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INTRODUCTION

Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, fourth Earl of Carnarvon (1831–1890), had the distinction of serving in all the Conservative ministries between 1858 and 1886, and was a member of Cabinets in three of them, under the fourteenth Earl of Derby, Disraeli, and Salisbury. What is equally remarkable is the fact that, although he resigned on two occasions, he was appointed a third time, in 1885. Throughout this time he kept a journal, in which he provided keen observations of his colleagues and comments on political happenings.

Carnarvon was the eldest son of Henry John George Herbert, third Earl (1800–1849) and his wife, Henrietta Anne (1804–1876), who was the eldest daughter of Henry Molyneux Howard, brother of the twelfth Duke of Norfolk. A sensitive man of a romantic and adventurous nature, the third Earl was the author of books based on his travels. His last important journey, which he undertook with his wife, his eldest daughter, Eveline, and the seven-year-old Carnarvon, then Viscount Porchester, was to Asia Minor. This plan was thrown into disarray by the boy's illness of Asiatic 'flu at Constantinople, which was so serious that the doctors ordered the family to return to England if he was to live. On the way there, his sister contracted fever, and both his nurse and his governess died in Italy. Thirty years later, in homage to his father, Carnarvon published the diaries of part of the journey, *Reminiscences of Athens and the Morea in 1839*.[1] In adult life, he too became a keen traveller. In 1860, together with his college friend Lord Sandon, he toured Asia Minor, visiting Babylon and Damascus. His love of antiquities was transmitted to his son, George, the fifth Earl, who, as patron of Howard Carter, was associated with the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in November 1922.[2]

Porchester also followed his father in a liking for politics. The third Earl, before inheriting the title in 1833, had sat briefly in the Commons as MP for Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, in March 1831, taking up his

[1] Carnarvon wrote, 'I have been engaged during the last few days in reading over my Father's Greek Journals. They are very interesting and written with all the care and grace and love of the imaginative and picturesque which he possessed in so full a measure' (Diary, 23 August 1867).

[2] H. Carter, *Tutankhamun: the politics of discovery* (London, 1998).

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position three days before Lord John Russell introduced the first Reform Bill. After making a speech on the second reading, ten days after Porchester's birth, he was offered a post in the ministry but refused.[3] As a Whig, he opposed the 'great and doubtful experiment', as Carnarvon was also to do. Carnarvon always admired his father's intellectual and literary powers and was saddened by the death of the third Earl in 1849 at the age of forty-nine.

Porchester showed early signs of precociousness. At the age of six, he delivered a speech to the Dulverton Troop of Yeomanry,[4] and at nine and a half he appeared with his father in London at a public meeting on behalf of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals.[5] He was reading Greek and Latin authors before he went to Eton, where he took with him his private tutor, John Kent, who became a lifelong friend. He had been at Christ Church, Oxford, for only three months when he succeeded to the earldom at the age of eighteen, on the death of his invalid father. He graduated in 1852, being awarded a first class in Greats, though he admitted that laziness had almost threatened a 'very premature termination' in his first year.[6]

Early years in politics

Since his Oxford days Carnarvon had been interested in politics. His first opportunity on the wider stage came in January 1854, when Lord Aberdeen, the Prime Minister of a coalition government, requested him to move the Address in Answer to the Queen's Speech. Although flattered by the proposal, Carnarvon anxiously replied to the offer, an action which became typical of his later political dealings. Admitting that he had not so far heard a single speech in the House of Lords, Carnarvon asked for an interview with Aberdeen on the Government's intention to enlarge the franchise 'for the upper classes of the operatives'. He wrote to Aberdeen after the interview, 'having very distinctly impressed on my mind your Lordship's previous emphatic avowal was distinctly Conservative I did not enter upon the point so fully as I now wish I had done'.[7] Aberdeen testily replied that

[3] H.H.M. Herbert, 4th Earl of Carnarvon, *The Herberts of Highclere* (London, 1907), p. 67.

