC." They show a keen eye for detail, a gift for clarity, and a sure grasp of tactics. The fourth was the best. By November 30—his twenty-first birthday—he had joined troops commanded by General Juarez Valdez in the fortified village of Arroyo Blanco. At 5:00 A.M., wearing his British uniform, he accompanied two battalions, seventeen hundred men, who were feeling their way toward a band of rebels led by Gómez. "No sooner had we got clear of the town than we heard the sound of firing." To deceive Gómez's scouts, the Spaniards retraced their steps and approached from a different direction, "through swampy meadows of coarse grass

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traversed by frequent water-courses." At 10:00 A.M., to his astonishment, they halted and everyone except sentries slept for four hours. This was his introduction to the siesta, a custom which he would appropriate and use during both world wars to turn one working day into two. Rising, they advanced and came upon a rebel encampment; the enemy's line of march could be traced "by broken branches and trampled grass, and this line the column followed." At 5:00 P.M. the Spaniards found rebel campfires "still smouldering, and signs of a hasty departure were to be seen on every side." Here they dug in for the night, with four companies of infantry posted as sentinels. "The whole scene, bathed in brilliant moonlight—in strong contrast to which the tall palm trees and the surrounding woods showed in deepest black"—was compared with "the numerous watch fires, against whose glaze the figures of the soldiers were silhouetted."[15]

At 5:15 A.M. they were off again. "The sun had not yet risen, and a mist hung over all the low-lying ground." The path ahead "lay through the thickest and most impenetrable forest." Until now Valdez's plan had been to throw one battalion ahead, with two extended companies guarding each flank, but here the flank guards had to be abandoned; the dense jungle confined them to a narrow path. "Daylight slowly broadened, and the long Spanish column insinuated itself like a snake into the endless forests and undulations of a vast, lustrous landscape dripping with moisture and sparkling with sunshine." Their siesta was interrupted by rebel sharpshooters. Back on the trail Winston lit a Cuban cigar—he had the habit now—and noted that the bush here "gave place to a forest of extraordinary palm trees of all possible sizes and most peculiar shapes." The column forded a river and camped at a place called Las Grullas, where he persuaded two officers to join him in a swim. As they were dressing, "suddenly we heard a shot fired. Another and another followed; then came a volley. The bullets whistled over our heads." Like Chinese Gordon and George Washington, he found it thrilling to be under fire: "There is nothing more exhilarating than to be shot at without result." He coolly observed that while Valdez's men carried Mausers, the enemy used Remingtons, "and the deep note of their pieces contrasted strangely with the shrill rattle of the magazine rifles of the Spaniards."[16]

That night a bullet passed through the thatched hut in which he was sleeping and another wounded an orderly just outside. Battle—the battle of La Reforma—was joined in the morning. The Spanish column debouched into open country, and the general, scanning the field through his field glasses, saw the enemy's main position. He ordered an attack. His infantry advanced three hundred yards in silence; then "from the distant crest line came a lot of little puffs of smoke, followed immediately by the report of the insurgent rifles." The Spaniards' rifles replied as the infantrymen continued their advance. "The firing on both sides became heavy." There was "a sound in the air sometimes like a sigh, sometimes like a whistle, and at others like the buzz of an offended hornet." Valdez, "in his white uniform and gold lace, mounted on a grey horse, was a mark for every sharpshooter," yet he rode up to within fifty yards of the firing line, urging his men on while bullets felled staff officers riding on either side of him. "Presently the sound of the Mauser volleys began to predominate and the rebel fire to slacken, till finally it ceased altogether." Churchill saw "figures scurrying to the shelter of the woods," then silence. Spanish troops occupied the enemy's position. They had but one day's rations left, however, and pursuit of the insurgents "was impossible owing to the impenetrable nature

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On the other hand, he had failed to grasp the essential nature of guerrilla warfare, so important to an understanding of the century ahead. He had been, and in some respects always would be, a defender of the established order. *Imperialism* would never be a pejorative for him. Of the infamous Jameson Raid, which took place a week after his return from New York, he later wrote, "I was all for Dr. Jameson and his men. I understood fairly well the causes of the dispute on both sides. I longed for the day on which we should 'avenge Majuba.' I was shocked to see our Conservative Government act so timidly in this crisis. I was ashamed to see them truckling to a misguided Liberal Opposition and even punishing these brave raiders, many of whom I knew so well." His forecasts of Cuba's immediate future would soon be discredited. But in the long run his pessimism about the island would be vindicated. He had just reached his majority. He had been growing in acumen since his father's death, and was continually revising his judgments. Little more than a year after his return from embattled Cuba, he expressed misgivings over his first interpretation of the revolution there. "I reproach myself somewhat," he wrote, "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…. I am aware that what I wrote did not shake thrones or upheave empires—but the importance of principles do not [sic] depend on the importance of what involves them." One principle was clear. It was inconceivable to him that a colony could survive as a sovereign state. After the *Maine* blew up, he told a reporter that "America can give the Cubans peace, and perhaps prosperity will then return. American annexation is what we must all urge, but possibly we shall not have to urge long." To him the very thought of Cuban independence was as absurd as, say, an independent India.[21]

India now loomed. The Fourth Hussars marched from Aldershot to Hounslow, paraded past the retiring Brabazon for the last time, and began packing leisurely for the long voyage eastward in the autumn. Churchill later recalled: "I now passed a most agreeable six months; in fact they formed almost the only idle spell I have ever had." It was the year of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; fashionable London celebrated with balls, receptions, recitals, and dinner parties. Jennie was back after nine months of dalliance on the Continent, including a marathon romp with Bourke Cockran in a Champs-Elysées apartment, and vexed only by pursuing, jealous little notes from the Prince of Wales, who typically speculated on "where your next loved victim is…?" Winston had also missed her. "My darling Mamma," he had written her from Aldershot, "I am longing for the day when you will be able to have a little house of your own and when I can really feel that there is such a place as home." Now she had taken, not a little house, but a seven-story Georgian mansion at 35A Great Cumberland Place, near Hyde Park and within sight of Marble Arch, and using London's six-year-old "electric deep-level" subway, the precursor of the modern tube, he commuted between there and Waterloo, taking the train on to his

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barracks. Once Duchess Lily invited him to join a weekend party at Deepdene given for the prince. Colonel Brabazon would also be present. Churchill realized, he wrote, that "I must be upon my best behaviour: punctual, subdued, reserved, in short display all the qualities with which I am least endowed." Unforgivably, he missed the six o'clock train to Dorking. That delayed him by an hour and a quarter. In his railway compartment, he frantically changed to full dress—to the dismay of the man who shared it—and a servant, meeting him at the station with a brougham, lashed the horses into a gallop. Nevertheless, he was late. He hoped to slip into the dining room unnoticed and apologize afterward. Instead, he found the entire company assembled in the drawing room. Without him there were only thirteen in the party, and the royal family was superstitious about that. As Winston bowed, HRH said shirtily with his German accent: "Don't they teach you to be punctual in your regiment, Winston?" He glared at Brabazon, who glared at Winston, who was, for once, mute.[22]

It didn't last. Before the meal ended he was chatting amiably with the prince. Duchess Lily reproachfully called him incorrigible; he cheerfully acknowledged it. Among the other guests he had met Sir Bindon Blood, an influential veteran of colonial wars, so he counted the weekend a triumph. In his letters of those months one has the feeling that skies were always blue. He danced, he hunted, he devised clever masquerades for fancy-dress balls, and he evaded creditors. His means during this period are in fact mysterious. Messrs E. Tautz, breeches and trousers makers, were dunning him for nearly forty guineas. He now had "five quite good ponies" and owed payment for them. Wine bills, book bills, saddler's bills—they accumulated, were stuffed away and ignored. His attitude toward them was insouciant. He left a note for his mother: "Our finance is indeed involved! If I had not been so foolish as to pay a lot of bills I should have the money now."[23]

She wrote him tautly: "I assure you unless something extraordinary turns up I see ruin staring me in the face." Jennie was as improvident as Winston—she would spend £200 on a ball dress—but after he left she would be in London to face the consequences of his extravagance, and her alarm mounted. She borrowed from friends. She borrowed £17,000 from a bank, using her life insurance as collateral. She raised money on her jewels and juggled balances. Still the drain continued. She wrote: "My darling boy, you can't think how all this worries me. I have so many money problems of my own I feel I cannot take on any others"; and, "What an extraordinary boy you are as regards yr business affairs." Her annual income had fallen to £900, out of which she had to provide allowances for both her sons. She explained this to Winston, and he replied: "The situation as described by your letter is appalling. As you say it is of course impossible for you to live in London on such a pittance." Then he hinted unscrupulously: "I hate the idea of your marrying—but that of course would be a solution." It was indeed the eventual solution. Meanwhile, she made ends meet by taking over houses, redecorating them, and selling them for a profit. Winston remained indifferent to her struggle. Once one of his checks actually bounced. She told him: "I marvel at their allowing you to overdraw as you do. Neither the Westminster or the National Bank will let me overdraw £5 without telling me at once." She sounded envious.[24]

He remitted thirty pounds of the forty-five she had paid on his account and vaguely

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subjects, was on the Red Sea, at midpoint in the twenty-three-day voyage. He played chess with a fellow officer that afternoon and listened to a string band that evening. His spirits were low. He wrote home: "The weather is beginning to get hot and the troop decks are awful." His only good news was that he had reached the semifinal of a shipboard chess tournament: "I have improved greatly since the voyage began, and I think I shall try to get really good while I am in India." But that was the limit of his expectations there. He had no inkling that India, far from dooming his future, would be the first crucial experience of his youth.[27]

In 1896 the British Raj had reached flood tide. It lay halfway between the Mutiny forty years earlier, which had seen the transfer of power from the Honourable East India Company to the Crown, and the great days of that improbable, bespectacled nationalist who wore only a homespun dhoti and was known as Mahatma Gandhi. In the interval English dominance over the subcontinent flourished. The Indian Empire was a jigsaw of 602 states, ranging in size from Kashmir and Hyderabad to tiny holdings of a few acres. All were ruled from London under the principle of "paramountcy." This was paternalism at best, and at worst, dictatorship, but the British argued, not unreasonably, that India had never been democratic, had never even been a country, and had always been governed by rajas, whose rights were respected by the Queen's viceroy. As Englishmen saw it, they had rescued the people from pagans and savagery and introduced them to a better way of life. This was not entirely hypocritical. At the time of the Mutiny they had founded three Indian universities. Qualified natives, though few in number, had been admitted to the Indian Civil Service since 1864. Irrigation, railroads, newspapers, and the concept of Western justice and its quaint trimmings had been introduced and accepted. Solicitors wore white collar-tabs, like lawyers in Lincoln's Inn; barristers wore wigs; judges wore imperial ermine. Hospitals, physicians, and public-health officials treated black and white patients alike.

Nevertheless, the Union Jack flew over all public buildings. Englishmen could, with impunity, strike natives who offended them. The pukka sahib and the burra sahib were masters to be respected and feared. By no means did all of them abuse their privileges. Those who came to love India, and they were many, treated its people with respect and civility. To them the Raj was a gigantic humming chromoscope providing endless, delightful, exotic sights and sounds: the sullen red glow growing in the bazaars and the little compounds crayoned with light at dawn, and equestrian statues of British generals staring blankly at the alien sunshine; the rhinestone eyes of plodding bullocks, and chuprassies fussing busily about in their gold-frogged *chamras,* and red *tikkas* on the foreheads of Brahmin women; dholl *banyas* beating their gongs and chewing blood-red pan supari; the fierce *dadu* wind blowing down the Himalayas and the contrasting hot puff of a sultry *loo* breeze; the fabrics of Mysore silk and Travancore coir and khuskhus screening from Bombay; the strumming of sitars, the quiet green maidans, the pye-dogs, the *ita'at* festivals of holy sadhus, the *did-you-do-it did-you-do-it* of lapwings perched on

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the branches of gigantic haldu trees, and the choruses of doves weeping piteously in scented foliage overhead, throbbing like a fever in the night. Britons who had found a home here ("Ah India, my country, my country," Kipling had scribbled in the middle of an essay) rejoiced in the land's eccentricities: the sacred elephants with their embroidered howdahs, the big fruit bats which flapped home at daybreak and hung upside down in trees by day; the fields of steaming white where dhobis' sheets lay drying; the native railway engineers who rode around seated beneath umbrellas on their little inspection trolleys; the paddle-wheelers of the Ganges; the "*kala* memsahibs," or black ladies, who could be just as arrogant as the most insensitive English mems; and the obscene carvings on the Nepalese temple of Benares, of which *Murray's Handbook* chastely observed, "visitors need not see them if the attendant is discouraged from pointing them out." Visits to rajas' palaces could be stunning; one might see strutting peacocks, figures of four-armed goddesses in marble courtyards, gardens of brilliant melon-flowers, displays of star rubies, Kashmir sapphires, and emeralds like eggs—visions of the ancient, merciless India of priceless jewels and slave girls. Performing scorpions were to be found in the streets. So were snake-charmers, and fakirs, and freak shows, and the indescribable scent of communal India, a complex compound of kerosene, burned ghee, rose, dung, and dahlia. Excitement could be found in just sitting on your veranda at teatime, sipping whiskey in the heat, your legs propped up on the long arms of your wicker chair, awaiting the first mango showers and watching the fading of daylight, so unlike the long blue twilights of England, when the sun plunged behind the Arabian Sea with dramatic swiftness, and darkness fell on the vast Hindustan plain before you could grope your way inside.

This was the India Kipling loved, but it was known to too few of the new arrivals of the 1890s. A majority of them ignored the magic of India, eschewed curry, tried to recreate English suburbs in their cantonments, and watched regimental cricket matches while bands played Gilbert and Sullivan airs. Among themselves they laughed heartily, slapped one another on the back, and called each other "old chap" while completely ignoring the Indians, or, as they called them, the "wogs."* They traveled like lords. Short distances were covered in horse-drawn tongas, in coolie-drawn rickshas, or in sedan chairs, where you sat on a *dholi*, a small stool suspended from poles carried on the shoulders of two natives. Long trips were by train, in coaches reserved for the English; at stations there were rest rooms for First Class Gents, even special ones for Officers. On Saturday evenings subalterns got drunk, played rugger for regimental trophies, and sobered up in the morning over mulligatawny soup—all without leaving the post to explore the mysteries beyond the gate. It was assumed that the greatest possible achievement of an Indian youth would be to be accepted by a British public school. Natives believed it, too. Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's greatest protégé, became, and remained, a loyal Harrovian.

That did not, however, entitle him to enter a Raj club. It was said that the only difference between the Bengal Club and the Bombay Club was that one excluded Indians and dogs while the other admitted dogs. These were sahib bastions. A member sat at a little table, rang a silver bell with the reproduction of a cobra as a handle, and ordered a chota peg, a small whiskey, secure in the knowledge that no one of inferior blood could approach. Reading matter was all from home: *Punch*, *Country Life*, the *Book of the Horse*, *The Times*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and, of course, the *Queen's Regulations*, *Hart's Army*

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List, and, later, *Jane's Fighting Ships*. In the clubs, members of the ascendant race planned war memorials, fountains, and statues honoring great Anglo-Indians. Memsahibs concentrated on converting hill stations—cooler because of their altitude, and therefore summer refuges—into a bit of the Mother Country. Naini Tal, Mussoorie, Ootacamund, and Darjeeling were popular hill stations, but the greatest was Simla, to which the viceroy and his court repaired when thermometers began to soar. Simla's English parks and its half-timbered cluttered homes, shrines of Victorian materialism, testified to the insularity of the Raj. There one could sit by evening fires, breathe deeply of moist, cool air, ride bridle paths, and pretend that the real India did not exist.

Architecture reflected the confusion of disparate cultures, no more so than in Bombay, the destination of the Fourth Hussars before they moved south to permanent quarters outside Bangalore in the Madras Presidency. Here, where Kipling was born nine years before Churchill, you could find Moslem and Hindu and Occidental architectural principles warring with one another in the Municipality, erected in 1893, and in the Victoria Terminus, the central train station, which Nicholas Wollaston called "pure imported ingenuity, a fantasy of spikes and pillars full of grime and purple gloom."[28] The Mint was Ionic. The Town Hall was Doric outside and Corinthian inside. The Old Secretariat was Venetian Gothic. The university library and clock tower, fourteenth-century Gothic, were the work of Sir Gilbert Scott, who had built the Albert Memorial. You couldn't miss the similarity; it was awesome. University Hall, fifteenth-century French Decorative, was named, appropriately, after Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Readymoney, an Indian who had met the standards of success recognized in the Victorian Midlands. The telegraph office was Romanesque; the High Court, Early English. Various monuments, in indescribable styles, saluted the military virtues, commerce, and equity. The identity of the designer of Bombay's Sassoon Dock has not survived, luckily for his reputation. It is a triumph of incompetence, so ill-suited to disembarkation that impatient immigrants often chose to come ashore in skiffs, a risky procedure which could cripple a man before he set foot on Indian soil.

It happened to Churchill. Let him tell it: "We came alongside of a great stone wall with dripping steps and iron rings for hand-holds. The boat rose and fell four or five feet with the surges. I put out my hand and grasped at a ring; but before I could get my feet on the steps the boat swung away, giving my right shoulder a sharp and peculiar wrench. I scrambled up all right, making a few remarks of a general character, mostly beginning with the earlier letters of the alphabet, hugged my shoulder and soon thought no more about it." He was reminded of it in Poona, where the regiment spent the night under double-fly tents and then tried out the polo ponies of the Poona Light Horse. On his mount he found he could not swing a polo stick unless his right arm was strapped to his side. He procured a leather harness. That would come and go, but tennis was out forever. Indeed, his injury was to plague him in various maddening ways all his life. His shoulder would go out at unexpected moments, while he was taking a book from a shelf, swimming, sleeping with his arm under a pillow, or slipping on a stairway. Once the capsule that held the joint together nearly tore loose during an expansive gesture in Parliament, and he thought "how astonished the members would have been to see the speaker to whom they were listening, suddenly for no reason throw himself upon the floor in an instinctive effort

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6,000 miles away."[31]

Days began just before dawn, when, he wrote, one was "awakened by a dusky figure with a clammy hand adroitly lifting one's chin and applying a gleaming razor to a lathered and defenceless throat."[32] Morning parade formed at 6:00 A.M. Mounted, they drilled and maneuvered for an hour and a half. Baths followed, and then breakfast. After that they were free until 5:00 P.M., the hour of polo. Despite his shoulder, he rode in every chukker, or playing period, he could find. As shadows crossed the field they broke up, bathed again, and dined at 8:30 P.M. to the strains of the regimental band. Subalterns fortunate enough to avoid being drafted for after-dinner whiskey by garrulous senior officers smoked and talked until 11:00 P.M. and lights out.

Every reveille found him ready for the new day. He was a keen soldier. His troop sergeant later recalled in the regimental history that "after a field day Mr Churchill would arrive at stables with rolls of foolscap and lots of lead pencils of all colours, and tackle me on the movements we had done at the exercise." Both sergeant and subaltern were detailed to attend a course on musketry; Churchill passed out first in the class. He was happy, at least in the beginning, to be ignorant of political crises and social gossip. Long afterward he would say: "If you liked to be waited on and relieved of home worries, India thirty years ago was perfection." He seldom gave money a thought. In addition to his lodging allowance, he was paid fourteen shillings a day, and three pounds a month to keep two horses. This, with his allowance from Jennie, constituted his income. Each month the paymaster handed him a string bag about the size of a turnip, filled with silver rupees. He immediately turned it over to his butler and forgot about it. This lofty disdain was irresponsible; his mother, her sister Clara, and several friends had just been defrauded of over £4,000 by an American confidence man. Jennie wrote, begging him to practice thrift. Instead, he lived beyond his means, borrowing from native moneylenders. He would recall: "Every officer was warned against these gentlemen. I found them most agreeable; very fat, very urbane, quite honest and mercilessly rapacious. All you had to do was to sign little bits of paper, and produce a polo pony as if by magic. The smiling financier rose to his feet, covered his face with his hands, replaced his slippers, and trotted off contentedly till that day three months."[33] Somehow Jennie managed to cover their debts. Her admirers were still many, and rich.

Romance first reared its violin-shaped head in Winston's life on November 3, 1896. He wrote home from Trimulgherry that he had just been introduced "to Miss Pamela Plowden—who lives here. I must say that she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen —'Bar none' as the Duchess Lily says. We are going to try and do the City of Hyderabad together—on an elephant." Pamela would be in and out of his life for years. Other girls did not attract him. Returning from a racecourse he reported that he had seen "a lot of horrid Anglo-Indian women" there, and that "nice people in India are few & far between. They are like oases in the desert…. I have lived the life of a recluse out here. The vulgar Anglo-Indians have commented on my not 'calling' as is the absurd custom of the country…. I know perhaps three people who are agreeable and I have no ambitions to extend my acquaintance." But there were other diversions. For a time he collected butterflies in the gardens around his bungalow—swallowtails, white admirals, purple emperors, and rare species. He sent home for nets, collecting boxes, pins, boards, and a

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killing tin. Barnes and Baring protested that he was turning the house into a taxidermist's shop. Then disaster struck. "My butterfly collection," he mournfully wrote Jack, "which included upwards of 65 different sorts, has been destroyed by the malevolence of a rat who crawled into the cabinet and devoured all the specimens." Undaunted, he cultivated roses: Maréchal Niel, La France, Gloire de Dijon—"over 50 different kinds of roses," he wrote his mother, adding, "if it would not worry you I would like you very much to send a few English seeds—Wallflowers, Stocks, Tulips etc."[34]

Winston's one great passion in those first months continued to be polo. His fellow officers shared it, and they concocted a plan. Never in the history of the Raj had a cavalry regiment from southern India won the Indian Empire's Regimental Cup. But the officers of the Fourth Hussars, pooling their resources, helped to break this precedent. Their scheme was to approach the Poona Light Horse. Because this regiment was permanently stationed in the country, the Poona sepoys, largely officered by Britons, had a clear advantage in securing the Arabian ponies so prized by polo players. Specifically, they had first choice of mounts arriving at the Byculla stables in Bombay, where Arab steeds were imported. During the Fourth Hussars' pause in Maharashtra, Churchill and his comrades had admired these animals. Now they bought an entire stud of twenty-five ponies from the Poona Light Horse. Ordinarily two or three years' practice was believed essential before a regiment could field a passable team, but six weeks after their landing they challenged the Nineteenth Hussars for the Golconda Cup in Hyderabad. Although the match was considered a joke—and the laughter grew when the crowd saw that one subaltern from Bangalore had to ride one-armed—it was preceded by customary ceremonies. The native army of the nizam of Hyderabad paraded in full dress. The British troops followed. Elephants hauling cannon raised their trunks in salute as they passed the reviewing stand. After tiffin the game began, and the lithe, darting Nineteenth Hussars, as expected, quickly scored three goals. They were held to that, however, while the Fourth Hussars, with the one-armed officer leading them, scored nine times, thus establishing a record, never broken, of a regiment's winning a major tournament within fifty days of landing in India. One of Churchill's contemporaries, Patrick Thompson, believed that if you wanted to understand him, you had to see him play polo. "He rides in the game," Thompson said, "like heavy cavalry getting into position for the assault. He trots about, keenly watchful, biding his time, a master of tactics and strategy. Abruptly he sees his chance, and he gathers his pony and charges in, neither deft nor graceful, but full of tearing physical energy—and skillful with it, too. He bears down opposition by the weight of his dash and strikes the ball. Did I say 'strikes'? He *slashes* the ball."[35]

Apart from polo, he had acquired a taste for horse racing, with himself as jockey. Duchess Lily had promised him a pony, and he had expected to find it waiting for him in Bombay. It wasn't there. He wrote Jennie of his disappointment. She was unsympathetic: "It may be dead for all I know, but if it is not I want you to promise me to sell it." She and the Prince of Wales had discussed it, "& he begged me to tell you that you ought not to race… it is next to impossible to race in India & keep clean hands." Winston bridled: "I do not at all want to sell it—and I cannot see that it is unwise of me to keep it…. Everyone out here possesses an animal of one sort or another which they race in the numerous local meetings…. Now I cannot believe that all who race—*on this small scale*—must

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Hume, and he had found it dull. Now, "all through the glistening middle hours of the Indian day, from when we quitted stables till the evening shadows proclaimed the hour of Polo, I devoured Gibbon. I rode triumphantly through it… and enjoyed it all. I scribbled all my opinions on the margins of the pages." On January 14, 1897, we find him writing Jennie, "The eighth volume of Gibbon is still unread as I have been lured from its completion by [Winwood Reade's] *The Martyrdom of Man* & a fine translation of the Republic of Plato: both of which are fascinating." Then, remembering Woom's brother-in-law by the fire at Ventnor, he tackled twelve volumes of Macaulay. On March 17 he wrote, "I have completed Macaulay's History and very nearly finished his Essays." He thought that Macaulay "is easier reading than Gibbon and in quite a different style. Macaulay crisp and forcible, Gibbon stately and impressive. Both are fascinating and show what a fine language English is since it can be pleasing in styles so different." He was covering "fifty pages of Macaulay and twenty-five of Gibbon every day. There are only 100 of the latter's 4,000 odd left now."[38]

The scope of his explorations was broadening—"I read three or four books at a time to avoid tedium"—and he was poring over Schopenhauer, Malthus, Darwin, Aristotle (on politics only), Henry Fawcett's *Political Economy*, William Lecky's *European Morals* and *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, Liang's *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, Victor-Henri Rochefort's *Memoirs*, the memoirs of the Duc de Saint Simon, and Henry Hallam's *Constitutional History*. Incredibly, he asked his mother to send him all one hundred volumes of the *Annual Register*, the record of British public events founded by Burke. He explained that he wanted to know "the detailed Parliamentary history (Debates, Divisions, Parties, cliques & caves)* of the last 100 years." Jennie balked at the expense—fourteen shillings a volume—but she did send twenty-seven. In using them, he first set down his opinion of an issue, then studied the debates. By this practice he hoped "to build up a scaffolding of logical and consistent views which will perhaps tend to the creation of a logical and consistent mind. Of course the *Annual Register* is valuable only for its facts. A good knowledge of these would arm me with a sharp sword. Macaulay, Gibbon, Plato etc must train the muscles to wield that sword to the greatest effect."[39]

He was scrawling letters to Jennie, Jack, Welldon, and Cockran, rekindling issues which had fired Parliaments of the past but were now resolved or at least dormant. Disraeli's support for the popular election of Scottish clergymen won his approval; Gladstone's opposition to parliamentary reform, his disapproval. He thought Lord Northbrook right in banning the export of Indian grain during the famine of 1873–1874. He favored the Irish Coercion Laws, advocated the establishment of a criminal appeals court in England, came down hard on the side of slum clearance, death duties, compulsory vaccination, and capital punishment in public ("Justice in every form should not shrink from publicity"), and rejected the charge that newspapers fanned the flames of war—a curious inference from one who knew the role of Pulitzer's *World* and Hearst's *Journal* in Cuba. What sort of education, he asked rhetorically, could a pupil anticipate in a tax-supported school? "Reading and writing, the knowledge of sufficient arithmetic to enable the individual to keep his accounts; the singing of patriotic songs and a gymnastic course is all that he may expect." Woman suffrage was ridiculous, "contrary to natural law and

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the practice of civilized states." Wives were "adequately represented by their husbands." Spinsters would back religious intolerance and "every kind of hysterical fad." Admit females to the polls and "all power passes to their hands." Indeed, "if you give women votes you must ultimately allow women to sit as members of Parliament." It was, he darkly prophesied, "only the thin end of the wedge."[40]

His autodidacticism precipitated a religious crisis. At Harrow he had attended daily prayers and Sunday services; in the army he participated in church parades. Until now he had never doubted their value. The anticipation of a hereafter, he had assumed, justifiably disciplined the lower classes and served as an incentive for middle-class morality. Indian sects were similarly useful, provided they did not degenerate into fanaticism. But the books he was now reading challenged the underpinning of everything he had learned since childhood. Gibbon, Reade, and Lecky convinced him that he had been gulled, and as a consequence he "passed through a violent and aggressive anti-religious phase which, had it lasted, might have made me a nuisance." This, of course, is a common experience among the self-educated. But Churchill's resolution of it was unusual. In moments of danger in Cuba and later, he instinctively recited prayers he had learned at Woom's knee. He survived. He asked for lesser gifts, "and nearly always in these years, and indeed throughout my life, I got what I wanted. This practice seemed perfectly natural, and just as real as the reasoning process which contradicted it so sharply." In a book of quotations he had read: *"Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point."* Why, he asked himself, should he discard the reasons of the heart for those of the head? Why not enjoy both? He therefore adopted "quite early in life a system of believing whatever I wanted to believe, while at the same time leaving reason to pursue unfettered whatever paths she was capable of treading."[41]

"I have hardly looked at a novel," he wrote on March 31, 1897. He was sticking to tough reading and writing letters meshed with abstruse allusions. His brother officers wondered how he did it. The climate was punishing. This was the Raj in its heroic period, without air conditioning, refrigerators, or even electric fans. One thinks of Kipling in the Punjab only a few years earlier, sweating and scribbling under the same sun through long afternoons in his darkened bungalow, struggling to immortalize the age. Churchill was writing, too, but his was a genius of a different order, and he had not found his medium. He was writing his first book, and only novel, *Savrola*, though he had not yet settled on that title. Once it had begun to take shape he wrote Jennie: "I think you will be surprised when you get the MS. It is far and away the best thing that I have ever done. I have only written 80 MS pages—but I find a fertility of ideas that surprises me…. It is called 'Affairs of State,' a political romance. Scene Plot a hypothetical Republic…. I am quite enthusiastic about it. All my philosophy is put into the mouth of the hero. But you must see for yourself. It is full of adventure."[42]

He added a postscript: "Do try to get me up to the war if you can possibly." He meant the imminent clashes along India's North-West Frontier, but it is clear from his correspondence that year that the prospect of fighting anywhere would have been welcome. The first flush of his enthusiasm for Bangalore had faded. He had become restless; his temperament cried for action. India had become "an abominable country to live long in. Comfort you get—company you miss…. There is every temptation to relapse

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into a purely animal state of existence." He and Baring had spent Christmas in Bengal, but he had concluded that "Calcutta is full of supremely uninteresting people endeavouring to assume an air of heartiness"; he was glad to have seen it only because "it will be unnecessary ever to see it again." Yearning for a stimulating environment, he wrote that if he could "only get hold of the right people my stay here might be of value. If I had come to India as an MP—however young & foolish, I could have had access to all who know and can convey. As a soldier… I vegetate." Without his books, he felt, he would stagnate. "The Indian press is despicable—being chiefly advertisements." All sorts of complaints crowded his letters now. "My face is blistered by the sun so badly that I have had to see a doctor," he wrote after one field exercise, and when he was appointed acting adjutant he had to write "so many memos etc that to touch a pen is an effort."[43]

His first chance to break free from this oppression came in the spring of 1897. The Greeks had sent a small expeditionary force to fight rebellious Turks on Crete. The British Mediterranean fleet, joining those of five other nations, was blockading the island to prevent the landing of Greek reinforcements. Churchill was indignant: "What an atrocious crime the Government have committed in Crete! That British warships should lead the way in protecting the blood bespattered Turkish soldiery from the struggles of their victims is horrible to contemplate." His mother disagreed: "The Concert of Europe were *obliged* to act as they did altho' they certainly were slow in making up their minds." He was unconvinced: "We are doing a very wicked thing in firing on the Cretan insurgents… so that she [Greece] cannot succour them." He saw the whole thing as a devious Salisbury plot to strengthen the Turks and thereby deny Constantinople to the Russians. He was right there, but wrong in an aside which, in the light of subsequent events, has a haunting ring: Salisbury's policy was "foolish because, 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."[44]

All this laid the groundwork for his letter to Jennie of April 21. "I am afraid you will regard this letter somewhat in the aspect of a bombshell," he began. He proposed to cover the Cretan fighting as a war correspondent, and he didn't care which side accepted his credentials. "Of course all 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." It didn't matter, really; "if you can get me good letters to the Turks—to the Turks I will go. If to the Greeks—to the Greeks." He thought her close friend Sir Edgar Vincent "could probably do everything for me in Constantinople & could get me attached to some general's staff etc as in Cuba. On the other hand you know the King of Greece and could of course arrange matters in that quarter." Jennie, he was confident, could also find a newspaper which would hire him. He expected to be paid ten or fifteen pounds for each piece but would meet his own expenses, and he asked her to manage a loan—"Lord Rothschild would be the person to arrange this for me as he knows every one." His mother, he felt certain, would "not stand in my way in this matter but will facilitate my going just as you did in the case of Cuba." He misjudged her. In London she described his design to friends as "a wild scheme" and told Jack that the men she knew in the Foreign Office thought the war would end soon anyhow. This being true, his plan, far from being a

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other hand, was "a look-before-you-leap policy… a policy of don't leap at all if there is a ladder." He praised the Tories' bill to compensate workers injured in industrial accidents, regretted a recent strike, and took the position, always popular with politicians courting the average voter, of damning both labor and capital. Ultimately, he believed, "the labourer will become, as it were, a shareholder in the business in which he works," though he hastily added that this solution would become practical only "in the distant future." The greatest achievement of the Conservatives, he said, had been teaching "the people of Great Britain the splendour of their Empire, the nature of their Constitution, and the importance of their fleet." This was the heart of his message, a paean to imperialism, and his peroration, throbbing with the rhythms of Gibbon, is both a tribute to his imperial faith and a demonstration of his beginning struggle toward eloquence:

> There are not wanting those who say that in this Jubilee year our Empire has reached the height of its glory and power, and that we now should begin to decline, as Babylon, Carthage, and Rome declined. Do not believe these croakers, 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, 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 shall we 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.[48]

On the day that Churchill spoke in Bath, news reached England of a Pathan uprising in the Swat Valley, on India's North-West Frontier. This had been smoldering for some time, and was a direct consequence of Whitehall's policy in that harsh, craggy corner of Asia. The British, having conquered the plains of India, had paused at the foothills of the Himalayas and turned back to develop the lands they had taken. The mountains formed a natural barrier as definite, and as unbridgeable, as the English Channel. But in the northwest the peaks trailed off. There, in 1893, an Anglo-Afghan frontier had been demarcated; Britain intended to build Afghanistan up as a buffer between the Raj and the Russians, Asia's other great power. Meanwhile, they went about enrolling the tribesmen on their side of the frontier as subjects of the Queen. And there lay the rub. These clansmen—Pathans, Swatis, Waziris, Mahsuds, Afridis, Bunerwalis, Chitralis, and Gilgitis—had lived in remote independence since the dawn of time. Now bands of pale aliens were moving among them, building roads, putting up signs, establishing outposts and blockhouses. They were bewildered, then angry. They knew almost nothing of what was happening in the rest of the world, but now they were being informed, and misinformed, by a Moslem rabble-rouser whom the British called the Mad Fakir and Churchill later described as "a priest of great age and of peculiar holiness."[49] This mullah told the tribesmen of victories by their fellow Moslems—the Turks on Crete and the Mahdi in the

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Sudan—and spread wild tales. Turks had captured the Suez Canal, he said, explaining what it was, and he assured them that the British bullets could not harm men faithful to Mohammed, displaying as proof a small bruise on his leg which, he said, was the only consequence of a direct hit by an English cannonball. The viceregal staff in Calcutta was not unaware of this agitation. Word of it came to them through networks of—readers of *Kim* will have guessed—informers. Punitive expeditions were organized; reinforcements of Tommies were on their way from other parts of the Empire. London was particularly worried by the isolation of the Raj's key frontier fort, Chitral, far to the north, a miniature Gibraltar situated on an eminence commanding the great passes into Afghanistan. A Swati revolt threatened the British garrison holding the Malakand Pass and, specifically, a long wire-rope *jhula,* or swinging bridge, needed to provision Chitral. Whitehall reacted by announcing that a field force of three brigades would put down the uprising. It would be led by General Sir Bindon Blood.

Churchill was standing on the lawn at the Goodwood races, enjoying balmy weather and winning money, when the report of this decision buzzed through the crowd. He was electrified. On meeting Sir Bindon at Deepdene the year before he had extracted a promise that, should the general take the field again, Winston would join him. Churchill had three weeks of leave left, but he instantly wired Blood, reminding him of his pledge, and caught the next boat to India, the S.S. *Rome,* leaving behind, in his haste, a batch of new books, his polo sticks, his pet dog Peas, a Primrose League badge old Mr. Skrine had lent him in Bath, and, of course, a sheaf of bills. At each port of call he looked, in vain, for a reply from Blood. This P & O voyage was even worse than the last, particularly on the Red Sea: "The temperature is something like over 100° and as it is damp heat—it is equal to a great deal more…. It is like being in a vapour bath. The whole sea is steamy and there is not a breath of air—by night or day." Finally, at Bombay, a telegram from Upper Swat awaited him: "Very difficult. No vacancies. Come as correspondent. Will try to fit you in. B.B."[50]

A four-day detour to Bangalore was necessary; he needed his colonel's permission to join Blood. Newspaper credentials came next. Jennie tried *The Times,* without success, but the *Daily Telegraph* contracted to pay Winston five pounds a column, and in India the Allahabad *Pioneer,* which had published much of Kipling's early work, agreed to run a three-hundred-word telegram from him every day and pay accordingly. At the Bangalore train station he pushed a small sack of rupees across the counter and asked, out of curiosity, how far north his journey would take him. The ticket babu checked a timetable and told him 2,028 miles—a five-day trip through the worst of the summer heat. But there were compensations. He had bought a bag of books, and the first-class, leather-lined, heavily shuttered railway compartment carried a circular wheel of wet straw which the passenger could turn from time to time. Thus, he proceeded, as he put it, "in a dark padded moving cell, reading mostly by lamplight or by some jealously admitted ray of glare."[51] He broke his trip at Rawalpindi to visit a friend in the Fourth Dragoon Guards. The dragoons were preparing to be sent to the front; officers expected the order to grind their swords any day. That evening he joined a sing-along in the sergeants' mess. Long afterward he would remember roaring out:

And England asks the question

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action. Several officers had been killed in local skirmishes, and their effects, in accordance with Anglo-Indian campaigning custom, had been auctioned off. Winston had bought two horses, hired a groom, and acquired a kit. He was now fully equipped. In the morning Blood welcomed him, motioned him to his side, and then led an expedition of twelve thousand men and four thousand animals over the bridge, into the valleys where lurking tribesmen, armed with long rifles, lay in wait. In describing the enemy's practice of hiding in the hills and firing down at the moving British column, Churchill introduced his readers to a new word. Such a rifleman, he wrote, was "a 'sniper,' as they are called in the Anglo-Indian army."[53]

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Lieutenant Winston Churchill in India

While pursuing tribesmen, the Malakand Field Force also carried out punitive missions: destroying crops, driving off cattle, putting huts to the torch. The Pathans were a pitiless foe, but the British perpetrated atrocities, too. Winston wrote Reggie Barnes in Bangalore: "After today we begin to burn villages. Every one. And all who resist will be killed without quarter. The [tribesmen] need a lesson—and there is no doubt we are a very cruel people. At Malakand the Sikhs put a wounded man into the cinerator & burnt him alive. This was hushed up. However I will tell you more stories—some queer ones I have heard too—when we meet." He wrote his mother: "The danger & difficulty of attacking these active—fierce hill men is extreme. They can get up the hills twice as fast as we can—and shoot wonderfully well…. It is a war without quarter. They kill and mutilate

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everyone they catch and we do not hesitate to finish their wounded off. I have seen several things wh. have not been very pretty since I have been up here—but as you will believe I have not soiled my hands with any dirty work—though I recognise the necessity of some things." Long afterward he recalled that "it was all very exciting and, for those who did not get killed or hurt, very jolly." His newspaper dispatches do not reflect this. Even less so do his letters. He was ill. It cannot have been pleasant to remain on the line at Inayat Kila with a 103-degree fever. "Here I am," he wrote miserably, "lying in a hole—dug two feet deep in the ground—to protect me against the night firing—on a mackintosh with an awful headache—and the tent & my temperature getting hotter every moment as the sun climbs higher and higher."[54]

Most war correspondents hover around headquarters, writing dispatches based on communiqués; in World War II they reported the fighting on the island of Okinawa, in the Pacific, while sitting at typewriters on Guam, fourteen hundred miles away. Churchill went into the field. Indeed, as Sir Bindon's officers fell, he found himself leading troops. At one point he commanded a company of the Thirty-first Punjab Infantry, sepoys whose language he didn't even speak. (He learned two words, *maro* ["kill"] and *chalo* ["get on"], and introduced them to an English one, "Tallyho!") There can be no doubt that he was remarkably brave, at times even rash. After closing within forty yards of the enemy he wrote, "I felt no excitement and very little fear." Like Nelson, he freely admitted that he was chiefly driven, not by patriotism, but by ambition. He wrote Jennie: "I rode on my grey pony all along the skirmish line where everyone else was lying down in cover. Foolish perhaps but I play for high stakes and given an audience there is no act too daring or too noble. Without the gallery things are different." This, he was convinced, was advancing him another step toward the House of Commons. "I shall get a medal and perhaps a couple of clasps," he wrote at one point, and, at another, "I should like to come back and wear my medals at some big dinner or some other function." The awful thought crossed his mind that no medal might be struck for this expedition. He told Jennie, "Here out of one brigade we have lost in a fortnight 245 killed and wounded and nearly 25 officers," suggested a comparison with "actions like Firket in Egypt—wh are cracked up as great battles and wh are commemorated by clasps & medals etc etc," and concluded, "I hope you will talk about this to the Prince and others." But apart from its political value, physical courage had an intrinsic value in his eyes, and the lack of it was shameful. To his "intense mortification" he saw men of the Royal West Kents "run and leave their officer on the ground." He added: "I know the Buffs wd never have done this." Despite the heavy casualties, when he thought of "what the Empire might have lost I am relieved."[55]

He wrote Reggie: "It is bloody hot." You could "lift the heat with your hands, it sat on your shoulders like a knapsack, it rested on your head like a nightmare." The worst scorcher was Thursday, September 16. It also saw the heaviest fighting—"16th was biggest thing in India since Afgan [sic] war," he wrote his mother. Judging from his letters and dispatches, it was a harrowing day for him. On its eve Sir Bindon ordered Brigadier Patrick Jeffreys, commanding his Second Brigade, to enter the Mamund Valley, a cul-de-sac, and clear it out. Swinging around in his saddle, the general told Churchill, "If you want to see a fight, you may ride back and join Jeffreys." A troop of Bengal Lancers was headed that way, so Winston mounted and accompanied them as they gingerly picked

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their way through the ten miles of broken ground between the general's camp and the brigadier's. They reached Jeffreys at dusk. "All night long the bullets flew across the camp; but everyone now had good holes to lie in, and the horses and mules were protected to a large extent."[56]

At the instant of dawn the entire brigade, preceded by a squadron of lancers, moved in warlike formation into the valley, Lee-Enfields at the ready. The Mamund basin widened as they entered it, and when they fanned out in three separate detachments, Churchill chose to ride with the center column. As they advanced not an enemy shot was fired. The slopes above were silent, watchful. But the natives were there. Approaching the far end of the valley, Churchill raised his field glasses and saw "a numerous force of tribesmen on the terraced hillsides… they appeared seated in long lines, each with his weapon upright beside him…. The sun threw back at intervals bright flashes of steel as the tribesmen waved their swords." At 7:30 A.M. the lancers, trotting a hundred yards forward, opened fire with their carbines. Martini-Henrys immediately replied. Churchill wrote: "From behind rocks and slopes of ground, on spurs, and from stone houses, little puffs of smoke darted. A brisk skirmish began." He accompanied about fifteen men around him who rode up, dismounted, and opened fire at seven hundred yards. They, too, came under fire. Then the British infantry, the bulk of Jeffreys's brigade, toiled up and reached them. The Thirty-fifth Sikhs split into small parties and attacked various hills, hummocks, and a village. Churchill picked the one heading for the village. Enemy fire died away; they reached their objective without incident. But once there, he looked back and saw no brigade. He searched the valley with his glasses. Jeffreys's force had simply disappeared. Although he did not realize it then, they were in fact enveloped in folds of the vast terrain. He and his people were equally invisible to the brigade; geography was the Pathans' great ally. It occurred to Winston that his was a very small troop: five officers, including him, and eighty-five Sikhs. He recalled Sandhurst warnings about "dispersion of forces," and was grateful when the company commander relayed word from a lieutenant colonel down below to withdraw because "we are rather up in the air here." Churchill noted on his pad that this was "a sound observation." Then the officer said: "You stay here and cover our retirement till we take up a fresh position on that knoll below the village."[57]

Winston's small rear guard waited uneasily for ten minutes. They were about to depart when the mountain above them sprang to life. Sabers flashed, gun muzzles erupted, bright flags appeared, and figures dressed in white and blue began dropping down from ledges hundreds of feet overhead, shrieking, "Yi! Yi! Yi!" A group of Pathans began to assemble in a clump of rocks about a hundred yards from Churchill, and as they fired, Winston, borrowing the rifle of a Sikh, squeezed off answering shots while the Sikh handed him cartridges. This continued for five minutes; then the battalion adjutant scrambled up and panted: "Come on back now. There is no time to lose. We can cover you from the knoll." Churchill pocketed his ammunition—it was a standing order to let no bullets fall into the hands of the tribesmen—and was about to leave when an enemy fusillade killed the man beside him and hit five others, one of whom "was spinning around just behind me, his face a mass of blood, his right eye cut out." Recovering wounded was a point of honor; torture was the lot of those who fell into the hands of the Pathans. Carrying their casualties, they were halfway down the slope when a force of thirty

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where they were with what they had. At daybreak a squadron of lancers galloped across the open pan of the valley and found them dug in around the battery. They had taken heavy casualties in hand-to-hand fighting. Jeffreys himself had been wounded in the head, though not seriously; he reported by heliograph to Sir Bindon Blood. Sir Bindon and the brigade with him had also been heavily engaged. Blood ordered that the valley be laid waste. "So long as the villages were in the plain, this was quite easy," Winston wrote. "The tribesmen sat on the mountains and sullenly watched the destruction of their homes and means of livelihood. When however we had to attack the villages on the sides of the mountains they resisted fiercely, and we lost for every village two or three British officers and fifteen or twenty native soldiers." He commented dryly: "Whether it was worth it, I cannot tell. At any rate, at the end of a fortnight the valley was a desert, and honour was satisfied."[60]

He saw action again with Jeffreys's brigade at Domodoloh, with the Buffs at Zagia, with the Mohmands in a minor engagement, and, after Sir Bindon had succeeded in getting his leave from the Fourth Hussars extended for two more weeks, at Agrah and then with the Thirty-first Punjab Infantry. Twice more he rode his gray pony along skirmish lines. Jeffreys mentioned him in dispatches, praising "the courage and resolution of Lieutenant W. L. S. Churchill, 4th Hussars, the correspondent of the *Pioneer* newspaper with the force who made himself useful at a critical moment," and Sir Bindon wrote Brabazon predicting that Winston "if he gets a chance will have the VC or a DSO." He received neither, partly because his reports were creating considerable discomfort at the highest levels of the Indian army in Simla. In a cable from Nowshera he had commented that "the power of the Lee-Metford rifle with the new dum-dum bullet—as it is called, though officially, the 'ek dum' bullet—is tremendous," a fact Simla would have preferred not to see in print. And he grew increasingly free with his criticisms of the British military establishment, condemning the manner in which sympathetic civilians were put in jeopardy, the failure to cover retreating soldiers with continuous fire, the "short service" system of recruitment, and the lack of proper rations for soldiers on long marches. Defiant of the wrath he knew this would arouse, he wrote: "There will not be wanting those who will remind me that in this matter my opinion finds no support in age or experience. To such I shall reply that if what is written is false or foolish, neither age nor experience should fortify it; and if it is true, it needs no such support."[61]

On October 12 he wrote his mother "one line to let you know that I am across the frontier and rejoining my regiment," and nine days later he followed this with news that "once again I write to you from my old table and my own room here in Bangalore." His first impression, when he leafed through back copies of the *Daily Telegraph,* was that his vivid reporting had been wasted in England. His stories had carried the anonymous by-line, "From a Young Officer." A letter from Jennie explained that the editor had "begged me not to sign yr name. He said it was very unusual & might get you into trouble." Winston indignantly replied: "I will not conceal my disappointment at their not being

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signed. I had written them with the design, a design which took form as the correspondence advanced, of bringing my personality before the electorate." He believed that "if I am to do anything in the world, you will have to make up your mind to publicity and also to my doing unusual things. Of course a certain number of people will be offended. I am afraid some people like Brab will disapprove…. But I recognise the fact that certain elements must always be hostile and I am determined not to allow them to interfere with my actions. I regard an excellent opportunity of bringing my name before the country in a correct and attractive light—by means of graphic & forcible letters, as lost."[62]

It was not lost. Jennie was more experienced in these matters than her son, and she had seen that everyone who mattered, from the Prince of Wales down, learned the identity of the Young Officer writing in the distant passes and gorges of the North-West Frontier. They even knew at Harrow. Welldon wrote her: "I have been much interested in seeing Winston's articles. I think he possesses in a high degree the special correspondent's art of seizing the picturesque and interesting features of a campaign. Really he is very clever, and must make a mark in the world." Voyages to India took over three weeks, and it was November before Churchill realized how deep an impression he had made. "I am very gratified to hear that my follies have not been altogether unnoticed," he wrote. His flair for the language was responsible, but he persisted in his belief that his valor, implicit in the pieces, would count far more among the Tory elders. He told his brother: "Being in many ways a coward—particularly at school—there is no ambition I cherish so keenly as to gain a reputation of personal courage."[*63]

Despite his daring and acclaim, Winston's standing in the army was not enhanced by all this. Generals were not alone in their disapproval. In the Fourth Hussars his brother officers were civil but cool. There was a vague feeling that what he had done was, by Victorian standards, "ungentlemanly." Regimental messes elsewhere put him down as a "medal-hunter," "self-advertiser," and "thruster." One officer would note in his memoirs that Churchill "was widely regarded in the Army as super-precocious, indeed by some as insufferably bumptious." Why, it was asked, should a subaltern praise or deprecate his seniors? Why should he write for newspapers while wearing the uniform? How did he get so much leave? Who was indulging him? The resentment was real, and became an obstacle to his plans. Sir Bindon asked that he be made his orderly officer. The adjutant general in Simla refused. Surely, Churchill thought, Lord Roberts could clear this up. The omnipotent Roberts, now in Ireland, had been a friend of his father's, and now Jennie, at his urging, wrote the field marshal, reminding him of past favors. But the old man declined to intervene. Churchill wrote bitterly: "I don't understand Lord Roberts' refusal. A good instance of ingratitude in a fortunate and much overrated man." Spurred by his mother, the *Daily Telegraph* appointed him a permanent correspondent, but the high command continued to deny him access to all battlefields. He complained to her: "The Simla authorities have been very disagreeable to me. They did all they could to get me sent down to my regiment…. I… invite you to consider what a contemptible position it is for high military officers to assume—to devote so much time and energy to harrying an insignificant subaltern. It is indeed a vivid object lesson in the petty social intrigue that makes or prevents appointments in this country." He added: "Talk to the prince about it."

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writing a book on the same subject. That called for haste: "Do not I beg you lose one single day in taking the MS to some publisher. [Lord] Fincastle's book may for all I know be ready now." On reflection he decided to "recommend Moreton's treating with the publishers, it is so much easier for a man." Here he misjudged both uncle and mother. The first edition, to Winston's horror, would contain some two hundred misprints. "A mad printer's reader," one reviewer would write, and Winston would add sadly, "As far as Moreton is concerned, I now understand why his life has been a failure in the city and elsewhere." Jennie, on the other hand, had very sensibly gone to Arthur Balfour, who had referred her to A. P. Watt, the literary agent. Watt negotiated the terms with Longmans. *Malakand*, appearing in March 1898, sold eighty-five hundred copies in nine months. It was priced at six shillings; the royalty was 15 percent. Winston had earned more in a few weeks (£382) than he could in four years as a subaltern.[66]

But far more welcome was the book's enthusiastic reception. Moreton's disgraceful performance did not pass unnoticed: the *Athenaeum* observed that "one word is printed for another, words are defaced by shameful blunders, and sentence after sentence ruined by the punctuation of an idiot or of a school-boy in the lowest form." But the same reviewer predicted that the author might become as great a soldier as the first Marlborough and "a straighter politician." The *Pioneer* found "a wisdom and comprehension far beyond his years." The *Spectator* agreed. It was hailed as a minor classic, the debut of an exciting new talent, and, in the *Times of India*, the *Madras Mail*, and Delhi's *Morning Post*, a penetrating study of Raj policy. Churchill's response to all this is curiously moving. He was "filled with pride and pleasure…. I had never been praised before. The only comments which had ever been made upon my work at school had been 'Indifferent,' 'Slovenly,' 'Bad,' 'Very bad,' etc. Now here was the great world with its leading literary newspapers and vigilant erudite critics, writing whole columns of praise!"[67]

The Prince of Wales read *Malakand*, sent a copy to his sister, the Empress Dowager Victoria of Germany, and wrote "My dear Winston" on April 22: "I cannot resist writing a few lines to congratulate you on the success of your book! I have read it with the greatest possible interest and I think the descriptions and the language generally excellent. Everybody is reading it, and I only hear it spoken of with praise." HRH thought Churchill probably wanted to see more combat, and he approved: "You have plenty of time before you, and should certainly stick to the Army before adding MP to your name." He had, of course, misread the author. Winston wanted to be where the fighting was thickest, but as a correspondent, not as a junior officer. He had vowed to "free myself from all discipline and authority, and set up in perfect independence in England with nobody to give me orders or arouse me by bell or trumpet." Besides, the struggle on the Indian frontier was over. Everyone knew that the next excitement would be in Africa. Sir Herbert Kitchener's campaign to reconquer the Sudan had begun two years earlier; he had been moving slowly, building a railroad as he went, but now in April 1898 his major victory over sixteen thousand dervishes on the Atbara River signaled the beginning of the end. Churchill longed to be at his side. Once more he implored his mother to yank strings. "You must work Egypt for me," he told her. "You have so many lines of attack…. Now I beg you—have no scruples but worry right and left and take no refusal." He wanted her to "stimulate the Prince into writing to Kitchener." Two months later he wrote: "Oh how I

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wish I could work you up over Egypt! I know you could do it with all your influence—and all the people you know. It is a pushing age and we must shove with the best."[68]

Unfortunately Kitchener, at that time, detested Churchill. He had been outraged by his book; it was bad for discipline, he believed, for subalterns to chide their superiors. In any event, he felt that Winston already had had a good run for his money in India; the Nile was out of bounds for him. "It was," Churchill later said, "a case of dislike before first sight." Jennie and her influential friend Mary, Lady Jeune, were wining and cajoling everyone in the War Office—Winston later said that they "left no wire unpulled, no stone unturned, no cutlet uncooked"—but while guests were susceptible to petticoat diplomacy, Kitchener, as Egyptian commander in chief, or Sirdar, had the final say, and in Winston's case he said it over and over. It was *no*. Lady Jeune wired him: "Hope you will take Churchill. Guarantee he wont write." She couldn't guarantee it, and the Sirdar knew it. Sir Evelyn Wood, the adjutant general and an admirer of Lady Jeune's, was recruited to the Churchill cause. Lady Jeune and Jennie lunched with Wood and the Prince of Wales, and Wood then cabled the Sirdar: "Personage asked me personally desires you take Churchill." Kitchener was adamant: "Do not want Churchill as no room." Jennie knew Kitchener, of course; she knew everyone. Winston asked her to write him directly: "Strike while the iron is hot and the ink wet." She did, and he replied with elaborate courtesy. He had too many officers as it was, he was overwhelmed with applications from men more qualified than her son, but if at some future time an opportunity arose he would be pleased, et cetera, et cetera. Really challenged now, she decided to go to Egypt herself. Winston wrote: "I hope you may be successful. I feel almost certain you will. Your wit & tact & beauty—should overcome all obstacles." They didn't. Setting up headquarters in Cairo's Continental Hotel with her current lover, Major Caryl John Ramsden, she bombarded the Sirdar with letters. The best reply she got was: "I have noted your son's name and I hope I may be able to employ him later in the Sudan." All Jennie had to show for her pains was humiliation, from Kitchener and then, unexpectedly, from Major Ramsden, who jilted her; returning to her hotel room on an impulse after she had left it for Port Said, she found Ramsden in bed with Lady Robert Maxwell, the wife of another army officer. HRH sent her a teasing note: "You had better have stuck to your old friends than gone on your Expedition to the Nile! Old friends are the best!"[69]

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Jennie in her prime

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and would report to the Abbasiya barracks, Cairo. It was understood that he would pay his own expenses and that the government would not be liable if he were killed or wounded. He immediately took a hansom to his solicitors, Lumley and Lumley, and then, with their approval, borrowed £3,500 at 4½ percent interest from the Norwich Union Society, using as collateral an insurance policy bequeathed him by his grandfather. Then he called on Oliver Borthwick of the *Morning Post*. Borthwick agreed to pay him £15 apiece—his value was rising—for a series of Nile dispatches which, to avoid ruffling Kitchener further, would be disguised as letters to "Dear Oliver." Winston told Aylmer Haldane, a friend, "If you look at the *Morning Post* it is possible that you will see that one of my friends has committed and continues to commit an unpardonable breach of confidence by publishing letters of mine. Don't give away the pious fraud as I do not want to be recalled."[72]

He was not yet in the clear. He needed official permission from the Fourth Hussars. But that didn't trouble him; his future didn't lie there. It lay in public life, and so, while packing, he decided to deliver a political address. He spoke at Bradford and wrote afterward: "The meeting was a complete success. The hall was not a vy large one—but it was closely packed. I was listened to with the greatest attention for 55 minutes at the end of which time there were loud & general cries of 'Go on.'… All of which was vy gratifying…. The conclusions I form are these—with practice I shall obtain great power on a public platform. My impediment is no hindrance. My voice sufficiently powerful, and—this is vital—my ideas & modes of thought are pleasing to men." R. B. (later Lord) Haldane, a leading Liberal MP, read the speech in the *Morning Post* the next day and wrote Jennie: "I thought it very good—broad in tone—fresh & vigorous. I hope he will soon be in the House."[73]

After Bradford, Churchill vanished. Once in Cairo, he reasoned, he would be beyond reach of the Fourth Hussars. Indeed, unless the War Office proved uncharacteristically helpful, Bangalore wouldn't even know where he was. Ignoring the swift, comfortable steamers of the P & O and Australian Lloyd, he took the train to Marseilles and boarded the freighter *Sindh*, "a filthy tramp," he wrote in a note on July 30, manned by "detestable French sailors." On August 2 he reached Cairo and took a carriage to the cavalry barracks. "All was hustle and bustle" there. "Two squadrons of the 21st Lancers had already started up the Nile." He paid forty pounds for a charger and paraded that evening with "A" Squadron, to which he was attached, in the uniform of the day: khakis, topee, Sam Browne belt, field glasses, revolver—he had forgotten his regular one, with its lucky silk lanyard, and had to buy a new Mauser pistol—and Stohwasser gaiters. The band struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and they were off. That was on a Tuesday. On Friday he was "toiling slowly up the rising river—against a 6 knot current with only a balance of speed of 4 miles an hour," pausing briefly in Luxor, on the east bank of the Nile, where he paid "a flying visit" to the ancient temple and was reminded of Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra*. He felt like a fugitive from the Fourth Hussars, which he was. He had "heard nothing definite about my leave being sanctioned by India—but as there has been no canceling order & a fortnight has already passed I think I may now conclude… that 'silence has given consent.' " The trip was proving "delightful," though the boat was a strange troop transport, one of Cook's, painted alabaster white, with chintz curtains in the saloon

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windows and flowered toiletries in every cabin. Winston, interested in everything, noted that it was powered by steam-driven pistons which turned "a great paddle-wheel which protrudes from the stern. The appearance is peculiar." He had found "many old friends in the regiment." He had also learned that never, in its entire history, had the Twenty-first Lancers seen action. Indeed, other regiments gibed that its motto was "Thou Shalt Not Kill." The taunt was of long standing, but in a month it would be forgotten.[74]

What were the British doing on the Nile? To the public at home, and to Churchill, who wrote ardently of Queen, Empire, and Flag, the answer was obvious. They were there, he wrote, to assure the destruction of an autocracy, "a state of society which had long become an anachronism—an insult as well as a danger to civilisation; the liberation of the great waterway; perhaps the foundation of an African India; certainly the settlement of a long account." That long account was the martyrdom of Chinese Gordon in Khartoum at the hands of the Mahdi's howling dervishes. After Khartoum had been retaken, Churchill thought, it would be rather a good thing to "tell some stonemason to bring his hammer and chisel and cut on the pedestal of Gordon's statue in Trafalgar Square the significant, the sinister, yet the somehow satisfactory word, 'Avenged.' "[75]

But over thirteen years had passed since Gordon had been butchered. The Mahdi, as inscrutable as his victim, had died suddenly (and mysteriously) five months later. Before his death he had chosen Abdullah Ibn Mohammed as Khalifa—literally "successor"—to lead the forces in Mahdism. Under the Khalifa the Sudanese situation had been transformed. After suppressing a conspiracy by the Mahdi's relatives and disarming the forces of other leading emirs, he had sought to accomplish the Mahdi's dream of a universal jihad, or holy war, reforming Islam throughout the Moslem world. Although the Sudanese people were of mixed Arab, Hamitic, and Negro ancestry, all of them were, and are, commonly called Arabs, and their devotion to the Prophet Mohammed approached the absolute. The Khalifa's hordes attacked north, south, east, and west. They were checked everywhere, notably by the Belgians in the Congo and the British in Egypt. Then the Mahdist Sudan entered a three-year period of great suffering. Almost no rain fell. Crops shriveled, herds grew emaciated, dervishes starved, epidemics broke out, thousands died. Eventually the rains returned; improved harvests brought prosperity. The Khalifa became a popular leader. He was an autocrat, but his people had never known democracy, and in any event the charge of autocracy was hardly one to be flung about carelessly by a twenty-three-year-old youth who was deftly exploiting his own membership in a privileged class to build popular support among his fellow countrymen.

England's real enemy on the Nile was France. Now that the British held Egypt, they wanted to insulate the length of the river, without which Egypt could not survive. "The Nile is Egypt," said Roberts, "and Egypt is the Nile." The Italians, the Belgians, and the Germans agreed to stay out of the river's valley. The French declined. Instead, they sent an expedition to Africa under Captain Jean-Baptiste Marchand, whose orders were to land on the continent's west coast, march inland, and seize Fashoda (now Kodok) on the upper

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It was serene, hardly like war at all, and he commented on that. Ordinarily one might expect patrols, sniping, skirmishing, preludes to a major operation: “Usually the game gets warmer by degrees.” The enemy lurked near Omdurman but had sent no one, except perhaps lone horsemen, to investigate the British approach. Not a shot had been heard. The British and Egyptian camps were “as peaceful as Aldershot or Bisley.” And yet they knew that one day the guns would “begin to fire and a big battle open.” At Wad Habeshi he wrote his mother: “We are but 60 miles from Khartoum and on the 27th we march 21 miles putting us in front of the infantry and in full contact. Within the next ten days there will be a general action—perhaps a vy severe one. I may be killed. I do not think so.” He was more worried about his other enemy, the Sirdar. Nothing could be easier for the commander than to send Churchill back and say, “Let him come on with the remounts after the battle.” At every stage along the way Winston half expected to be detained by a staff officer. “I suppose,” he wrote, “a criminal flying from justice goes through the same emotions at every stopping-point.” Toward the end hope replaced fear, though he knew

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his presence was resented at the top. He wrote home that Frank Rhodes, the *Times* correspondent, had "talked to the Sirdar about me. Kitchener said he had known I was not going to stay in the army—was only making a convenience of it; that he had disapproved of my coming in place of others whose professions were at stake & that E. Wood had acted wrongly & had annoyed him by sending me. But that I was quite right to try my best." Churchill concluded that Kitchener "may be a general—but never a gentleman." That was arrogant. But Churchillian swagger was almost always redeemed by his boyish charm and the quickness with which he could laugh at himself. He captured an Arab who turned out to be a British intelligence agent. Lionel James of Reuters wanted to write a story about it, "but I prevailed on him not to do so," Winston wrote, "having a detestation of publicity."[77]

Before they even reached the battlefield he had a bad fright. From Atbara the Twenty-first Lancers marched to Shabluka, bandoliers filled, lances with pennons tightly rolled, ready for action. Various duties kept Winston behind on the river's east bank; he had been told to join the column that evening at its first camp, fifteen miles away. His chores took longer than he had expected, and it was late afternoon before the ferry steamer *Tahra* carried him over to the west shore. He asked for directions and was told: "It is perfectly simple. You just go due south until you see the campfires and then turn towards the river." He nodded and left. An hour later the sun sank; darkness enveloped him. To avoid the thorny bushes on the Nile bank he struck inland and rode down through the desert, steering southward by keeping his back to the North Star. After two hours of trotting he paused for a drink and rations. To his dismay, clouds drifted across the star, and the pointers of the Great Bear became invisible. He was lost. Unless the overcast lifted, he would have no choice but to wait. Picking a spot, he passed the reins around his waist, leaned against a rock, and tried to sleep. The night was sultry; "a hot, restless, wearing wind blew continuously with a mournful sound"; slumber was impossible. Then, at 3:30 A.M., the sky cleared and "the beautiful constellation of Orion came into view. Never did the giant look more splendid." He rode toward it, and after two hours he found the Nile. He and his mount drank deeply. But it was broad daylight before he found the lancers' camp, and the regiment had gone. Nearby villagers spoke no English; he made himself understood, indicating hunger by pointing to his mouth and stomach, but nothing happened until he uttered the magical Arabic word *baksheesh*. Now that they knew he was going to give them money, everything changed; "all difficulties melted." Three women appeared to serve him dates and milk. His pony was fed *doura*. What he now needed was information. Using the point of his sword, he sketched a profile of a lancer on the red mud wall. A man wearing a fez nodded excitedly, made lapping motions with his tongue to convey the fact that the troopers had watered their horses here, and pointed southward. "Then he gazed hard at me, and, with an expression of ferocious satisfaction, pronounced the word 'Omdurman.' " Thus Churchill first learned where battle would be joined.[78]

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Churchill in Cairo, 1898

He caught up with the column at its camp that evening. By August 27 all Anglo-Egyptian forces, both the army in the desert and the gunboats on the Nile, were concentrated south of the Shabluka Hills. The following morning they began their final advance, covering only eight to ten miles a day to save their strength. The heat was "intense. In spite of thick clothes, spine pads, broad-brimmed pitch helmets, one felt the sun leaning down upon one and piercing our bodies with its burning rays." But that was the only enemy Churchill saw. Omdurman seemed undefended. He began to doubt the villager in the fez. The crisp surface of the desert plain, through which the Nile meandered in its broad sweeps, stretched wide and vacant: "Everyone in the British cavalry had made up his mind that there was to be no battle," that " 'we shall be marching like this towards the Equator for months and months.' " At nine o'clock on the morning of September 1, the Twenty-first Lancers, riding ahead as scouts, sighted Omdurman. If the Khalifa meant to fight, he would fight here. Winston was studying the city's mud huts and the dome of the Mahdi's tomb—and trying to ignore a hundred vultures circling overhead, which made him extremely uncomfortable ("It would be difficult," he told readers of the *Morning Post*, "to assign limitation to the possibilities of instinct")—when another subaltern motioned toward a ridge ahead and cried: "Enemy in sight! They haven't bolted!"[79]

Churchill squinted at the ridge. It lay three miles away, between them and the city. At first he saw only "a long black line with white spots." The white spots appeared to be dervishes, perhaps "three thousand men behind a high dense zareba of thorn bushes." They thought this "better than nothing. There would in any case be a skirmish." They rode closer for a better view. At 11:00 A.M., to his astonishment, "the whole black line, which

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real. Churchill defied it, strolling around in the moonlight to inspect the Sirdar's defenses, and when the Twenty-first's buglers blew at 4:30 A.M., he swung into his saddle, ready to join the spray of officers' patrols which would serve as Kitchener's eyes at dawn. Daybreak arrived and revealed the enemy. Churchill was delighted. "This," he wrote, "is an hour to live." He mounted a ridge which had been christened Heliograph Hill. Afterward, writing Ian Hamilton of that morning's events, he said that he believed he was "the first to see the enemy—certainly the first to hear their bullets…. I and my little patrol felt very lonely." At 5:50 A.M., kneeling, he scribbled in his field service notebook the first of two messages to the Sirdar, both of which survive.

Dervish army, strength unchanged, occupies last nights [sic] position with their left well extended. Their patrols have reported the advance and loud cheering is going on. There is no *zeriba*.

Nothing hostile is between a line drawn from Heliograph Hill to the Mahdi's tomb, and river. Nothing is within three miles from the camp.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL
Lieut 4th Hussars
attd 21st Lancers

Handing this to a corporal, he climbed for a better view. The sun was high now. Scarcely four hundred yards away he beheld the humps and squares of the Khalifa's multitude, bright with glittering weapons and iridescent standards. He wrote: "Talk of fun! Where will you beat this? On horseback, at daybreak, within shot of an advancing army, seeing everything, and corresponding direct with Headquarters." He was a target now; enemy bullets were swatting sand around him. The corporal, spurring his weary horse to a full gallop, returned with a request from the Sirdar's chief of staff for word of new developments. It was 6:20 A.M. Winston scrawled his second report:

About ¼ Dervish army is on their right which they have refused at present. Should this force continue to advance it would come the South side of Heliograph Hill.

Most of the Cavalry are with this force.

Duplicate to Col Martin

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL
Lieut 4th Hussars

By now, he wrote Hamilton, "the fire was for the time being as hot as anything I have seen—barring only those 10 minutes with the 35th Sikhs—a year ago today." An enemy patrol of three horsemen approached him: "They were dark, cowled figures, like monks on horseback—ugly, sinister brutes with long spears. I fired a few shots at them from the saddle, and they sheered off." But the enemy mass was coming on like a sea. "The tide was rising fast. One rock, one mound of sand after another was submerged by that human flood. It was time to go." Still he was reluctant. Then a major appeared and ordered him to withdraw; the British infantry was about to open fire. Back he scampered then, to watch, from the flank, the Sirdar's response to the challenge and, opposite him, "all the pride and

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might of the Dervish Empire… on this last great day of its existence."[83]

Unlike twentieth-century warfare, nearly everything at Omdurman was visible, if distorted, to the naked eye. As Churchill wrote, "the whole scene lay revealed in minute detail, curiously twisted, blurred, and interspersed with phantom waters by the mirage." It quickly became apparent that the Khalifa had now committed every man he had, including his reserves, hoping to overwhelm the infidels. His sacred black flag floated above the bright banners of lesser emirs and the white standards bearing Mohammed's most stirring passages in Arabic script. Shrieking as they ran, these troops dipped beneath a swell of ground which briefly concealed the main bodies of the rival armies from one another and then swept up, over, and down into the arena where the invaders of their soil stood shoulder to shoulder, braced to receive them. But the two never met. Lashed and scythed by storms of Lee-Enfield dumdums, by four batteries of howitzers, and by shells from at least seventy big guns on the Nile bank and in the gunboats, the dervishes faltered seven hundred yards from their objective, the last of them stumbling and sprawling over the bodies of seven thousand of their fallen comrades. Kitchener then wheeled his five brigades into echelon formation and prepared to move on Omdurman. That would cut the enemy off from his base and force him into the desert. The fifty-three thousand remaining dervishes regrouped and attacked again. This time they came within a hundred yards of the Anglo-Egyptian lines, but at the appalling cost of twenty thousand men. The Sirdar's force was virtually unblooded. The city was still accessible to the Khalifa's survivors, however, and despite their casualties, numbers were still on their side. Kitchener believed that he had to occupy Omdurman before the enemy could flee there. His army, as Churchill noted, "could fight as many Dervishes as cared to come in the plain; among the houses it was different." But before the Anglo-Egyptian infantry could advance, the Arabs must be driven from the intervening ground. That was a cavalry task. The Twenty-first Lancers, on the spot, waiting in a little hollow, stood to their horses. Then the heliograph at Kitchener's side instructed them, in flashes of reflected sunlight: "Advance—clear the left flank—use every effort to prevent the enemy entering Omdurman." The stage was set for Britain's last great cavalry charge, and Churchill, leading twenty-five troopers, would be in the thick of it.[84]

Scrambling into their saddles, the massed lancers walked forward at a deliberate pace, stepping over the crisp desert toward the city, stirred by what Churchill called "a high state of excitement." Presently they noticed, three hundred yards away and parallel to their course, a long row of blue-black objects, two or three yards apart. At that moment the bugles sounded Trot, and the regiment began to jingle and clatter across the front of these crouching dervishes. It was a lull in the battle. Except for the sound of the harnesses, silence was near perfect. Abruptly the Arabs broke it, firing a volley; three horses and several lancers toppled to the ground. Until then the colonel had intended to swing around the flank of the enemy riflemen, but now he decided to attack them head-on. The bugles sounded Right Wheel into Line. There was no further order. As Winston wrote Hamilton:

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was to loiter in the midst of the enemy." The dervish riflemen fired together and missed. Hunching down over his pommel, he spurred his pony free and found his squadron two hundred yards away, faced about and already forming up. His own troop had just finished sorting itself out, but as he joined it a dervish sprang out of a hole in the ground and into the midst of his men, lunging about with a spear. They thrust at him with their lances; he dodged, wheeled, and charged Churchill. "I shot him at less than a yard. He fell on the sand, and lay there dead. How easy to kill a man! But I did not worry about it. I found I had fired the whole magazine of my Mauser pistol, so I put in a new clip of ten cartridges before thinking of anything else." It occurred to him that if he hadn't injured his shoulder in Bombay, he would have had to defend himself with a sword and might now be dead. Afterward he reflected: "One must never forget when misfortunes come that it is quite possible they are saving one from something much worse." He wrote Jennie: "The pistol was the best thing in the world."[88]

He was ready to charge again; they all were; several of his troopers asked permission to discard their lances and draw their swords. Then they looked back at where they had been, and their blood cooled. Winston saw, coming from the direction of the enemy, "a succession of grisly apparitions; horses spouting blood, struggling on three legs, men staggering on foot, men bleeding from terrible wounds, fish-hook spears stuck right through them, arms and faces cut to pieces, bowels protruding, men gasping, crying, collapsing, expiring."[89] Attending to these came first. As they finished improvising bandages, the colonel, apparently for the first time in the action, remembered that his men carried carbines. Bugles sounded and they trotted off to the flank, where they could enfilade the *khor* from three hundred yards. This forced the dervishes to retreat toward the ridge where the Khalifa's black flag still waved. Twenty minutes after the British had wheeled into line and charged, they occupied the watercourse and were breakfasting there, in sole possession of the field.

The question is whether it was worth it. Churchill wrote Hamilton: "It was I suppose the most dangerous 2 minutes I shall live to see. Out of 310 officers & men we lost—1 officer and 20 men killed—4 officers and 45 men wounded and 119 horses of which 56 were bullet wounds. All this in 120 seconds!" He told his mother that he was "about the only officer whose clothes, saddlery, or horse were uninjured." In the final reckoning it was found that Kitchener had lost fewer than 3 percent of his troops in the entire battle of Omdurman. Yet the Twenty-first Lancers' casualties, in their brief encounter, had exceeded 22 percent. Churchill conceded in the *Morning Post* that this isolated engagement "did not greatly influence the fortunes of the battle."[90] Actually, it had no impact whatever. The Sirdar's fears of house-to-house fighting in the city proved groundless. To be sure, the Khalifa did everything he could to arouse his people there. He ordered the Mahdi's great war drum beaten, the martial *ombya* blown, and his sole Krupp gun wheeled into position and fired, while exhorting the inhabitants to prepare for a last stand. But his troops wanted none of it. They had seen enough of pointless slaughter. Disregarding his summons and the pleas of their emirs, they faded into the desert or surrendered. As the Sirdar approached Omdurman's walls, three men emerged, knelt before him, and presented him with the keys to the city. British soldiers then marched through it, end to end. All this would have happened without the lancers' charge. The

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evidence is overwhelming: the blood of Colonel Martin's men had bought nothing.

The survivors of heavy fighting always try to justify the cost, however, and Churchill was no exception. He reasoned in his dispatches that the regiment had faced "no choice but to charge or gallop away. The definite orders excluded the latter alternative. In any case there was no time to argue. At that close range it was impossible so heavy a fire could be ineffective." Actually, the lancers had proceeded to outflank the position after the charge, which proves that the enemy could have been outmaneuvered without it. Churchill offered his readers other arguments, which, though irrational, tell much about the era and his enthusiasm for its values. The regiment's feat, he said, "was of perhaps as great value to the Empire as the victory itself." It was important that untested British troops show "those intrinsic fighting virtues without which no race can long continue to rule." Because of the Twenty-first Lancers at Omdurman, he concluded, England "may rise refreshed and, contemplating the past with calmness, may feel confidence in the present and high hope in the future. We can still produce soldiers worthy of their officers—and there has hitherto been no complaint about the officers."[91]

There was more of this, most of it, by today's standards, deplorable. He rejoiced to see that the Union Jack hoisted over the ashes of Khartoum was four times the size of the Egyptian khedive's flag. He wept over the new English graveyard on an eminence overlooking the desert, with its "protecting crosses which the living raised as a last tribute to those who had paid the bill for all the fun and glory of the game." To Hamilton he wrote that after his experience in the *khor*, "my faith in our race & blood was much strengthened." "Perhaps," he told his readers with heavy humor, "to these savages with their vile customs and brutal ideas, we appeared as barbarous aggressors"—which is, of course, precisely how they were regarded, and understandably so. After the guns had fallen silent he wrote in the *Morning Post*, "I raised my voice and helmet in honour of that persevering British people who, often affronted, usually get their own way in the end." And although he had assured his mother that war could not be gilded, he tried to do it himself; brave deeds, he told his newspaper's subscribers, "brighten the picture of war with beautiful colours, till from a distance it looks almost magnificent, and the dark background and dirty brown canvas are scarcely seen." David Beatty's eye was clearer. He had watched the lancers' charge from his gunboat. Years later he told Churchill he had seen it, and Churchill eagerly asked him what his impression had been. "It looked," Beatty said, "like plum duff: brown currants scattered about in a great deal of suet."[92]

Churchill's impressions of the dervish rout were melodramatic because he was, and always would be, a romantic. In this he was a man of his time. He was no more persuaded of war's ennobling virtues than Sir Henry Newbolt or Tennyson in *Maud* ("… hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!"), or Thomas Hughes. *Fighting*, to Hughes, was one of the most honorable words in the language, "the real, highest, honestest business of every son of man." As late as August 24, 1914, when the British cavalry flung itself against a sleet of German bullets, John Buchan felt exalted. He knew that this suicidal act was "as futile and gallant as any other like attempt in history on unbroken infantry and guns in position. But it proved to the world that the spirit which inspired the Light Brigade at Balaclava… was still alive in the cavalry of today." Somehow carnage had been transformed by concepts of Saint George, the Holy Grail, and "playing the game," as

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though butchery were a manlier form of rugby. “Victorian and Edwardian chivalry,” Mark Girouard notes, “produced its own world of myth and legend, just as much as medieval chivalry.”[93]

Young Winston had fallen under this dark enchantment, and he would never be entirely free of it. But even at Omdurman he was his own man, undazzled by rank and quick to accuse those who betrayed the code of honor, which, he realized, must be observed by all or none. Kitchener soon discovered this. Despite his lordly bearing and his impeccable guardsman’s mustache, the Sirdar was a man of primitive, inclement instincts. On his orders the Mahdi’s tomb was desecrated, the corpse ripped from its shroud, and the head lopped off and dumped in a kerosene can to be “preserved for future disposal”—an official phrase which, the outraged Churchill wrote, could only be interpreted as meaning that it would be “passed from hand to hand till it reached Cairo,” where it would be treated as “an interesting trophy.”[94]

Lord Cromer read this and had the gruesome relic sent back for reinterment. Kitchener seethed. Then Churchill found evidence of battlefield atrocities. He wrote his mother that the triumph had been “disgraced” by atrocities, and that “Kitchener is responsible for this.” Most of the guilty had been Egyptians and Sudanese fighting under the khedive’s colors, but some had been Englishmen. No blind chauvinist would have acknowledged that. Winston accepted it and wrote about it, and that took courage. “The sentiment that the British soldier is incapable of brutality,” he told his readers, “is one which never fails to win the meed of popular applause; but there are in fact a considerable proportion of cruel men in any army.” Kitchener now erupted. Winston wrote Hamilton: “I am in great disfavour with the authorities here…. Generally things have been a little unpleasant.” The Sirdar tried to punish him by putting him in charge of a band of sick camels limping wearily back to Cairo. Churchill tore up the orders, took the next launch north, and reached England in time to join the lancers’ triumphant London parade. A “general officer” testily wrote to the *Army and Navy Gazette:* “What is the position of Lieut. Spencer Churchill in Her Majesty’s Army?” Here he was, a subaltern with less than four years’ service, “acting as special correspondent here, there, and everywhere. Now, as a special correspondent he has, as a matter of course, to criticise general officers highly placed in authority and to influence public opinion. Can it be for the good of the Service…?” Even the Prince of Wales was offended. He wrote Winston: “I fear that in matters of discipline I may be considered old fashioned—and I must say that I think an officer serving in a campaign should not write letters for newspapers or express strong opinions of how the operations were carried out.” HRH said he now realized why the Sirdar “viewed your joining his force with dislike—it is I am sure merely because he knows you write, for which he has the greatest objection I understand—and I cannot help agreeing with him.”[95]

Winston was unruffled. This was one test for which his pathetic school years had prepared him. He knew how to stand alone. As for the controversy and evidence of his independence, he welcomed them; they would be useful in Parliament. At the same time, he was developing political acumen in other, subtler ways. Earlier he had missed the significance of the French troops on the upper Nile, but now, as Kitchener led a force there, he noted “rumours about Fashoda” in a dispatch and predicted that “the Battle of

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enemy. Brown objects, almost the colour of the earth, like bundles of dead grass or heaps of manure, were also dotted about—the bodies of soldiers. Among these were goat-skin water-bottles, broken weapons, torn and draggled flags, cartridge-cases. In the foreground lay a group of dead horses and several dead or dying donkeys. It was all litter."[98]

As magnanimous to the enemy as he was rebellious toward his commander, he paid tribute to the slain Arabs:

When the soldier of a civilised power is killed in action his limbs are composed and his body is borne by friendly arms reverently to the grave. The wail of the fifes, the roll of the drums, the triumphant words of the Funeral Service, all divest the act of its squalour, and the spectator sympathises with, perhaps almost envies, the comrade who has found this honourable exit. But there was nothing *dulce et decorum* about the Dervish dead. Nothing of the dignity of unconquerable manhood. All was filthy corruption. Yet these were as brave men as ever walked the earth. The conviction was borne in on me that their claim beyond the grave in respect of a valiant death was as good as that which any of our countrymen could make…. There they lie, those valiant warriors of a false faith and of a fallen domination, their only history preserved by their conquerors, their only monument their bones—and these the drifting sand of the desert will bury in a few short years. There days before I had seen them rise eager, confident, resolved. The roar of their shouting had swelled like the surf on a rocky shore. The flashing of their blades and points had displayed their numbers, their vitality, their ferocity. They were confident in their strength, in the justice of their cause, in the support of their religion. Now only the heaps of corruption in the plain and fugitives dispersed and scattered in the wilderness remained. The terrible machinery of scientific war had done its work. The Dervish host was scattered and destroyed. Their end, however, only anticipates that of the victors, for Time, which laughs at Science, as Science laughs at Valour, will in due course contemptuously brush both combatants away.[99]

The Prince of Wales, though he felt his rebuke justified, added thoughtfully: "Your writing a book with an account of the campaign is quite another matter." Such a work, HRH said, would have his blessing, and he hoped Winston would "come & see me & tell me all about the recent campaign & about your future plans." Then, revising his earlier advice, he observed: "I cannot help feeling that Parliamentary & literary life is what would suit you best."[100] Winston agreed, of course. And he was in a hurry. He had reached the odd conclusion that he was destined to die, like his father, at forty-six, that whatever he did must be done by 1920. He had already anticipated the prince's literary advice and was at work on a new manuscript. Its working title was *The War for the Waterway*. He believed it would be ready for publication in a year, and he was right. What he did not anticipate was that he would be unable to read the reviews, because by then, still racing the calendar, he would be a prisoner of war in another part of Africa.

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Back in England he was all business. In Rotherhithe, Dover, and Southsea he addressed cheering Tories. "To keep the Empire you must have the imperial spark," he said. And: "To keep our Empire we must have a free people, an educated and well fed people." And: "The great game will go on until we are come through all the peril and trial, and rule in majesty and tranquillity by merit as well as by strength over the fairest and happiest regions of the world in which we live." Turning a room at 35A Great Cumberland Place into a study, he started the new book; then, taking a break, he finished his novel, *Savrola,* and sent the completed manuscript to his grandmother for comment. Duchess Fanny thought it had "much merit and originality," but she noted shrewdly that the character based on Jennie "is a weak and uninteresting personality. It is clear you have not yet attained a knowledge of Women—and it is evident you have (I am thankful to see) no experience of Love!"[101]

Pamela Plowden could have told her that. As the daughter of Sir Trevor John Chichele-Plowden and granddaughter of a general, Pamela was eminently suitable for Winston, and he had written his mother that he thought her "the most beautiful girl" he had "ever seen," but although they had been meeting and corresponding for two years now, their relationship was going nowhere. One has the feeling that Miss Plowden, like Eliza Doolittle, was ready for action and was becoming exasperated as she got only words, words, words. She as much as told him so. He admitted it and promised to "try and take your advice," telling her that he had met a girl "nearly as clever & wise as you," which meant "I rank her one above Plato." Pamela, who plainly did not relish a comparison with Plato, at least not in this situation, accused him of lacking ardor, thus offering him a classic opening. But Winston was merely wounded: "Why do you say I am incapable of affection? Perish the thought. I love one above all others. And I shall be constant. I am no fickle gallant capriciously following the fancy of the hour. My love is deep and strong. Nothing will ever change it."[102]

In a sense this was true, but the object of his designs was not the marriage bed but political office. Pamela can scarcely be blamed if she found this unflattering. In retrospect Winston appears to have been a very eligible bachelor. Yet vaunting ambition can be unattractive in a young man. It can even be unpleasant for him. In a revealing note, Churchill wrote that though tempted, "I have no right to dally in the pleasant valleys of amusement." Then, in gnawing terror: "What an awful thing it will be if I don't come off. It will break my heart for I have nothing else but ambition to cling to." So he turned from arms which would have welcomed him and sought hands that could help him up. He lunched at the Carlton Club with rising Tories of his generation: Ian Malcolm, Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Percy, and Lord Balcarres. The discussion was sharper and far more clever than anything he had heard in his regimental mess; he felt like an "earthen pot among the brass" and considered attending Oxford or Cambridge—until he learned he must first pass examinations in Latin and Greek. Then he discovered that companions at the Tory club possessed another political asset he lacked. They were rich. At Conservative party headquarters Fitzroy Stewart introduced him to Richard Middleton, "the Skipper," or party manager. Middleton greeted him warmly. He said the party would certainly find him a seat, and soon. Then he delicately raised the question of money. How much could

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Pamela Plowden, 1892

After a week in Calcutta as the guest of the new viceroy (the vicereine, Lady Curzon, wrote Jennie, "People in India have an immense opinion of Winston & his book"), he returned to Bangalore, forwarded his resignation papers to London, and sat misty-eyed while his fellow officers drank his health for the last time. "Discipline and comradeship" were the lessons he had learned in the regiment, he wrote, and "perhaps after all they are just as valuable as the lore of the universities. Still," he added, "one would like to have both." His university continued to be his books—he could now read at great speed—and his writing had become his livelihood. *Macmillan's Magazine* was paying a hundred pounds for serial rights to *Savrola*. For *The River War*, as he now called his new manuscript, he had even greater expectations. He had worked on it during the voyage over, in Jodhpur, in Meerut, and Calcutta; he continued writing it in Bangalore and on the trip home. To his mother he wrote that he was at it "all day & every day…. My hand gets so cramped. I am writing every word twice & some parts three times. It ought to be good since it is the best I can do."[105]

He was still learning. Macaulay was the real architect of *The River War*, and the balanced and ironical apothegms which appeared from time to time were borrowed from Gibbon. But his own style was nearly formed now. It was evident, not only on paper, but also in conversation, a fact noted during his trip homeward by a fellow passenger, the gifted G. W. Steevens of the *Daily Mail*. When they docked, Steevens filed a story about him, prophesying that he might become "a great popular leader, a great journalist, or the founder of a great advertising business." He said Churchill was "born a demagogue, and he happens to know it. The master strain in his character is the rhetorician. Platform speeches and leading articles flow from him almost against his will. At dinner he talks and

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talks, and you can hardly tell when he leaves off quoting his one idol, Macaulay, and begins his other, Winston Churchill…. We shall hear more about this in the course of ten years…. At the rate he goes there will hardly be room for him in Parliament at thirty or in England at forty."[106]

Kitchener tried to see to it that there was hardly room for him in Cairo, where he broke his journey to deepen his research on the Nile. The Sirdar had forbidden Major James Watson, his aide-de-camp in the Sudan, to furnish Churchill with any documents. Winston solved the problem, as many another writer has, by simply interviewing Watson. He also lunched with Lord Cromer, who "afterwards did me the honour of talking to me about the Soudan, its past and its future with reference to my book for more than two hours and a half." Cromer saw him twice more, provided him with letters of introduction to everyone of importance in Egypt, and introduced him to the khedive. Winston's letter to Jennie written at Cairo's Savoy Hotel immediately afterward serves as a vintage example of the British contempt which outraged the Empire's darker subjects. "I was much amused," he told her, "by observing the relations between the British Agent and the *de jure* Ruler of Egypt. The Khedive's attitude reminded me of a school-boy who is brought to see another school-boy in the presence of the head-master. But he seemed to me to be an amiable young man who tries to take an intelligent interest in the affairs of his kingdom, which, since they have passed entirely beyond his control is, to say the least, very praiseworthy."[107]

He finished the manuscript—now destined to be two fat volumes, running, with maps, to nearly a thousand pages—in Great Cumberland Place. On May 3, 1899, he noted: "Miss P. has been vy much impressed with the Proofs of the first two chapters of *The River War*." Pamela was still trying. Jennie, on the other hand, was busy pursuing literary ambitions of her own, launching a competitor to *Yellow Book* called the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, which, at a price of five dollars in the United States and a guinea in England, was destined to last eleven issues before she ran out of money. Winston's own finances were unchanged. He had high and, as it turned out, justifiable hopes for his new work, but nothing in hand except the *Macmillan's* check. Nevertheless, he was determined to stand for office now. He would, of course, run as a Conservative. It didn't matter that Gibbon had been a protégé of a renegade Tory and Macaulay a Whig, a precursor of the Liberals, or that all the indignation over Kitchener's profanation of the Mahdi's remains lay on the Liberal side of the House of Commons, while the Conservatives, as he noted from the Strangers' Gallery, seemed to think it "rather a lark." The explanation, of course, is that to desert the Tories would have been to betray his father's memory. He couldn't do that, at least not in 1899.[108]

The constituency chosen for him was Oldham, a working-class district in Lancashire, and the chooser, at the outset, was Robert Ascroft, one of the two Tory MPs who represented it. Ascroft wanted Churchill to run with him. Suddenly he died. Oldham's other MP resigned. That called for a double by-election. The Skipper expected to lose both seats, hoping he would win them back on the rebound in the next general election, and he picked Winston and a radical Conservative for the sacrifice. Winston knew how small his chances were, but reasoned that any fight was better than none. On June 20 he wrote Miss Plowden: "I have just returned from Oldham overnight. The whole thing is in

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my hands as far as the Tory Party there go." He wanted her to campaign with him. She refused; reading proofs was one thing, sweaty politics quite another. She sent him encouragement, a charm, and word that she would remain in London. In his reply he said he understood; "it would perhaps have been a mistake—but I shall be sorry nevertheless." He was still drawn to her, and kept her posted with bulletins on his progress. His left tonsil became inflamed; Dr. Roose, ever reliable, put a throat spray in the mail. On June 28 Winston wrote that "the big meeting was a great success and although I spoke for fifty minutes my throat is no worse—but rather better. We are now in the middle of the fight." Four days later he reported, "A vy busy week has closed. I now make speeches involuntarily. Yesterday I delivered no fewer than eight." He felt he was improving: "At each meeting I am conscious of growing powers and facilities of speech, and it is in this that I shall find my consolation should the result be, as is probable, unfortunate. But I still wear your charm—so who can tell. Write to me Pamela—I have had you in my mind more perhaps this week than ever." The London papers had predicted his defeat. He didn't doubt it, or resent it; "after all," he told her, "the battle in the end must be to the strong."[109]

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Churchill in his first, unsuccessful, campaign for Parliament

This Nietzschean sloganeering, though in high favor at the time—Winston was actually quoting John Davidson, a popular poet of the 1890s—begs the question. The fact is that while he spoke well, he was not yet a competent politician. Disraeli had warned

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wanted the backing of all England. Over the next two months, while Churchill was making his final changes in *The River War,* they carefully built it. By the end of September hostilities were imminent. Obviously Winston would go as a war correspondent. Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* and Borthwick's *Morning Post* were bidding for him, but in the end he stayed with Borthwick, who offered him unprecedented terms: expenses, protection of his copyright, and £250, roughly $1,250, a month. He wired news of his coming departure to Chamberlain, who replied from Birmingham on October 4: "I have your telegraph & will write to Milner tonight asking his good offices for the son of my old friend…. I shall be in London on Monday but I gather that you leave before then. If so good luck & best wishes!" In fact, Milner was to receive two letters recommending Winston; Chamberlain's, which was tepid ("He has the reputation of being bumptious. Put him on the right lines."), and a warmer one from George Wyndham, the under secretary of state for war: "He is a very clever fellow & is bringing out an unprejudiced mind."[113]

Actually, Winston wasn't due to sail until Saturday, so he saw Chamberlain once more. The autocratic colonial secretary invited him to share his morning hansom ride from the Chamberlain house at Prince's Gardens to Parliament. That morning he was the very quiddity of Joe, "Joe the Brummagem screw-maker," the self-made manufacturer from the Midlands: the diamond pin in his stock, the homegrown orchid in his buttonhole, his monocle in his eye, and, with the inevitable cigar in his teeth, as calm and self-assured as a slab of his Birmingham steel. "Buller," he said of General Sir Redvers Buller, the new commander in chief for South Africa, who was still in England, "would have been wiser to have gone out earlier. Now, if the Boers invade Natal, Sir George White with his 16,000 men may easily settle the whole thing." Sir George was in Ladysmith, which, with Kimberley and Mafeking, was regarded as one of the three keys to English defense. Churchill asked about Mafeking, close to the border. "Ah, Mafeking, that may be besieged," Chamberlain said airily, "but if they cannot hold out for a few weeks, what is one to expect?" He added prudently, "Of course, I have to base myself on the War Office opinion. They are all quite confident. I can only go by what they say."[114]

On Thursday, when the first Boer shots were fired at Kraajpan, Churchill was packing his black tin steamer trunks with Thomas Walden, who had been Lord Randolph's valet and was now his son's. Winston had just submitted his first expense account, for £30 18s. 6d. Clearly he had no intention of living a Spartan life at the front. In addition to a compass, a new saddle fitted with a pigskin case, and his Ross telescope and Voigtlander field glass, repaired at Borthwick's expense, he was taking thirty bottles of 1887 Vin d'Ay Sec, eighteen bottles of St. Emilion, eighteen of ten-year-old scotch, a dozen bottles of Rose's Cordial Lime Juice, six bottles of light port, six of French vermouth, and six of Very Old Eau de Vie 1866.* Every evening that week he attended a dinner party in his honor. Since the election he had been trying, without much success, to grow a guardsman's mustache, and his touchiness about it inspired what may have been the first faint flash of Churchillian wit in London society. A friend of Jennie's, seated next to him at one of the dinners, told him she liked neither his politics nor his mustache. He replied, "Madame, I see no earthly reason why you should come in contact with either."[115]

The Royal Mail steamer *Dunottar Castle* was to sail at 6:00 P.M. Saturday, October

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14, 1899, from Southampton docks. Churchill arrived early, jaunty in a yachting cap, but the huge crowd, perched on roofs and cranes, hadn't gathered for him. It was there to cheer his most distinguished fellow passenger, Buller, and Buller's staff. A fleet of civilian liners would follow with forty-seven thousand volunteers, but Sir Redvers was the man of the hour. The general's special train arrived at the wharf two hours before the *Castle* weighed anchor. Everyone was ready to follow Chamberlain's trumpet now. The throng sang "Rule Britannia," "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and "God Save the Queen." Men shouted, "Remember Majuba!" "Pull old Krojer's whiskers!" and "Give it to the Boers!" The ship's foghorn blew. A pioneer newsreel cameraman from the Biograph Company cranked his camera. From the head of the gangplank Sir Redvers thanked everyone and said he hoped he would not be away long. His hope was to be dashed. So were their hopes in him.

Eight years earlier Lord Randolph, during his own trip to South Africa for the *Daily Graphic*, had acquired five thousand shares in Rand Mines. They had been sold to cover his debts, but had he held them their value would have been increased by twenty times at his death, and, shortly thereafter, by fifty or sixty times. That was the key to the Boer issue. After Majuba, Gladstone had negotiated the London treaty of 1884, which had granted limited self-government to the two Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State; the two South African colonies, Natal and Cape Colony, were to remain British. Then gold had been discovered in the Transvaal—diamonds had already been found near Kimberley—and Empire builders like Cecil Rhodes wanted the Transvaal and the Orange Free State back. At that time the world's monetary systems, chiefly British, were dependent on gold. The Empire builders thought they saw a way to regain power over the Boer lands. The gold rush of the 1880s had brought the Transvaal a tremendous influx of Englishmen, or Uitlanders ("Outlanders"—foreigners), as the Boers called them: so many that by the mid-1890s they probably formed a majority of the republic's inhabitants. To British imperialists they seemed exploitable.

President Paul Kruger—"Oom Paul," that strong Brueghel peasant whom Chamberlain had called an "ignorant, dirty, cunning" old man—was uncowed. He refused to give these British immigrants the vote. That was what the Jameson Raid had been all about; the raiders had hoped to spark an uprising by the English settlers. Badly planned, the plot had failed. Nevertheless, Rhodes and Chamberlain, who had been implicated in it, were determined to answer the Uitlander's *cri de coeur*. The fact that this was a violation of the 1884 pact, in which the British had agreed not to intervene in the Transvaal's domestic affairs, was ignored. Imperialists continued to speak ominously of "consolidating the Empire." On the eve of the first Boer crisis Gladstone had warned against "the fascinations of passion and of pride," but his voice had been stilled in 1898. Thousands of young Englishmen agreed with the more strident advocates of expansion; in India, Churchill had written: "Imperial aid must redress the wrongs of the Outlanders. Imperial troops must curb the insolence of the Boers." He thought the issue was the persecution of his countrymen, not gold. Chamberlain himself regretted that there was

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and its "impudent burghers," the *Daily Telegraph* was "in doubt whether to laugh or weep." Since Victoria's coronation two generations earlier, her subjects had been swaggering down the highways of the world, fighting short, relatively bloodless colonial wars at almost no cost; the army had fought only two engagements since the Indian Mutiny of 1857 in which more than a hundred men had been lost. The rewards for this insignificant sacrifice had been immense; Rosebery had told an Edinburgh audience that during the past twelve years 2,600,000 square miles had been added to the Empire, chiefly in Africa. That might be called the end of the red-coat era. Now, at the end of the 1890s, the army was about to fight its first big conflict in its new khaki uniforms. Churchill and the *Dunottar Castle* were heading for the last of the Victorian wars, England's costliest struggle between Waterloo and Sarajevo, which would drain the Empire of a half-million men and bring down upon London the opprobrium of the civilized world. "If there was a good case for the Boer War," Margot Asquith would later write in her diary, "it was indifferently put, and I doubt if a single nation understood it." The war was about to give England, in Kipling's phrase, "no end of a lesson."[117]

Plunging through high seas and what Churchill called "grey storms"—as usual he was ill—the *Dunottar Castle* lurched toward the Canary Islands. Cut off from the world, they endured more than two weeks of what Winston called a "heavy silence"; it was, he wrote his mother, "a long time in war, especially in the beginning." At Madeira they learned nothing, which was "very hard to understand. Why did they declare war if they had nothing up their sleeves? Why do they waste time now?" On their sixteenth day they passed a tramp steamer, the *Australian,* whose crew held aloft a crude white-on-black sign: BOERS DEFEATED. THREE BATTLES. PENN SYMONDS KILLED.[118]

They took this to mean that the enemy had been routed in three engagements, though the loss of Symonds, a Natal general, was difficult to reconcile with victory. Winston heard an aide tell Buller, "It looks as if it will be over, sir." Sir Redvers replied, "I dare say there will be enough left to give us a fight outside Pretoria." The soundness of this military judgment was confirmed when, two days later, on October 31, they anchored in Table Bay and a launch sped out bearing, in Winston's words, a "Man Who Knew." All the tidings were grim. Mafeking and Kimberley were surrounded by Boers—had been, in fact, since the *Dunottar Castle* left Southampton. After Symonds's death General Sir George White had begun retreating into Ladysmith, which was itself threatened with encirclement. The enemy had been defeated nowhere. So much for the reliability of tramp steamers as news media. Ashore, Winston interviewed a distraught Milner and sent off a report: "We have greatly underestimated the military strength and spirit of the Boers. I vy much doubt whether one army Corps will be enough to overcome their resistance." Moreover, Kruger wasn't the only man with troublesome immigrants. Milner had told Winston that the Boers who lived here in Cape Colony under the Union Jack were "trembling on the verge of rebellion." Winston concluded that the British government could, "for the moment, be sure of nothing beyond the gunshot of the Navy."[119]

Buller intended to remain in Cape Town, pondering his choices and awaiting the arrival of his troop transports. At home, Salisbury was telling a Guildhall audience that his confidence in the British soldier "is only equalled by my confidence in Sir Redvers Buller." Churchill wasn't so sure. The general struck him as the kind of man who plodded

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"on from blunder to blunder and from one disaster to another." It was, Winston felt, time to leave him. During the voyage he and J. B. Atkins of the *Manchester Guardian* had agreed to knit their fortunes; now they decided to reach Ladysmith before the enemy slammed the door. On inquiry at the Mount Nelson Hotel they learned that by taking a train to East London, seven hundred miles away, and continuing by small mail boat or tug to Durban, they could beat other correspondents to the front by four days. It would be risky; the railroad skirted Boer strongpoints and was undefended. They caught the last express to get through safely and reached Durban, but the sea leg was an ordeal. Their ship, a steamer of about 150 tons, had to fight its way through a howling Antarctic gale. Between waves Winston could see "rocks which showed their black teeth endlessly a bare mile away upon our port beam." The seasickness, however, was far worse. He lay in his bunk "in an extreme of physical misery while our tiny ship bounded and reeled, and kicked and pitched, and fell and turned almost over and righted itself again… through an endless afternoon, a still longer evening and an eternal night."[120]

Arriving at midnight, they slept six hours and awoke only to be told that they were too late; Ladysmith was invested. The disappointment was deep, but they resolved to get as close to it as possible. Another train, zigzagging up and down hills and negotiating hairpin curves, took them sixty miles to Pietermaritzburg and on to Estcourt, a town of about three hundred stone-walled houses roofed with corrugated iron. Estcourt was the end of the line. They could hear the Ladysmith cannonade from there. While his valet pitched his tent, Winston uncapped his pen and began to write. All along the way he had been interviewing everyone who had fought or seen the Boers, beginning, in Durban, with Reggie Barnes, his companion in Cuba and polo teammate later. Barnes had been wounded in the groin storming a hill at Elandslaagte; his colonel had fallen beside him; sixty-seven of their men had been killed or wounded in the assault. He had said: "All these colonials tell you that the Boers only want one good thrashing to satisfy them. Don't you believe it. They mean going through with this to the end." Again, Churchill's instincts told him Barnes was right. They betrayed him, however, when he talked to Uitlander refugees. On November 5 he reported "the fullest confirmation of the horrible barbarities perpetrated by the Boers," telling of a woman who had been flogged across the breasts and commenting: "Such is the Boer—gross, fierce, and horrid—doing the deeds of the devil with the name of the Lord on his lips. It is quite true that he is brave, but so are many savage tribes."[121]

One is struck, in reading Churchill's accounts from the South African battlefields, by the frequency with which he encountered old friends and acquaintances. Barnes was one. Ian Hamilton commanded troops nearby. Brabazon, back in uniform, was on his way. Leo Amery, Winston's fellow Harrovian, was the *Times* correspondent in Estcourt, and among the officers there was Captain Aylmer Haldane, whom he had known in India. On the night of November 14 the captain was ordered by his commanding officer, Colonel Charles Long, to lead two companies aboard an armored train and probe the Boer lines. As he later wrote in his memoirs, he was leaving headquarters when he noticed Churchill "hanging about to pick up such crumbs of information for his newspaper as might be available." Haldane described his mission to Winston and "suggested that he might care to accompany me next day. Although he was not at all keen he consented to do so, and

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arranged to be at the station in time for the start."[122]

Churchill's lack of enthusiasm was sensible. Buller, when he heard of Long's decision, called it "inconceivable stupidity." Winston had already described the armored train. It was "cloaked from end to end with thick plates and slabs of blue-grey iron." Slits permitted soldiers aboard to fire out. It looked formidable but was, as Thomas Pakenham puts it, "a parody of modern mobile war: an innovation that was already obsolete." All the Boers had to do was blow up a bridge or sabotage the rails; the locomotive would then be immobile and helpless. Winston should have turned Haldane down. He didn't, he wrote afterward, "because I thought it was my duty to gather as much information as I could for the *Morning Post*" and he was "eager for trouble." On those grounds it was justified. The trip would produce plenty of news and danger. It would do more; before the adventure was over, his name would be a household word throughout England. Although it almost cost him his life the decision was, by the light of his flaming ambition, well worth the risk. He would have but one regret. Only yesterday he had posted a letter to the War Office in London, and before he saw another sunset he would wish he had left it unmailed. He had written: "There has been a great deal too much surrendering in this war, and I hope people who do so will not be encouraged."[123]

Louis Botha, the swarthy Boer general besieging Ladysmith, overestimated the number of British troops in Estcourt. Apprehensive that they might be preparing to break his grip on the town, Botha, on the day Churchill agreed to join Haldane, led a column of five hundred mounted raiders southward to investigate, and the next morning, standing in his stirrups atop a ridge, he sighted the armored train steaming north. After the lumbering monstrosity had passed, he ordered rocks strewn on the rails just around a curve and then awaited its return. As the engine reappeared, headed back toward the British lines, his gunner fired two shells at it. Peering out from inside his car, or truck, as they were called, Churchill had just spotted a clump of Boers on a nearby knoll. At that instant he was dazzled by a flash of light and jarred by the sound of steel fragments rattling on the train's iron shield: "It was shrapnel," he later wrote—"the first I had seen in war." He thought the train might be headed into a trap and turned to Haldane to say so. Simultaneously the engineer up ahead, frightened by the shells, rocketed around the curve at full throttle and crashed into the rocks. Before Churchill could speak "there was a tremendous shock, and [Captain Haldane] and I and all the soldiers in the truck were pitched head over heels on to its floor."[124]

Scrambling up, Winston saw scores of Boers lying on the grass outside, delivering heavy and accurate rifle fire upon one side of the train. He and Haldane ducked and put their heads together. The captain, they agreed, should move to the rear and order his troops to pin down the Boer riflemen while Churchill inspected the damage and tried to repair it. Winston found the locomotive still on the rails. The next three cars had been derailed, however, and the civilian engineer, bleeding from a superficial face wound, was on the verge of hysteria. Churchill lectured him on duty. Then he congratulated him. This,

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disintegrated when they hit a man's body. Dumdums had been outlawed at the Hague Conference the previous July, and Churchill knew it. As his guard turned to open an umbrella he managed to drop one clip unseen. He had the other in his fist when the Boer, looking down from his horse, said sharply in English: "What have you got there?" Winston opened his hand and asked, "What is it? I just picked it up." Botha took the clip, glanced at it, and tossed it in the grass. It is sad to note that the following March 9 Churchill indignantly informed his *Morning Post* readers that the Boers were using "expansive" bullets and piously commented that "the character of these people reveals in stress a dark and spiteful underside. A man, I use the word in its fullest sense, does not wish to lacerate his foe, however earnestly he may desire his death."[127]

Even without the dumdums he was anxious about his fate. He ranged himself in line with the other prisoners but was brusquely picked out by the Boers and told to stand apart. It was an ominous order. He "had enough military law," as he put it, "to know that a civilian in a half uniform who has taken an active and prominent part in a fight, even if he has not fired a shot himself, is liable to be shot at once by drumhead court martial." Then, just as curtly, he was directed to rejoin the others; an enemy officer came over and told him they knew who he was and regarded him as a prize: "We don't catch the son of a lord every day." Churchill, in his own phrase, felt "quite joyful" at the realization that he would live. His euphoria lasted during the subsequent three-day trek north, on foot sixty miles around the booming cannons pounding Ladysmith and then by train from Elandslaagte to their prisoner-of-war camp in Pretoria's State Model Schools. Once there behind wire, however, he forgot his gratitude for escaping a firing squad and he convinced himself that his captivity was illegal.[128]

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An artist's reconstruction of the armored-train ambush, in the Daily News Weekly *of November 25, 1899*

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feels, powerful friends of Jennie's, HRH's, or even Cockran's found a way to intervene successfully on his behalf. There is simply no other explanation for the extraordinary judgment Joubert rendered on December 12, completely reversing himself. Pondering Winston's denial that he played an active role in the events which followed the train wreck, and having decided (he didn't say why) that he was an honorable English gentleman and could therefore be only truthful, the commandant-general wrote: "I have to accept his word in preference to all the journalists and reporters." Their accounts, he said, must have been "exaggerated." He therefore concluded: "I have no further objections to his being set free."[131]

Had it ended there, the incident would have had little effect on Churchill's political fortunes at home. But before this order could reach the POW camp, he had taken matters into his own hands. Like his lie about the wreck, the story of his breakout from Pretoria is not entirely creditable, but a special tolerance has always been extended to prisoners of war bent on freedom, and there is no reason to withhold it from him, particularly in light of the courage and imagination with which he carried out the escape plan. The plan was not, however, his. It was the brainchild of Haldane and one A. Brockie, a regimental sergeant major, who, to get better quarters, had passed himself off as an officer. In the back of the enclosure, shielded from the searchlights, stood a circular toilet. The night sentry there seemed lax. Brockie spoke both Afrikaans, developed from seventeenth-century Dutch, and the native Bantu language. If he and Haldane could jump the wall there unobserved, he might be able to talk their way across the countryside to Portuguese East Africa—"Portuguese East"—and freedom. Churchill, overhearing them, insisted that they take him with them. He would see to it, he said, that Haldane's name appeared in headlines all over the world. Brockie didn't want him; he thought him unpredictable and believed another fugitive would increase their risks. But although the key to the scheme, the sergeant major was an enlisted man; his opinion didn't count for much. Haldane, having invited Winston aboard the train, felt a certain responsibility for his plight. He would include him, he said, provided he "conform to orders."[132]

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before the moon rose, Haldane and I both got into the roundhouse and waited for a chance of climbing over; but after much hesitation we (he could not make up our minds to it) thought it too dangerous; and came back to the veranda (again). Brockie then came up and asked us why we had not got over. Haldane explained the difficulty of the sentry's position, and Brockie said; "You're afraid". Haldane replied: "You can go and see for yourself". Brockie then went across the yard, got into the roundhouse, and remained there some time. Then I said (to Haldane): "I will go back again". I went across the yard, and at the entrance to the roundhouse I met Brockie coming out, but we dared not speak to each

From Churchill's later version of the escape

Their chances of success were slight, and were to become slighter, but Winston, ever confident, wrote an impudent letter to the Boer under secretary of war on Monday, December 11, and left it in his bunk. It was headed "p.p.c."—*pour prendre congé* (to take furlough). "I do not concede," he began, "that your Government was justified in holding me… and I have consequently resolved to escape." Friends "outside," he said, were "making this possible." Before leaving he wanted to "place on record my appreciation of the kindness which has been shown to me," promised to "set forth a truthful and impartial account of my experiences in Pretoria," expressed the hope that "this most grievous and unhappy war" would end the enmity between the Boers and British "races," and ended: "Regretting the circumstances have not permitted me to bid you a personal farewell, believe me, Yours vy sincerely, Winston S. Churchill."[133]

Tuesday night, unaware of Joubert's order, which had gone out that afternoon, the three donned civilian suits acquired by barter and awaited their chance. Haldane and Churchill entered the latrine and returned, discouraged by the sentinel's unexpected vigilance. Brockie accused them of timidity, but when he went in, he, too, was thwarted. Churchill reentered alone, passing Brockie coming out. Once inside, he saw his chance—the guard had turned to light a pipe—and leaping to the top of the wall he dropped into a garden on the other side. There he crouched, awaiting the others. But they were luckless. At one moment Haldane was in the toilet, ready to jump, when the sentry stirred and leveled his rifle at him. Churchill waited for an hour and a half, then decided to go on alone. He left behind two very resentful countrymen. The idea, after all, had been theirs. Haldane was "bitterly disappointed to find that Winston had gone," he would later write in his memoirs, adding, "I resist the temptation of stating what Brockie had to say on the

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subject."[134] Yet it is difficult to see what else Winston could have done. A ledge on the outer side of the wall prevented him from climbing back. His prospects in any case were extremely dim. Ahead of him lay three hundred miles of wild and hostile country. He didn't know the language. He lacked a compass and a map—Brockie had those. His pockets contained seventy-five pounds in British money, four slabs of chocolate, and a few biscuits. Believing he had no other choice, he rose from the garden, making no attempt at concealment, and strode past another sentry, unchallenged, into the moonlit evening.

Pretoria was crowded with burghers. He strode right through them, humming to himself until he reached the suburbs, where he sat on a little bridge to reflect. At dawn he would be missed; pursuit would be immediate. At any rate he was free, "if only for an hour." Wandering about, he found a railroad track and followed it to the nearest station. There he waited in a ditch until the next train arrived. It paused five minutes and started moving again. He had no idea where it was going, but it offered the only way out of town. As the locomotive passed him he saw the engineer "silhouetted against the furnace," the "black profile of the engine," and "clouds of steam." His moment was now. Twice he hurled himself at cars and fell back; on the third try he found a handhold and vaulted into a mass of empty coal bags. Burrowing into them, he fell asleep.[135]

The sky was still dark when he awoke. Remaining aboard till daybreak was out of the question; his presence would be betrayed when the bags were unloaded. He had to alight quickly, find water, and hide, awaiting the return of night and another train. Springing from the speeding car, he took two gigantic strides and sprawled in a shallow trench. Then, finding a pool in a nearby gully, he forced himself to drink all he could hold because he had no way of knowing when he would find more. Dawn broke and he felt jubilant: the train tracks ran straight toward the sunrise and Portuguese territory. That day was spent huddled in a ravine, nibbling at chocolate; his sole companion was "a gigantic vulture, who manifested an extravagant interest in my condition, and made hideous and ominous gurglings from time to time."[136] As dusk deepened he crawled out and made his way to a point where the tracks lay uphill and on a curve, reasoning that a train would slow there, permitting him to hop aboard. But no train came. Sometime after midnight, having waited six hours in vain, he struck out on foot, hoping to put ten or fifteen miles of roadbed behind him before another day dawned. Presently he saw the flaw in this plan. Every railroad bridge was guarded by armed men. To avoid them he had to creep across the moonlit veld or detour through bogs, swamps, and streams. A station loomed. On a siding lay three long strings of freight cars. He was studying their markings, hoping to learn their destinations and then hide in one which seemed promising, when loud voices came toward him, scaring him away and driving him out into the grass of the boundless plain.

By now he was exhausted, wandering aimlessly. Out in the darkness to his left gleamed what appeared to be the fires of a Kaffir kraal, a native village. It occurred to him that the Kaffirs, who were said to be disillusioned with the Boers, might be cooperative. He spoke no Bantu tongues, but perhaps sign language would do; it had worked when he was lost in the Sudanese desert. There seemed to be no alternative, so he turned that way. As he approached the settlement, he saw he had been mistaken. It wasn't kraal at all. The

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food, a pistol, a guide, and, if possible, a pony. He wouldn't have a chance, the departing Howard told him. Only that afternoon a Boer officer had been there, asking about him. "They have got the hue and cry out all along the line," he said, "and all over the district."[139]

Back at the camp the previous morning Churchill's absence had been discovered, his letter found. Its reference to friends "outside" had led his guards to believe, as he had meant them to, that he had accomplices in Pretoria. Warrants were issued, houses searched; nothing was found. This being the capital of the republic, correspondents from neutral countries heard of the hunt. Then the name of the missing man leaked out. Borthwick sent Jennie word: "Just received the following from Reuter, 'Churchill escaped.' " The *Daily Telegraph* speculated: "If Mr Churchill is caught the Boers won't let him have the privileges of being a prisoner-of-war again. He cannot be shot unless he uses arms to resist capture, but he may be subjected to confinement rigorous enough to control the innate daring and resourcefulness of which he inherits his full share." He wasn't expected to reach the frontier; within forty-eight hours two papers reported he had been seized, first at Waterval-Boven and then at Komati Poort. The Boers were certainly determined to find him. Joubert felt betrayed. He furiously wired Kruger's state secretary: "With reference to Churchill's escape I [wonder] whether it would not be a good thing to make public the correspondence about the release of Churchill to show the world what a scoundrel he is."[140]

Despite the *Daily Telegraph*, a newsman in Pretoria cabled that on recapture he "may probably be shot," and one London paper, the *Phoenix*, actually thought that reasonable, commenting that "the Boer General cannot be blamed should he order his execution. A non-combatant has no right to carry arms. In the Franco-Prussian War all non-combatants who carried arms were promptly executed." A. E. Brofman, the Boer deputy superintendent of police, posted notices all over the Transvaal describing the fugitive as: "Englishman 25 years old, about 5 ft 8 in tall, average build, walks with a slight stoop, pale appearance, red brown hair, almost invisible small mustache, speaks through the nose, cannot pronounce the letter 'S', cannot speak Dutch, during long conversations occasionally makes a rattling noise [*voggeld*] in his throat, was last seen in a brown suit of clothes." Boers were asked "to remain on the alert and in case aforementioned Churchill appears to arrest him at once." Presses were rolling with a police photograph of him, and a price was set on his head.[141]

Brofman's quarry awoke the following afternoon, reached for the candles, and found nothing. It would be dangerous, he knew, to blunder around the shaft in the dark, so he lay still until, several hours later, a faint gleam of lantern light heralded the return of Howard, bearing a chicken and several books. The chicken, he explained, came from the home of an English physician who lived twenty miles away. It was a necessary precaution; Howard's Boer servants had been inquisitive about the missing mutton. Policemen were knocking on every door here. The presence of English residents in the mining district

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made it a natural focus of suspicion. But he assured Churchill he was safe. He could pass the time reading. Where, by the way, were his candles? Winston told him they had vanished. His host gave him a half-dozen replacements and apologized; he should have warned him to keep them under the mattress. If left out, he explained, they would be devoured by the swarms of savage white rats in the mine.

Fortunately Churchill did not share the common revulsion for rats. During his three days in the mine they were his biggest problem, pulling at his pillow when he stored the candles beneath it, scurrying around him whenever he blew the flame out, and even wakening him from a doze by running across his face. Once the two miners came down and led him on a tour of the shaft's subterranean tunnels and galleries; Winston, ever interested in new experiences, questioned them closely about their work. But mostly he glared at rats and read. On the fourth day Howard visited him and said the manhunt seemed to be losing its momentum. The police were combing Pretoria again, convinced he could not have left the town, that a British sympathizer there must be harboring him. He was brought up for a walk on the veld that night and then moved into new quarters behind packing cases in Howard's office. There he remained for three more days, and was frightened but once, when intermittent rifle fire broke out in the neighborhood. A Boer police officer was in fact there, but the shots had been the result of a ruse of Howard's. To draw the man away from the house, he had challenged him to a rifle match, shooting bottles. The gullible policeman had won and left no wiser.

Howard now had an escape plan. He had recruited another plotter, Charles Burnham, a local shipping agent.* On Tuesday, December 19, Winston's seventh day of freedom, a consignment of wool was to be loaded on the mine's railroad branch and sent, via the main line at Balmoral, to Lourenço Marques in Portuguese territory. Churchill would be hidden among the bales. At first, curiously, he balked. He said he would rather cross the veld with directions and a horse. Imprisonment, he later reflected, had warped his judgment. He was reading Stevenson's *Kidnapped* at the time, identifying with David Balfour and Alan Breck in the glens. Like them, he was a victim of his need for concealment and deception, which, he later concluded, "breeds an actual sense of guilt very undermining to morale. Feeling that at any moment the officers of the law may present themselves or any stranger may ask the questions, 'Who are you?' 'Where do you come from?' 'Where are you going?'—to which questions no satisfactory answer could be given—gnawed at the structure of self-confidence." He agreed to the trip but dreaded it.[142]

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It was just as well he knew no more. Burnham had decided to accompany the train in one of the passenger cars, and before the trip was over he felt he had aged a lifetime. Churchill would never have made it without him. At Middelburg, their second stop, a trainman wanted to shunt the wool car off on a sidetrack and leave it there overnight; at Waterval-Boven a railroad agent ordered it sidetracked because of a petty regulation; an armed Boer started to untie the tarpaulin when they paused in Kaapmuiden; and when they reached Komanti Poort and the frontier, a detective stepped forward to search the entire train. Burnham dissuaded all of them with bribes and drinks until they had crossed the border and reached Ressano Garcia, where, for the first time, he encountered an honest man. The stationmaster, refusing his money, said the wool could not proceed with the passenger cars. The best he would do was promise it would follow within a half hour. Burnham therefore reached Lourenço first, bribed another policeman—who wanted to arrest him for "loitering with intent"—and was waiting when his cargo arrived. According to Burnham's account in the Johannesburg *Star* twenty-four years later, "The truck had not been stationary a minute when Churchill, black as a sweep by reason of the coal-dust which was in the bottom of the truck, sprang out." Meanwhile, Winston, squinting through his peephole, had already seen a Portuguese place-name painted on a board. He was so carried away that he shoved aside the bale overhead and "fired my revolver two or three times in the air as a *feu de joie*."[143]

Burnham led him out of the station, around several corners, and paused. He looked up silently at the roof of a building opposite. Winston followed his gaze "and there—blest vision!—I saw floating the gay colours of the Union Jack. It was the British Consulate." A piece of opéra bouffe ensued. At the door a minor official took one look at his filthy clothes and snapped: "Be off. The Consul cannot see you today. Come to his office at nine tomorrow if you want anything." Churchill stepped back, threw back his head, and shouted at the upper stories: "I am Winston Bloody Churchill! Come down here at once!" An upstairs window flew open; it was the startled consul, Alexander Ross. Ross called hurried instructions to the man downstairs, and within a quarter hour Winston was lolling in a hot bath. In borrowed clothes he accompanied Burnham to a store, where, Burnham

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recalled, “he bought a rigout and a cowboy hat.” Back at the consulate, after an enormous dinner, Churchill dispatched a sheaf of telegrams to London. At Great Cumberland Place Jennie picked up the telephone and heard a reporter shouting into the mouthpiece: “Hurrah! Hurrah!” Miss Plowden sent a three-word telegram: “Thank God—Pamela.”[144]

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Churchill addressing the crowd at Durban

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It's the soldiers of the Queen, my lads,
Who've been the lads, who've seen the lads
In the fight for England's glory, lads—
Of her world-wide glory let us sing!

And when we say we've always won
And when they ask us how it's done
We'll proudly point to every one
Of England's soldiers of the Queen!

That afternoon he caught a train to Pietermaritzburg, where he remained overnight as the guest of Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, governor of Natal, and picked up more disquieting information. The kaiser had written his grandmother the Queen, threatening to side with the Boers. ("I cannot sit on the safety valve forever. My people demand intervention.") Buller had cabled the War Office that the investment of Ladysmith could not be lifted without further reinforcements. More troopships were on their way to him, but he had been demoted. Although he would retain command of the Natal forces, Lord Roberts was sailing down to take over as commander in chief, with Kitchener, Winston's nemesis, as chief of staff. Back at the front, Churchill celebrated Christmas Eve with the rest of the press corps, scarcely a hundred yards from the site of the armored-train ambush. In a flush of patriotism he cabled the *Morning Post:* "More irregular corps are wanted. Are the gentlemen of England all fox-hunting? Why not an English Light Horse? For the sake of our manhood, our devoted colonists, and our dead soldiers, we must persevere with the war." Buller wrote Lady Theresa Londonderry: "Winston Churchill turned up here yesterday escaped from Pretoria. He really is a fine fellow and I must say I admire him greatly. I wish he was leading irregular troops instead of writing for a rotten paper. We are very short of good men, as he appears to be, out here." He then sent for Churchill and questioned him closely about conditions in the Transvaal. All he got were impressions Winston had gleaned by looking through a tiny crack between bales of wool, but at the end he said: "You have done very well. Is there anything we can do for you?"[145]

To his delight, Winston asked for a commission. The general said, "What about poor old Borthwick?" and his face fell when Churchill replied that he couldn't possibly break his contract with the *Morning Post.* It might be a rotten paper to the general, but it paid twelve times as much as the army. That put Buller in a dilemma. After the Nile expedition, the War Office had ruled that no soldier could double as a war correspondent. Now Churchill, whose dispatches had been responsible for the ruling, was asking that he be made an exception to it. The general circled the room three times, worried an ear, and said: "All right. You can have a commission in Bungo's regiment. You will have to do as much as you can for both jobs. But you will get no pay for ours." Winston quickly agreed, and "Bungo"—Colonel Julian Byng, commanding the South African Light Horse, an Uitlander regiment—appointed him assistant adjutant, with the understanding that while

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not actually fighting he could go where he liked. Happily stitching his badges of rank on his khaki jacket, Churchill stuck the SALH's long plume of "cockyolibird" feathers in his hat and headed toward the sound of the guns.[146]

In London, Borthwick raised no objection—since the escape his circulation had soared—but the arrangement was a poor one. Taken as a whole, Churchill's youthful war correspondence reveals a remarkable grasp of strategy and tactics and an admirable readiness to criticize senior officers. He felt indebted to Buller, however, and here, as in Cuba, gratitude warped his judgment. He wrote: "If Sir Redvers Buller cannot relieve Ladysmith with his present force we do not know of any other officer in the British Service who would be likely to succeed." That was absurd, and in moments of clarity he knew it. On January 10, after a bloody reverse on the Tugela River, he wrote Pamela: "Alas dearest we are again in retreat. Buller started out full of determination to do or die but his courage soon ebbed and we stood still and watched while one poor wretched brigade was pounded and hammered and we were not allowed to help them…. And the horrible part of it all is that Ladysmith will probably fall and all our brave friends be led off to captivity and shame." In the aftermath of another disaster—the general had delegated authority to a weak officer, then relieved him—Churchill pictured Buller at last gripping "the whole business in his strong hands." He failed to note that by then it was too late for the men who had died in vain.[147]

The toll was mounting. And the British, including Churchill, were shocked and bewildered. None of them had ever known anything like this slaughter. Even Majuba, fought near here, had been relatively tame. In their defeat there the British had lost just ninety-two men. The Boer bullet which had crippled Ian Hamilton's left wrist—Winston called it Hamilton's "glorious" deformity—had been enough to distinguish him. Now, abruptly, everything had changed. This time the Boers, unlike the Pathan and Omdurman tribesmen, were armed with weapons just as modern as Buller's. Machine guns shredded the Queen's dense khaki ranks. Distant Long Toms, sited far beyond the reach of the English cavalry, fired 40-pound, 4.7-inch shrapnel shells that dismembered men or even obliterated them. Barbed wire had appeared, and sandbagged entrenchments. The Boers understood the new warfare. They told one another: "Dig now, or they'll dig your grave later."[148] The baffled British clung stubbornly to their Sandhurst principles. Cavalrymen like Major Douglas Haig assured one another that their *arme blanche*, the lance and sword, would winkle out the foe. They tried and failed and tried and failed and learned nothing. In British regimental accounts one finds the first pathetic strains of a theme which would be sounded throughout all the wars of the twentieth century, now less than a month old. This or that local engagement was "imperishable," or "immortal"; it would "go down in history," "enshrined forever" in the records of the past. So it was said in South Africa that winter of Hussar Hill, Mount Alice, Conical Hill, Aloe Knoll, and Potgeiter's Ferry. So it would be said of Broodseinde in 1917, Galloping Horse Ridge in 1942, the Punchbowl in 1951, and Pleiku in 1965. Eventually all would be forgotten, even by the descendants of those who had fought there.

The first of the century's butcheries was Spion Kop, or Spion Mountain, and Churchill was there, as was Gandhi with his stretcher-bearers. Abandoning the plan of forcing the Tugela at Colenso, Buller tried to turn Botha's right flank by fording the river

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proposed be done next. The brigadier, in shock, on the verge of a complete breakdown, mumbled that it was all hopeless and he had decided to withdraw: "Better six good battalions safely down the hill than a bloody mop-up in the morning." Churchill insisted the gains could still be consolidated—military historians agree with him—and harangued the brigadier about "Majuba" and "the great British public." It was in vain; the order to retreat went up. Down the Uitlanders came, leaving their dead three deep. In the first olive moments of dawn Churchill glowered up, his thumbs in his braces and his lower lip thrust out in that way he had, and saw two of Botha's burghers standing jubilantly on the pinnacle. They were waving their rifles and slouch hats, shouting that the Khakis had been *"kopschuw"*—routed.[151]

His bitterness over the loss of Spion Kop was relieved by the arrival in South Africa of Lady Randolph Churchill. Jennie had solicited £41,597 from wealthy Americans and commissioned a hospital ship, the *Maine*, named after the U.S. warship lost in Havana harbor. In the forecastle were an American flag, sent by Theodore Roosevelt, and, from Queen Victoria, a Union Jack. (Jennie chose to fly the British colors.) Accompanying her on the voyage was Jack, just nineteen, whose brother had obtained a commission for him in the SALH. They had learned of Winston's escape the day before they sailed, and he met them on the Durban docks. After they had killed a bottle of '25 brandy, Jennie mounted a wild horse, tamed it, and rode it into the regiment's camp. At forty-five her beauty had reached its autumnal glory, and if she seemed determined to prove that she retained the energy of youth, there was reason: she had decided to marry George Cornwallis-West, an impecunious junior officer just Winston's age. There is no record of her sons' reaction to this. Her friends, however, were appalled. Jennie didn't care. She told one of them: "I suppose you think I'm very foolish, but I don't care. I'm having such *fun*."[152]

Winston's family was well represented in South Africa now. There was his mother; his brother; his bland, mustachioed cousin Sunny, the young duke, serving in Cape Town as Lord Roberts's military secretary; and, among the civilians in besieged Mafeking, his aunt Lady Sarah Wilson, Randolph's glamorous thirty-five-year-old sister, who, bored by London, had come down here for excitement and found it. Captured in the Transvaal during a clumsy attempt at spying, she had been exchanged for a Boer cattle thief and now held court in a luxurious, white-paneled bunker hewn out of Mafeking's red soil, the walls decorated with African spears from the Matabele War and a huge Union Jack. Lady Sarah was a survivor; no one seems to have been concerned about her. Winston was worried about Jack, however. He felt responsible for him, and almost immediately his fears were justified. In action for the first time on Hussar Hill, Jack was wounded in the calf. To Atkins, "It seemed as though he had paid his brother's debts." Winston thought it "an instance of Fortune's caprice." Jack, he wrote Pamela, had been "lying down. I was walking about without any cover—I who have tempted fortune so often. Jack was hit." To his mother he wrote: "It is a coincidence that one of the first patients on board the *Maine* should be your own son… but you may be glad with me that he is out of harm's way for a month. There will be a great battle in a few days and his presence—though I would not lift a finger to prevent him—adds much to my anxiety when there is fighting."[153]

The great battle, for Vaal Krantz, was fought and succeeded by another, and then

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another. Slowly the weight of British numbers began to tell. Kimberley, 240 miles to the west, was relieved by Major General John French, while here in Natal, Botha fell back on Hlangwane Hill, then in further retreats on Inskilling Hill, Pieters Plateau, Railway Hill, and Hart's Hill. Churchill was in action almost every day, and on the historic evening of February 28, the one hundred eighteenth day of Ladysmith's investment, he rode with the first two squadrons to enter the beleaguered town, galloping "across the scrub-dotted plain, fired at only by a couple of Boer guns. Suddenly," he wrote, "from the brushwood up rose gaunt figures waving hands of welcome. On we pressed, and at the head of a battered street of tin-roofed houses met Sir George White on horseback, faultlessly attired…. It was a thrilling moment." That night he dined with White and Ian Hamilton on champagne and a roast from the garrison's last trek-ox, saved for this occasion. But "better than feast or couch" was the reward, "which was all the more splendid since it had been so long delayed—victory."[154]

Churchill remained in Ladysmith over a month, feverishly writing a new book, *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria*. His escape had fueled sales of his earlier works—8,000 copies of *Savrola*, 3,000 of the two-volume *River War* at 36 shillings ($9), and 600 of the *Malakand Field Force*—bringing him about £1,500 in royalties. This, with the checks from Borthwick, went into his political war chest. Already Tories in Southport had invited him to run in their constituency, but he wanted vindication in Oldham. When Joe Chamberlain sent him a long letter, inviting a discussion of public affairs, he cannily replied that, while he hoped "to find a seat before the dissolution, as I should like to record a vote on many points," he could not return to England "until the end of the war or at least until the Transvaal is in our hands." His Oldham defeat had taught him the need for planning. He meant to build a financial base, at the same time cultivating readers with his vivid prose—"Winston's graphic tongue," as Jennie called it. Yet he could never be a cautious politician. With casualty lists lengthening, the last thing his readers wanted from him was a plea for magnanimity toward the enemy. Nevertheless, he wrote: "Peace and happiness can only come to South Africa through the fusion and concord of the Dutch and British races, who must forever live side by side," and "I earnestly hope, expect and urge that a generous and forgiving policy will be followed." Angry subscribers disagreed, and his own paper ran an editorial demanding punishment of the Boers. Hely-Hutchinson wrote him that Boers who sought to return to Natal "shd be tried & punished…. You must remember that the Natal Dutch have been treated with special consideration in the past, and that if what we hear from many sources is true they have been the ringleaders in the looting & destruction that has been going on in Natal." What looting? Winston asked. What destruction? It appeared to him that this was based on unconfirmed rumors. He refused to retract; indeed, with each Boer defeat his appeals for mercy and compassion grew stronger.[155]

As a suitor, on the other hand, he continued to be both indecisive and inept. He wrote his mother: "I think a great deal of Pamela; she loves me vy dearly." Yet a considerate young man would have spared his beloved the grisly details of his brushes with death. Winston kept Pamela fully informed on every bullet, every shell fragment that came his way, reminding her over and over that each breath might be his last, that even as she read this he might already be a decomposing cadaver. "I was very nearly killed two hours ago

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by a shrapnel," he wrote her in a typical missive, and, on the eve of a battle, "I pray to God that I may have no thoughts of myself when the time comes—but for you my darling always." Unquestionably he missed her. Indeed, when Jennie had arrived he wrote Pamela: "Oh why did you not come out as secretary? Why did you not come out in the *Maine* so that I should be going to meet you now." Then, as after her refusal to campaign in Oldham, he backed off: "Perhaps you are wise." He didn't understand women; he compared them with his eccentric mother and was puzzled by the variance. When Pamela, like Joe Chamberlain, hinted that he had done his part and ought to come home now, he bridled. "I do not know whether I shall see the end or not," he replied, raising that specter again, "but I am quite certain that I will not leave Africa till the matter is settled. I should forfeit my self-respect forever if I tried to shield myself behind an easily obtained reputation for courage. No possible advantage politically could compensate—beside believe me none would result." That was the nub of it. He was convinced he was making political capital down there and was therefore content. The possibility that he might make better time with her by leaving the front seems never to have occurred to him.[156]

The limelight, which he craved more than any woman's company, now faded from Natal and shone down upon the Cape Colony, where England's shortest and most popular soldier was preparing to move through the Orange Free State and into the Transvaal. Kipling understood the popularity of the diminutive Field Marshal Lord Roberts, KCB, GCB:

What 'e does not know o' war,
Gen'real Bobs,
You can arst the shop next door—
can't they, Bobs?
O 'e's little but 'e's wise,
'E's a terror for 'is size,
An'—'e—does—not advertise
Do yer, Bobs?

Churchill, forgetting his earlier bitterness, described him as "this wonderful little man." Bobs, however, did not reciprocate. Kitchener, bitter over Winston's criticisms at Omdurman, had deepened the field marshal's distrust of this impudent subaltern who presumed to pass judgment on his commanding officers. Moreover, Bobs had been outraged by a Churchillian critique of a church parade on the eve of the assault on Vaal Krantz. Over five thousand men had assembled, awaiting inspiration. "The bridegroom Opportunity had come," Winston had written. "But the Church had her lamp untrimmed." Instead of a rousing sermon, the chaplain "with a raucous voice" had preached dully on Jericho, freezing the soldiers "into apathy." Bobs was sensitive to criticism of army chaplains, who had come to South Africa in response to a War Office call for volunteers.

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defeat. If Englishmen showed pluck and daring, if they were loyal to their Queen and their manhood, Britain would always win through; Saint George was sure to slay the dragon in the end. The facts, however ugly, were laundered to suit the Churchillian preconception. Those who have other memories of combat turn away troubled. Yet these incidents were real. The tall man on the pale doomed horse left no version of the episode, but the captain of the scouts made a full report, and it confirmed Winston. Virtually every event he described in South Africa, as in Cuba, on the North-West Frontier, and at Omdurman, was witnessed by others whose recollections were consistent with his. The difference, of course, lay in interpretation. Winston fashioned his own reality, created his own life. "I had thrown double sixes again," he wrote after he had been saved from the kopje riflemen.[160] He did it over and over. He had reached the prison latrine just as the sentry was lighting his pipe, had found the one train which passed through Pretoria that night, had blindly knocked on the door of the one man in the mining district who could and would help him through to the Portuguese border, and had been spared a thousand times in battle since then while the first bullet had found poor Jack. So it would continue throughout the march with Roberts, and if his view of life under Bobs seems fantastic, one can only observe that in his case life was, and continued to be, remarkably melodramatic.

Just once was he vouchsafed a glimpse of what the South African war was all about. On the last day of May, Roberts took Johannesburg, in the heart of the Witwatersrand, the "Rand," that sixty-three-mile-long ridge, seamed with auriferous rock, which constitutes the world's richest goldfield. After gazing down at the gray-stockinged feet of eighteen Highlanders awaiting burial, Churchill wrote, he found himself "scowling at the tall chimneys of the Rand." But the moment passed. England wouldn't send men to die for *that*. He turned away and presently found himself with Hamilton, Sunny, and the exhilarating advance of the eleven-thousand-man flank force's move northward. The weather was magnificent, the scenery stunning. In later life he told his doctor, "I loved it: all movement and riding." He spent £1,000 of *Morning Post* expense money on a pair of horses, a team of four oxen, and a wagon whose false bottom was crammed with liquor and Fortnum and Mason groceries. They almost lost the wagon fording a stream, but naturally Winston guided the team through the current. One night they found a flock of geese on a pond. Sunny shepherded them toward his cousin, who felled one with a flying kick. They ate it that night, and they let General Hamilton have some.[161]

Counting the main force under Roberts, Johannesburg and then Pretoria were the objectives of over 200,000 British troops. The Boers never had more than 88,000 men under arms on all fronts, and they prudently prepared to abandon the Transvaal capital and withdraw eastward. On June 2 they were still there, however, standing between Hamilton's column and the main army under Roberts. Hamilton had just crushed an enemy force at Doornkop; he wanted Bobs to know of it. He was only twenty miles from the field marshal by direct route, but a courier avoiding Johannesburg would have to cover an eighty-mile detour over rough country. Churchill, as it happened, had just finished interviewing a Frenchman who had left the town only hours before on his bicycle. Boer security was lax there, said the Frenchman; he was certain Winston could safely cycle right through. He offered to lend him his bike, even volunteered to borrow another from a friend and act as his guide. If a Boer became suspicious, they would chat in French.

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Here, surely, was temptation. Less than six months earlier, against all odds, Winston had fled prison just north of here. Then he had been merely a war correspondent. Now he held a Queen's commission. He would have to travel in a civilian suit. In his pocket he would be carrying an urgent report from one British commander to another. Even the debonair Frenchman—if indeed he was what he said he was; Winston, with his own atrocious French, was no judge of that, and no one else here had ever laid eyes on the man before—conceded that armed Boers were thick in the streets. A simple search by any one of them and Winston would be shoved against the nearest wall and executed by an ad hoc firing squad. Nevertheless, he agreed. He took the plan to Hamilton, who, amused, gave him a copy of the dispatch he was sending by orderlies the long way. Changing clothes, Winston shoved it into the jacket with his *Morning Post* telegrams and cycled off with his carefree guide.

In Johannesburg they had one bad moment. They were pushing their bikes up a long steep street when a slowly trotting Boer horseman drew abreast, reined in his mount, and walked alongside, carefully scrutinizing them. The rider had a rifle slung on his back, a pistol in a holster, and three bandoliers of ammunition dangling from his shoulder. Altering their pace would have been a grave mistake. Turning away, Winston said as much in French, sounding all the final consonants as usual—his companion flinched—and the Boer trotted off. Encountering no enemy picket line, another stroke of luck, they reached Roberts's advance patrols without further incident. Churchill was taken directly to Bobs. The commander in chief read the dispatch. Then he looked up and asked: "How did you come?" "Through Johannesburg," Churchill said, and explained. The little man's eyes twinkled. Winston wrote gaily, "Lord Roberts had very remarkable eyes, full of light. I remember being struck by this at the moment." Bobs's chilliness toward him had disappeared. Kitchener remained distant, but Winston's new source of news and favors was at the very top.[162]

The first fruit of this conversion followed within seventy-two hours. Bobs permitted him to canter into Pretoria, with Sunny at his side, at the head of the lead column. They galloped toward the POW camp in the State Model Schools. It looked exactly as it had when he left nearly six months before, a long tin building surrounded by dense wire, and the Boer guards, still on watch, brought their rifles to the ready. "Surrender!" cried Sunny, and after an uneasy pause the commandant appeared and capitulated. Prisoners had rushed to the fence. Haldane and Brockie were gone—they had finally made it to the British lines on their own—but the others were all there. One of them, Lieutenant Thomas Frankland of the Second Dublin Fusiliers, had been wondering if the sound of distant gunfire meant approaching freedom. He wrote, "Who should I see on reaching the gate but Churchill, who, with his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, had galloped on in front of the army to bring us the good tidings." Another prisoner, a Yorkshire engineering officer named Melville Goodacre, recorded in his diary how he had been washing clothes in the compound "when suddenly Winston Churchill came galloping over the hill." Goodacre watched, astonished, a wet shirt still in his hand, as Winston pushed past the guards—Sunny was giving the commandant a receipt for their rifles—and made for the flagpole. He produced a Union Jack. Then, Goodacre's diary continues, he "tore down the Boer flag and hoisted ours amidst cheers," whereupon "the Boer guards were put inside and our prisoners guard over *them!*" It was, the diarist thought, "roarable and splendid." It was

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incorporated in the Empire. That action could be reversed, however, and in time it was. England's losses, on the other hand, were irreplaceable. The Boer blitz of 1899 had destroyed the myth of British invulnerability; now, in this final *fin de siècle* convulsion, Britain's moral position was also crippled.

Winston missed all this. After interviewing Milner in Cape Town and spending a day foxhunting with the Duke of Westminster, he boarded the *Dunottar Castle* and set to work on a new book, *Ian Hamilton's March*, a paste-up of his dispatches since leaving Buller. *London to Ladysmith* had appeared five days before the relief of Mafeking; the two books were to sell twenty-two thousand copies in England and the United States, the equivalent of over seventy thousand today. He was also planning his entrance into public life. He hoped his mother would tell him of the country's political temper when he docked in Southampton July 20. To his consternation, she wasn't there; she was busy preparing for her wedding and had let the house in Great Cumberland Place, which Winston regarded as his home as well as hers. Sunny rescued him, assigning him the lease of a spacious flat at 105 Mount Street in Mayfair. Winston bought furniture at Maples and asked his aunt Leonie to redecorate the rooms—"you cannot imagine how that kind of material arrangement irritates me; so long as my table is clear and there is plenty of paper I do not worry about the rest."[166]

During the next seven months he was seldom there. Public interest in him was almost overwhelming. Eleven Conservative constituencies now sought him as their candidate, but he made straight for Oldham, which gave him a tremendous welcome. A band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes" as he entered the town in the midst of a procession of ten landaus. Shopkeepers and factory hands lined the streets, some shouting, "Young Randy!" At the Theatre Royal he addressed a full house. They wanted to hear of his escape, and when he responded, telling them of his arrival at the mine and mentioning Dan Dewsnap—British troops had occupied the Witbank colliery district, so he could name names—voices shouted: "His wife's in the gallery!" Mrs. Dewsnap took a bow, plump and blushing; Winston, bowing back, was cheered to the rafters. A chorus of mill girls stood and sang the music hall ditty sweeping England that summer:[167]

> *You've heard of Winston Churchill;*
> *This is all I need to say—*
> *He's the latest and the greatest*
> *Correspondent of the day.*

If this mood held, he would be swept into office. But it didn't hold; it couldn't. The Liberal incumbents were popular, well financed, and well organized, and when he declared his candidacy on September 19, two days after the dissolution of Parliament, it was clear that the race would be fought at concert pitch. "The excitement is already great," he wrote his mother after his first day on the stump, "and I have no doubt that before the end of the campaign the town will be in a state of frenzy." Twice he appealed for her help ("I need not say that it would be very pleasing to me"; "I write again to impress upon you how very useful your presence will be") but Jennie declined. She was enjoying her extended honeymoon; he would have to win by himself. Actually, no candidate in that

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election, "the khaki election," as it became known, was to be judged by his own merits. Party tactics guaranteed that. Chamberlain had set the tone with his slogan, "Every seat lost to the Government is a seat gained to the Boers." One poster declared: OUR BRAVE SOLDIERS IN SOUTH AFRICA EXPECT THAT EVERY VOTER WILL DO HIS DUTY…. REMEMBER! TO VOTE FOR A LIBERAL IS A VOTE TO THE BOER. Churchill himself was not above this. One of his Oldham hoardings read: "Be it known that every vote given to the radicals means 2 pats on the back for Kruger and 2 smacks in the face for our country." He was stung when the Liberals retaliated with a whispering campaign, describing him as a fake and a cashiered officer. The *Daily Mail* of September 27 reported: "In nothing does Winston Churchill show his youth more than in the way he allows slanders to affect him…. They deeply wound him and he allows men to see it. When some indiscreet supporter brings these stories to him, his eyes flash fire, he clutches his hands angrily, and he hurries out to find opportunity of somewhere and somehow bringing his traducers to book." He wrote the opposition in protest; their reply expressed "extreme regret," but added, not unreasonably, that Liberals had been exasperated by the character of the Tory campaign and "the ill-advised attempt of your political friends to run this election on the question of your undoubted physical courage instead of upon the political issues involved."[168]

Balfour had agreed to come and speak for him "if I could manage it." Now he found he couldn't. Chamberlain came, however, even though it meant a four-hour return train trip at night. They rode through Oldham together in an open carriage, with loud hurrahs rising on both sides, and afterward Winston wrote: "He loved the roar of the multitude…. The blood mantled in his cheek, and his eye as it caught mine twinkled with pure enjoyment." It is doubtless true, as Violet Asquith wrote, that at this time Joe had "a genuine affection and admiration" for Churchill. But as party strategist he had a special interest in his campaign. In those days of "hammer and anvil politics," as Winston called them, England did not vote in a single day. Voters went to the polls over a period of six weeks. On October 1, Oldham's thirty thousand workmen would be almost the first to poll, and the results would affect Conservatives still on the stump. Thus, Churchill's victory—his margin was only twenty-two votes, but it represented a crossover of fifteen hundred voters, and he had won a seat from a strong Liberal—instantly put his party in his debt. Salisbury personally telegraphed his congratulations. All over the country Tories in tight contests (including a penitent Balfour) begged him to come and campaign for them before their constituents voted. He went, he received standing ovations, and he was elated when victories followed in his wake. "I have suddenly become one of the two or three most popular speakers in this election," he wrote Cockran, "and am now engaged on a fighting tour, of the kind you know—great audiences (five and six thousand people) twice & even three times a day, bands, crowds and enthusiasm of all kinds."[169]

Politically, he had arrived. And his party still ruled England. Chamberlain's tactics, however dubious, had worked. The khaki election assured the future of Salisbury's Tory-Unionist coalition; it now held a solid majority of 134 seats over the Liberals and the Irish Nationalists combined. But when the new House of Commons met on December 3, its newest star was absent. Winston Churchill, MP, had decided to postpone his maiden speech until next year. His finances had priority. Sunny had contributed £400 to his campaign, and would pay £100 a year toward his constituency expenses, and Winston had

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his royalties and the checks from Borthwick, but he wanted more. He knew this wave of popularity would not last. He meant to cash in on it now, with lecture tours of England, the United States, and Canada. Beginning in late October, accompanied by Sunny, he covered more than half of Great Britain in a month, speaking for an hour or more almost every night except Sundays, and often twice a day, traveling ceaselessly, usually at night, seldom sleeping twice in the same bed. Because he was working with his tongue now, not his pen, he tried to master his stubborn speech between lectures by muttering under his breath such exercises as, "The Spanish ships I cannot see for they are not in sight." Violet Asquith has left an endearing portrait of his weary figure as he trudged from hall to hall, his magic lantern under his arm, the profile already unmistakable by virtue of "the slightly hunched shoulders from which his head jutted forward like the muzzle of a gun about to fire."[170] He reached his objective; by December 8, when he sailed westward on the *Luciana,* he had made £4,500 and turned it over with the rest of his savings to Sir Ernest Cassel—who had been a friend of his father's—for investment in consols.

On the whole his American tour was a disappointment. Cockran saw to it that he met President McKinley and Senator Chauncey Depew, and dined in Albany with Governor Theodore Roosevelt, the vice-president-elect. He was delighted when Mark Twain, one of his boyhood heroes, inscribed a limited edition of his works for him, writing on the first flyleaf: "To do good is noble; to teach others to do good is nobler, and no trouble." But then Twain, introducing him to his first audience, in Manhattan's Waldorf-Astoria on December 12, 1900, made it clear that he thought the British treatment of the Boers ignoble. Describing the speaker as the son of an English father and an American mother, and therefore "the perfect man," he said bluntly: "I think England sinned when she got herself into a war in South Africa which she could have avoided, just as we have sinned in getting into a similar war in the Philippines." The listeners murmured in agreement, then sat on their hands when Winston described his flight across the Transvaal. Afterward he turned to his host and growled: "My country right or wrong." But he was not yet Twain's match. "Ah," the old man nimbly replied, "when the poor country is fighting for its life, I agree. But this was not your case." Churchill, writing home, complained about his U.S. lecture agent, J. B. Pond: "First of all the interest is not what Maj Pond made out and secondly there is a strong pro-Boer feeling, which has been fomented against me by the leaders of the Dutch, particularly in New York." Yet Baltimore and Chicago audiences were colder than New York's, and beginning in Chicago, Irish-Americans, indignant over the Tory policy toward Ireland, came to boo. To quiet them, he would describe a dramatic crisis on a South African battlefield. The British position had been desperate, he would tell them, when "the Dublin Fusiliers arrived, trumpeters sounded the charge, and the enemy were swept from the field." A newspaperwoman reported: "Suddenly the balconies grew silent, then thundered with cheers."[171]

But that was cheap, and he knew it. He wrote his mother that the tour was "vy unpleasant work. For instance, last week, I arrived to lecture in an American town and found Pond had not arranged any public lecture but that I was hired out for £40 to perform at an evening party in a private house—like a conjurer. Several times I have harangued in local theatres to almost empty benches. I have been horribly vulgarised by the odious advertisements Pond and Myrmidons think it necessary to circulate—and only my cynical

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institutions and values. They were his priceless legacy; he was their fortunate heir. His career would be inconceivable today. And it would have been equally unthinkable before Victoria came to the throne, when England had been an agricultural island, lacking in industry and without an Empire. Native drive, wise legislation, an educated and enlightened oligarchy ingeniously harnessed to genuine democracy, sea power, skillful diplomacy, faith in the supremacy of its island race—these had made imperial Britain, which, in that first Edwardian winter, despite the stigma of South Africa, continued to glitter on its splendid pinnacle, the envy of the world's chancelleries.

Could any other nation in 1901 offer its young politicians the chance for greatness which was now his? Not the insular United States of nineteen-year-old Franklin Roosevelt, then an immature, unpromising Harvard freshman in a country of fewer than 76 million—less than a fifth of the Empire's 412 million—which largely ignored the rest of civilization. Not the vast China of thirteen-year-old Chiang Kai-shek; its few pretensions to a national identity had been shattered with the crushing of the Boxer uprising the previous summer. Certainly not the locked medieval oriental kingdom of sixteen-year-old Hideki Tojo's Japan. The domain of the Turk—the home of nineteen-year-old Mustapha Kemal—was an empire in name only. Czarist Russia seethed with anarchy, terror, despotism, nihilism, and intrigue, and was constantly menaced by uprisings in the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Finland, Poland, and Georgia, where Joseph Stalin, then Josif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, aged twenty-one, had just been fired from the only nonpolitical job he ever held, a clerkship in the Tiflis observatory. In Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, the Hapsburg emperor presided over an equally unstable polyglot of Serbs, Croats, Poles, Magyars, Czechs, Yugoslavs, and Austrians, including, in the Austrian town of Linz, a sullen eleven-year-old schoolboy named Adolf Hitler. Italy, where Benito Mussolini, seventeen, was the quarrelsome son of the Predappio blacksmith, had repeatedly tried to play the part of a world power under a recent series of ineffectual rightist premiers and had been humiliated every time. Italy was blinded by an *idée fixe,* the recovery of lost territories, *Italia irredenta;* the France of Charles de Gaulle, who had just celebrated his tenth birthday in Lille, by a yearning to settle the scores of 1871, which had marked the beginning of the Gallic decline in growth and prestige. Only Wilhelmine Germany loomed as an immediate rival to Britain, and the character of the kaiser's regime excluded any commoner from a distinguished career in public life. Thus England alone could offer young Churchill the role he sought, and its prospects seemed certain to remain unique, barring monumental English folly, or loss of will, or the abandonment of such Victorian principles as disdain for continental alliances. The mere suggestion of any of these lapses would, in 1901, have evoked global laughter.

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THREE

RIVER

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1901–1914

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and its decor had not changed since the eighteenth century. Directly beneath the timbered ceiling lay the well, with the carved chair of the Speaker, who determined which members should have the floor. On either side of him the benches, upholstered in green, rose in five tiers. Those to the Speaker's right were occupied by the party in power; the Opposition sat to his left. Each tier was separated at midpoint by an aisle, the "gangway." The front government bench, extending from the Speaker's chair to the gangway, was reserved for the prime minister and his cabinet; it was also called "the Treasury Bench" because the first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, had also been first lord of the Admiralty and chancellor of the Exchequer. Two red stripes on the well carpet marked the point beyond which no front-bencher could advance in addressing the House; the distance between the stripes was the length of two drawn swords. There were not enough seats for all elected members; this permitted the conversational style and avoided an impression of emptiness during routine sittings. "A crowded House" gave an air of urgency to dramatic moments.

Churchill knew all this; had known it since boyhood. He was also familiar with the customs of the House. Savage, even cruel words could be exchanged between members who, off the floor, were on the best of terms. Any speech made off the floor was said to be given "out of doors." The House of Lords was "another place." Committee meetings were held "upstairs." Leaders of one's own party were addressed as "my right honorable friend"; an Opposition leader was "the right honorable gentleman." The dominant figures in the chamber were, for the most part, the same men who had prevailed during his father's last days here. The Tories had remained in power, and the destroyer of Lord Randolph's career, Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, was still prime minister. Salisbury's grip on the controls had in fact tightened; he had maneuvered so many members of his family into key posts that wits called the House "the Hotel Cecil." No fewer than seven Salisbury sons, nephews, and cousins sat on the Conservative benches. Four were in the government, and one, Arthur J. Balfour, "AJB," leader of the House, was preparing to take over as prime minister when his uncle retired. As a youthful MP, AJB had belonged to Lord Randolph's Fourth Party, but now he had put all that behind him and was as rock-ribbed a supporter of Tory policies as Joseph Chamberlain. The entire Tory-Unionist hierarchy stood four-square and was prepared to defend the established order down to the last desperate inch. Leaders of the Liberals, on the other side of the House, had been split over foreign policy since the Jameson Raid. The ablest of them—Rosebery, Herbert Asquith, Edward Grey, and R. B. Haldane—had become "Liberal Imperialists": supporters of the Boer War. But a majority of the party's MPs disagreed, remaining faithful to the Gladstonian tradition. The Liberal center was led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ("C-B"). If the party was returned to power, C-B would become prime minister. His followers included a group of antiwar radicals from the Celtic fringe, among them the charismatic young Welshman David Lloyd George, who wanted to geld the House of Lords and follow the lodestar of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*. Since only men of means could afford to enter Parliament, the left was underrepresented. Just two workingmen, supported by union dues, sat as MPs. These "Lib-Labs," as they were popularly known, were identified in the House as members of the Labour Representative Committee; five years would pass before the committee was renamed the Labour party.

Mastery of the House has been given to few. Its moods arch the British spectrum, from cockney vulgarity through Midlands stolidity and Scottish skepticism to Welsh

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emotionalism and, in those days, Irish mysticism. It can be frivolous, irresponsible, and grave on occasions which any other body would treat with hilarity. No new member can be expected to hold it spellbound, but on the evening of February 18, 1901, when Churchill's maiden speech was scheduled, the chamber was full. Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, and Grey faced him on the front Opposition bench. Balfour and Joe Chamberlain sat on the Treasury Bench. Mrs. Chamberlain was in the gallery. So were Jennie and four of her sisters-in-law—Lady Howe, Lady Tweedmouth (Fanny Marjoribanks), Lady de Ramsey, and Lady Wimborne—and the Duchess Consuelo. Winston was known as "Randy's Boy," and, in his own right, as a gifted journalist and a hero of the South African war. Moreover, in his first "division," or vote—MPs vote by streaming from the chamber and into two different lobbies, Yes and No—he had sided with the radicals and the Irish. At home, as abroad, he was already magnetic. The *Morning Post* reported that his audience was one which "very few new members have commanded." The *Yorkshire Post* observed: "In that packed assembly, everybody a critic, watching to see what sort of start he made in politics, Winston Churchill made his debut."[3]

He had decided to speak on the war, ignoring the advice of older Tories who had warned, "It is too soon; wait for a few months till you know the House," and crossing the lobby he had been disconcerted to learn that, contrary to his assumption, not all these people were here just to hear him. Lloyd George was also expected to rise. He would, indeed, be Churchill's immediate predecessor. Winston suffered from a parliamentary weakness and knew it: "I had never had the practice which comes to young men at the University of speaking in small debating societies impromptu upon all sorts of subjects." He had spent days in front of a mirror, committing every word he intended to say to memory as his father had. But a House speech cannot stand alone; it must dovetail into the previous remarks, and Lloyd George, as usual, was unpredictable. He had been called to move an amendment, which would have been an easy thread for Winston to pick up. Instead, he was delivering a wide-ranging attack on the government's record in South Africa. Its truce terms were vague: "Does anyone think the Boers will lay down their arms merely to be governed from Downing Street?" Losses were appalling: "There have been 55,000 casualties; 30,000 men are in hospital." Kitchener's burning of Boer barns was barbarous: "It is not a war against men but against women and children." Every time Winston prepared an appropriate opening, the Welsh firebrand, egged on by radicals and Irish Nationalists, switched to a new tack. Churchill felt "a sense of alarm and even despair." At that point an elderly member beside him whispered: "Why don't you just say, 'Instead of making his violent speech without moving his moderate amendment, he had better have moved his moderate amendment without making his violent speech'?"[4]

When Lloyd George sat down Churchill said precisely that, drawing chuckles. His spirits rising, he continued: "I do not believe that the Boers would attach particular importance to the utterances of the hon[orable] member. No people in the world received so much verbal sympathy and so little support. If I were a Boer fighting in the field…" He paused dramatically. Then: "*And if I were a Boer, I hope I should be fighting in the field*…" Balfour groaned; Chamberlain muttered, "That's the way to throw away seats."[*] The radicals cheered, then found he had trapped them, for he went on, "I would not allow myself to be taken in by any message of sympathy, not even if it were signed by a hundred

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hon[orable] members." The Tories laughed—four years earlier a hundred radical MPs had sent an ineffectual cable of support to the king of Greece, immediately after which he had been obliged to capitulate to the Turks. Winston advocated a generous peace in South Africa, drawing a scowl from the Conservatives around him. Of course, he quickly added, the Boers might reject the offer "and stand by their old cry, 'Death or Independence.' " This drew applause from the Irish Nationalists. But he had set another trap: "It is wonderful that hon[orable] members who form the Irish party should find it in their hearts to speak and act as they do in regard to a war in which so much has been accomplished by the courage, the sacrifices, and, above all, by the military capacity of Irishmen." Kitchener's scorched-earth policy was no worse, he said, than the German practice in the Franco-Prussian War of "throwing shells into the dwelling houses of Paris and starving the inhabitants of that great city to the extent that they had to live upon rats and like atrocious foods in order to compel the garrison to surrender." Indeed, the British under Kitchener had done nothing not "justified by precedents set by European or American generals during the last fifty or sixty years." Not that he thought Britain wholly in the right. He took a middle course: "I do not agree very fully with the charges of treachery on the one side and barbarity on the other." Having established his independence—he had deftly said that the Boers were not traitors, that they were right to fight, that they deserved mercy—he drew to a graceful close, evoking his father's name by attributing "the kindness and patience with which the House has heard me" to "a certain splendid memory which many hon[orable] members still preserve."[5]

Older members led him to the House bar, where, in his words, "Everyone was very kind. The usual restoratives were applied, and I sat in a comfortable coma till I was strong enough to go home." Before he left, Lloyd George told him, "Judging from your sentiments, you are standing against the Light," and Churchill replied, "You take a singularly detached view of the British Empire"—an inauspicious opening to what would become the strongest political friendship of Churchill's early career. Lloyd George had missed the mutinous notes in the speech. So had most of the press. The Liberal (anti-imperialist) *Daily Chronicle* dismissed the new member as "a medium-sized, undistinguished young man, with an unfortunate lisp in his voice." The Conservative papers approved of his remarks. He had "held a crowded House spellbound," said the *Daily Express*, had "satisfied the highest expectations," said the *Daily Telegraph*, had delivered a speech "worthy of the traditions of the House," said Borthwick's *Morning Post*. But Hugh Massingham noted in the Liberal (imperialist) *Daily News* that "this young man has kept his critical faculty through the glamour of association with our arms." Not only had he kept it; it grew. As the weeks passed, and he listened to the Opposition members, he felt himself drifting steadily to the left, feeling, as Simone Weil did, that "one must always be ready to change sides with justice, that fugitive from the winning camp." To intimate friends he confided that he now thought barn burning in the Transvaal and Orange Free State was "a hateful folly." He had come to feel "sentimental about the Boers" and was both in revolt against jingoism and "anxious to make the Conservative party follow Liberal courses." Outside his circle this was unknown. In public he remained a staunch Tory back-bencher. Yet all the while, cold as malice, unsuspected but deadly, the vengeful hand of Lord Randolph Churchill was reaching out of the grave to smite those who had struck him down fifteen years earlier, when his son had been twelve years

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Spy cartoon in Vanity Fair, *July 10, 1900*

Diarists began to take note of him. Beatrice Webb thought him “restless, egotistical, bumptious, shallow-minded and reactionary, but with a certain personal magnetism, great pluck and some originality—not of intellect but of character.” Dilke, who had depicted Rosebery in his diary as “about the most ambitious man I had ever met,” now added: “I have since known Winston Churchill.” Rosebery, ironically, found Churchill’s emerging zeal distasteful. But he was far from alone; in the opinion of Robert Rhodes James, Winston was “brash, assertive, egocentric, wholly absorbed in himself and his own career, and unashamedly on the make.” Lloyd George misjudged him, however, when he wrote that “the applause of the House is the breath of his nostrils. He is just like an actor. He likes the limelight and the approbation of the pit.” Churchill wanted, not approval, but attention. He didn’t mind boos. He expected them, for he was preparing to hoist the banner of rebellion. Wilfrid Blunt, no parliamentarian, may have sensed this in describing Winston in his diary: “In mind and manner he is a strange replica of his father, with all his father’s suddenness and assurance, and I should say more than his father’s ability.” There was, he added, “just the same *gaminerie* and contempt of the conventional.” One would think Randolph’s old colleagues might have seen that. But having taught the mutinous father a lesson, they hardly expected that they would have to teach it again to the son. Besides, until now Winston had performed the rites of Tory loyalty. He had dedicated *The River War* to Salisbury, “under whose wise direction the Conservative Party have long enjoyed power and the nation prosperity.” Lord Randolph, the insurgent, had sat below

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the gangway, the customary seat for independent MPs. After being sworn in, Winston had chosen a spot directly behind the front government bench.[8]

With the arrival of spring, however, he moved. The alert correspondent for the *Daily Mail* noticed that the member for Oldham was now "sitting in the corner seat from which his father delivered his last speech in the House of Commons" and observed "a startling resemblance" between Winston and Randolph—"the square forehead and the full bold eye of his father," and "the hurried stride through the lobby." The lobby correspondent for *Punch* wrote that the resemblance lay "less in face than in figure, in gesture and manner of speech. When the young member for Oldham addresses the House, with hands on hips, head bent forward, right foot stretched forth, memories of days that are no more flood the brain." The son now began to advocate tight budgets and isolation from quarrels outside the Empire. References to Secretary for War William Brodrick began to appear in his speeches—Brodrick, under secretary in 1886, had been an enemy of Randolph's—and they were caustic. He was deeply offended, and said so, when Brodrick told the House: "It is by accident that we have become a military nation. We must endeavour to remain one." Salisbury had grown inattentive in his seventies, but Joe Chamberlain observed Winston often conferring with Sir Francis Mowatt, who had been his father's Exchequer colleague. Winston himself wrote: "Presently I began to criticize Mr. Brodrick's Army expansion and to plead the cause of economy in Parliament. Old Mowatt said a word to me now and then and put me in touch with some younger officials, afterwards themselves eminent, with whom it was very helpful to talk." Speaking to the Liverpool Conservative Association on April 23, Randolph's son fired his first heavy warning shot. He deplored the large sums earmarked for army expansion. "Any danger that comes to Britain would not be on land," he said; "it would come on the sea. With regard to our military system we must be prepared to deal with all the little wars which occur continually on the frontiers of the Empire. We cannot expect to meet great wars… for I think our game essentially is to be a naval and commercial power. I cannot look upon the army as anything but an adjunct to the navy…. I hope that in considering the lessons of the South African war we shall not be drawn from our true policy, which is to preserve the command of markets and of the seas."[9]

At 11:00 P.M. on Monday, May 13, he opened his offensive in the House. Realizing that this would be a watershed speech for him, he had been working and reworking it for six weeks, and like his father he had sent advance copies to the press, committing himself before he rose. Reminding them of "a half-forgotten episode"—his father's fall—he read a few lines from Randolph's letter of resignation and said he proposed "to lift again the tattered flag of retrenchment and economy." In less than eight years, he noted, army costs had risen from seventeen million pounds to nearly thirty million. He wryly congratulated the secretary for war. This, surely, was a triumph of acquisitiveness. But now the minister had come to the well again. The House was being asked to vote on yet another rise, this one of five million pounds. Churchill's voice rose: "Has the wealth of the country doubled? Has the population of the Empire doubled? Have the armies of Europe doubled? Is there no poverty at home? Has the English Channel dried up and are we no longer an island?" It was time "a Conservative by tradition, whose fortunes are linked indissolubly to the Tory party," should protest this increase of the public burden. Brodrick wanted

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and apparent determination by members elected to support it."[12]

Sir James implied pettiness. That was unjust. Churchill's motives were noble, and so was his rhetoric. It was also extraordinarily effective. One of its strengths, the perceptive Violet Asquith thought, was his lack of formal education. His colleagues, steeped in classical erudition and experience, were intellectually jaded, but "to Winston Churchill," she wrote, "everything under the sun was new—seen and appraised as on the first day of Creation. His approach to life was full of ardor and surprise. Even the eternal verities appeared to him to be an exciting personal discovery." He was unashamed, she noted, of speaking simple truths which, from others, would have been truisms. "Nor," she continued, "was he afraid of using splendid language…. There was nothing false, inflated, artificial in his eloquence: It was his natural idiom. His world was built and fashioned in heroic lines. He spoke its language." Other MPs, unaware how effective his eloquence would be forty years later, thought his speeches merely a last glow of Britain's Antonine age of parliamentary oratory. In fact they were mature, powerful, and, coming from a man not yet thirty, extraordinarily foresighted:

> Europe is now groaning beneath the weight of armies. There is scarcely an important Government whose finances are not embarrassed; there is not a Parliament or people from whom the cry of weariness has not been wrung…. What a pity it would be if, just at the moment when there is good hope of a change, our statesmen were to commit us to the old and vicious policy! Is it not a much more splendid dream that this realm of England… should be found bold enough and strong enough to send forth for the wings of honest purpose the message which the Russian Emperor tried vainly to proclaim: that the cruel and clanking struggle of armaments is drawing to a close, and that with the New Century has come a clearer and calmer sky?[13]

Astonishingly, his campaign against Brodrick succeeded. He won what was, for a new MP, a major triumph. The cabinet accepted his argument that three corps couldn't "begin to fight Europeans." The plan was shelved. The minister resigned and was moved to the India Office. But Churchill's victory was illusory. His premise, that "the honour and security of the British Empire do not depend, and can never depend, on the British Army," that "the only weapon with which we can expect to cope with great nations is the Navy," was rejected. In the House a senior Tory scathingly asked him if he really believed that "in future all that would happen in the case of war with a Continental power would be our magnificent fleet pursuing an inferior fleet?" The MP said: "Such a state of things is unthinkable and I cannot imagine a war between Britain and a Continental power in which the British Army would not be required." Winston, irrepressible, swiftly interjected, "Not in Europe," but the army budget passed easily. His father's battle could not be refought on this ground and won. Wilhelm II, aged twenty-nine, had just been crowned in Königsberg when Randolph left Salisbury's cabinet. Now he was powerful, aggressive, and a clear threat to British interests.[14]

Another vernal politician would have congratulated himself for having scored an important point, counted his change, and returned to the fold. But once Churchill had taken a position, no one but himself could persuade him to abandon it. He would be among the last of the Edwardians to appreciate the menace of the kaiser. In the House he

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distrusted every authority except his own—as, when he finally came to power, he would ruthlessly crush everyone who revolted against *him.* Yet such was his charm and intellect, even in those early days, that he could always find recruits to his cause, sometimes against their own best interests. After Brodrick's defeat he formed a society of Conservative back-benchers in their twenties, enrolling Lord Percy, the Duke of Northumberland's heir; Ian Malcolm, Lillie Langtry's son-in-law; Arthur Stanley, a son of the Earl of Derby; and, a real coup, Lord Hugh "Linky" Cecil, one of the prime minister's sons. They were called "the Hooligans," or "Hughligans," after Lord Hugh, but Winston was their undisputed leader. Every Thursday they dined together in the House, and he laid down their first principle: issues would not be discussed until after the meal—"It shall be High Imperialism nourished by a devilled sardine." Hooligans were pledged to outrageous parliamentary manners, but each week they invited a distinguished guest, and such was the prestige of their family names that no one refused them, though Salisbury insisted that they dine with him at his home in Arlington Street, a block from Green Park. Their most memorable guest was Joe Chamberlain. He joined them after a stormy House session. An English newspaperman had been imprisoned in South Africa for writing what was considered a seditious article about the war. Having served his sentence, he had been denied the right to return home on the ground, stated from the Treasury Bench, that it was "undesirable to increase the number of persons in England who disseminated anti-British propaganda." The Liberals had leapt to their feet, shouting objections, and the Hooligans had joined them, Winston crying, "Where else can anti-British propaganda be less harmful at this time than in Great Britain?"[15]

Over soup Chamberlain eyed them challengingly. He growled: "I am dining in very bad company." They expostulated; the government's stand was arrogant, absurd, and ineptly defended. How could they be expected to support it? He shot back: "What is the use of supporting your own party only when it is right? It is just when it is in this sort of pickle that you ought to come to its aid." Churchill's reply is unrecorded, but he must have kept himself in check, for Joe thawed; he became mellow and then, according to Winston, "most gay and captivating. I never remember having heard him talk better." As he rose to leave, he turned at the door and said with great solemnity: "You young gentlemen have entertained me royally, and in return I shall give you a priceless secret. Tariffs! There are the politics of the future, and of the near future. Study them closely and make yourselves masters of them, and you will not regret your hospitality to me."[16]

They didn't, but he bitterly regretted his advice, for Churchill took it, studying tariffs and then rejecting them, thereby contributing heavily to Chamberlain's political ruin and the fall of the Tory government. The issue, dear to the heart of this self-made businessman, was rooted in the British economy and in his dream of Empire. Victorian prosperity had peaked in the early 1870s. Since then the country's annual growth rate had sunk below 2 percent. The problem was foreign competition, which, with improved transport and more efficient machinery, had deeply penetrated the English market. Wheat was down ten shillings, the textile industry was in straits, and both the United States and Germany had surpassed Britain's steel production. Because of the country's heavy investments abroad, particularly in the United States, these losses had been unfelt by the public. Indeed, per capita income actually continued to grow, a tribute to the Empire's

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vast wealth. But the deficit could not be camouflaged indefinitely. Chamberlain believed the answer was imperial preference. After touring South Africa late in 1902—the Boer treaty had been signed at Vereeniging in May—he returned home to propose a tariff scheme which, he was convinced, would unite the Mother Country and her colonies and Dominions in a common market. Imposing heavy taxes on imports from outside the Empire, while establishing preferential tariffs for territories within it, the union would shield imperial industry and agriculture from foreign competitors while strengthening British security and providing funds for social programs at home.

This was logical, sensible, and political dynamite. Free Trade had been the keystone of English economic policy for a half century. Its obvious advantage, for the middle and working classes, was an abundance of cheap imported food, but to them it represented more than that; they believed that it meant peace with the rest of the world, while protective tariffs led to war. Campbell-Bannerman—who believed that Chamberlain, before turning his coat, had wrecked the Liberal party by fighting Home Rule in the 1880s—now wrote a friend: "This reckless criminal escapade of Joe's is the great event of our time. It is playing Old Harry with all Party relations." The Liberal Violet Asquith thought the issue "money for jam."[17] The ruling coalition was deeply split; three members of the cabinet resigned in protest. A lull followed. On July 11, 1902, in the middle of a conference of colonial leaders considering the tariff proposal (they favored it), Salisbury stepped down as prime minister. Balfour then succeeded him. The new leader needed time to settle in. Chamberlain welcomed the break; given time, he believed, he could bring the party around. And he was largely successful. The Conservative newspapers and the constituency committees rallied to him. At Sheffield a party conference voted overwhelmingly to support protectionism, backing it with almost ideological fervor as a way to bind the Empire together.

Nevertheless, there were a few important holdouts, among them Linky Cecil and his brother Robert—and Winston Churchill. At the beginning of the controversy Winston's position had been unclear. He believed colonies should stand alone economically—earlier in 1902 he had voted against a West Indian sugar subsidy because "I object on principle to doing by legislation what properly belongs to charity"—but the following summer, in his annual report to Oldham Conservatives, he had cautiously noted that he was merely looking into "the question of what is called Fair Trade," adding, noncommittally, "Time is, I think, coming near when men will have to make up their minds on this great issue, to formulate their opinions, and set them forth without hesitation or doubt." This sounds casual. Actually, he was examining the matter with great care. He knew that his father's old friend Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who had been Salisbury's chancellor of the Exchequer, was an ardent Free Trader. This, however, was something he had to think through for himself. "First," he told Violet Asquith afterward, "I had to learn economics. I had to learn economics in eight weeks." She asked how he set about it. He had gone to Mowatt, he said, and Mowatt, risking dismissal as joint permanent secretary of the Treasury, "coached and grounded me with facts and general principles and arguments and gave me half a dozen books to read. He girded on my armor and equipped me for a fight. And then," he concluded with relish, "I found no difficulty in doing the rest myself." Thereafter his faith in Free Trade, Violet wrote, became "a passionate conviction, perhaps the only economic conviction he ever held, and it was upheld and reinforced by the

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duty on food-stuffs," which might "incidentally be protective in character" but whose main purpose was "to provide an instrument for fiscal union with the colonies." Then, absurdly: "This is a very different thing from protection, both in theory and in practice. But undoubtedly the matter is one of difficulty, and requires the most wary walking."[20]

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Joseph Chamberlain

Undoubtedly Balfour was wary of Churchill. Shrinking from controversy, he was inviting deeper trouble. There was another possible answer to Winston's challenge, however, and many Tory colleagues had expected him to make it before now. Traditionally, observes Colin Coote, managing editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, "there are two ways of getting on in the House of Commons—by being very naughty, and by being very good. If you are very naughty, your party says, 'Give the puppy a nice bone to keep him quiet.' " In short, the able young critic of his elders is assigned responsibility and thus silenced. Some MPs thought such a possibility was what Churchill had had in mind when he attacked Brodrick. He had shown parliamentary ability, and he had changed Salisbury's mind. But Balfour was not Salisbury. Dissent within Conservative ranks alarmed him, and he had been offended by Winston's tactics. He may also have recalled his uncle's reply when asked why, after Lord Randolph's humiliation, he had not invited him back into the government: "When you have got rid of a boil on your neck, you don't want it back." In reshuffling his cabinet, Balfour had found room for one Hooligan, appointing Lord Percy under secretary of state for India, but in his view Winston was an even bigger boil than Randolph.[21]

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Arthur Balfour

Everyone knew Churchill was searching for a shortcut to office. Political tacticians had predicted that he would adopt one of two courses. Either he would try to talk Balfour into disowning Chamberlain, hoping to replace him as the party's strong man, or he would follow Lord Randolph's example and organize a revolt against the prime minister. His May exchange of letters with Balfour represents the failure of the first. But there is reason to believe that he had already tested the possibility of a coup. On March 4, 1905, J. L. Wanklyn, MP for Central Bradford, told an audience of constituents that more than two years earlier Winston had approached him with a scheme to unseat the Balfour leadership, replacing it with a weak ministry of Tory radicals, which in turn would be succeeded by a Churchill government. According to Wanklyn, Winston already had a list of men he would appoint to his cabinet, including Hugh Cecil as education minister. *The Times* carried Wanklyn's speech and, the next day, Winston's statement that the charge was "devoid of the slightest foundation…. The whole story from beginning to end is a pure invention of his own, and, if not a hallucination, can only be described as a wilful and malicious falsehood."[22] Nevertheless, Wanklyn stuck to his guns. He invited Winston to sue him. The offer was declined, and the story credited, for by then the House believed that to reach his ends Winston would stop at nothing, that he was even prepared, if necessary, to bolt his party.

Churchill always nailed his colors to the mast, but not always to the same mast. He "did not," he later said, "understand the importance of party discipline and unity, and the sacrifices of opinion which may lawfully be made in their cause." The issue was everything. Less than forty-eight hours after receiving Balfour's squelch, he wrote another

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think he is quite prepared to sacrifice his whole political position… for the cause in which he is so wrapped up." Yet Winston came to regard Joe as the turncoat, the subversive, the renegade. In early September the *Pall Mall Gazette* quoted Churchill as saying: "Some of us were born in the Tory Party and we are not going to let any aliens turn us out." The *Gazette* reporter asked him about rumors that he would cross to the Opposition, and he replied: "Oh, absurd. I am a Tory and must always remain a Tory." The article concluded: "He is a Tory by birth and inheritance. Toryism possesses him…. It is with him something of a religion."[25]

It wasn't, really. He was on the verge of sacrilege. The turning point came that month. On September 12, 1903, Chamberlain quit the cabinet to devote himself to his crusade. Momentarily it seemed that the prime minister might be able to ignore the issue. It was an illusion. The tension was still there, and it was growing. Two days after Joe had stepped down, Churchill wrote his mother: "I fancy a smash must come in a few days. Mr Balfour is coming to Balmoral on Saturday. Is he going to resign or reconstruct?… If he reconstructs—will it be a protectionist reconstruction of a cabinet wh does not contain the free trade Ministers, or a free trade reconstruction of a Cabinet from which J.C. has resigned? All these things are possible." But there was no ministerial reshuffle. Two weeks later a second Conservative conference at Sheffield strongly reaffirmed imperial preference as a means of strengthening the Empire. In his speech to them, Balfour then tumbled off the fence and, with some characteristic reservations, declared himself to be on their side. This, to Winston, meant the time had come to take off his gloves. He wrote (but did not mail) a letter to Linky Cecil, declaring that "to proceed making perfervid protestations of loyalty to the 'party' & yet to trample on the dearest aspirations of the party & thwart its most popular champions is to court utter ruin." He added, bitterly: "I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory party, their men, their words & their methods." Even so, he was not yet ready to make his change of heart public: "Nothing need happen until December at any rate, unless Oldham explodes."[26]

But Oldham did explode. Despite promises to jump to the Tory whip, he endorsed the Liberal candidate in a Ludlow by-election on the ground that "Free Traders of all parties should form one line of battle," and at a Free Trade rally in Halifax he cried: "Thank God we have a Liberal Party." On December 23 Oldham's Tory executive committee resolved that he had "forfeited" their confidence and could not expect their support in the next election. The resolution would be laid before the full body on January 8, 1904. In a spirited defense, Churchill wrote them that he was responding to a higher loyalty: "When Mr Balfour succeeded Lord Salisbury, he solemnly pledged himself at the Carlton Club that the policy of the party should be unchanged. And yet at Sheffield, only a year afterwards, he declared for a 'fundamental reversal of the policy of the last fifty years.' Therefore it is not against me that any charge of breaking pledges can be preferred." He said he meant to continue representing the thirteen thousand men who had voted for him, doing his best "to oppose all protectionist manoeuvres in Parliament and to explain to the electors of Oldham how closely Free Trade and cheap food are interwoven with the welfare of the Lancashire artisan." The committee was unconvinced. The resolution carried with but one dissent. He offered to resign, which was crafty of him; in a by-election he would either split the vote with their candidate or win as a Liberal—a Tory

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loss either way. So his original Oldham sponsors fumed, impotent, while he continued to sit on the Conservative side of the House, savaging his leaders day after day.[27]

Not even the oldest MPs could remember a more brilliant, more acrimonious performance. The *Daily Mail* commented that since Sheffield "his speeches have been almost without exception directed against the policy of the Government. They have been clever, severe, biting in their sarcasm, full of sneers and scorn for Mr Balfour and his Ministers." The Conservative party, Churchill said, had become "the slave of great interests." The Tory flaw was "a yearning for mediocrity." The party's members were "ready to make great sacrifices for their opinions, but they have no opinions. They are ready to die for the truth, if only they knew what the truth is." He cried: "To keep in office for a few more weeks and months there is no principle which the Government is not prepared to abandon, and no quantity of dust and filth they are not prepared to eat." Balfour was guilty of "gross, unpardonable ignorance" and a "slipshod, slapdash, haphazard manner of doing business." Winston said that "the dignity of a Prime Minister, like a lady's virtue, is not susceptible of partial diminution." Balfour, however, had "flouted the traditions of Parliament and dishonoured the service of the Crown." When one of the prime minister's supporters protested this outrageous language, Churchill wrote *The Times*, accusing the man of trying to gag him, and adding: "While Mr Balfour silences his followers in the House of Commons Mr Chamberlain is busy with their constituencies" disseminating "protectionist propaganda." The prime minister was only a puppet, a fool; the real Tory leader was Chamberlain, and Winston described Joe's vision of the party: "Over all, like a red robe flung about the shoulders of a sturdy beggar, an extravagant and aggressive militarism, and at the top, installed in splendour, a party leader, half German Chancellor, half American boss." Chamberlain's insistence that tariffs would enrich Britain was "a downright lie." When another Free Trader resigned from the party, Tory MPs hissed his speech explaining why. Churchill shouted: "Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am quite unable to hear what my honourable friend is saying owing to the vulgar clamour of the Conservative Party." Sir Trout Bartley, a Balfour supporter, leapt up, pointed at Churchill, and shrieked: "The vulgarest expression came from this honourable gentleman!"[28]

The prime minister tut-tutted and looked away. Most of the time he ignored Churchill, but sometimes he was drawn. What galled him most was the knowledge that while the wounding slurs of other MPs arose from the heat of battle, Churchill coldly honed and barbed his insults each evening in Mount Street. It was premeditated, ungentlemanly. Once he deeply angered Balfour. In tones dripping with malice Churchill said, "We have been told *ad nauseam* of the sacrifices which the Prime Minister makes. I do not deny there have been sacrifices. The House ought not to underrate or deny those sacrifices." He ticked them off: "sacrifices of leisure," "sacrifices of dignity," "the sacrifice of reputation." He quoted the prime minister's supporters as saying that he stood "between pride and duty." Winston sarcastically commented: "Pride says 'go' but duty says 'stay.' The Right Honourable Gentleman always observes the maxim of a certain writer that whenever an Englishman takes or keeps anything he wants, it is always from a high sense of duty." AJB rose, shaking, and accused him of poor taste. He said: "It is not, on the whole, desirable to come down to this House with invective which is both prepared

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and violent. The House will tolerate, and very rightly tolerate, almost anything within the rule of order which evidently springs from genuine indignation aroused by the collision of debate; but to come down with these prepared phrases is not usually successful, and at all events, I do not think it was very successful on the present occasion. If there is preparation there should be more finish, and if there is so much violence there should certainly be more veracity of feeling."[29]

Churchill did not hang his head. "I fear I am still in disgrace," he cheerfully wrote Jennie, and, in a letter to Cockran, predicted more "stormy times ahead." Margot Asquith thought his problem was a lack of empathy, that he tended "to ignore the need to feel his way about other minds," but he didn't think he had a problem at all. He was releasing his inner aggression and enjoying it enormously. He later said: "I did not exactly, either by my movement or my manner, invite any great continuing affection." He didn't want it. Earl Winterton recalled: "Churchill made no attempt to dispel the suspicion and dislike with which he was regarded by the majority of the House of Commons. He seemed to enjoy causing resentment. He appeared to have, in modern parlance, a 'chip on his shoulder,' when in the Chamber itself or in the Lobbies." Winston jovially told a reporter, "Politics are almost as exciting as war and quite as dangerous." The newsman asked, "Even with the new rifle?" Churchill replied, "Well, in war you can only be killed once, but in politics many times."[30]

Though he was to prove that repeatedly, expressions of his unpopularity in the spring of 1904 were uglier and more strident than anything his father had endured. Shouted down by his own party, he was called "wickedly hypocritical," the "Blenheim Rat," and a "Blackleg Blueblood." In a rare affront, the Hurlingham Polo Club blackballed his application for membership. He seemed unrepentant. And he offended men who might have befriended him. One contemporary noted in his diary on March 5: "Went to the Speaker's Levée… Winston Churchill was there in a cavalry uniform with a long row of medals. He is a most astounding person. His speeches in the House this session have been very fine." But in a fortnight the diarist changed his mind; Churchill, he had decided, was "a most infernal nuisance." *Punch* reported: "His special enmity for Chamberlain and all his works is hereditary…. Winston is a convinced Free Trader. But he enters with lighter, more fully gladdened heart into the conflict, since Protection is championed by his father's ancient adversary." Earl Winterton thought him "too eager to hunt down his father's old enemies." MacCallum Scott, another contemporary, wrote that "the followers of Mr Chamberlain repaid his [Winston's] hostility with a passionate personal hatred over which they vainly endeavoured to throw a mask of contempt. There was no better hated man in the House of Commons." He was shunned. Only Tories who felt absolutely secure dared be seen with him. On Good Friday, Linky Cecil suggested that "the town council of Oldham give Winston Churchill the freedom of the borough as a mark of his independence and public spirit. As he is not going to stand for Oldham again it could not be mixed up with local party politics and it would be a fitting rebuke to ill-mannered persons in the House. He is I think being abominably treated. For he is very honest and very good-hearted." But Linky was Lord Salisbury's son. Had this come from an MP less well connected, it could have been a note of political suicide.[31]

The beginning of the end came on March 29, 1904. At 5:00 P.M. Churchill rose to

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One name was on the lips of upper-class London: *Lord Randolph*. Less than ten years earlier Winston's father, occupying the same seat, had broken down in the same way, signaling his slide down into oblivion and death. To his family and friends the parallel was appalling. The next day Shane Leslie called at Mount Street and found his cousin huddling with his brother, Jack, and Sir Alfred Harmsworth. Winston asked Leslie to make inquiries about Pelmanism, the memory training system. It was unnecessary. His memory had been, and would again be, phenomenal; he had merely suffered a temporary lapse. In the future he would seldom speak without a text, but he rarely seemed to glance at it. Over the weekend his spirits, and his confidence, rebounded. He had passed the crisis of party renunciation. A correspondent in the Press Gallery noted the return of his "unmistakably schoolboy grin" in House shouting matches, "not the assumed smile so often seen in Parliament, but the real grin of one who is alive to all the fun of things." On May 16 he delivered his last speech as a Tory, envisioning the fall of the Conservative government: "Extravagant finance was written on the head of their indictment, and it will be written on the head of their tombstone." The Boer War had been an "immense public disaster." He was partly to blame, "tarred" in a small way "with responsibility," but the heavier guilt fell upon Chamberlain and his "New Imperialism… that bastard Imperialism which was ground out by a party machine and was convenient for placing a particular set of gentlemen in power." The *Manchester Guardian* reported that "his neighbours melted away till scarcely a Protectionist was left in the House." This time he beamed at their retreating backs.[34]

Early in April, over Easter weekend, he had been adopted by northeast Manchester as its Liberal candidate in the next election. On the last day of May he crossed the floor. It was low-key; there was no ceremony. *Punch* reported: "House resumed to-day after Whitsun holidays. Attendance small; benches mostly empty. Winston, entering with all the world before him where to choose, strides down to his father's old quarters on the front bench below the gangway to the left of the Speaker, and sits among the ghosts of the old Fourth Party." It was here, when the Tories were in opposition, that Randolph had stood in 1885, waving his handkerchief to cheer the downfall of Gladstone. The seat beside it was now occupied by Lloyd George, who gripped Winston's hand. Rosebery and Grey also welcomed him, none of them, of course, mentioning the invective he had once poured on their party, calling them "prigs, prudes, and faddists," describing liberalism as "hiding from the public view like a toad in a hole," and predicting that "when it stands forth in all its hideousness the Tories will have to hew the filthy object limb from limb."[35]

His former colleagues on the other side of the House hadn't forgotten, however. They had agreed with him then, and now regarded him as the filthiest of toads. Henry Lucy, "Toby, MP" of *Punch* (like the *New Republic*'s later TRB), wrote in his diary: "Winston Churchill may be safely counted upon to make himself quite as disagreeable on the Liberal side as he did on the Unionist. But he will be handicapped by the aversion that always pertains to a man who, in whatever honourable circumstances, has turned his coat." However, Lucy had no control over another *Punch* correspondent, who wrote: " 'He's gone over at last, and good riddance,' say honest hacks munching their corn in well-padded stalls of Government stables. They don't like young horses that kick out and cannot be safely counted upon to run in double harness. 'Winston's gone over at last,'

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they repeat, whinnying with decorous delight."[36]

Afterward they had long second thoughts. Chamberlain confided to Margot Asquith: "He was the cleverest of all the young men. The mistake Arthur made was in letting him go." F. E. Smith, the brilliant young Conservative who became Churchill's closest friend, wrote: " 'He can wait' has always been the Tory formula which has chilled the hopes of young and able men…. And so chance after chance of modest promotion went by… Winston characteristically jumped the whole fence." Winston himself, of course, denied that ambition had played any role in his decision. "Some men change their party for the sake of their principles," he said; "others their principles for the sake of their party." He quoted Pope: "Sworn to no master, of no sect am I / As drives the storm, at any door I knock."[37]

But he knew that in switching parties he was joining the future. For a generation the Liberal party had carried the cross of Home Rule. Now, in part due to him, Free Trade had replaced it as the central issue before the country. And Joe Chamberlain's exhortations to working-and middle-class audiences, his pleas to "think imperially," had failed. He was booed, or addressed empty halls. That debacle, public disillusionment with the Boer War, and scandalous reports that Chinese coolies were being treated as slave labor in South African mines—charges also laid at the former colonial secretary's door—had shifted England's balance of political power. The historian D. C. Somervell has concluded that "from 1903 onwards, it seemed certain, and not only to those who wished it, that Balfour's Government would be defeated at the next election." On December 12 of that year Churchill wrote Cockran: "I believe that Chamberlain will be defeated at the General Election by an overwhelming majority."[38] And so he was. After the votes had been counted, Joe suffered a paralytic stroke and lived out his life a tragic invalid. His children carried on the family's parliamentary tradition. In subsequent governments the elder boy, Austen, went on to become foreign secretary, chancellor of the Exchequer, and first lord of the Admiralty. The other son, Austen's half brother, was Neville Chamberlain.

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gracefully declined his hand, explaining that she felt she "would not be able to cope with the great world of politics." Next he wooed Muriel Wilson, a handsome young heiress. Privately he admitted that he was after her money. Perhaps she sensed that; after an automobile tour of Italy with her and another girl in Lionel Rothschild's motorcar, he wrote glumly: "Nothing could exceed the tranquil *banalité* of my relations with M." Halfheartedly he pressed his suit and she, to his evident relief, rejected it. She gently told him that she didn't think he had much of a future.[40]

Part of his difficulty was inherent in his upbringing. As Lord Boothby points out, in their class "the sexes were completely segregated from the age of ten to twenty-two." Yet Boothby, who shared that handicap, managed to find his way into a remarkable number of beds, partly because he genuinely liked women. Winston didn't, at least not those outside his family. He was the kind of chauvinist feminists love to hate. During his bachelor days, he and Eddie Marsh, his private secretary, would arrive early at a party and watch each lady make her entrance. Recalling "the face that launched a thousand ships," Churchill would ask, "How many ships do you think she would launch?" Marsh would hazard, "Two hundred ships, or perhaps two hundred and fifty?" Winston would reply decisively: "By no means. A small gunboat at the most." He complained that the United States "is too cluttered up with women. They are everywhere. They control eighty percent of the country's wealth. They wield enormous power—and they bully their husbands." The only person to succeed in frightening him was the American Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, who always referred to him as "that dreadful man." He growled that she was the least feminine woman he had ever met.[41]

But he was at a loss even with the mannequins of young Edwardian womanhood. He didn't know what to say to them. The only subject which really interested him was himself. He knew none of the delicate moves that could lead to intimacy; for example, "peering down Pennsylvania Avenue," as it was called—discreetly glancing down a girl's décolletage to admire her breasts. In mixed society he was a combination of Wellington and Peel—"I have no small talk," the great duke had said, "and Peel has no manners." If Churchill felt cordial, he might ask a woman her age. Sometimes he didn't even speak. In 1904, during a dance at Salisbury Hall given by Lady Crewe, Jennie introduced him to the lovely Clementine Hozier. Clementine said, "How do you do?" In her words: "Winston just stared. He never uttered one word and was very gauche—he never asked me for a dance, he never asked me to have supper with him. I had of course heard a great deal about him—nothing but ill. I had been told he was stuck-up, objectionable etcetera. And on this occasion he just stood and stared." In the beginning, Violet Asquith, sitting beside him at dinner for the first time, found him equally uncommunicative. She wrote: "For a long time he remained sunk in abstraction. Then he appeared to become suddenly aware of my existence. He turned on me a lowering gaze and asked me how old I was. I replied that I was nineteen. 'And I,' he said almost despairingly, 'am thirty-two already.' " On reflection he added thoughtfully, "Younger than anyone else who counts, though." Then, savagely: "Curse ruthless time! Curse our mortality. How cruelly short is the allotted span for all we must cram into it!" He burst into a diatribe about the brevity of life and ended: "We are all worms. But I do believe that I am a glowworm."[42]

Later Violet observed that his "inner circle of friends contained no women. They had

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their own place in his life. His approach to women was essentially romantic…. Their possession of all the cardinal virtues was assumed as a matter of course." She, knowing how rare purity was in his mother's set—they openly despised "middle-class virtue"—accused him of "innocence." He was offended, but he was aware that his perception of girls was flawed; comparing himself to his cousin Sunny, he wrote: "He is quite different from me, understanding women thoroughly, getting into touch with them at once, & absolutely dependent upon feminine influence of some kind for the peace & harmony of his soul." Later, after marriage, he developed a glorious dependence upon his wife, but outside his home he was never really comfortable in the company of women. One explanation may lie in his mother's affairs. He knew of her relationship with the King, which appears to have resumed after his coronation. In one postscript he wrote her: "I have been reading 'An English Woman's Love Letters.' Are all Mothers the same?"[43]

Certainly they weren't in the lower classes. The nine-year reign of Edward VII saw vast technological advances, but the only sexual innovations were the brassiere, invented by Charles R. Debevoise in 1902, and the perfection of the Wassermann test in Germany four years later. Few could afford, or even knew about, the expensive Dutch cup. Contraception was largely limited to withdrawal or, for the unfastidious, such abortifacients as lead-plaster. Outright abstention was surprisingly common. Paul Thompson concludes that "the cumulative weight of three generations of Victorian puritanism, affecting the working classes directly through church and chapel teaching and indirectly through middle-class influence," led to "striking self-restraint among young adults." The average bride was twenty-six. One Englishwoman in every five did not marry at all, and those who did were often parsimonious with their favors. A pioneer sex researcher, interviewing Edwardian workmen, found them bitter about their wives' unresponsiveness in bed. One wife, during the throes, kept reminding her husband not to forget to leave twopence for the gas; another chewed an apple during sexual intercourse; a third kept her clothes on (her spouse said, "It's about as exciting… as posting a letter"); and a fourth, "a sad little man, complained that not only did his wife take no interest in the proceedings, but she also insisted on a regular emolument of sixpence per session."[44]

The liberal recommendations of the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce were ignored, and adultery still meant social ruin, but upper-class women, like their mothers in the 1880s—and often with their mothers' advice—had learned to manage complex intrigues. In public they were angelic. On Sundays they joined the black-bonneted, black-robed processions setting off for church. Mornings they trotted through the park in their gleaming victorias, parasols held over their heads and, on the seat opposite, card cases and pink leather address books from Dreyfous. They might sneak cigarettes in bedrooms, but in sitting rooms they merely wiggled crochet hooks or perched sedately behind teapots, and in dining rooms, their lovely faces illumined by candelabra, they sat erect and decorative, their piled hair crowned by gems and their bare, magnificent shoulders arising from clouds of tulle. An Edwardian lady in full dress was a wonder to behold, and her preparations for viewing were awesome. Silk stockings, carefully smoothed, went on first. Then she would rise in her chemise while her lady's maid fitted the long stays of pink coutil, heavily boned, around her hips, fastening the busk down the front, anchoring the garters to the stockings and tightening the silk lacings. Pads of pink

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satin would be affixed on the hips and under the arms, to stress the narrow waist. Drawers came next, after which the maid would spread the petticoat in a ring on the floor, and the lady, now wearing high-heeled shoes, would step into it. Buttons would be buttoned, tapes tied; then she would dive into the massive gown of taffeta and tulle and stand rigid while the maid laced up the bodice. Jewels went on last: rubies at the waist, dog collars of rubies and diamonds around the neck, and the tiara on top. As she sailed forth from her boudoir, you would never have guessed how quickly she could strip for action.

Assignations depended on circumstances. Vita Sackville-West explains in *The Edwardians:* "The code was rigid. Within the closed circle of their own set, anybody might do as they pleased, but no scandal must leak out to the uninitiated. Appearances must be respected, though morals might be neglected." The king's mistresses had an easy time of it. No one would question a royal command, and few husbands, even in the aristocracy, were prepared to challenge His Majesty's droit du seigneur. Indeed, some women wore, pinned to their blouses, the little watches he gave them, bearing a true lover's knot of mauve enamel ribbon, and, on the back, the crown and the interlaced *E.R. VII*. "Of course I don't *like* it," they would say, "but it's a good little timekeeper, and so I wear it." Actually, HM's watches gained, on the average, about an hour a day.[45]

Amants de coeur of lesser rank had to be more discreet. Luckily transportation was slow; if His Lordship was off shooting partridge in September, or pheasant in October, or attending to fillies and paddocks, Her Ladyship could safely conclude that the coast was clear. It was then, after darkness had gathered, that a one-horse, rubber-tired brougham would draw up outside her private entrance and her lover, using the key she had given him, would stealthily enter. (It never seems to have occurred to them that the brougham and the horse, standing there patiently throughout the evening, or even the night, were a dead giveaway.)

They were lusty in bed and rapacious at table. Meals were enormous, beginning, typically, with ortolan within quail, a truffle within the ortolan, pâté de foie gras within the truffle—on and on, until the pallor of the exhausted diners reminded one observer of the Roman vomitoria. "Dinners," wrote George Cornwallis-West, "were Gargantuan affairs… champagne, port and old brandy were the order of the day, or, rather, night." No one shrank from self-indulgence, and all but a few disdained work. They played tennis and auction bridge, which was invented in 1904; they attended races, amateur theatricals, elaborate teas, private recitals, and on one occasion a private circus engaged by an imaginative host. Sackville-West quotes an elderly peeress who defended all this: "We lead the country, don't we? People who lead deserve their privileges. What would happen to the country, I should like to know, if the people at the top enjoyed no leisure? What would happen to the dressmakers, if your mother had no more pretty frocks?" Then, defending the Victorian precept that ostentation was a form of altruism, the peeress added: "Besides, the country likes it. Don't you make any mistake about that. People must have something to look up to. It's good for 'em; gives 'em an ideal. They don't like to see a gentleman degrading himself."[46]

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enjoyed quietude. Few of them thought of the toil which made it possible. If they did discuss their menials, they were as likely as not to do it in the presence of the help. Domestics were not supposed to have feelings.

Before the ascendancy of Churchill and Lloyd George, all legislative attempts to provide relief for the unfortunate had failed. In 1905 the government established a royal commission on the Poor Law; the members included the Webbs, but both its majority and minority reports were tabled. Parliament outlawed compulsory trade-union contributions to Labour party candidates. MPs were not salaried until 1911. Financing a campaign cost about £1,000, nearly ten times the annual income of a skilled worker, so that even Liberals tended to champion the lot, not of workmen, but of the middle classes. In the radical Parliament that replaced Balfour's House, nearly half the MPs were businessmen or financiers, one in six was an Etonian, one in three was a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, and only one in ten represented the working class. During the thirty years before 1916, half of all cabinet ministers were peers or members of peers' families. It was, for them, a splendid time, when everyone knew everybody, and gentlemen still wore toppers and ladies wore ostrich-plume bonnets, and there were always fresh strawberries in season on the House terrace, and waltz time was unthreatened by ragtime, and there were more hansoms than automobiles. A defender of Britain's oligarchic democracy wrote that MPs "have an extraordinarily wide acquaintance with one another from one end of the land to the other. They are connected by marriage, by early association at the public schools and at Oxford or Cambridge, and they are brought constantly together by entertainments in the capital, and visits at country houses. Such a constitution gives to society great solidity and great influence, without the narrowness and rigidity that attends a purely hereditary caste."[48]

That did not satisfy Churchill, who, despite his loyalty to his new party, would be no more a Liberal sheep than he had been a Conservative sheep. He noted that a Liberal party rule enjoined any cabinet member from serving as a director of a public company, yet thirty-one out of fifty-five Liberal ministers were directors, holding among them sixty-eight directorships—a "laxity of principle," he said, which "is a sign of the degeneration of the day," reflecting the creed of politicians "who go about preaching the gospel of Mammon advocating the 10 percent commandments, who raise each day the inspiring prayer, 'Give cash in our time, O Lord.' "[49] He raised the specter of class warfare, and with justification. The Edwardian sky grew redder each year. In 1902 the British economist John Atkinson Hobson had published *Imperialism: A Study*, which had an immense impact on Rosa Luxemburg and Rudolf Hilferding in Germany and, through them, influenced Lenin. At the same time, the new British custom of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, the P.S.A., was providing expectant audiences for lay speakers who could entertain and divert them: journalists, humanitarians, adventurers, authors, hobbyists—and, more and more, radical propagandists intent upon exploiting forums to spread a secular faith subversive of the established order.

The P.S.A., innocuous on the surface, was actually an institution of immense social significance. Its roots were the decline of the Victorian Sabbath and shrinking Anglican congregations—which in turn weakened the Tories, the Church of England's most ardent supporters. The solid core of agreed religious belief was gone. The Bible had lost its grip

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on Englishmen. People were groping for a substitute. *Fin de siècle* ideas had become unfashionable—the Boer War had tarnished Kiplingesque imperialism even as Oscar Wilde had discredited *Yellow Book* aestheticism. The new vogues were popular psychology, pragmatism, Nietzscheanism, and, toward the end of Edward's reign, the philosophy of Henri Bergson and the autosuggestivism of Emile Coué ("Every day, in every way, I'm growing better and better"). But perhaps the most influential ideological works were William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, appearing in 1902, and Sir James Frazer's eleven-volume *Golden Bough*, which was published intermittently, in revised editions, throughout the decade. Guided by James and Frazer, the children of nineteenth-century Christian evangelism moved toward a broadening tolerance of all creeds—which is to say, a vulnerability to radical speakers whose dogma provided hard, specific, simple answers to all complex questions.

That vulnerability was enhanced by a growing concept of a mechanistic universe—the obverse of traditional faith in the soul—which was an unanticipated by-product of the era's scientific and technological triumphs. Edwardians were bombarded by news of discoveries: glands, hormones, vitamins, genes, Einstein's $E=mc^2$, Pavlovian conditioned reflexes, Röntgen's X rays, Madame Curie's radium, and the subconscious as revealed by Freud, Adler, and Jung. Fruits of inventive genius promised more excitement to come. Because of Guglielmo Marconi, the King talked to President Roosevelt in 1903 by wireless. That same year two Americans flew the first heavier-than-air machine, and Eric S. Porter produced the first feature-length film, *The Great Train Robbery*. The British formed the Bristol Aeroplane Company; the *Daily Mail* sponsored the first international aircraft race. The Russians completed the trans-Siberian railway. Sleeping cars were introduced on Egypt's Cairo-to-Luxor Express. The production of Austin motorcars began in 1905; the following year the Royal Automobile Club turned its attention from steam-powered trucks to internal-combustion engines. In 1904 heels clicked all over Germany when the North German Lloyd steamer *Kaiser Wilhelm II* set a new transatlantic record of five days, eleven hours. Britons agreed that that would not do, and the Cunarder *Mauretania* made the trip in four days, twenty hours, and forty-one minutes. The Clyde was turning out bigger and bigger ships. The *Lusitania*, launched in 1907, was the largest yet: 31,550 tons, 790 feet long, with four screws and staterooms for 2,000 passengers. Meanwhile, the battleship H.M.S. *Dreadnought* had been launched. She carried ten twelve-inch guns. The kaiser, chagrined, announced that he would not only match her; he would widen the Kiel Canal to permit passage of the huge new fleet he was building. *"Dem Deutschen gehört die Welt"* ("The world belongs to Germans") was the slogan of the Alldeutsche Verband (Pan-German League). The British public, however, couldn't take it seriously. To them it was as free of menace as that catchy tune written in 1908 by the English songwriters Harry Williams and Jack Judge, "It's a Long Way to Tipperary."

But the cumulative effect of all this change, which should have broadened the human vision, gave men a sense of confinement and helplessness. There were new powers at large, many of them incomprehensible, none in accord with the tidy, distinct images of reality they had been taught as children. Apparently there were no limits to the ways in which the world could be transformed. The Empire had provided their parents with a boundless frontier. Now, with the conquest of northern Nigeria in 1903, the map had filled up; Britain's new imperial challenge was not to get, but to hold. That stifled initiative

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Mayfair flat, required a lot of dusting. There were petit point chairs, a large Coromandel screen, a "sociable" on which two people of opposite sexes might sit, facing each other but properly divided by the arm; tortured carvings of ebony, Benares brass, a red-and-gold Crown Derby tea set; and mahogany tables littered with family and polo-team photographs, silver cannon models, model soldiers, jade ashtrays, Indian and Egyptian carvings, celadon bowls, a Fabergé cigar box, twin candelabra, and a small clock. The air was exotic with the scents of wax and furniture oils. Books were everywhere. There were even bookshelves in the bathroom. Hugh Massingham, coming to call, found the occupant literally "sleeping with encyclopedias." Pasted in huge scrapbooks were newspaper clippings on every public topic and on prominent men, particularly Winston S. Churchill. In an unguarded moment he mentioned these to Balfour, explaining that they were useful for reference. AJB's lip curled. He said disdainfully that he could not see the point of "rummaging through a rubbish heap on the problematical chance of finding a cigar butt."[51]

Impressions of Churchill at this time are varied but vivid. Wilfrid Blunt, meeting him for the first time, described him as "a little, square headed fellow of no very striking appearance, but of wit, intelligence, and originality." On the other hand, Leslie Hore-Belisha, who was ten years old when Churchill called on his father in Manchester, thought him very striking indeed; Winston was wearing "a frock coat with silk facings and below his chin was a large winged collar with a black bow tie…. I went so far as to buy—and wear in private—a large winged collar. Thus the imagination of a small boy was captured." Directly after her first dinner-party encounter with him, Violet Asquith had gone to her father and told him that for the first time in her life she had seen genius. Asquith chuckled and said, "Well, Winston would certainly agree with you there—but I am not sure you will find many others of the same mind." Then he added, "Still, I know exactly what you mean. He is not only remarkable but unique." Jennie's new sister-in-law, Daisy Cornwallis-West, was uncharmed; her brother's marriage, she wrote, "made Winston Churchill a connection of ours, a prospect we viewed with somewhat mixed feelings. I cannot honestly say I ever cared for him very much." The same trait attracted and repelled: his brilliant, compulsive conversation. His critics called it "bombast," the "self-advertisement" of an "arriviste." His admirers delighted in what they regarded as genuine wit. Lloyd George told him he was against the social order. Winston replied: "You are only against those parts of it that get in your way." Churchill described F. E. Smith's debating skills: "The bludgeon for the platform; the entangling net and unexpected trident for the Courts of Law; and a jug of clear spring water for an anxious, perplexed conclave." "The difference between Balfour and Asquith," he said, "is that Arthur is wicked and moral, while Asquith is good and immoral."[52]

Churchill's capacity for work was remarkable. His appointment book shows that in his first two weeks as an MP he dined out eight times, attended a trade conference, conducted an inquiry at the Treasury, called on the prime minister, delivered three speeches in the House, campaigned for a Conservative candidate in Manchester, and was there to congratulate him on his victory. One friend recalled in his memoirs that Winston "gave himself to work. When he was not busy with politics, he was reading or writing. He did not lead the life of other young men in London. He may have visited political clubs,

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but I never met him walking in Pall Mall or Hyde Park where sooner or later one used to meet most friends. I never met him at a dinner-party that had not some public or private purpose."[53]

Once he began writing his father's biography he attended even fewer parties, and was never seen at dances. The rest of his set hummed Franz Lehár's new waltzes; Churchill was reluctant even to learn the step. In *Anglo-American Memories,* George Smalley, a journalist from the United States, described a weekend as Churchill's fellow guest at Dunrobin, the seat of the Duke of Sutherland. Winston invited him into his bedroom, and Smalley gaped. The room, he wrote, "had been turned into a literary workshop, strewn with books and papers and all the apparatus of the writer. He had brought with him a tin box, some three feet square, divided into closed compartments. This was his travelling companion on journeys of pleasure…. His hostess had provided him with a large writing-table. This was covered with papers, loose and in docketed bundles, but all in exact order for ready reference…. When we left Dunrobin we found that Winston had reserved a compartment in the railway train for himself and for his big tin case of papers. He shut himself up there, and during that long journey read and wrote and worked as if a Highland railway train were the natural and convenient laboratory in which literature of a high order was to be distilled."[54]

Yet this view of Churchill may have been exaggerated. Like most men of affairs, he had learned to use his time efficiently, and in London he was all business. But he was not what today would be called a workaholic. Many of his leisured friends, it must be remembered, did not work at all; very little dedication was necessary to impress them. His appetite for statecraft did not prevent him from playing when he chose. He followed the races—at a Warwick Castle house party he astounded his fellow guests by reciting the names of the last fifty Derby winners and their breeding—and he always found time for polo, boar hunting, duck shooting, and holidays abroad. In Egypt he sailed up the Nile on a dahabeah with his aunt Leonie, Hicks-Beach, Sir John Gorst, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and Alice Keppel. In Switzerland he was the guest of Sir Ernest and Lady Cassel, and at Balmoral he stalked stages with His Majesty. ("You will see the King on Weds when he comes to Invercauld," he wrote his mother; "mind you gush to him about my having written to you saying how much etc etc I had enjoyed myself here.") After observing German military maneuvers as the guest of another personage, HM's nephew the kaiser, he traveled by stages through Breslau, Vienna, Venice, Bologna, Ravenna, Rimini, Urbino, San Marino, Perugia, Siena, and Eichorn. "Such a lot of churches we have seen and saints and pictures 'galore,' " he wrote. "It has been vy pleasant."[55] Similar expeditions were always available to him; indeed, he had difficulty avoiding them. He knew so many members of society, and was such an eligible bachelor, that he had to go into hiding to finish his father's biography. Sunny, not yet troubled by his growing radicalism, turned Blenheim over to him for three or four months each year. The book was completed in the palace and, when published, was well received, though Balfour found the passages mentioning him objectionable. In the first four months the set sold 5,827 copies. An American edition, and then a one-volume British edition, were equally successful.

Churchill was the most active member of every social gathering, and to the annoyance of other young men he never hesitated to take charge. As a guest at the seaside,

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one hostess wrote, he "flung himself with zest into our favorite and most perilous pastime of rock climbing, reveling in the scramble up crags and cliffs, the precarious transition from ledge to ledge, with slippery seaweed underfoot and roaring seas below. Though we considered ourselves salted climbers of four weeks' experience and he was a raw novice, he always took command of every operation, decreeing strategy and tactics and even dictating the correct position of our arms and legs. He brought to every ploy the excitement of a child and, like a child, he made it seem not only exciting but serious and important." Even more revealing was his response to a terrible fire which followed his brother's wedding. The bride and groom having departed, the rest of the party stayed in Burley-on-the-Hill, an ancient country home near Oakham famous for its paneling, tapestries, and priceless Elizabethan manuscripts. In the middle of the night a newly installed heating system burst into flames. Awakening to screams, in smoke and darkness, the guests fled to the lawn. There, Eddie Marsh wrote, "Winston commandeered a fireman's helmet and assumed the direction of operations." F. E. Smith's wife remembered Churchill on the roof, shouting down orders, trying to quench the blaze with a tiny fire engine which had been brought from Oakham. Unfortunately, nothing could be saved. The owners were in tears.[56]

Churchill wasn't. He wrote Miss Hozier: "The fire was great fun & we all enjoyed it thoroughly. It is a pity such jolly entertainments are so costly. Alas for the archives. They roared to glory in about ten minutes…. It is a vy strange thing to be locked in deadly grapple with that cruel element. I had no conception—except from reading—of the power and majesty of a great conflagration. Whole rooms sprang into flames as if by enchantment. Chairs and tables burnt up like matches. Floors collapsed and ceilings crashed down…. Every window spouted fire, & from the centre of the house a volcano roared skyward in a whirlwind of sparks." As descriptive writing, this is splendid, but as a response to tragedy it is neither pleasant nor wholesome; that the others "enjoyed it thoroughly" is doubtful—Marsh, for one, had lost his Perceval gold watch, gold chain, and three tiepins, all heirlooms. One can understand why many men distrusted Churchill. "It is no disparagement of Winston's extraordinary qualities," wrote Almeric Fitzroy, "to say that his judgement is not quite equal to his abilities." Destruction, like war, enthralled the mischievous boy in him, and he would never entirely outgrow that fascination. Yet he alone had climbed to the roof and tried to extinguish the flames.[57]

England in those years, "lapped in the accumulated treasures of the long peace," as he wrote, was like Burley-on-the-Hill before the fire: precious, deeply loved, apparently safe, unaware of its deadly peril.[58] The world's diplomats still set their clocks by Big Ben. Because the British government permitted it, Turkey ceded the Sinai to Egypt and Greece annexed Crete. Little importance was attached to the decision, made the year after Victoria's death, to end her policy of "splendid isolation." Actually, it was a move of enormous consequence. From Canning to Salisbury, isolationism had served Britain well, keeping it aloof from a whole series of continental wars. The Royal Navy was its mighty shield; for a century after Nelson's victory at Trafalgar no nation had attempted to build a competitive fleet. In 1870 Gladstone's announcement that England would intervene if Belgium's neutrality were violated had kept both the French and the Germans from crossing Belgian frontiers.

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Maude Adams in the lead, and it has been playing in one hall or another ever since. Kipling wrote *Kim* and *Just So Stories for Little Children;* Beatrix Potter, *Peter Rabbit;* Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows;* and Sir R. S. S. Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, published *Scouting for Boys* in 1906 and founded the Boy Scout movement with the motto "Be Prepared," based on his initials. Boys around the globe enrolled, 11,000 of them coming to convene in the Crystal Palace.

In music and art the British were less successful. Sir Thomas Beecham was a gifted conductor and the London Symphony a distinguished orchestra, but Elgar was the only memorable composer. The best native tunes were heard in London's music halls, and the liveliest of these, "Waltzing Matilda," was written by an Austrialian, Marie Cowan, in 1903. John Singer Sargent, an American, was commissioned to paint *The Marlborough Family; Westminster Bridge, The Houses of Parliament,* and *Port of London* were the work of France's André Derain. London painters were indeed inhospitable to foreign genius. They jeered at the first major London exhibition of Postimpressionists, Derain among them; even Sargent said, "I am absolutely sceptical as to their having any claim whatever to being works of art, with the exception of the pictures by Gauguin that strike me as admirable in colour—and in colour only." In literature, however, the English scene glowed. The number of books published annually soared from 5,971 to 9,541. A certain sacrifice was made for wider audiences. Before the Edwardian era, authors could assume that their readers knew Latin and the Bible. The mass-circulation newspapers had altered their vocabulary for subscribers lacking a classical education, and this was reflected in the new books, including serious fiction. R. C. K. Ensor has noted that this created "a distinct barrier of language between the modern Englishman and most of his country's greater literature from Milton down through Burke to Macaulay."[60]

Yet the gain was greater than the loss. Edwardian writers possessed a vitality unmatched in England before or since, and this is reflected in the files of the *Times Literary Supplement,* whose first issue was dated January 17, 1902. In poetry these were the years of Masefield and Alfred Noyes's "Highwayman" ("The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees, / The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas…"). Drama apart, the novel was the only popular literary form, and it glittered with the works of Kipling, George Moore, Samuel Butler (*The Way of All Flesh,* 1903), Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Conrad, the early Maugham, Henry James, Saki, W. H. Hudson (*Green Mansions,* 1904), John Galsworthy (Soames Forsyte arrived in *The Man of Property,* 1906), and Bloomsbury's E. M. Forster, whose most fruitful years these were (*Where Angels Fear to Tread,* 1905; *The Longest Journey,* 1907; *A Room with a View,* 1908; and his masterpiece, *Howards End,* 1910). Fictive entertainment also flourished. This period saw the appearance of Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles;* the first Edgar Wallace thriller, *The Four Just Men;* and the debut of P. G. Wodehouse, whose *Pothunters,* astonishingly, was published in 1902.

But it was the English stage that captivated the literary world. London's dramatic renaissance, the fruit of twenty years of brilliant criticism and experiment, reached its culmination during Edward's reign; for the first time since Shakespeare, British plays were being translated into all continental languages, and the city's little theaters were packed almost nightly throughout the decade. At His Majesty's Theatre you could see Clyde Fitch's *Last of the Dandies* and John Millington Synge's *Tinker's Wedding.* The

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Royal Court Theatre produced Galsworthy's *Silver Box* and seven Shaw plays: *Candida, John Bull's Other Island, Man and Superman, Major Barbara, Captain Brassbound's Conversion, The Doctor's Dilemma,* and *The Philanderer.* Shaw's *Getting Married* could be seen at the Haymarket, Masefield's *Tragedy of Man* at the New Royalty. If you liked Barrie, and he was more popular then than now, you went to the Duke of York, which staged, in addition to *Peter Pan, The Admirable Crichton, Alice Sit-by-the-Fire, What Every Woman Knows, Old Friends,* and *The Twelve-Pound Look.* The Duke of York also showed Galsworthy's *Justice* and Shaw's *Misalliance.* Quite apart from artistic merits, Edwardian playwrights dealt with the absorbing social and political issues of the time—labor unions, feminism, criminal justice, the prison system, the Irish question, imperialism, armaments, socialism, salvationism, syndicalism, property, marriage, and divorce—and they therefore found Churchill in their audiences. He met most of them and knew Shaw well. When rehearsals for *Pygmalion* ended at His Majesty's Theatre (with Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Jennie's husband's mistress, playing Eliza Doolittle) GBS wired Winston: "Am reserving two tickets for you for my premiere. Come and bring a friend—if you have one." Churchill wired back: "Impossible to be present for the first performance. Will attend the second—if there is one."[61]

Winston was a Liberal back-bencher for eighteen months and, most of the time, an inconspicuous one. The larger part of his time was devoted to writing and building a Manchester constituency for the coming general election. In the House he tried to steer a careful course between the left and right wings of his new party, speaking on the safe subjects of army reform and the economy. But he was never completely himself unless in the center of the firing line, and Balfour, dodging on and off the floor to avoid taking stands which would further split his Tories, was an irresistible target. Churchill mocked his "miserable and disreputable shifts" of principle and "his gross and flagrant ignorance." *Punch* reported Balfour's reaction: "Prince Arthur lolls on the Treasury Bench looking straight before him with studious indifference, betrayed by a countenance clouded with rare anger." Other Conservatives were less aloof. They published an anonymous pamphlet quoting the turncoat's past attacks on his new colleagues. It was headed: "Mr Winston Churchill on the Radical Party Before he donned their livery and Accepted their Pay."[62]

Balfour decided to resign as prime minister before the country went to the polls. On December 4, 1905, dispirited, lacking in legislative goals, and unable to reestablish a working relationship with Chamberlain, AJB stepped down over a minor issue, and the King asked Campbell-Bannerman to form a new government. Edward gave C-B a free hand in his appointments. The new prime minister offered Churchill a choice of posts and Winston asked to be named under secretary of state for the colonies; the secretary of state would be the Earl of Elgin, and since Elgin sat in the House of Lords, Winston would handle colonial matters in the Commons. C-B agreed and it was announced. The Tories, predictably, were outraged. Now the truth was out, they cried. The renegade had changed his party to reach office; he stood exposed as "a political adventurer who would do

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anything beautiful, never eating anything savoury, *never saying anything clever!'* " He meant to be clever here, but not alarming. The city had become a Conservative stronghold—all nine seats were held by Tories—and apart from ringing tributes to Free Trade, he skirted controversy just twice. Courting workingmen's votes, he promised that the Liberals would remember England's "left-out millions," and, less honorably, assured Protestant Unionists that he would "support no legislation which I regard as likely to injure the effective integrity of the United Kingdom." Hecklers distributed copies of the pamphlet quoting his past scorn for his present party; one thrust it in his hands while others cried, "Answer it!" He did: "I said a lot of stupid things when I worked with the Conservative Party, and I left it because I did not want to go on saying stupid things." Then, amid loud cheers, he tore the leaflet to shreds and, a newspaperman reported, "flung it from him with a dramatic gesture, expressing… contempt for the cause he had once espoused."[66]

He was the most exciting candidate in the city. "There is no question about it," wrote Charles E. Hands of the Tory *Daily Mail;* "the public interest of Manchester in the General Election is centred and focussed on the personality of Mr Winston Churchill. You can hardly see the rest of the political landscape for this dominant figure." Men discussed his alliterative rhetoric, the mammoth posters bearing his name in letters five feet high, the reviews of his new book, and the startling youthfulness of his mother, who was stumping for him every day. He was billed to speak in the Manchester Coal Exchange one afternoon at three o'clock. "At half past two," the *Guardian* reported, "the hall was packed with a struggling crowd; a second crowd was struggling on the staircase leading to the hall; and a third crowd [was] jostling for standing room on the pavement in the street." The *Mail* noted that he was "wearing a new old-fashioned hat, a flat-topped sort of felt hat, and already the hatters are having enquiries for articles of that pattern." In addition, "Ladies who have been privileged to speak to him are envied of their sex."[67]

Among the enviers of their sex were the Pankhursts. In late 1905, even before the campaign had begun, Christabel Pankhurst and her friend Annie Kenney had been arrested for disrupting a Churchill speech in northwest Manchester; Churchill had offered to pay their fifteen-shilling fine, but they chose a week's martyrdom in a cell. Emmeline Pankhurst now interrupted one of his speeches repeatedly until stewards lured her into a side room and locked the door. Winston, who thought she had left the meeting, said he had voted for the one woman suffrage bill to come before the House but deplored disturbances at political rallies. Someone shouted: "That's right, don't be henpecked, Winston!" At St. John's Schools, Gartside, he had to deal with Sylvia Pankhurst. She raised a sign bearing the slogan "Votes for Women," but she had it upside down, and Churchill mildly pointed that out. She called: "Will you give us a vote?" He invited her to join him on the platform; she did, and he asked the crowd: "Will everybody please be quiet. Let us hear what she has to say." They refused; they chanted: "We want to hear Churchill!" He tried again and failed. The hall was in an uproar. According to the *Guardian*, he then said: " 'We should be fair and chivalrous to ladies. They come here asking us to treat them like men.' (Laughter) 'That is what I particularly want to avoid. We must observe courtesy and chivalry to the weaker sex dependent upon us.' (Hear hear.)" Sylvia, furious, stalked out. Like her mother, she had found that in one respect

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Churchill was like Arthur Balfour. He could adroitly avoid making a commitment under the wrong circumstances.[68]

Manchester voted on January 13; the results were announced two days later. All nine Liberals had won. Balfour was among the losers. Winston, whose margin of victory was over 1,200 votes, took Hands to supper at the hotel. The reporter called it "a grand slam in doubled no trumps."[69] Churchill agreed. Bridge was never his game, but this time he was on the money; he sensed the mood of the entire country. When the last votes were counted it was clear that the Liberals had won a historic landslide. They had swept 377 seats; of the Tories, who had gone into the fight 400 strong, only 157 survived. In addition, there were 83 Irish Nationalists, and—portentous, though few noted their significance—53 Labour members. Campbell-Bannerman and his men could alter the face of England. Churchill confronted a personal challenge. He had been a formidable critic; now, holding office in a secure government, he must be constructive. But political tempers are slow to change. Men long in opposition cannot easily break habits of cavil, particularly when they have mastered the art, nor are they adept at the compromises and jugglery which are the plain handmaidens of responsibility. Winston was now answerable to the House for the administration of the King's colonies, and the first issue he faced would have taxed a seasoned veteran of the Treasury Bench, which he, at this time, clearly was not.

It was an ugly business. Sir Alfred Milner, last seen in this narrative being interviewed by Churchill in Cape Town, had been elevated to the peerage, and the month after the Liberal sweep he made his maiden speech in the House of Lords. A lot of men wanted to question Milner. As high commissioner in South Africa he had imported some fifty thousand Chinese coolies to work the Rand gold mines. Their contracts ran for three years; they were not permitted to bring their families, they were penned in camps, and reportedly they were subjected to corporal punishment. In one of his first acts as prime minister, Campbell-Bannerman had announced that the leasing of Chinese would be discontinued. Licenses for fourteen thousand more coolies had already been issued the previous November, however, and the matter of their treatment in the past was therefore a burning question. Documents acquired by the new government revealed that mine bosses had been meting out punishments without trial, flogging the Chinese indiscriminately. This was a gross violation of London's instructions to the high commissioner and of Whitehall's assurances to authorities in China. A fellow lord asked Milner if he had sanctioned this. Milner confessed that he had, adding, "I think, in the light of subsequent events, that I was wrong."[70]

The Liberal press, led by Massingham and the *Guardian*, was in full cry. Radical Liberals demanded Milner's head. Churchill agreed that his conduct had been reprehensible and said: "I should not put myself to any undue or excessive exertion to defend Lord Milner from any attacks which might be made upon him." At Question Time, replying to Hilaire Belloc, a new Liberal MP, he added: "Lord Milner committed a grave dereliction of public duty and at the same time an undoubted infringement of the law." Belloc and others drafted a motion of censure. Chamberlain, whose man Milner had been, protested that it was "despicable" to "persecute him for a single error of judgment in a long course of public service." Winston accused Joe of abusing the Boers, and then Free Trade. The only difference between the two, he said, was that "whereas the first enterprise

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of the right honourable gentleman has had the effect of nearly ruining South Africa, the second enterprise has had the effect of politically ruining himself." Chamberlain hotly replied that it was Churchill's duty, as "head of a department," to "defend the servants of the department." At this point senior Liberals decided to put out the fire. Milner had a large following in the country; making a martyr out of him would be both pointless and risky. Churchill had to tell the House that in the interests of peace and conciliation, he would oppose the censure motion. He was uncomfortable in this position, however, and his defense of it was deplorable. "Lord Milner," he said, "has gone from South Africa, probably for ever. The public service knows him no more. Having exercised great authority he now exerts none. Having held high employment he now has no employment…. He is today a retired Civil Servant, without pension or gratuity of any kind whatever. It is not worth while to pursue him any further."[71]

The Conservatives were outraged, the Liberals embarrassed. Margot Asquith called the speech "ungenerous, patronising, and tactless." Even Eddie Marsh, who had thought it impressive in rehearsal, now concluded that his new employer "appeared to be taunting a discredited statesman." A Tory MP moved to reduce Winston's salary for "embittered and empoisoned language" on coolie labor and above all for insulting Milner, "a man whom so many of us esteem, honour, and love." Kipling, an admirer of Milner, never forgave Winston. Sir William Anson, the warden of All Souls, Oxford, wrote that Churchill had seemed "both pompous and impertinent. It is terrible to think what harm that young jackanapes may do with a big majority behind him and an incompetent Prime Minister to look after him." The House of Lords passed, 170 to 35, a resolution expressing its gratitude to Milner for his service in South Africa. The King wrote the Liberal Marquess of Crewe: "It is a pity that Lord Elgin does not seem to be able to control the violent and objectionable language of his Parliamentary Under-Secretary." To Lady Londonderry, a kinswoman of Churchill's, he remarked that "the conduct of a certain relation of yours is simply scandalous. It is indeed hard on Lord Milner to be treated in such a manner."[72]

This was hard on Elgin. The secretary of state for colonies could hardly be expected to control events in the House of Commons when, as a peer, he could not even be admitted to the chamber. A shy man, bereft of social graces—Marsh described him as "a rugged old thane of antique virtue and simplicity"—he nevertheless possessed administrative abilities and had acquitted himself well as viceroy of India. Later he wrote: "When I accepted Churchill as my Under Secy I knew I should have no easy task." He had decided to show Winston all documents, let him join all policy discussions, always give him the benefit of the doubt, "but to keep control." Austen Chamberlain, in *Politics from Inside*, tells the story that Churchill submitted a long memorandum to his minister, ending, "These are my views," and Elgin sent it back with the notation, "But not mine." No doubt the under secretary tried the secretary's patience at times. He also bemused him. To his wife, Elgin wrote, "Winston is a curious impulsive creature." He described how, when he mildly criticized a paper, Churchill apologized profusely, "seized the paper and tore it up." It was

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parliamentary questions, a gifted writer of arresting minutes, he defended colonial policy in the House with a sharpening wit; to Andrew Bonar Law, a Tory who accused him of twisting the meaning of a Tory document, he replied: "The words which you now tell me you employed and which purport to be a paraphrase, if not an actual quotation, are separated by a small degree of inaccuracy and misrepresentation from the inaccuracy and misrepresentation of the condensed report." He also carried a burden of day-to-day decision which was immense because of the Empire's immensity. He negotiated with Cypriots over pledges of financial assistance, spoke up for Jewish immigrants embittered by what he regarded as a "very harsh and quite indefensible measure," recommended reductions of naturalization fees, advocated help for Zulu tribes mistreated by the Natal government, urged Campbell-Bannerman to invite all six of Australia's state premiers to a colonial conference, and mediated a dispute in India between Curzon, the viceroy, and Kitchener, commander in chief of His Majesty's forces there. (He sided with Curzon, but Kitchener won.) Most of the matters brought before him were insignificant even then, but two weren't. The South African mining magnates were persuaded to repatriate their Chinese workers. And the Boers, at last, were given a just political settlement.[76]

Churchill played an active role in drafting the provisions for the Transvaal constitution, and later that of the Orange River Colony, and piloted them through the House. The former republics were to be granted self-government with universal manhood suffrage, an approach to the "one vote, one value" principle which even England lacked. The revered name "Orange Free State" was then restored and a limited ban on the Afrikaans language lifted; members of both Boer parliaments could address their colleagues in either English or Afrikaans. Indeed, British colonial officials posted there would be expected to master Dutch dialects, "for," Winston wrote, "if the people like to talk to him in Volapuk, he must learn Volapuk. If they have a weakness for Sanskott, it must become his study. By humouring them, and understanding them, he will be able very often to make their wishes and their welfare coincide." "We are prepared," he told the House, "to make this settlement in the name of the Liberal Party. This is sufficient authority for us; but there is a higher authority which we should earnestly desire to obtain." He asked the Tories to "join with us to invest the grant of a free Constitution to the Transvaal with something of a national sanction. With all our majority we can only make it the gift of a Party. They can make it the gift of England." But Balfour, who had found another seat in a by-election, wanted no part of it. He called the bill "a dangerous, audacious and reckless experiment." Milner condemned it in the Lords. *The Times* prophesied the doom of the Empire, and the *Daily Mail* ran the headlines: ANOTHER MAJUBA—TRANSVAAL GIVEN BACK TO THE BOERS—FRUITLESS SACRIFICES OF THE WAR—22,000 LIVES AND £250,000,000 FOR NOTHING.[77]

Nevertheless, the measure was a triumph. Botha became prime minister, first of the self-governing Transvaal, and then after 1910 of the new Union of South Africa. When they met as fellow statesmen, he recognized Churchill as his armored-train prisoner, whereupon Winston complained that the reward for his recapture had been stingy. In 1914 Botha and his followers chose to fight side by side with the British, something not foreseen only a few years earlier, and Churchill's fellow Liberals, among others, recognized the wisdom and generosity of his terms. His "shame" was past; he was

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appointed a first-class member of the Privy Council, a rare honor for a man below cabinet rank. Now he stood in the party's front echelons. The next vacancy on the government's front bench would be his. Meanwhile, he decided to have some fun and possibly make money, too. In the summer of 1907, after a colonial conference at which he beat back appeals for imperial preference by arguing that tariffs would lead to "a deep feeling of sullen hatred of the colonies and of colonial affairs among the poorer people in this country," he left England for five months. He and F. E. Smith attended French military maneuvers, joined Sunny for a partridge shoot in Moravia (now part of Czechoslovakia), and then separated, Winston making his way in easy stages, by Vienna and Syracuse, to Malta, where he rendezvoused with Eddie Marsh, George Scrivings, and a distant Churchill relative. The four of them boarded the cruiser *Venus*, which, Winston wrote, was "lying obedient and attentive in the roads." The Admiralty had put it at his disposal for a tour of the east African domains.[78]

On Cyprus they were greeted by a mass demonstration favoring Enosis, complete union with Greece. That was the last flicker of controversy on the journey. The rest was an idyll, impossible now and possible then only because of the unchallenged might of the Empire. The party "threaded the long red furrow of the Suez Canal," as Churchill wrote afterward, and "sweltered through the trough of the Red Sea" to Aden. Pausing in Mombasa, they traveled up-country on a special train provided by the Uganda Railway; two of them, he told his mother in a long letter home, sat "on a seat in front of the engine with our rifles & as soon as we saw anything to shoot at—a wave of the hand brought the train to a standstill & sometimes we tried at antelope without even getting down." They found zebras, lions, rhinoceroses, antelopes of every kind, ostriches, and giraffes. He wrote: "On the first day I killed 1 zebra, 1 wildebeeste, two hartebeeste, 1 gazelle, 1 bustard (a giant bird)," and he had also sighted "a vy fine kind of antelope with beautiful straight horns." He was nearly run down by a rhino, "a survival of prehistoric times," whose charge was halted when he fired "a heavy 450 rifle & hit her plumb in the chest."[79]

Everywhere Africans waited to pay the bwana tribute: "I was presented by the various chiefs with 108 sheep, 7 Bulls, about £100 worth of ivory, an ostrich egg, many fowls & some vy good leopard skins." A glimpse of "the mighty snow-clad peak of Mt Kenya" was followed by stops at Nairobi, Lake Victoria, Kampala, the Ripon Falls, Gondokoro, and, after a leisurely journey by train and steamer, Khartoum, where, to Churchill's dismay, his manservant fell ill with choleraic diarrhea and died. The Dublin Fusiliers, at Winston's request, gave Scrivings a military funeral; "we all walked in procession to the cemetery as mourners, while the sun sank over the desert, and the band played that beautiful funeral march you know so well." That put a damper on the rest of the trip; they hurried to Wadi Halfa, Aswân, Cairo, and home. But on balance the expedition had been a great success. Churchill felt fit and was in fact wealthier. After the last election he had left Mount Street and rented a small house at 12 Bolton Street, just off Piccadilly, two blocks from the Ritz, and during his absence his brother had sublet it for him. The *Strand* paid him £750 for four articles on his tour; Hodder and Stoughton advanced £500 against royalties for a book, *My African Journey*. Solvent and radiant, he was guest of honor on Saturday, January 18, 1908, at a dinner given by the National Liberal Club to welcome him home. He told them: "I come back into the firing line in the

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around as an object of compassion and commiseration. Manchester has washed its hands of him. The juveniles have for days past been singing to a popular air 'Good-bye, Winnie, you must leave us,' and Winnie has gone. On the whole Manchester appears to be taking the sorrowful parting with composure." So was Churchill. Even before he left the city, telegrams had arrived offering him eight safe Liberal seats. He chose Dundee, one of whose MPs had just been elevated to the peerage. To his mother he wrote: "It's a life seat and cheap and easy beyond all experience." The Manchester defeat didn't rankle. He wrote a woman friend, not a militant feminist, who mourned his loss: "It was a real pleasure to me to get your letter & telegram. I am glad to think you watched the battle from afar with eyes sympathetic to my fortunes…. How I should have liked you to be there. You would have enjoyed it I think. We had a jolly party and it was a whirling week. Life for all its incompleteness is rather fun sometimes."[83]

The friend was Clementine Hozier, whom he had disconcerted with his rude, silent stare four years earlier. Now twenty-three, Clementine was at the height of her beauty. Violet Asquith, seeing her for the first time, thought she had "a face of classical perfection" and "a profile like the racing cutter in George Meredith's novel *Beauchamp's Career*," or "the prow of a Greek ship."[84] Her social credentials were acceptable, if not spectacular. She belonged to one of those landed gentry families which lived on tight budgets. Descended from Scots whose lineage could be traced back to the twelfth century, she was a granddaughter of the Countess of Airlie. Jennie had once known her mother well; Winston's uncle Jack Leslie had been one of her godfathers. Men said she was a good hunter for a woman; women said that she had rightly decided her hair was her crowning glory, and on formal occasions she always wore it up. But there was much more to Clementine than that. The child of a shattered marriage, educated at the Sorbonne, she was a strong-minded young woman of firm likes and dislikes (she did not like Jennie), and her politics were rather to the left of the Liberal establishment. Although she never invited arrest or shouted down cabinet members, she believed women were entitled to the vote and was prepared to say so anywhere, to anyone, at any time. She was not, in short, a paradigm of an upper-class Englishwoman. Most youthful patricians would have found her a difficult wife, and she had already broken an engagement she knew was unwise. Yet there were deep reservoirs of love in her. For the right husband, she would be magnificent.

"Where does the family start?" Winston once asked rhetorically. "It starts with a young man falling in love with a girl. No superior alternative has yet been found." But first they must be thrown together, and both he and Clementine almost missed their second meeting. It came in March 1908, two months after his return from Africa. They had been invited separately to a dinner being given at 52 Portland Place by her aunt, Lady St. Helier, formerly Lady Jeune, who had been Winston's benefactress when he wanted to ride with Kitchener to Khartoum. At the appointed hour, however, he was in his bath. Eddie, bursting in on him, said: "What on earth are you doing, Winston? You should be at dinner by now!" Churchill said he wasn't going, that it would be a great bore; Eddie told

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him he couldn't do that to Lady Jeune, and, grumbling and scowling, Winston emerged from the tub, dressed, and caught a cab. Meanwhile, at 51 Abingdon Villas in Kensington, Clementine and her mother had exchanged similar words. Clementine had spent the afternoon giving French lessons at a half crown an hour. She was tired and didn't want to go out, but Lady Blanche scolded: "That is very ungrateful of you. Your Aunt Mary has been extremely kind to you. Let's have no more nonsense; go upstairs straight away and get dressed."[85]

So the two unwilling guests arrived late. Seated next to Clementine, Winston was all courtesy this time, though as usual he wanted to talk about himself. He asked her if she had read his biography of Lord Randolph. She hadn't. He promised to send her a copy and then forgot. But he didn't forget Clementine. He asked his mother to invite her and her mother for a weekend at Salisbury Hall, the Cornwallis-West country home. Clementine was impressed with him; in her letter thanking Jennie, she wrote of his "dominating charm and brilliancy." Maddeningly, Lady Blanche, who couldn't afford it, chose this spring to take her daughter abroad for six weeks. Winston's letters pursued her. Having just called on the King to "kiss hands"—receive royal sanction for his new office—he seized "this fleeting hour of leisure to write & tell how much I liked our long talk on Sunday and what a comfort & pleasure it was to me to meet a girl with so much intellectual quality & such strong reserves of noble sentiment." He wrote her of his brother's marriage to Lady Gwendeline Bertie, or "Goonie," as everyone in the family called her; he wrote of politics and the fire at Burley-on-the-Hill. To this last, Clementine replied: "I have been able to think of nothing but the fire & the terrible danger you have been in…. My dear my heart stood still with terror."[86]

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Clementine Hozier at the time of her wedding

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Plowden and Muriel Wilson). He picked Linky Cecil as his best man, and asked Welldon to speak at the service. Presents had to be acknowledged. In the happy English tradition of political civility, gifts arrived from Balfour and the Chamberlains. The King sent a gold-headed walking stick; Sir Ernest Cassel, £500.[89]

On the appointed Saturday the guests, including Sir Bindon Blood, Ian Hamilton, and Lloyd George, gathered in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster. Even here the groom could not elude controversy; *Tailor and Cutter* described his attire as "one of the greatest failures as a wedding garment we have ever seen, giving the wearer a sort of glorified coachman appearance." Blunt wrote in his diary that Churchill had "gained in appearance since I saw him last, and has a powerful if ugly face. Winston's responses were clearly made in a pleasant voice, Clementine's inaudible." Appropriately, the reception was held in Lady St. Helier's home. In his new post Churchill had defended the right of costermongers to trade in the street, and "Pearly Kings and Queens," cockneys whose costumes were adorned with pearl buttons sewn in elaborate patterns, danced outside in Portland Place.[90]

Winston later wrote that he and Clementine "lived happily ever afterwards." It was, in fact, a great marriage, but few brides have had to adjust so quickly to their husband's careers. She was given a glimpse of the future immediately after the wedding ceremony, when she found him with Lloyd George in the church vestry, earnestly talking politics. At Blenheim, where their honeymoon began, he revised the final text of his book on Africa, and in Venice, their last stop, he was toiling away at official papers and memoranda, belying his letter to his mother from there: "We have only loitered & loved—a good & serious occupation for which the histories furnish respectable precedents." In Eichorn on the way back they stayed with an old friend of Winston's, the Austrian Baron Tuty de Forest, who had been educated in England. Winston and the baron had a marvelous time shooting, but Clementine found the household stiff and the baroness dull. She was glad to be headed home, and was excited by the prospect of being presented to her husband's constituents in Dundee. Her oddest experience on the wedding trip had been her first encounter with Winston's underwear. She wore cheap chemises, but his underclothes, she whispered to a wide-eyed Violet Asquith when they returned and dined at Downing Street, were made of pale pink, very finely woven silk; they came from the Army and Navy Stores and "cost the eyes out of the head"—about eighty pounds a year, she calculated. When Violet "taxed him with this curious form of self-indulgence, he replied: 'It is essential to my well-being. I have a very delicate and sensitive cuticle which demands the finest covering.' " He invited her to examine the texture of the skin on his forearm. It was, he proudly told her, "a cuticle without a blemish, except for one small portion of my anatomy where I sacrificed a piece of my skin to accommodate a wounded brother officer on my way back from the Sudan campaign."[91]

Like other lovers, they invented pet names for each other. Clementine was "Cat" or "Kat"; Winston was "Pug," then "Amber Pug," then "Pig." Drawings of these animals decorated the margins of their letters to each other, and at dinner parties Winston would reach across the table, squeeze her hand, and murmur, "Dear Cat." After a garden luncheon, Blunt entered in his diary: "He is *aux plus petits soins* with his wife, taking all possible care of her. They are a very happy married pair. Clementine was afraid of wasps,

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and one settled on her sleeve, and Winston gallantly took the wasp by the wings and thrust it into the ashes of the fire." She became pregnant the month after the wedding. Not knowing the child's sex, they created the name "Puppy Kitten," then shortened it to simply "P.K." The imminent arrival of the P.K. made a move from the little house on Bolton Street imperative, and early in 1909 Churchill took an eighteen-year lease, at £195 a year, on a house at 33 Eccleston Square, in Pimlico, between Victoria Station and the Thames. Clementine was economizing wherever possible; on April 27 she wrote Winston: "I had a long afternoon with Baxter & carpets. The green carpet is lovely & will do beautifully for the library. It looks like soft green moss… I tried hard to make the red stair carpet do for the dining room, but it is really too shabby." A "green sickly looking carpet" from Bolton Street "does Puppy Kitten's room." One servant's room could "be done for about £2." She had "written to the people who are making the blue stair carpet to ask what it will cost to cover dining room entirely with the blue—(4/6 a yard)."[92]

In May they moved in, and three months later Clementine gave birth to a girl, whom they christened Diana. Away watching army maneuvers that September, Winston wrote his "dear Kat," begging her to "try to gather your strength. Don't spend it as it comes. Let it accumulate…. My darling I so want your life to be a full & sweet one, I want it to be worthy of all the beauties of your nature. I am so much centered in my politics, that I often feel I must be a dull companion, to anyone who is not in the trade too. It gives me so much joy to make you happy—& often wish I were more various in my topics." Diana was followed, less than two years later, by their son, Randolph, "the Chumbolly." Winston wrote from Blenheim: "My precious pussy cat, I do trust & hope that you are being good & not sitting up or fussing yourself. The Chumbolly must do his duty and help you with your milk, you are to tell him so from me." She replied, "I am very happy here, contemplating the beautiful Chumbolly who grows more darling & handsome every hour, & puts on weight with every meal; so that soon he will be a little round ball of fat. Just now I was kissing him, when catching sight of my nose he suddenly fastened upon it & began to suck it, no doubt thinking it was another part of my person!"[93]

These notes are only partly attributable to his travels. She was a lark, he a nightingale; they tried having breakfast together two or three times, he later said, "but it didn't work. Breakfast should be had in bed alone." Since one was often bustling about while the other slept, they left hundreds of these missives for each other. All testify to a devotion that never flagged, though, like every other couple, they had their edgy moments. In the beginning his sudden and unexpected absences made her wonder if there were other women in his life. Her challenge does not survive, but we have his reply: "Dearest, it worries me vy much that you should seem to nurse such absolutely wild suspicions wh are so dishonouring to all the love & loyalty I bear you & will please god bear you while I breathe. They are unworthy of you & me. And they fill my mind with feelings of embarrassment to wh I have been a stranger since I was a schoolboy. I know that they originate in the fond love you have for me and therefore they make me feel tenderly towards you & anxious always to deserve that most precious possession of my life. But at the same time they depress me & vex me—& without reason. We do not live in a world of small intrigues but of serious & important affairs…. You ought to trust me for I do not love & will never love any woman in the world but you and my chief desire is to link

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Your pug in clover, W." And she would assure him that while he was gone, "your lazy Kat sits purring and lapping cream and stroking her kittens."[96]

Certainly Winston needed the exercise. In 1909 newspapers noted that his stoop had grown more pronounced, and that he was getting fat. Nevertheless, the QOOH outings made Clementine uneasy. She believed that F.E. kept her husband up late and encouraged him to play poker. Winston always stayed up late and always gambled, but her anxiety was understandable; he couldn't afford the high stakes of his rich friends. At the time of his appointment, Asquith had written him that as president of the Board of Trade he would be "on the same level, as regards salary & status," as a secretary of state. That would have brought in £5,000 a year, on which the family could have lived comfortably. As it turned out, he was paid only half that. The money he had invested with Cassel was gone; so were the royalties from his later books. Clementine had grown up learning to live on little money, but she became haunted by the need to make ends meet. Her husband was loving but inconsiderate. On very short notice he would send word that he was bringing friends home to dinner. If she asked what she was expected to feed them, his answer was always the same: "Let's have Irish stew with lots of onions." She waved handfuls of bills at him and he turned away shrugging, though once he suffered pangs of remorse. At their wedding his aunt Cornelia had given her a diamond necklace; later Winston had had rubies set around the diamonds. Beset by creditors, she impulsively sold it. When she told him, he rushed to the jeweler to buy it back, but he was too late; it was gone.[97]

Being Winston Churchill's wife was sometimes embarrassing and even dangerous. In November 1909 the Churchills, arriving at Bristol railway station, were leaving their car when a suffragette, Theresa Garnett, ran up and tried to lash his face with a whip. He grabbed her wrists and she tugged him toward the tracks and the path of a moving train. At the last moment Clementine grabbed his coat and pulled both of them back to safety. A few months later he faced another whip, this one in the hands of a suffragette's male relative who cried: "Take that, you dirty cur!" Winston took evasive action instead. He warned his wife against opening "suspicious parcels arriving by post without precautions…. These harpies are quite capable of trying to burn us out." By 1912 he would be a supporter of their cause, but as long as their assaults on public men continued, he refused to commit himself in Parliament. Clementine's feelings were mixed. She said publicly that she was "ardently in favour of votes for women," and privately she believed feminism needed champions willing to break the law. On the other hand, she certainly didn't want Winston maimed or killed. No such ambiguity troubled her on other issues, however. As his advocacy of Liberal reforms grew more passionate, Tory homes were closed to the Churchills, and some die-hard acquaintances would cross the street rather than greet her. She gloried in their animosity, for in these years, when Winston's radicalism crested, his most enthusiastic supporter was Clementine Churchill.[98]

Even before he left the Colonial Office, Winston had become a thunderer on the left. He had urged the South Africans to adopt a program of unemployment compensation, and in

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a letter from Africa on December 22, 1907, he had proposed parliamentary bills establishing minimum wages, insurance against sickness, and old-age pensions in England. Back in London he gave Charles Masterman, himself a reformer, the impression that he was "full of the poor whom he has just discovered. He thinks he is called by Providence—to do something for them. 'Why have I always been kept safe within a hair's breadth,' he asked, 'except to do something like this?' " Writing in the *Nation* of March 7, he recommended that men without jobs be "treated as if they were hospital patients" and that the economy be managed through a "network of state intervention and regulation"; he saw "little glory," he had said, "in an Empire which can rule the waves and is unable to flush its sewers." In Glasgow he had delivered a historic speech, declaring that "the fortunes and interests of Liberalism and Labour are inseparably interwoven. They rise by the same forces, they face the same enemies, they are affected by the same dangers." The state, he said, must "concern itself with the care of the sick and the aged, and, above all, of the children." The government should get "the railways of this country in our hands" and become "the reserve employer of labour," establishing public-works projects to "spread a net over the abyss."[99]

All this was breathtaking in 1908. Beatrice Webb revised her early judgment of him; she wrote: "He is brilliantly able—more than a phrase-monger, I think." But the upper classes, Churchill's relatives and the people he had lived among all his life, were flabbergasted. This was the man who, as a Sandhurst cadet, had approved of churchgoing for workmen on the ground that "nothing can give them a good time here, but it makes them more contented to think that they will get one hereafter." At heart he was a traditionalist who loved the Shakespearean "tide of pomp/That beats upon the high shore of this world." Except by reading, or strolling through the Manchester slum with Eddie Marsh, he knew nothing of real poverty. Clementine's small economies were hardly comparable to the destitution of jobless Britons. The Churchills always had servants. Winston never packed a bag; it was simpler to ring a bell. It never occurred to him to travel third-class. Eddie Marsh wrote that until he married, Winston had never even heard of such things as "lodgings." He once told Violet Asquith: "I have always had to earn every penny I possessed, but there has never been a day in my life when I could not order a bottle of champagne for myself and offer another to a friend."[100]

Why, then, had he chosen to become a tribune of the oppressed? Doubtless his resentment of the Tory hierarchy was one reason; as he saw it, they had ruined his father, driven Winston himself out of their party, and treated him viciously since he had crossed the House floor. He was an intuitive rebel. But being humane, he was also genuinely appalled by the plight of the downtrodden as he discovered it through reading and in talks with the Webbs, Shaw, and Wells. Another explanation is political. The Liberals, though apparently invincible, felt menaced by the burgeoning Labour party, which threatened to steal their thunder and their strong radical wing. An increase in Lib-Lab strength was the result. Asquith made their triumphs possible, though he himself was no ideologue. Silver-haired, with a small, thin-lipped, stubborn-looking mouth and a thick Yorkshire accent which had survived the City of London School and Balliol College at Oxford, he had displayed little political imagination in the past, but he grasped his party's need for movement to the left, shrewdly sensing the necessity for some official response, however

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limited, to the outcry over the public and private exposés of working-class destitution. One of his first acts had been to provide free meals and free medical attention for schoolchildren. Winston's combative spirit was stirred when these mild measures provoked violent Tory protests. "Party animosity," Lord Campion wrote nearly a half-century later, "reached a degree of virulence which is hardly conceivable in the present generation."[101] Finally, all these motives for the liberation of Churchill from patrician dogma were immeasurably strengthened by the charisma and leadership of his colleague Lloyd George, his senior by eleven years.

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Churchill and David Lloyd George, Budget Day, 1910

Churchill at the Board of Trade, Lloyd George at the Exchequer—this was the team which really drove the Asquith government in its first surge of reform. It was an unlikely alliance. The younger man, born to a ducal family, weaned on privilege, had been boosted to fame by influential relatives and friends, including England's present King, and had, for all his brushes with death on battlefields, led a sheltered life. Lloyd George had been a penniless Welsh boy, raised by a widowed mother, articled to a solicitor at sixteen, and introduced to the practice of law by defending poachers in local courts. One wore a top hat in town, the other, except on extraordinary occasions, a crumpled fedora. Yet each was an impulsive political genius, fired by idealism, joined to the other by common goals. "Both," wrote Elie Halévy, "were opposed to a policy of heavy expenditure on the Army and the Navy, both advocates of a policy of social reform which, they maintained, the Liberal Party must pursue with unprecedented daring, if the Labour Party were not to

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providing for old-age pensions and an expanded National Health Insurance Act—his slogan was "nine-pence for fourpence," the difference between the two figures being the contributions from employers and the government. The latter bill didn't become law until 1911, because the House of Lords balked at it. The solution which broke the legislative impasse, and which was designed by Lloyd George and Churchill, altered the historical balance between the two Houses of Parliament.

At that time the Lords, the "upper house," could veto bills passed by the Commons, the "lower house," though since 1660 money matters, by custom, had been left to the commoners. Until now there had been few confrontations between the two because members of both houses had come from the same background, and within a fairly narrow range they shared the same political convictions, regardless of party. But Asquith's Liberals were introducing new concepts of government. The burning question, said Balfour, was whether the Conservatives "should still control, whether in power or whether in opposition, the destinies of this great Empire." The upper house, AJB pointed out, still had a heavy Tory majority. They could block or mutilate social legislation. He urged them to do it, and they did. An education bill was so maimed by the Lords that Asquith had to drop it. A voting bill was rejected outright. A land-reform program met the same fate, and so did a liquor-licensing bill. This last was a favorite of Winston's. Among the radical causes he had embraced—this from Churchill!—was temperance. Lucy Masterman was with him on November 26, 1908, when word arrived that the Lords had killed the measure. She wrote in her diary: "Churchill was perfectly furious at the rejection… stabbed at his bread, would hardly speak: murmured perorations about 'the heart of every Band of Hope in this country sinking within them.' He went on: 'We shall send them up a budget in June as shall terrify them, they have started a class war, they had better be careful.' "[106]

Actually, the "People's Budget" of 1909 came in April. Its essence was a revolutionary concept. Until now, with the exception of progressive death duties the taxing power had been used solely to raise revenues for the government. Now it would also redistribute the wealth. Churchill and Lloyd George drafted the budget together. On Tuesday, April 27, Winston wrote Clementine: "Tomorrow—Sweated Trades! Thursday—the deluge [the budget]!!! Thus the world wags—good, bad, & indifferent intermingled or alternating, & only my sweet Pussy cat remains a constant darling." The next day he reported that his minimum-wage bill had been "beautifully received & will be passed without division," but: "Tomorrow is the day of wrath! I feel this budget will kill or cure. Either we shall secure ample funds for great reforms next year, or the Lords will force a Dissolution in September." Clementine, replying from Blenheim, noted that "Sunny is much preoccupied about the Budget." She predicted: "It will make politics vy bitter for a long time." She was right, but it is an astonishing fact that scarcely anyone realized the budget's implications when the chancellor introduced it in the House. He began by stating his intention to "wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness" and went on for more than four hours while "Churchill," according to Virginia Cowles, "watched him like an anxious nannie." As a performance, Violet Asquith wrote, "it was a flop. I went to the House of Commons, agog to hear it, and I failed to sit it out…. It was read so badly that to some he gave the impression that he did not himself understand it." Even the press missed its implications; the following day *The Times*, the trumpet of the Conservative

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establishment, dismissed it as "unadventurous."[107]

It was hardly that. Taxes were raised on everything: whiskey, gasoline, pub licenses. But the stinger, cloaked in elaborate periphrases, provided that the rich, for the first time, be singled out for special treatment. Death duties were up, the aristocracy's great estates were assessed whether their land was used or not, capital gains were taxed if the land was sold, and everyone who received over £3,000 a year was subject to a supertax. Only some 11,500 Englishmen had that much, but they were the people who ran the country, including members in the House of Lords. The aristocracy was enraged—Winston and Sunny were estranged—and they decided that if Liberals could break precedents, so could they. Against the advice of wiser Tories, the peers vetoed the People's Budget. This created a constitutional crisis. Winston's dander was up; he relished the fight ahead. As early as June 1907 he had described the Lords as "one-sided, hereditary, unpurged, unrepresentative, absentee. Has the House of Lords ever been right?" he had asked. "I defy the Party opposite to produce a single instance of a settled controversy in which the House of Lords was right."[108] Until now their blunders had been borne. But never before had they usurped the lower house's power of the purse. He meant to right this wrong by taking the issue to the country, and he meant to pour it on.

So did Lloyd George, who went for the dukes, the leaders of the peerage. The economy was flourishing under the Liberal administration, he said; "only one stock has gone down badly; there has been a great slump in dukes. A fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two dreadnoughts; and dukes are just as great a terror and they last longer." A nobleman's elder son, he said, was merely "the first of the litter." Since that definition fitted Sunny, Winston was expected to curb Lloyd George's invective. Instead, he matched it. In a speech which the *Daily Express* headed HIS OWN RECORD FOR ABUSE OUTDONE, he pictured "the small fry of the Tory party" falling back on their dukes, from whom nothing could be expected but childish behavior. "These unfortunate individuals," he said, "who ought to lead quiet, delicate, sheltered lives, far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, have been dragged into the football scrimmage, and they have got rather roughly mauled in the process…. Do not let us be too hard on them. It is poor sport—almost like teasing goldfish. These ornamental creatures blunder on every hook they see, and there is no sport whatever in trying to catch them. It would be barbarous to leave them gasping upon the bank of public ridicule upon which they have landed themselves. Let us put them back gently, tenderly in their fountains; and if a few bright gold scales have been rubbed off in what the Prime Minister calls the variegated handling they have received they will soon get over it. They have got plenty more."[109]

Lloyd George was forgiven because of his background, Churchill condemned because of his. Cartoons depicted him denouncing the aristocracy and then retiring to Blenheim for the weekend. A Manchester Tory said that what was "neither excusable nor permissible is the lack of common decency shown by vulgar abuse of the dukes on the part of a man who is the grandson of one duke, the nephew of another, and the cousin of a third; who belongs to a family which has produced nine dukes; who figures in Debrett [*] as boasting a dozen titled relatives; and who owes every advantage he possesses over those whom he contemptuously calls 'the small fry of public life' to his aristocratic connections." In the great country houses during that summer of 1909 venomous gossips

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could no longer claim the Liberal victory of 1906 as a mandate. In January 1910 he called for a general election; the party slogan would be "The People versus the Peers." Churchill was the most popular campaigner in the election, but the results were disappointing. The Conservatives picked up 116 seats, reducing the Liberal majority to 2. The *Annual Register* called the verdict "obscure and indecisive." Nevertheless, with the support of Labour MPs and Irish Nationalists, the Asquith government still held the field. Then, on May 6, 1910, Edward VII suddenly died. There was just enough time for Queen Alexandra to send a brougham to fetch Mrs. Keppel so she could be at the bedside of her royal lover when he breathed his last.[112]

Margot Asquith dined at Jennie's home that evening. Winston was there, and at the end of the dinner he rose and said: "Let us drink to the health of the new King." Lord Crewe added: "Rather to the memory of the old." Jennie, her face puffy from weeping, gave Crewe a grateful look. She and Edward's other mistresses knew now that their long social reign had ended. Some hoped that the younger generation would pick up their torch. Alice Keppel told Clementine that if she really wanted to advance Winston's career, she would take a wealthy, influential lover. Mrs. Keppel even offered to act as procuress and, when Clementine declined, called her "positively selfish." But other faded beauties realized that this was, in the words of the song they had adored, After the Ball. They stood forlornly, sobbing among a quarter-million other grievers as the gun carriage bearing Edward's coffin passed them on the Mall, between St. James's Park on one side and the stately buildings, including St. James's Palace, on the other, Big Ben tonguing with muffled clapper, the cortege led by the new King, George V, flanked by his uncle the Duke of Connaught and, wearing the scarlet uniform of a British field marshal, Kaiser Wilhelm II, to whom, said *The Times*, "belongs the first place among all the foreign mourners," because "even when relations are most strained [he] has never lost his popularity amongst us." Later Edward's mistresses paid him their own tribute. Jennie, Alice, Lillie Langtry, and the others celebrated that year's Ascot as Black Ascot, standing in their old box wearing black feathers and ribbons on enormous black hats—wrinkled, graying women in their late fifties, but still slender, still pert, still flirtatious, and, in Jennie's case—her marriage to Cornwallis-West was headed for the divorce court—still available.[113]

Winston's mother was not invited to the new King's coronation, but her daughter-in-law was. George sent Clementine a ticket to the Royal Box in Westminster Abbey, and when he learned that she was indisposed, he made special arrangements for her to arrive just before the crown was set on his head and then be whisked away. Her husband was another matter. Churchill tactlessly insisted that the King name a new battleship the *Cromwell*, which George flatly refused to do. Worse, when the King told him that he felt Asquith was "not quite a gentleman," Winston repeated it to Asquith.[114] The big issue facing the new monarch, however, was the unresolved People's Budget. The Liberals urged him to appoint enough new peers to swing the House of Lords' vote their way. He hesitated, and the country prepared to go to the polls again. Andrew Bonar Law, who would succeed Balfour as the Conservative leader, tried to exploit Churchill's gambling instincts by proposing that he and Winston run for the same constituency in Manchester, with the understanding that the loser would stay out of the next Parliament. Winston

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declined to abandon his safe seat, preferring to spend his time and energy campaigning for other Liberal candidates. He was a political celebrity now. Crowds gathered wherever he spoke, eager to hear his biting wit and pitiless philippics.

The second election confirmed the close results of the first. Still the Lords refused to budge. Winston wrote Clementine: “Things are tending to a pretty sharp crisis. What are you to do with men whose obstinacy & pride have blinded them to their interests and to every counsel of reason? It would not be surprising if we actually have to create 500. We shall not boggle about it when it comes to the pinch.” Three weeks later he wrote her: “If anything goes wrong we make 350 Peers at once.” It proved unnecessary. Lloyd George had derided the upper house as “Mr. Balfour’s poodle,” and on this issue it was; they would take their cue from him. Asquith wrote Balfour, telling him the King would pack the Lords with new peers. The diehards—originally a regimental nick-name, the word entered the language at this time—were finished. Balfour resigned his post as party leader, signifying defeat, and in the sweltering summer of 1911 the upper house passed a parliamentary reform act, emasculating their powers, by the thin margin of 131 to 114. The Liberals, however, had paid a price. During the campaign Austen Chamberlain had predicted that Asquith’s government, if kept in office, would “establish Home Rule in Ireland.” Churchill later wrote of Austen: “He always played the game, and he always lost.” But this time he was right. To win the backing of the Irish MPs in the “People versus the Peers” struggle, the Liberals had agreed to introduce a new Home Rule bill, thus reviving that old and bitter quarrel.[115]

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Winston and Jennie, 1912

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Winston's parliamentary skills and his services to the party entitled him to a promotion—a long step toward the prime ministership which, it was generally agreed, would be his before long. Even the Tories believed it; Balfour told him: "Winston, I believe your hour has come." Churchill never waited for recognition. When the polls closed on the first of these two elections, he wrote Asquith that "Ministers should occupy positions in the Government which correspond to some extent with their influence in the country." He wanted, he said, "to go either to the Admiralty (assuming that place to become vacant) or to the Home Office." He was advised that "the First Lord could not be changed… without being slighted. But if you cared for the HO, no doubt it would be at your disposal." He cared for it, and on February 14, 1910, he was appointed home secretary. He was thirty-five. Only one home secretary, Sir Robert Peel, had been younger.[116]

Churchill's salary now reached the promised £5,000, and he was working hard for it. His responsibilities included the welfare of seven million factory workers and a million miners, national security, England's police force, immigration, and law and order. Every evening when the House was in session he had to write a longhand report on its proceedings for the King. He was answerable for conservation, the censorship of stage plays, regulations governing automobile mudguards, the licensing of Italian organ-grinders—everything, in short, which directly involved the people living in the United Kingdom. His view of the office was liberal and humanitarian. He said: "There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies."[117] Bills drafted by him limited the hours of shop assistants and introduced safety measures in the mines. Most important, at the outset, were his role in guiding Lloyd George's National Health Insurance Act through the House and his penal reforms.

On his appointment he told Violet Asquith that he was less interested in his policemen than in their quarries. Memories of his POW imprisonment in Pretoria were still vivid. Prisoners, he said, must have entertainment, "plenty of books, that's what I missed most," and anything else which would relieve their feelings of confinement, "except of course the chance of breaking bounds and getting out of the damned place—I suppose I mustn't give them *that!*" She said she would prefer hanging to a life sentence; he vehemently disagreed: "Never abandon life. There is a way out of everything except death." He soon found that the duty he liked least was signing execution warrants; after visiting him, Blunt noted in his diary that it had "become a nightmare to him to have to exercise his power of life and death in the case of condemned criminals, on an average of one case a fortnight." One death warrant which did not trouble him was that of Dr. H. H. Crippen, who had left his wife's dismembered remains in the cellar of his London home and boarded a transatlantic steamer with his mistress, only to be intercepted on the other side by Canadian Mounties—the first fugitive to be caught by a wireless alert. Crippen was hanged at first light in Pentonville Prison on October 18, 1910. Churchill celebrated with a champagne breakfast.[118]

His predecessor, in handing over the seals of office, had told him: "As regards prisons, it won't be a bad thing to give a harassed department some rest." Winston gave it

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complained that he "thinks with his mouth"; his wife wrote in her diary, "Winston has a noisy mind"; Lloyd George compared him to "a chauffeur who apparently is perfectly sane and drives with great skill for months, then suddenly takes you over a precipice." Almeric Fitzroy thought that "his defect is that he sees everything through the magnifying-glass of his self-confidence." Another Liberal leader came closer to the deepest source of their misgivings when he told A. G. Gardiner: "Don't forget that the aristocrat is still there—submerged but latent." Charles Masterman put it bluntly a few years later: "He desired in England a state of things where a benign upper class dispensed benefits to an industrious, *bien pensant,* and grateful working class." There was an undefined feeling that his social legislation smacked of paternalism and had been a gesture de haut en bas; that, in Margot Asquith's words, he had merely learned "the language of Radicalism. It was Lloyd George's native tongue, but it was not his own, and despite his efforts he spoke it 'with a difference.' " In point of fact there *was* a difference. Beatrice Webb remarked upon Winston's "capacity for quick appreciation and rapid execution of new ideas, whilst hardly comprehending the philosophy beneath them." But in time he did comprehend the philosophy of the extremists. And when he understood it, he recoiled. He put his trust in social evolution, not upheaval. England's class distinctions suited him. He saw no need to efface them, or even blur them. Only when reactionaries refused to budge, as in the struggle with the Lords, would he endorse sweeping action. Rejected by Tories because he had betrayed his class, he was distrusted by radical reformers because his conversion had been incomplete. He couldn't win.[121]

He was likeliest to lose in the Home Office. The first duty of the home secretary was maintenance of order, and beginning in the year he took over the ministry, organized workingmen suddenly turned to violent tactics. In the beginning the prospect of labor strife didn't daunt him. Three weeks after taking over the Board of Trade he had settled a shipbuilding lockout on the Tyne to the satisfaction of both parties. But in the two years since then battle lines had been drawn between capital and labor, and as a moderate he occupied no-man's-land. In union chapels his ritualistic denunciations of socialism were resented—though, curiously, Lloyd George's, just as vehement, were not—and his attempts to be evenhanded failed. He compared irresponsible workmen to irresponsible peers and succeeded only in irking the new King, who felt he had insulted the aristocracy. Replying to the sovereign, Winston said that the home secretary had received "with deep regret the expression of YM's Displeasure wh has reached him through the PM… with regard to the particular phrase wh has caused YM's displeasure, wh Mr Churchill understands is 'It should be remembered that there are idlers at both ends of the social scale.' Mr Churchill cannot understand why this shd be thought Socialistic in character…. To say this is not to attack the wealthy classes, most of whom as Mr Churchill knows well have done their duty in many ways: but only to point to those particular persons whose idle and frivolous conduct and lack of public spirit brings a reproach to the meritorious class to wh they belong." George was unmollified. And the left, judging Winston by his acts, found him wanting.[122]

In the first week of November, 1910, over 25,000 coal miners walked out at Rhondda, in south Wales. Riots followed; several mines were flooded, and the disorders culminated in the battle of Glamorgan Valley, after which the miners smashed shop fronts

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in the town of Tonypandy. The local chief constable, unable to cope, asked for troops. Aware that sending soldiers against strikers was bad politics, Churchill kept the number of troops to a minimum of four hundred, sent three hundred London policemen, and made sure that the commanding officer was reponsible to him. Afterward the officer said: "It was entirely due to Mr Churchill's foresight in sending a strong force of Metropolitan Police, directly he was made aware of the state of affairs in the valleys, that bloodshed was avoided."[123] Strikers charged the bobbies, but the policemen swung rolled-up mackintoshes and beat them off. Elsewhere, however, two miners were killed, and when a unit of soldiers was stoned, they fixed bayonets and prodded the strikers into retreating.

In light of the fact that the wrecked stores in Tonypandy were looted during what *The Times* called "an orgy of naked anarchy," the use of force does not seem excessive. The troops had been sent in response to an appeal from the Glamorgan law-enforcement official, and Churchill had had no part in that decision. But the fact that they had been called out, and had unsheathed bayonets, infuriated union leaders. Churchill firmly told them that the soldiers now in position would remain there until he judged that troops were "no longer necessary." They then blamed the two deaths on him. He called this "a cruel lie," which it was. Keir Hardie, maddened beyond reason, declared that the Liberals "will give you Insurance Bills, they will give you all sorts of soothing syrups to keep you quiet, but in the end your Liberal Party, just like your Tory Party, is the Party of the rich and exists to protect the rich when Labour and Capital come into conflict."[124]

The Conservatives turned this inside out. If troops had been sent in earlier, they said in the House, there would have been no looting and no property damage. An appeal from Winston, urging the strikers to renounce violence, was ridiculed by *The Times* as showing "a somewhat maudlin tone…. Mr Churchill hardly seems to understand that an acute crisis has arisen, which needs decisive handling. The rosewater of conciliation is all very well in its place, but its place is not in the face of a wild mob drunk with the desire of destruction." The *Daily Express* was even harsher: "Nothing was ever more contemptible in childish and vicious folly than Mr Churchill's message to the miners…. It is the last word in a policy of shameful neglect and poltroonery which may cost the country dear." To the King, Winston reported: "The insensate action of the rioters in wrecking shops in the town of Tonypandy, against which they had not the slightest cause for animosity, was not foreseen by anyone on the spot, and would not have been prevented by the presence of soldiers at the colliery itself." Nevertheless, the two myths endured. Tories thought he had acted spinelessly. Labor believed he had overreacted, and for more than forty years he would be heckled by workingmen who were convinced that he had led a bloody massacre of miners at Tonypandy.[125]

Less than two months later he was in his bathtub—it is extraordinary how many crises found him bathing—when he was summoned to the telephone, "dripping wet and shrouded in a towel," as he later recalled, to be told that members of a gang of Latvian anarchists had been trapped at 100 Sidney Street in Whitechapel. This was welcome news,

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down," he explained afterward, "than spend good British lives in rescuing those ferocious rascals." So it blazed for an hour. "Then at last," reported the *Daily News*, "Mr Churchill stepped to the middle of the street and waved his arms… firemen appeared and regardless of possible bullets poured water on the burning house… and policemen led by Mr Churchill rushed forward to the door." Inside they found nothing but charred bodies.[128]

All this was recorded by cameramen. Eddie Marsh, dropping into the Palace Theatre, saw flickering newsreels, captioned "Mr Churchill directing the operations," and heard them greeted by boos, hisses, shouts of " 'E let the bastards in the country!" and "Shoot 'im!" More embarrassing, Balfour rose in the House to ask caustically: "We are concerned to observe photographs in the illustrated newspapers of the Home Secretary in the danger zone. I understand what the photographer was doing, but why the Home Secretary?" The Conservative press agreed that it was absurd. Churchill noted that "*The Times* blamed me for stopping the soldiers going to Tonypandy and now blames me for sending them to Sidney Street. Their doctrine is now apparent, that soldiers should always be sent to put down British miners in trade disputes but never to apprehend alien murderers engaged in crime. This is on a par with Tory thought in other directions." It was not only Tory thought, however. Liberals were equally troubled; his recent conduct seemed inconsistent with their serene slogan: "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." A. G. Gardiner wrote in the *Daily News:* "He is always unconsciously playing a part—an heroic part. And he is himself his most astonished spectator. He sees himself moving through the smoke of battle—triumphant, terrible, his brow clothed in thunder, his legions looking to him for victory, and not looking in vain…. It is not make-believe, it is not insincerity; it is that in this fervid and picturesque imagination there are always great deeds afoot, with himself cast by destiny in the Agamemnon role. Hence that portentous gravity that sits on his youthful shoulders so oddly, those impressive postures and tremendous silences, the body flung wearily in the chair, the head resting gloomily in the hand, the abstracted look." Thus, Gardiner accounted for his "tendency to exaggerate a situation" and dispatch "the military hither and thither as though Armageddon was upon us." Other Liberals believed that he had shown he lacked a sense of proportion, using "a steamhammer to crack a nut." Charles Masterman, returning from holiday, demanded: "What the hell have you been doing now, Winston?" Churchill, lapsing into his lisp, replied: "Now, Charlie. Don't be croth. It was such fun."[129]

The "Siege of Sidney Street," as the press called it, was followed by the hottest summer on record, and, with it, a wave of industrial unrest. The disturbances began in June, when dockers walked out in Southampton, and swiftly spread to other ports. Then transport workers struck to show that they sided with the longshoremen. Churchill observed that "a new force has arisen in trades unionism, whereby the power of the old leaders has proved quite ineffective, and the sympathetic strike on a wide scale is prominent. Shipping, coal, railways, dockers etc etc are all uniting and breaking out at once." The head constable in Liverpool reported to the Home Office that rioters had built barricades of dustbins and wire entanglements in side streets, lured policemen there, and stoned them from windows and housetops. The King wired Churchill: "Accounts from Liverpool show that situation there more like revolution than a strike…. Strongly deprecate half-hearted employment of troops: they should not be called on except as a last

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resource but if called on they should be given a free hand & the mob should be made to fear them."[130]

The immediate threat was famine. On August 9 the London meat and fruit markets shut down; they had nothing left to sell. Then, a week later, the railwaymen gave notice of a national strike. The railway companies had refused to recognize their union as a bargaining agent. Food shortages were imminent in the great quadrilateral of British industrialism, from Liverpool and Manchester in the west to Hull and Grimsby in the east, from Newcastle down to Birmingham and Coventry. Asquith offered the trainmen an inquiry by a royal commission. When they turned it down on the ground that such a commission would take too long, he reportedly said: "Then your blood be on your own head." That night every member of the union received a wire from its leadership: "Your liberty is at stake, all railwaymen must strike at once." Churchill told the House that "no blockade by a foreign enemy" could be so perilous. If unchecked it would lead, he said, "to the starvation of great numbers of the poorer people."[131]

Violence erupted in Llanelly when rioters stormed a train and two were shot. The lord mayor of Liverpool telegraphed Churchill, asking him to requisition a warship and bluejackets to man the Mersey River ferries. H.M.S. *Antrim* was dispatched. But the larger issue was the railroad strike. Until August 17 the home secretary, though goaded by Tories and his sovereign, clung to the same position he had held at Tonypandy. Law enforcement was the responsibility of policemen, who were encouraged to enroll special constables. This attitude was not unappreciated; Ben Tillet, the leader of the London longshoremen, called Winston's influence moderating and responsible. In his "History of the London Transport Workers' Strike," a leaflet published by the transport workers' union in 1911, Tillet wrote that before the crisis he had thought of Winston as a "ferocious man of blood and iron," but when they met in the lobby of the House he found him "as amiable as the gentlest shepherd on earth," a man who "in quite convincing manner assured us he heartily agreed with all our views." Tillet added: "If patience and courtesy, if anxious effort and sincerity count for respect, then Winston Churchill is entitled as a man to gratitude…. We found an urbane young Cabinet Minister apparently fully alive to the duties and responsibilities of his office."

Unfortunately, Churchill's approach had produced no results. He was in a dilemma. Liberal politicians, including every member of the cabinet except the chancellor of the Exchequer, shied away from the use of force, and soldiers could not be legally used in any domestic dispute without specific requests from local authorities. On August 19 Winston decided to break this precedent. He alerted fifty thousand troops and announced: "The Army Regulation which requires a requisition for troops from a civil authority is suspended." Asquith remained silent. Lloyd George acted; he persuaded the railroad employers to recognize the union, and the men went back to work. Churchill believed his own order had cut the knot because it proved "that any Government must exert itself to prevent… catastrophe, and because it was certain that in taking such action they would be supported by the good sense and resolution of the whole mass of the people." King George concurred; he wired him: "Feel convinced that prompt measures taken by you prevented loss of life in different parts of the country."[132]

Nonetheless, he had set a questionable example. In addition, he had again offended

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the left, whose powerful ally he had been at the Board of Trade. Masterman charged Churchill with "whiff-of-grapeshot" tactics, even with a "longing for blood." Labour MP Ramsay MacDonald called the mobilization "diabolical" and went on: "This is not a mediaeval state, and it is not Russia. It is not even Germany…. If the Home Secretary had just a little bit more knowledge of how to handle masses of men in these critical times, if he had a somewhat better instinct of what civil liberty does mean… we should have had much less difficulty during the last four or five days in facing and finally settling the problem." One observer concluded that Churchill's "reputation with organized labour suffered a severe blow." Even the *Manchester Guardian,* until now Winston's warmest admirer in the press, was outraged when, despite the absence of any request from the lord mayor, troops appeared and occupied Manchester's railroad stations.[133]

The speed with which Churchill's reforms were forgotten is puzzling. It is almost as though the radicals had felt uncomfortable with him in their midst. Henceforth he would be regarded as a conservative. He had always felt ties to the past, and there is an inevitable connection between a public man's performance and the psychic baggage which is his unshakable companion. But the politicians of the left had pushed him rightward, just as the Tories had pushed him in the opposite direction seven years earlier. His own view was evocative of Robert E. Lee's: "True patriotism sometimes requires of men to act contrary, at one period, to that which it does at another." Essentially Churchill was unaltered. It was England which had shifted direction. The awakening of the working class, which he himself had stirred, had altered the political climate. In Victoria's reign, or even during her son's early years on the throne, workmen would never have conspired to bring the country to its knees over a union issue. But neither would a chancellor have imposed a supertax on the rich, nor a party have humiliated the peers. Social stability was wobbly, and civility diminished. The easy cordiality which had marked the rivalry between Joe Chamberlain and young Winston would soon be a rarity. Enemies were implacable. Friendships became exhausted, reservoirs of goodwill drained, public men used up. The disturbances of 1910–1911 had damaged Churchill's credibility in the Home Office, and Asquith decided to shake up his cabinet. The rift within the Liberal-Labour coalition over the use of force in industrial disputes was one reason. The other lay in Europe. The kaiser, so welcome at Edward's funeral, had been behaving outrageously. Germany was now regarded as a menace to the long European peace.

Churchill had met the kaiser on September 8, 1906, when he was still undersecretary at the Colonial Office. He had sought an invitation to the German army's military maneuvers that year in Silesia, and as a member of Britain's ruling class he was welcome. Count von der Schulenberg, military attaché at the emperor's London embassy, informed him that an officer would meet his train in Breslau; he would stay at the Hofmarschallamt as the personal guest of *Seine Majestät.* Winston didn't speak a word of German—"I'll never learn the beastly language," he growled, "until the Kaiser marches on London"—but like most upper-class Britons of the time, he assumed that every civilized man knew

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Churchill and Kaiser Wilhelm at German maneuvers in 1909

He was troubled by the Teutonic character: "These people are so amazingly *routinière* that anything at least [sic] out of the ordinary—anything they have not considered officially and for months—upsets them dreadfully…. With us there are so many shades. Here it is all black & white (the Prussian colours). I think another 50 years will see a wiser & gentler world. But we shall not be spectators of it. Only the P.K. will glitter in a happier scene." This time he was even more awed by the kaiser's martial juggernaut. He described it as "a terrible engine. It marches sometimes 35 miles in a day. It is in number as the sands of the sea—& with all the modern conveniences…. How easily men could make things better than they are—if they only all tried together! Much as war attracts me & fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations—I feel more deeply every year—& can measure the feeling here in the midst of arms—what vile & wicked folly & barbarism it all is." He treasured his family all the more: "Sweet cat—I kiss your vision as it rises before my mind. Your dear heart throbs often in my own. God bless you darling & keep you safe & sound. Kiss the P.K. for me all over. With fondest love—W."[137]

Back in England he once more persuaded himself that war between the two empires was unthinkable; it would be too ghastly; no sane authority could countenance it. He counseled the new King to take a conciliatory line, writing him on May 13, 1911, "Mr Churchill thinks that Your Majesty's references on Tuesday next to the German Emperor will be very warmly welcomed by the Peace party in the country, & will do a lot of good

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to public sentiment here & in Germany."[138] Then, less than seven weeks later, came Churchill's greatest volte-face, transforming him from a dove into a hawk. It was triggered that July by the incident at Agadir, an obscure port on the Atlantic coast of Morocco.

The Germans had been late entrants in the race for colonies, and by the time they reached Africa all the prizes were gone. After the Tangier incident in 1905, Germany and France had agreed that neither would annex Morocco, but unrest there spread into French Algeria, and French troops, in another hot pursuit, crossed over onto Moroccan soil. The kaiser, on the advice of his aggressive foreign minister, decided to make an issue of it. He dispatched a gunboat, the *Panther,* to Agadir. Wilhelm expected the French to grab Morocco, which they did, and had no intention of contesting it; his goal was acquisition of a bargaining chip which would win him concessions in the Congo. He got them, but the arrival of the *Panther* on July 1, 1911, was destined to set off a murderous chain reaction. While Paris and Berlin were haggling, the Italians took advantage of the diversion by invading Tripoli. Tripoli was part of the Turks' Ottoman Empire. Discontented nationalities in the Balkans decided that if Italy could take on the Turks, so could they. The immediate results were the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, followed by the rise of Serbia, Austria-Hungary's fear of a strong Serbia, and Russia's alliance with the Serbs, a consequence of the czar's determination to preserve his credibility in the Balkans. Russia's growing military presence in the region threatened Austria-Hungary and Germany, Austria-Hungary's powerful ally. The kaiser liked his cousin in Saint Petersburg, but he believed that if he ever allowed him time to mobilize and arm Russia's countless millions, they would be unbeatable. Therefore he began to contemplate pre-emptive war. Meanwhile, all the great European powers, engaging in a deadly quadrille, rearmed at a furious pace.

These sequelae were unrevealed to the Britons of 1911. No man, not even the wisest statesman, can see across the horizon, and in the barbarous 1980s the appearance of a small warship in an African harbor does not seem provocative. But it was then. Diplomacy was different in the years before 1914. A studied insult, even an unanswered note, could make governments tremble. The display of naked force—the *Panther*—had been shocking. It simply was not done. By doing it, the Germans changed a lot of minds, among them that of Lloyd George. Obviously, George told Churchill, Berlin believed that London would never intervene, whatever the kaiser did. He said, "People think that because I was pro-Boer I am anti-war in general, and that I should faint at the mention of a cannon." He meant to correct that impression at once, and he did, in the chancellor's annual address to the City bankers at the Mansion House. He said: "If a situation were forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure." The German ambassador, who had described George as a pacifist, was recalled in disgrace.[139]

Churchill was also reappraising his position. His opposition to the Admiralty's dreadnought program had been based upon his faith in Germany's good intentions. Now,

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told the committee that Winston's prediction was "ridiculous and fantastic—a silly memorandum." But three years later the Germans lost the battle of the Marne on the war's forty-second day.[142]

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Churchill at British army maneuvers, September 1913

By September 1911 Churchill had tired of the Liberals' growing polarization between left and right, the internal struggle in which he was being ground up, and was again pondering the Victorian policy of Splendid Isolation. He had cherished it as part of his political legacy. But now he studied a Foreign Office paper written in 1907 by Eyre Crowe. Crowe had held that England must preserve Europe's balance of power by forging an alliance with the second-strongest nation on the Continent. Brooding over this thesis, Winston was struck by the thought that although earlier generations of Englishmen had never put it on paper, they had in fact always pursued it. This grand strategy, he believed, had been the key to the Elizabethans' rout of the Spaniards, Marlborough's defeat of Louis XIV, and Wellington's triumph over Napoleon. Following the same line of reasoning, he concluded that England must now embrace France, even hold joint maneuvers with France. As a candidate three years earlier, he had told audiences in Manchester and Dundee that the German threat was a figment of Tory imagination. After Agadir he became the cabinet's most ardent advocate of intervention.

Another prime minister might have resented his home secretary's active interest in military issues. Asquith didn't. Indeed, he had good reason to encourage it. Churchill, one of his ablest ministers, was no longer comfortable or suitable in the Home Office, and the Royal Navy needed a forceful hand at the tiller. As first lord of the Admiralty, Reginald

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McKenna was far too easygoing; he had been unable to overcome the resistance of his first sea lord—the equivalent of the U.S. chief of naval operations—to the formation of a naval war staff. Asquith pondered having them switch jobs. Apart from Churchill, the only other strong candidate for the Admiralty was the secretary for war, Lord Haldane, who had just completed a brilliant reorganization of the army. In September 1911 the prime minister invited both men and their wives to be his guests at Archerfield, his Scottish estate on the East Lothian coast. The Churchills would arrive late, because Winston had to visit Balmoral first. It was customary for each senior minister to spend a few days there with the King each year. Clementine passed those days with her grandmother in Airlie Castle—wives were not received at Balmoral on such occasions—and on September 25 she wrote: "I hope you are happy my sweet Pug and that you are being properly petted, & that you will secure a huge stag. I am very happy here—Granny is become much kinder with age…. She sends her love & is looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday for luncheon which is at 1.30 *to the second by Greenwich time*. Afterwards we fly away to Archerfield in the new motor." The automobile, a £610 red Napier, had been delivered to Churchill at Balmoral. He drove over to pick Clementine up, and before they left the castle he told her he was afraid Asquith would pick Haldane. She opened her grandmother's Bible to the one hundred seventh Psalm. "I know it's all right about the Admiralty," she said, and read: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."[143]

She was right. Asquith had already made his decision. Churchill would run the navy. Asquith wrote Haldane: "The main and, in the longer run, the deciding factor with me has been the absolute necessity for keeping the First Lord in the Commons." Clementine was absent at the great moment. After a round of golf with Asquith, Winston approached Violet, who was just finishing tea, and asked her to join him for a walk. In his face, she wrote, she saw "a radiance like the sun." Did he want tea? she asked. He shook his head. They had hardly left the house when he blurted out: "I don't want tea, I don't want anything—anything in the world. Your father has just offered me the Admiralty." He looked sea-ward, and in the fading light of evening watched the silhouettes of two battleships steaming slowly out of the Firth of Forth. It was a full moment for him. He said: "Look at the people I've had to deal with so far. Judges and convicts! This is a big thing—the biggest thing that has ever come my way—the chance I should have chosen before all others. I shall pour into it everything I've got!" Just as Clementine had opened a Bible in Airlie Castle, so, that night at Archerfield, did he. He found himself reading from the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself…. Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee."[144]

The next day he and Clementine rode to London in the Napier, and in the morning he and McKenna changed guard. McKenna came over to the Home Office and Churchill introduced him to everyone there; then they crossed to the Admiralty, where Winston met his new board, senior officers, and departmental heads. That afternoon he convened a board meeting. The secretary read the letters patent confirming the new first lord's

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appointment. Thereupon Churchill, in the words of the order-in-council, became "responsible to Crown and Parliament for all the business of the Admiralty." In 1923 he would write: "I was to endeavour to discharge this responsibility for the four most memorable years of my life."[145]

His new office was accompanied by many perquisites, in all of which he reveled. There has always been a certain panache to England's service ministries, and because the Admiralty is the senior service, the navy, in an old expression, "always travels first class." Among other things, the first lord decides who launches ships. Seven weeks after his appointment Clementine christened the battleship *Centurion* at Devonport, and shortly thereafter Jennie baptized its sister ship, the *Benbow*. The first lord had at his disposal a luxurious steam yacht, the *Enchantress*. In Churchill's words, this vessel became "largely my office, almost my home." His time aboard was mostly work time; he visited every important ship and every dockyard, shipyard, and naval establishment in the British Isles and the Mediterranean. But for Clementine it was mostly fun. There was one memorable cruise up the coast of Scotland, on which her sister Nellie and her sister-in-law Goonie accompanied them. Another took them to Venice, where the crew caught a huge turtle; the cook asked, "Which evening would madam prefer turtle soup?" and was dismayed when his mistress, as fond of pets as her husband, ordered the tortoise returned to the sea. On a third voyage, they anchored in Cardigan Bay and visited the Lloyd Georges in Criccieth, their Welsh home. Because Clementine knew that Winston hated meals at which nothing of importance was accomplished, most guests were men who could be useful to the Admiralty, and she scored a real coup by suggesting they entertain Kitchener, now a field marshal and agent-general in Egypt. "By all means ask K to lunch," Winston said. "Let us just be *à trois*. I have some things to talk to him about." So the long feud finally ended.[146]

These were golden days for Clementine. Motherhood had brought her a new tranquillity, and she had learned to suppress her objections to some of her in-laws. Winston wrote that they had received an invitation from Lady Wimborne, and asked her to accept: "I have a great regard for her—& we have not too many friends. If however you don't want to go—I will go alone. Don't come with all your hackles up & your fur brushed the wrong way—you naughty." She replied: "I will write tomorrow to Aunt Cornelia—I would like to go, & I will be very good I promise you, especially if you stroke my silky tail." She didn't even demur when seated next to Asquith at meals, though the prime minister was a notorious peerer down Pennsylvania Avenue. Now in her late twenties, Clementine attracted many a lustful eye. After a day at Broadstairs with the Churchills, an artist friend wrote: "Winston went off to dig castles in the sands and the rest of us bathed. It was a broiling day and the water was heavenly. Clemmie came forth like the reincarnation of Venus re-entering the sea. Her form is most beautiful. I had no idea she had such a splendid body."[147]

Yet she was jealous of Violet Asquith, feeling, according to her daughter Mary, "an understandable reserve toward this well-ensconced friend of Winston's." And soon Violet

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and prevent what an Admiralty paper called Britain's likeliest peril: "the interruption of our trade and destruction of merchant shipping." Two-thirds of England's food was imported. The British merchant vessels which fetched it still accounted for over half the world's seaborne trade. Enemy sea raiders, unless held at bay, could sink every one of them. Afterward Churchill wrote of the Royal Navy that its ships "were all we had. On them, as we conceived, floated the might, majesty, dominion and power of the British Empire. All our long history built up century after century, all the means of livelihood and safety of our faithful, industrious, active population depended on them. Open the sea-cocks and let them sink beneath the surface… and in a few minutes—half an hour at the most—the whole outlook of the world would be changed. The British Empire would dissolve like a dream; each isolated community struggling by itself; the central power of union broken; mighty provinces, whole Empires in themselves, drifting hopelessly out of control, and falling a prey to others; and Europe after one sudden convulsion passing into the iron grip of the Teuton and of all that the Teutonic system meant."[150]

He had no doubts about the identity of England's enemy. His mission, he said at the outset, was to put the fleet into "a state of instant and constant readiness for war in case we are attacked by Germany." Looking back, he wondered how he could ever have been gulled by Berlin's protestations of peaceful intent. In 1900, when he had been first elected to Parliament, the kaiser already presided over the most powerful army in Europe. That year *Seine Majestät* had proclaimed: "In order to protect German trade and commerce under existing conditions, only one thing will suffice, namely, Germany must possess a battle fleet of such strength that even for the most powerful naval adversary a war would involve such risks as to make that Power's own supremacy doubtful." Nautically, only one nation could be this "most powerful adversary." Since 1889 Britain had been committed to what was called the "two-power naval standard," meaning that England's navy must be as great as any two other navies combined. Its supremacy posed no threat to the Second Reich. England had nothing to gain on the Continent. But sea power was its lifeline, and throughout the Edwardian years the kaiser's shipbuilding program had put it at increasing hazard. In a note to Grey on January 31, 1912, four months after taking over as first lord, Churchill wrote that while "at present… several of the German Dreadnts are vy often the wrong side of the Kiel Canal wh they can't pass & therefore must make a long detour," that consolation was only temporary: "The deepening of the Canal by 1915 will extinguish this safety signal." Then he submitted a formal memorandum to the Committee of Imperial Defence: "The whole character of the German fleet shows that it was designed for aggressive and offensive action of the largest possible character in the North Sea or the North Atlantic…. The structure of the German battleships shows clearly that they are intended for attack and for fleet action. They are not a cruiser fleet designed to protect colonies and commerce all over the world. They have been preparing for years, and continue to prepare… for a great trial of strength."[151]

To end this insanity, Haldane visited Berlin early in 1912. He seemed the right man to send; a barrister with a passion for German philosophy, he was known at the War Office as "Schopenhauer among the generals." But the first lord was better informed about the Reich's new naval program, due to be introduced in May. The kaiser, in the naive assumption that their friendship transcended geopolitics, had sent him a copy via Sir

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Ernest Cassel. On February 7, with Haldane still on the Wilhelmstrasse, the Churchills were in Victoria Station, waiting for a train, when Winston picked up the late edition of an evening newspaper and read the German emperor's speech opening the Reichstag. One sentence struck him: "It is my constant duty and care to maintain and strengthen on land and water the power of defence of the German people, which has no lack of young men fit to bear arms." Two days later, after comparing this with the kaiser's May plan, Churchill spoke out in Glasgow. "This island," he said, "has never been, and never will be, lacking in trained and hardy mariners bred from their boyhood up in the service of the sea…. We will face the future as our ancestors would have faced it, without disquiet, without arrogance, but in stolid and inflexible determination." He could not understand the kaiser's motives: "The British Navy is to us a necessity and, from some points of view, the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury."[152]

Had he understood their beastly language, he would have used another word. The German press translated it as *Luxus*, which has other implications; it denotes extravagance, or sumptuousness. In the Reich, as Churchill later wrote, it became "an expression passed angrily from lip to lip." In London the Tories were critical; even the *Daily News*, which had been one of his most ardent supporters, commented: "It is difficult to reconcile Lord Haldane's mission with Mr Churchill's speech at Glasgow…. Lord Haldane is on a mission to cultivate good feeling between the Governments and peoples of England and Germany…. Mr Churchill will pass and be forgotten. What we trust will remain and work is Lord Haldane's mission and determination to come to an understanding with Germany which doubtless it represents." The kaiser, told of Winston's statement, realized that he had miscalculated. Feeling betrayed by a former guest and protégé, he demanded an apology. None was forthcoming. Asquith said that although his first lord's choice of language had perhaps been unfortunate, he had nevertheless made "a plain statement of an obvious truth." And Haldane, upon his return from Berlin, told the cabinet that, "so far from being a hindrance" in his negotiations, "the Glasgow speech had been the greatest possible help."[153]

Regrettably, he added bleakly, it had not been enough to crown his efforts with success. He had talked to the emperor, to Chancellor Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg, and to Grossadmiral Alfred von Tirpitz. Their price for accepting Britannia's rule of the waves had been exorbitant—an English pledge of neutrality in the event of war between Germany and France. Haldane had concluded that once "the war party got into the saddle" in Berlin, they would push "not merely for the overthrow of France or Russia but for the domination of the world." None of them seemed to realize that the English were as sensitive on the naval issue as the French on Alsace-Lorraine. They vigorously supported the German Navy League, whose hundred thousand members, corps of paid lecturers (paid by Krupp, shipbuilders to *Seine Majestät*), and magazine *Die Flotte* were flooding the Reich with chauvinistic literature and posters with such slogans as "England the Foe!" "Perfidious Albion!" "The Coming War!" "The British Peril!" "England's Plan to Fall on Us in 1911!" Apparently Bernard Shaw was right; the Germans were a people with contempt for common sense.[154]

Or perhaps their problem was their critical adoration of authority. Haldane was convinced that the root of it was the kaiser, *der hohe Herr*. It was he who had told them:

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indisputably a genius. If Germany and England went to war, the navy Tirpitz would fight would be Fisher's creation.[158]

Churchill had met him in 1907, when both were visiting Biarritz. They had begun corresponding that April, and Fisher's first letter, inspired by a sugar strike in the British West Indies, provides a fair sample of his style: "St Lucia quite splendid! Dog eat dog! You are using niggers to fight niggers! For God's sake don't send British Bluejackets inland amongst sugar canes on this job or we shall have to set up a War Office inside the Admiralty & goodness knows *one* War Office is enough! I enclose a very secret paper. *Don't let anyone see it.* The best thing ever written in the English language bar the Bible & Robertson's Sermons & letters from a Competition Wallah. Kindly return the print with your improvements in the margin—study it closely."[159] The enclosure has not survived. It could have been anything. The admiral was given to superlatives and overstatements; his letters were peppered with exclamation marks and words underscored two or three times. A prudent minister would have shunned him, but Winston was never that; he believed that his own vision, married to Fisher's experience, would make a brilliant union.

In the beginning he was right. The admiral came hopping home in response to Churchill's summons, and they talked for three days. Winston found him "a veritable volcano of knowledge and inspiration; and as soon as he learnt what my main purpose was, he passed into a state of vehement eruption…. Once he began, he could hardly stop. I plied him with questions, and he poured out ideas." Fisher, for his part, was so excited that he ran a fever. His chief recommendations were to arm Britain's battleships with fifteen-inch guns, increase their speed, convert the entire navy from coal to oil, and shake up the senior officers: "The argument for a War Staff is that you *may* have a d—d fool as First Sea Lord, and so you put him in commission, as it were." Churchill adopted all these proposals, though his attempt to put the war staff under himself failed when Haldane persuaded the cabinet that a sailor, not a politician, should head it. The fuel conversion was a difficult step. Having made it, he took another, inducing the House to invest £2,000,000, later increased to £5,000,000, in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, thus assuring adequate reserves in the event of war.[160]

Handling the admirals was easier, but more delicate. The war staff was established in January 1912 and Wilson was relieved of his post. Winston had considered bringing Fisher back as first sea lord, then rejected the idea because another retired admiral, Lord Charles Beresford, the old salt's sworn enemy, had become powerful in Parliament. At Fisher's suggestion he settled on Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman. As second sea lord—Bridgeman's prospective successor—he chose Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, a relative of the royal family. It was not a foresighted move. Prince Louis was a naturalized British subject and proud of it; when one of Tirpitz's officers had reproached him at Kiel for serving under the Union Jack, he had stiffened and replied: "Sir, when I joined the Royal Navy in 1868, the German Empire did not exist." Still, he spoke with a heavy German accent, and the time was coming when that would be enough to discredit him. Winston appointed one friend, David Beatty of his Sudan days, to be rear admiral and his personal naval secretary. His key decision was naming Admiral Sir John Jellicoe as second in command of the Home Fleet and thus heir to England's most crucial seagoing command. Jellicoe was Fisher's candidate for Nelsonhood. The old admiral wrote

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Churchill: “He has all the Nelsonic attributes. He writes me of new designs. His *one, one, one* cry is SPEED! *Do lay that to heart!* Do remember the receipt for jugged hare in Mrs. Glasse’s Cookery Book! *First catch your hare!*” After leaving London he wrote a friend: “I’ll tell you… the whole secret of the changes! *To get Jellicoe Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet prior to October 21, 1914*—which is the date of the Battle of Armageddon.” That was vintage Fisher. One moment he sounded demented and the next he came uncannily close to guessing the date of the approaching war.[161]

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Churchill and Lord Fisher, 1913

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where Britain's dreadnoughts could keep an eye on Heligoland Bight, through which Tirpitz's *Flotte* must pass in any sortie. In Parliament he won approval of his appropriation bills by vivid, lucid descriptions of abstruse technical matters. Describing the impact of a shell upon a warship, he told the House: "If you want to make a true picture in your mind of a battle between two great modern iron-clad ships, you must not think of it as if it were two men in armour striking at each other with heavy swords. It is more like a battle between two egg-shells striking each other with hammers…. really needs no clearer proof."[164]

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Churchill and Asquith at Camberwell Green

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French army was concerned, *"l'avion c'est zéro!"* In the British navy it was otherwise. As early as February 25, 1909, when he was still at the Board of Trade, Churchill had told the cabinet that aviation would be "most important" in the future and suggested that "we should place ourselves in communication with Mr [Orville] Wright and avail ourselves of his knowledge." The following year he presented a *Daily Mail* check for £10,000 to two airmen who had taken off from the Dominion of Newfoundland and landed on a field in, as he put it, "the future equally happy and prosperous Dominion of Ireland"—poor political prophecy, but no other national figure had come to greet them. Arriving at the Admiralty, he had sought out the small band of adventurous officers who were the pioneers of naval aviation. In 1912 he founded the Royal Naval Air Service—a precursor of the Royal Flying Corps and, later, the Royal Air Force—to provide "aerial protection to our naval harbours, oil tanks and vulnerable points, and also for a general strengthening of our exiguous and inadequate aviation." A larval helicopter was built; he inspected it. In tests it proved unstable, and prone to crash, after it had risen about three hundred feet. Winston proposed a hollow propeller containing a parachute. The suggestion was completely impractical, but his encouragement of experimentation elsewhere led to breakthroughs. Because of his efforts, England became the first country to equip a plane with a machine gun, and the first to launch an airborne torpedo. He coined the words *seaplane*, and *flight* to designate a given number of aircraft, usually four.[167]

To Clementine's alarm, he decided to fly himself. He regarded his first ride, in 1912, as a matter of duty. Discovering that he enjoyed it, he made repeated ascents. The craft were primitive, the techniques slap-dash. On one bumpy trip, in the teeth of a gale, nearly three hours were required to cover the sixteen miles from Gravesend to Grain, and "after landing Churchill safely," the pilot reported, "my seaplane 'took off' again, landing trolley and all over the sea wall, as it was being brought up the slipway, and was more or less wrecked." The hazards whetted Winston's appetite. In October 1913, at the Eastchurch naval flying center, he went up in three different craft. That evening he wrote Clementine: "Darling, We have had a vy jolly day in the air… it has been as good as one of those old days in the S. African War, & I have lived entirely in the moment, with no care for all those tiresome party politics & searching newspapers, and awkward by-elections…. For good luck before I started I put your locket on. It has been lying in my desk since it got bent—& as usual it worked like a charm." She wired her dismay from the *Enchantress* and then followed up with a note: "I hope my telegram will not have vexed you, but please be kind & don't fly any more just now."[168]

It was a postage stamp wasted. Churchill with the bit in his teeth was incorrigible. Deeply as he loved his wife, at that moment he loved the excitement of flying more. To the consternation of the barnstormers who had been taking him up, he declared that he wanted to be a pilot himself. He was too old, they protested; thirty-two was regarded as the top age for a novice, and he was thirty-eight. He invoked his powers as first lord, ordered them to shut up, and began taking lessons in managing controls at Apavon. One of his instructors, Ivon Courtney, later recalled: "Before our first flight together he said to me: 'We are in the Stephenson age of flying. Now our machines are frail. One day they will be robust, and of value to our country.' He had already done a lot of flying. 'I want some more instruction,' he said." Aircraft were not equipped with headphones then; the

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two men sat in separate cockpits, Churchill in the rear, and shouted at each other, hoping their voices would carry above the wind. The instruments were encased in a box, but most airmen scorned them, preferring to rely on what they called "ear." Winston, however, was fascinated by the dials and needles. He would crouch down, peering at them, "and," Courtney wrote, "he was right to do so. He saw that one day the box of instruments would be more important than the pilot's ear."[169]

They went up as often as ten times a day. Every officer on the instruction staff worried about their eminent student. "We were all scared stiff," said Courtney, "of having a smashed First Lord on our hands." Eugene Gerrard, later air commodore, said: "WSC has had as much as twenty-five hours in the air, but no one will risk letting him solo; if anything happened to WSC the career of the man who had allowed him a solo flight would be finished." Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté, later air chief marshal, remembered Winston as "a very fair pilot once he was in the air, but more than uncertain in his take-off and landing. His instructors usually took over the controls to make the final approach and touchdown." Another future RAF marshal, Hugh Trenchard, gave him lower marks. After watching him "wallowing about the sky," as he put it, he decided Winston was "altogether too impatient for a good pupil."[170]

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Churchill in pilot's gear for a practice flight

But Churchill persevered. He spent the afternoon of Saturday, November 29, 1913, in the air with Captain Gilbert Wildman-Lushington of the Royal Marines. After they had parted, the captain wrote his fiancée: "I started Winston off on his instruction about 12.15 & he got so bitten with it, I could hardly get him out of the machine, in fact except for about ¾ hour for lunch we were in the machine till about 3.30. He showed great promise, & is coming down again for further instruction & practice." Winston himself was dissatisfied. Once he had set his mind on an objective, anything short of total conquest

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was unacceptable. Back in his Admiralty office that evening he wrote Lushington: "I wish you would clear up the question of the steering control and let me know what was the real difficulty I had in making the rudder act. Probably the explanation is that I was pushing against myself…. Could you not go up with another flying officer and, sitting yourself in the back seat, see whether there is great stiffness and difficulty in steering, or whether it was all my clumsiness." Then he dropped Clementine a line: "I have been very naughty today about flying…. With twenty machines in the air at once and thousands of flights made without mishap, it is not possible to look upon it as a vy serious risk. Do not be vexed with me."[171]

She wasn't vexed; she was frantic. By the time this letter reached her, Lushington was dead; coming in to land at Eastchurch on Sunday, he sideslipped and crashed. F.E. wrote Winston: "Why do you do such a foolish thing as fly repeatedly? Surely it is unfair to your family, your career & your friends." It was; it was thoughtless, the act of a supreme egoist. H. G. Wells wrote: "There are times when the evil spirit comes upon him and I think of him as a very intractable, a very mischievous, dangerous little boy, a knee-worthy little boy. Only thinking of him in that way can I go on liking him." The fact is that His Majesty's first lord of the Admiralty deserved a good spanking. Despite his instructor's death and his wife's appeals, he refused to stay on the ground. At Easter Clementine wrote him from Spain, where she and Mrs. Keppel were Cassel's guests: "I have been seized by a dreadful anxiety that you are making use of my absence to fly even more often than you do when I am there—I beg of you not to do it at all, at any rate till I can be there." It was a shrewd guess. That very day he had not only flown; he had been shaken up when engine failure forced his new instructor to make an emergency landing. Undaunted, he took off again two days later. Clementine and the children were now staying with her mother in Dieppe, and on May 29, 1914, he wrote her there: "I have been at the Central Flying School for a couple of days—flying a little in good & careful hands & under perfect conditions. So I did not write you from there as I knew you would be vexed."[172]

She replied: "I felt what you were doing before I read about it, but I felt too weak & tired to struggle against it. It is like beating one's head against a stone wall…. Perhaps if I saw you, I could love and pet you, but you have been so naughty that I can't do it on paper. I must be 'brought round' first." She signed the letter with the sketch of a cat, its ears down. She did see him the following week; he crossed on the *Enchantress* to spend a day with her and the children. They discussed his flying, and he assured her that the airfield he was using, at Sheerness in Kent, had every modern facility. Yet in her next letter the tension was still there: "I cannot help knowing that you are going to fly as you go to Sheerness & it fills me with anxiety. I know nothing will stop you from doing it so I will not weary you with tedious entreaties, but don't forget that I am thinking about it all the time & so, do it as little & as moderately as you can, & only with the *very best* Pilot. I feel very 'ears down' about it." Her fear haunted her; she was five months pregnant with their third child—it would be another daughter, Sarah—and thought, not unreasonably, that she was entitled to more consideration from her husband. In her next letter she described a nightmare. She had dreamed she had had her baby, but the doctor and nurse hid it. Finding the infant in a darkened room, she feverishly counted its fingers and toes

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Admiral Tirpitz." Winston declined on the ground that "all that could be said on our part wd be that till Germany dropped the naval challenge her policy wd be continually viewed here with deepening suspicion and apprehension; but that any slackening on her part wd produce an immediate *détente*, with much good will from England. Failing that I see little in prospect but politeness and preparation." On October 24, 1913, he again suggested a shipbuilding suspension, forwarding the recommendation to *der hohe Herr* through Ballin and advising the cabinet: "The simultaneous building by so many powers great and small of capital ships, their general naval expansion, are causes of deep anxiety to us…. Naval strength to other powers is a mere panache. But as the frog said to the boy in the fable 'It is sport to you: it is death to us.' " This time his proposal wasn't even acknowledged.[175]

All overtures to the kaiser having failed, he and Jack Seely, who had succeeded Haldane as war minister, pushed for higher military appropriations. At the end of the year Churchill submitted his naval estimates for 1914. They were shocking: £50,694,800—the largest in British history, the largest in the world. The chancellor of the Exchequer was stunned. Winston and Lloyd George were still friends, but they were no longer partners in political counterpoint. The first lord had become militant, even belligerent; the chancellor, whose own position was softening again, complained that Churchill was "getting more and more absorbed in boilers." The cabinet was divided. Asquith accepted the estimates, but Margot wrote Lloyd George: "Don't let Winston have too much money—it will hurt our party in every way—Labour and even Liberals. If one can't be a little economical when all foreign countries are peaceful I don't know *when* we can."[176]

The split was deep, and involved more than money. Asquith, Churchill, Seely, and Grey believed that the integrity of France was vital to England's national interest; that, as Grey put it, "if Germany dominated the Continent it would be disagreeable to us as well as to others, for we should be isolated." The Tories agreed, but among Liberals, even within the cabinet, it was a minority view. Their leader there, Lord Morley, believed he could count on "eight or nine likely to agree with us" in opposing the policies being advanced by Grey with "strenuous simplicity" and by Churchill with "daemonic energy." Morley described himself as "a pacifist at heart." He had been Gladstone's friend and biographer, and he and those who agreed with him believed they were acting on Gladstonian principles. The fights they loved were those fought for Free Trade, social reforms, Irish Home Rule, and the defeat of the arrogant dukes. They were unmoved by France. Only an appeal for help from a little country like Belgium could reach their hearts, and even that was uncertain.[177]

Thus Lloyd George had friends in power when, on New Year's Day, 1914, he told a *Daily Chronicle* reporter that Churchill's plan for "exorbitant expenditure on armaments" violated Lord Randolph's memory. Replying, Winston rebuked him; he said he never granted newspaper interviews "on important subjects of this character while they are under the consideration of the Cabinet." One of the two ministers, it seemed, would have to resign. While refusing to be quoted, Churchill became the source of sensational rumors. He was pondering a return to the Conservative party; he had become doubtful about Home Rule; if he left the Admiralty, the four sea lords would quit in protest. As tempers rose, the two principals sat down for five hours of what Winston called "polite but deadly" negotiation. The prime minister joined them, and his strong support of the estimates

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decided the issue. To save Lloyd George's face, 2 percent was cut from the naval budget, further economies were promised for the following year, and expensive maneuvers planned for the following summer were canceled, to be replaced by a trial mobilization of the fleet. George avoided mortification by pretending that he had changed his mind. He invited Churchill to breakfast at No. 11 Downing Street, the traditional home of the chancellors. He said his wife had told him that he ought to let "that nice Mr Churchill" have his dreadnoughts, arguing that it would be better to have too many than too few. "So," he said, "I have decided to let you build them. Let's go in to breakfast." Winston wrote his mother: "I think the naval estimates are now past the danger point & if so the situation will be satisfactory. But it has been a long and wearing business wh has caused me at times vy gt perplexity."[178]

In March he presented his naval estimates to the House. The Liberals were tepid, the Conservatives enthusiastic. The *Daily Telegraph* hailed his address as "the most weighty and eloquent speech to which the House of Commons have listened [from a first lord of the Admiralty] during the present generation."[179] This was praise Churchill didn't need. Indeed, though Tories publicly approved of his naval expansion, behind his back they said it was inspired by a personal pursuit of glory. Winston's defection from their ranks, his humiliation of Joe Chamberlain, and his corrosive invective in political campaigns and parliamentary struggles could be neither forgotten nor forgiven. His political advancement —even survival—depended on his strength with his adopted party, where, more and more, MPs on the back benches were saying: "He's not really a Liberal." He had to prove that he was. In that four-year interval between the end of the Edwardian era and the outbreak of the Kaiser's War there were many disputes between the Asquith government and the Opposition, but Churchill needed a dramatic issue. One appeared. It seemed ideal: explosive, emotional, and above all a matter of principle. And it was unavoidable. The eighty-four Irish Nationalist MPs had presented their bill for services rendered in unmanning the House of Lords, and payment was now due.

By later Irish standards they were mild—"Gentlemen first, Irishmen second" had been their muted war cry—and as gentlemen they had been patient. Their cause had been hopeless in the fourteen years between Parnell's death in Kitty O'Shea's arms and the fall of the Balfour government, but the Liberals had been in power since 1906 and had done nothing to redeem Gladstone's promise. Winston had prodded the cabinet; on February 13, 1910, Blunt had noted in his diary that Churchill had said it was "the ambition of my life to bring in a Home Rule Bill." But neither Asquith nor Lloyd George found the issue appealing, and even Winston, who had been offered the post of chief secretary for Ireland, had turned down what was known as the "hoodoo job of the Cabinet." Ireland had always been a political minefield, and it had been doubly treacherous since Lord Randolph had played what he called his "ace of trumps, the Orange card."[180]

Ulster—the nine counties around Belfast, in northern Ireland—was largely populated by Protestants, descendants of Scots who had settled there before the *Mayflower* sighted

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stared out at a burning effigy of himself. At one point, the *Guardian* reported, the mob lifted the car's back wheels eighteen inches off the ground. The *Times* correspondent wrote that "men thrust their heads in and uttered fearful menaces and imprecations. It seemed to me that Mr Churchill was taking a greater risk than ever he expected…. Yet he never flinched and took hostility visualised as well as vocalised calmly and no harm befell him." This observer noted that he "smilingly raised his hat whenever the crowd groaned." Clementine, badly frightened herself, thought that "the opposition and threats seemed to 'ginger him up.' "[183]

Nevertheless, it was clear that he had misjudged Ulster's mood. A hostile throng of ten thousand awaited them at the hotel. Businessmen in the lobby angrily shook their fists. The windows of their suite were heavily draped; when Winston tried to peek out, a roar of boos and oaths swelled up from below. Meeting in Ulster Hall was out of the question. The local Unionist Council, which had resolved to prevent his appearance "in the centre of the loyal city of Belfast," had occupied it with armed "Hooligan Corner Boys," as they were called. Evicting them would cost the lives of at least six policemen. A dozen plots were afoot to murder Churchill if he even approached the hall. The rally was therefore moved to Celtic Park in the Falls neighborhood, a Catholic stronghold, where a heavy rain began falling at 2:00 P.M. as Winston, standing beneath a leaking canvas marquee, rose to address a drenched crowd of five thousand Irish Nationalists and a handful of Unionist hecklers. The Tories, he told them, were trying to regain office by using Ireland as a cat's-paw, but "the flame of Irish nationality is inextinguishable." Of his father he said: "The reverence which I feel for his memory, and the care with which I have studied his public life, make me quite content to leave others to judge how far there is continuity or discontinuity between his work and any I have tried to do." Then he ended audaciously, ringing a change on Lord Randolph's most famous words: "If Ulster would fight for the honor of Ireland, for reconciliation of races and for forgiveness of ancient wrongs, for the consolidation of the Empire, then indeed Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right."[184]

The apologetic Liberals of Ulster presented Winston and Clementine with blackthorns, stout walking sticks—a pleasant gesture which was swiftly forgotten when, as they mounted the Larne gangplank for the journey home, dockers pelted them with rotten fish. It was a fitting farewell; in the eight centuries since Pope Adrian IV gave Ireland to Henry II, the relationship between England and Ireland had been marked by wave after wave of violence, and now new fury was rising. Churchill wasn't even safe in the House of Commons. In June, Ronald MacNeill, a prominent Unionist MP, picked up a copy of the House's standing orders from the ledge of the Speaker's chair and flung it at the first lord, cutting him in the forehead. Next day MacNeill apologized. Churchill assured him he hadn't minded at all, which was true; he was enjoying the battle, and if tempers on the other side grew frayed, he was the first to admit that his own remarks were incendiary. His treatment in Ulster, he said, was proof that Carson and Bonar Law, leader of the Tories in the House, had plotted war on the British army and had "even suggested that this process in Ireland should be accompanied by the lynching of His Majesty's Ministers." Captain James Craig, an Ulster MP, called him "contemptible." Winston replied: "If I valued the honourable Gentleman's opinion I might get angry." He enjoyed a studied insult, even when he was its victim, and chortled when he read that Lord Charles

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Beresford, during a Hyde Park rally, referred to him as a "Lilliput Napoleon—a man with an unbalanced mind, an egomaniac whose one absorbing thought is personal vindictiveness towards Ulster." He didn't even mind when feelings ran so high in the House that only a quick-thinking Labour MP, who started everyone singing "Auld Lang Syne," prevented fistfights on the floor.[185]

He was, however, troubled by talk of Belfast's gutters running red with British blood. Abuse was tolerable only up to a certain point. Carson passed it when he called him "Lord Randolph's renegade son, who wants to be handed down to posterity as the Belfast butcher who threatened to shoot down those who took his father's advice." Though his language was less blistering, Law went even farther. He said: "Ireland is two nations. The Ulster people will submit to no ascendancy, and I can imagine no lengths to which they might go in which they would not be supported by the overwhelming majority of the British people." This was an open invitation to revolt, from the man who would be prime minister in a Conservative government. Such speeches were fanning the flame of discord in northern Ireland. Protestant volunteers were already forming insurgent regiments. Law warned the House that Ulster might explode at any moment; if blood were shed, he said, the cabinet would be answerable for it. Winston retorted that "those who talk of revolution ought to be prepared for the guillotine." In a letter to *The Times* he said: "Mr Bonar Law and his lieutenant Sir Edward Carson have…. incited the Orangemen to wage civil war…. All this talk of violence, of bullets and bayonets, of rebellion and civil war has come from one side alone." He wouldn't budge: "Whatever Ulster's rights may be, she cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland."[186]

One reason the Irish crisis grew is that it was given time to grow. Asquith introduced his Home Rule bill on April 11, 1912, two months after Churchill's Belfast speech, and the issue was still before the country in the summer of 1914. The House of Lords was responsible for the delay. The peers no longer possessed an absolute veto, but they retained some power to obstruct; if they stonewalled, as they did in this instance, they could force the House of Commons to pass a bill in three successive parliamentary sessions. As the seasons passed, the Orangemen's enmity hardened. For more than two years, Churchill later calculated, the question "absorbed nine-tenths of the political field." Meanwhile, he and his fellow ministers were struggling to find a compromise which would give Ireland both Home Rule and peace. His first proposals were naive. He saw the Transvaal constitution as a sound precedent, though it would be hard to imagine two breeds less alike than the Boers and the Irish. Lloyd George suggested a "referendum…. each of the Ulster counties is to have the option of exclusion from the Home Rule Bill," which was equally impractical. The idea of partition was first mooted in June 1912, when two MPs introduced an amendment to the bill exempting four Ulster counties from Home Rule. Carson, believing that "if Ulster were left out, Home Rule would be impossible," supported their measure in the hope of defeating the bill in its entirety.[187]

It was rejected, but the idea remained. On August 31 Churchill wrote John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, that "something should be done to afford the characteristically Protestant and Orange counties the option of several years before acceding to an Irish Parliament." This was the first indication that he might be receptive to partition. At the time he thought of it as a temporary measure. With the Ulster Volunteers

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drilling, and Carson designated head of a "provisional government," he appealed for a fresh approach at Dundee in October 1913. By this time Home Rule had passed the Commons twice and been spurned twice by the Lords. Its enactment was now certain. Churchill, however, was looking beyond that, to the practical problems of enforcement. The Unionists' claim for special treatment, he said, was "very different from the claim to bar and defer Home Rule and block the path of the rest of Ireland." He added significantly: "Our bill is not unalterable." The Liberals could pass it without a single Tory vote, "but it will take more than one party to make it a lasting success. A settlement by agreement… would offer advantages far beyond anything now in sight. Peace is better than triumph provided it is peace with honour…. Only one thing would make it worth while or even possible to recast a measure on which so much depends: It is a very simple thing—good will." Redmond, afraid that his most powerful ally might be weakening, denounced the "two-nation theory" as "an abomination and a blasphemy." Carson was scornful. One solitary Conservative, F. E. Smith—who, astonishingly, remained close to Winston through all this—said he had "shown a grasp of those facts which are fundamental which none of his colleagues, at least in public, has displayed."[188]

If his motive in entering this donnybrook had been political—and surely that was among his reasons—he had chosen the wrong arena. To be sure, he was reestablishing his credentials as a Liberal, but the cost was prohibitive. By agreeing to be Asquith's chief spokesman on Home Rule, he had added his name to that long list of English public men who had intervened in the Irish question and emerged bloodied. Other members of Asquith's cabinet could speak out in support of Winston when his decision was popular and remain silent when it wasn't. This was even true of the prime minister. Eventually Asquith would have to commit himself, but in the interim he could leave the stump to Churchill. Moreover, Winston couldn't confine himself to polemics. He had to search for a solution, a hopeless task which was bound to antagonize partisans in both Belfast and Dublin. Twice in the autumn of 1913 he conferred with Conservative leaders in the hope of finding middle ground, talking to Bonar Law at Balmoral in September, and then to Austen Chamberlain aboard the *Enchantress* in late November. Chamberlain's memorandum on their discussion, written immediately afterward, shows how far Churchill was prepared to go at that time to reach a settlement: "In answer to W's opening remark I said that I had assumed that… he was prepared to [exempt] Ulster. He replied: 'We have never excluded that possibility—never.' Of course Redmond hated it, but they were not absolutely bound to R. and he was not indispensable to them. They would not allow Ulster to veto Home Rule, but they had never excluded the possibility of separate treatment for Ulster. This was repeated more than once in the course of our talk."[189]

Winston was still not considering permanent partition. His papers leave no room for doubt on that point. He was merely contemplating a transition period for the northern counties. Yet it hardly seemed to matter. Neither side was interested in finding a middle course. Right or wrong, Ulster was preparing to fight. On September 12, 1912, Carson had drawn up a covenant, not against Home Rule for Ulster, but against any version of Home Rule, and a half-million Orangemen had signed it, some in their own blood:

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as the whole of Ireland, subversive to our civil and

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Ascendancy; so did Lord Roberts. Kitchener's duties in the Middle East ruled him out, but Roberts declined the UVF command only because, at eighty-five, he was too old. More and more one heard the name of General Henry Wilson, who had been appointed Britain's chief of military operations despite the fact that as an Ulsterman he had signed the covenant. Tall, lanky, with a look of despondent fidelity which was entirely misleading, Wilson was one of many establishmentarians whose names gave the incipient revolt an aura of respectability. Others included Lord Rothschild, Edward Elgar of "Land of Hope and Glory," and Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had contributed £30,000 to the UVF and published a poem honoring it—not in *The Times*, which supported Home Rule, but in the archconservative *Morning Post:*

The blood our fathers spilt,
Our love, our toils, our pains,
Are counted us for guilt,
And only bind our chains.
Before an Empire's eyes,
The traitor claims his price.
What need of further lies?
We are the sacrifice.

Even the King had doubts about using force against the Orangemen. He asked Bonar Law: "Will it be wise, will it be fair to the Sovereign as head of the Army, to subject the discipline and indeed the loyalty of his troops to such a strain?" Law, a Canadian who had become an adopted Orangeman, exploited the King's discomfort. At stake, he told the monarch, was not merely Ulster, but the entire British Empire. Home Rule would be the thin end of the wedge for His Majesty's fractious subjects all over the world. He should refuse to recognize it, whatever Parliament did. Law said: "You will save the Empire by your example."[192]

Meanwhile, the tale of the twenty-five thousand smuggled Mausers had leaked out. The possibility of a Belfast-Berlin collaboration seemed very real, and was discussed in the House. Liberal back-benchers demanded prosecution of Orangemen negotiating with the Germans. Asquith refused; he was vacillating. Churchill spoke out: "We have," he said, "been confronted with an avowed conspiracy to defy Parliament and the law, leaving a great army practising preparations for rebellion and for the setting up of a provisional Government, which would be an outrage against the realm and the Empire." England, he said, would not be intimidated by plots to raise a revolt "greater than the police could cope with."[193] He was not speaking only to Belfast; Redmond and his fellow Irish Nationalists had been desperately worried about the response to all this among their own people in the south, and their nightmares were being realized. Riots were reported in Dublin. Catholic youths were flocking to join the Irish Nationalist Volunteers. Irish MPs who were counselors of moderation were losing their followers. In 1913 a militant working-class movement had forged a tight alliance with the Sinn Féin, who regarded themselves as Irishmen first and last and gentlemen never, and wearers of the green were turning to these champions of violence.

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By March 1914, with final passage of the Home Rule bill less than two months away, the strain was becoming insupportable. Asquith, with Redmond's reluctant consent, promised that Ulster would be permitted to vote itself out of Home Rule for six years, or until two successive general elections had been held. Carson angrily rejected this as "a sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years." Churchill decided to take his gloves off. He had been conciliatory at Dundee. Now he would swing over to the attack. At Bradford on March 14 he called Bonar Law "a public danger seeking to terrorize the Government and to force his way into the Councils of his Sovereign" by exploiting the issue for partisan purposes. "Behind every strident sentence which he rasps out," he said, "you can always hear the whisper… 'Ulster is our best card; it is our only card.' " That was fair. The Tories had asked for it. But then, carried away by his own rhetoric, he blundered, salting the Unionists' wounds with sarcasm. Having raised troops, he said, Ulster seemed anxious for battle "so that her volunteers could assert themselves." But the proposed moratorium would deprive them of that test. He put words in their mouths: " 'Now the Government have had the incredible meanness to postpone all possible provocation for six long years.' " Bitterly he commented: "Coercion for four-fifths of Ireland is a healthful, exhilarating, salutary exercise, but lay a finger on the Tory fifth—sacrilege, tyranny, murder!" The Liberals were not cowed, he said: "There are worse things than bloodshed…. We are not going to have the realm of Britain sunk to the condition of the Republic of Mexico." The issue, for him, was "whether civil and Parliamentary government in these realms is to be beaten down by the menace of armed force." If Orangemen would extend the hand of friendship, it would be eagerly clasped by Liberals and Irish Nationalists, but "if every effort to meet their views is only to be used as a means of breaking down Home Rule… if the civil and Parliamentary systems are to be brought to the crude challenge of force… then I can only say to you: Let us go forward and put these grave matters to the proof." Lord Fisher wrote him: "I should say it's probably the best speech you ever made." But *The Times* commented the next day that, having carried his naval estimates over the protests of rank-and-file Liberals, he "seemed to think it necessary to show that on occasion he could shout defiance with the rest," and another critic called his remarks redolent of "cheap champagne made of gooseberry juice and vitriol, exhilarating at the moment but nauseating sooner or later."[194]

It was quickly forgotten, for within a week Churchill found himself in deep trouble. He and Seely were worried about the loyalty of British soldiers in Ireland. A high proportion of them were natives of Ulster. Moreover, they were badly deployed for the approaching climax; of the twenty-three thousand regulars on the island, only nine thousand were stationed in the north. Mutinous mutters had met proposals for a redistribution which would transfer troops billeted on the Curragh plain, outside Dublin, to Belfast. Even if the men remained subordinate, it was reported, Ulster officials of the Great Northern Railway might refuse to carry them northward. However, it was feasible to send them up by sea. Encouraged by Lloyd George, the two service ministers, with the approval of Asquith and the King, decided to take precautionary steps. Guards at the Ulster arms depots of Armagh, Omagh, Enniskillen, and Carrickfergus were doubled. Winston signaled the vice admiral commanding his Third Battle Squadron: "Admiralty, 19 March 1914. Secret. Proceed at once at ordinary speed to Lamlash…. Acknowledge and report dates of arrival. WSC." This would put eight battleships, a cruiser, and three

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At this point he altered his tone dramatically and ended on a propitiatory note. He appealed directly to Carson: "The right honourable Gentleman… is running great risks in strife. Why will he not run some risk for peace? The key is in his hands now. Why cannot the right honourable and learned Gentleman say boldly: 'Give me the Amendments to this Home Rule Bill which I ask for, to safeguard the dignity and the interests of Protestant Ulster, and I in return will use all my influence and good will to make Ireland an integral unit in a federal system'?" The House was stirred. Balfour, while describing Churchill's earlier remarks as "an outburst of demagogic rhetoric," declared that he was "heartily in sympathy with the First Lord's proposal," and Carson went so far as to say that he was "not very far from the First Lord." Negotiations were reopened. Liberals and Irish Nationalists, who insisted that northern Ireland must yield, protested angrily. Winston's position in the party was still shaky; he wrote Clementine that his plea for a truce was "the biggest risk I have taken." His cabinet colleagues, generous with their "hear, hears" when he had taken the offensive, had sat on their hands when he offered Carson an olive branch.[199]

But the negotiations stalled and were again discontinued. The general feeling was that it was too late for one man to halt the drift toward fratricide. Churchill himself said wearily, "A little red blood had got to flow," though he quickly added: "We shall give no provocation. The Ulstermen will have no excuse, and we think that public opinion will not support them if they wantonly attack." On May 26 the Home Rule bill passed for the third and last time. Officially it was now law. The possibility of enforcing it, however, was as remote as ever. Each side was still waiting for the other to shoot first. On July 20 the King intervened, summoning an all-party conference to Buckingham Palace. The Speaker of the House presided as the delegates wrangled for four days. Winston wrote Clementine: "We are to go ahead with the Amending Bill, abolishing the time limit and letting any Ulster county vote itself out if it chooses. The [southern] Irish acquiesced in this reluctantly. We must judge further events in Ulster when they occur."[200]

Asquith's cabinet met on the afternoon of Friday, July 24, 1914, to discuss the final conclusions of the King's conference. The report was sterile; absolutely nothing had been accomplished. It was at this point that the Irish issue, foremost in everyone's mind, so certain to burst into flames at any moment, was unexpectedly deferred, destined not to re-emerge for years, by which time the whole cast of characters would have changed. The ministers were about to break up when Grey began reading in quiet, grave tones a document which had just been sent in to him from the Foreign Office. It was an Austrian note to Serbia. Churchill was very tired; several minutes passed before he could disengage his mind from the tedium which had just ended. Gradually the phrases and sentences began to take shape and meaning. The foreign secretary was reading an ultimatum. Winston had never heard anything like it. He did not see how any country could accept it, or how any acceptance, however abject, could satisfy the government which had sent it. He later recalled: "The parishes of Fermanagh and Tyrone faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began immediately, but by perceptible gradations, to fall and grow upon the map of Europe."[201]

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Churchill later blamed three men for the outbreak of the Great War: the Serb assassin, the Austrian foreign minister who had written that first ultimatum, and the kaiser, who could have stopped the chain reaction of governments bound by military alliances. But the initial culprit was an incompetent chauffeur whose name has not survived. On June 28, 1914, four weeks before the delivery of the fateful note to Serbia, Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, Sophie, had been riding through the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo when the driver took a wrong turn. Realizing his mistake, he came to a dead halt—right in front of a Serbian fanatic armed with a revolver. Franz Ferdinand and Sophie were shot dead on the spot. In Vienna the toils of vengeance, like everything else in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, moved very slowly. But they were moving. Meanwhile, Britain stood aside. There was every reason to believe Britain would remain there. It had nothing at stake. Grey's "moral obligation," assumed eight years earlier, had been given privately and was not binding. Britain's only commitment on the Continent was to defend Belgian independence, which hardly seemed threatened then, and even that was vague. Winston didn't care for the Belgians; he thought their behavior in the Congo disgraceful. At the Admiralty he lunched with Kitchener, on leave from Egypt and soon to be Seely's successor at the War Office. Both suspected the existence of a secret agreement between Brussels and Berlin which would permit German troops to cross Belgium on their way to France. For England, they agreed, such an "invasion" would be an inadequate casus belli. But it was all very speculative, very remote, quite nebulous.

The Admiralty's trial mobilization had begun, as scheduled, in the middle of July, over two weeks after the Sarajevo murders. The grand review was held on July 18. Churchill called it "incomparably the greatest assemblage of naval power ever witnessed in the world"—223 battleships, armored cruisers, light cruisers, destroyers, minesweepers, and submarines parading past the royal yacht and the *Enchantress* at Spithead, with the King and his first lord taking the salute. Normally, the next step would have been demobilization of all three fleets, accompanied by liberty for the regular tars and tickets home for the reservists. It wasn't taken. Churchill, concerned about rumors from central Europe, published an Admiralty notice in the newspapers of July 20: "Orders have been given to the First Fleet, which is concentrated at Portland, not to disperse for naval leave at the present. All vessels of the Second Fleet are remaining at their home ports in proximity to their balance crews." Yet he was confident that negotiations would settle the differences between Vienna and Belgrade. In a letter to Grey two days later, drawing an analogy between that problem and the more urgent situation in Ulster, he wrote that if the question were how to uphold British interests on the Continent, "you wd proceed by two stages. First you wd labour to stop Austria & Russia going to war: second, if that failed, you wd try to prevent England, France, Germany & Italy being drawn in." In either instance, mediation was the solution. The following day Lloyd George, who concurred, assured the House that "civilization" would have no difficulty in regulating disputes which arose between nations, by means of "some sane and well-ordered arbitrament."[202]

After studying the note Grey had read to the cabinet, however, Churchill wrote

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Clementine: “Europe is trembling on the verge of a general war, the Austrian ultimatum to Servia [sic] being the most insolent document of its kind ever devised.” It was in fact remarkable. Serbia was required to suppress all criticism of Austria-Hungary in newspapers, magazines, societies, and schools; Serbain officials and teachers who had spoken unfavorably of Austrians were to be dismissed; certain Serbs known to be unfriendly to Austria were to be arrested at once; and Austrian officers were to enter Serbia to enforce all these demands and investigate the Sarajevo assassinations. Belgrade must reply to this ultimatum within forty-eight hours. A request for an extension was denied. In Vienna the foreign minister acknowledged that the tone of the note was “such that we must reckon on the probability of war.”[203]

“Happily,” Asquith wrote the King, “there seems to be no reason why we should be anything more than spectators.” Churchill shared his view. At Overstrand, on the Norfolk coast, he had rented a little holiday house called Pear Tree Cottage for Clementine and the children—Goonie Churchill and her two young sons had taken nearby Beehive Cottage—and Friday evening he postponed an Admiralty meeting which had been scheduled for Saturday morning, preferring to spend the weekend at the shore. He wrote: “My darling one, I have managed to put off my naval conference and am coming to you & the kittens tomorrow by the 1 o’clock train.” Before he left London, good news arrived: Serbia had accepted all demands upon it except the supervision of compliance by Austrian officers, and Belgrade offered to submit that question to the Hague Court. Even the kaiser believed this reply had removed “every reason for war.” Winston told Prince Louis to run the Admiralty in his absence; he would stay in touch by phone. On the beach he organized the children, distributed buckets and spades, and directed them while they built a sand castle against the rising tide. The surf leveled it. As he remembered later: “We dammed the little rivulets which trickled down to the sea as the tide went out. It was a very beautiful day. The North Sea sparkled to a far horizon.”[204]

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Pear Tree Cottage had no telephone, but their nearest neighbor, Sir Edgar Speyer, a rich German Jew, had offered the use of his. It was here, at noon on Sunday, that Churchill heard the latest development from Prince Louis. Vienna had declared the Serbian response unsatisfactory, severed diplomatic relations with Belgrade, and ordered partial mobilization against the Serbs—who had already mobilized their army. Winston was on the next London train. There newsboys were hawking extras; Vienna had "burst into a frenzy of delight, vast crowds parading in the streets and singing patriotic songs." At the Admiralty he learned that the first sea lord had anticipated him; the Third Fleet had completed its test mobilization and was scheduled to disperse, but Prince Louis had ordered it to remain ready for battle, and at 4:05 P.M. he had telegraphed: "Admiralty to C in C Home Fleets. Decypher. No ships of First Fleet or Flotillas are to leave Portland until further orders. Acknowledge." Churchill approved and began a ten-day shuttle between his office, Whitehall, No. 10, and Admiralty House, catching sleep in brief naps. Other ministers grew wan. He thrived.[205]

The following morning, Monday, July 27, the cabinet met for the first discussion of the crisis on the Continent. Clearly the Austrians meant to invade Serbia. That might bring in Russia, the Serbs' ally, which might bring in Germany, Austria's ally, which might bring in France, Russia's ally. The kaiser, aware of the threat on his western frontier, might launch a preemptive strike into northern France. If that happened, the Liberal militants thought, England might become involved. A majority of the ministers disagreed. The Entente Cordiale of 1904 was not binding, they pointed out; it was merely "a sentimental liaison." Grey's assurance to the French had been unofficial. In an unpublished note Churchill wrote afterward: "The Cabinet was absolutely against war and would never have agreed to being committed to war at this moment." A message arrived from Pear Tree Cottage: "Goodnight my Dearest One. I trust the news may be better tomorrow. Surely every hour of delay must make the forces of peace more powerful. It would be a wicked war." Winston had no intention of making it wickeder by being caught off guard. That night he telegraphed all British fleets, squadrons, and flotillas, scattered over five oceans: "European political situation makes war between Triple Alliance and Triple Entente Powers by no means impossible. This is *not* the Warning Telegram but be prepared to shadow possible hostile men-of-war…. Measure is purely precautionary. The utmost secrecy is to be observed and no unnecessary person is to be informed."[206]

Austria-Hungary declared war on Tuesday, July 28, and bombed Belgrade. Both Winston and Prince Louis were worried about the position of the First Fleet, now anchored off the Isle of Wight. It was vulnerable there, and a navy's primary duty, as Mahan had written, was to remain "a fleet in being"; Churchill pointed out that the admiral commanding the Home Fleet was the only man in Europe who could "lose the war in the course of an afternoon." The ships' war station was Scottish waters, where they would be secure and a deterrent to any sudden German attack, at the same time serving notice that England was prepared. Yet Winston "feared to bring this matter before the Cabinet," he wrote, "lest it should be mistakenly considered a provocative action likely to damage the chances of peace." Instead, he went to No. 10 and told Asquith he was going to act on his own authority. The prime minister, he recalled, "looked at me with a hard stare and gave a sort of grunt. I did not require anything else." That night, on his

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