[4] A local paper reported on 30 December 1837, 'On the health of Lord Porchester being given (a fine and noble boy of about six years of age, who had been brought into the room) he was put on the table, and returned thanks in a maiden speech, such as it is hoped may be the forerunner of many hereafter in the Senate': CP, BL 60994A, fo. 13.

[5] Hardinge, I, p. 25.

[6] Carnarvon to H.W. Acland, 12 December 1852: H.W. Acland Papers, MS Acland, d. 77, fos 41–42.

[7] Carnarvon to Aberdeen, 13 January 1854: Aberdeen Papers, BL MS 43252, fos 56–57.

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> from my desire to afford you all the satisfaction in my power, I entered into an explanation of details which was not at all necessary to do for the purpose of the Address [. . .]. All therefore which is required from any person moving the Address is a general assent to the proposition that it is desirable to consider some measure of Parliamentary Reform.[8]

Carnarvon, now satisfied that he could undertake the task 'consistent with my own principles', moved the Address on 31 January. In his speech, which was well received, he spelled out his belief in a strong British Empire with the colonies living in harmony with their mother country. He wrote to John Kent the following day, 'Lord Aberdeen told me that it was one of the most successful first speeches.'[9]

Carnarvon's temperament was the subject of amusement for many of his Cabinet colleagues later in his career. Disraeli and others referred to him as 'Twitters' in their correspondence. His excitability at one stage of the Near East crisis in 1877 led Salisbury to send his colleague a quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, 'Be advis'd; Heat not a furnace for your foes so that / it does not singe yourself.'[10] Sir Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's private secretary, described him as a man 'with a nervous manner and a most distressing little cough which always attacks him when you ask him a question'.[11] Carnarvon himself believed that his personality was a family characteristic. He once confessed to an old family friend:

> You are, I am afraid, right as to my restlessness, and also in a great measure as to its cause. At the same time you must remember that I have always had this 'restless' temper, from School days till now, and that it has been, to a great degree not least, a secret of whatever little success I have won. If it wearies me, it also prevents my rusting, which is a contingency I dread much more. Eveline [his sister] has a good deal of the same quality, but she makes excellent use of it. Auberon [his brother] has it largely and unfortunately in excess.[12]

Carnarvon's maiden speech, the Address in Answer to the Queen's Speech, took place while the Crimean War was in progress.[13] His brother-in-law described Carnarvon as 'not one of those who strike the popular imagination. He was not tall, nor capable of vigorous expression and his extreme refinement possibly gave to those who did not know him well an impression of weakness which was increased

[8] Aberdeen to Carnarvon, 16 January 1854: *ibid.*, fo. 64.
[9] Carnarvon to Kent, 1 February 1854: CP, BL 61063, fo. 1.
[10] Quoted in M. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: conservative environments in late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 128.
[11] Ponsonby to his wife, Mary Elizabeth, 15 September 1875: Royal Archives, Add A/36.
[12] Carnarvon to Sir William Heathcote, 18 September 1878: CP, BL 61074, fo. 153.
[13] *Hansard*, CXXX, 31 January 1854, cols 13–16.

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by his short-sightedness and a thin voice in public speaking.'[14] With the ending of the war, Carnarvon toured the battlefields with an acquaintance, Admiral Lord Lyons. They sailed to Constantinople, where he visited the capital of Turkey for the third time. He was disillusioned with the state of the country. Giving an address the following year, Carnarvon stated:

> Without absolutely saying that the Turkish Government is wantonly cruel, it is not too much to assert that it has been singularly unfortunate in its internal administration [. . .]. In war, continual barbarities and massacres and the violation of all faiths: and in peace, systematic family murders, misrule, irresponsibility and extortion.[15]

Nor did he believe that civilization was the policy or property of Russia. A British presence in the East was probably the answer.

By 1857, Carnarvon noted that he had made 'considerable progress and certainly had greater confidence' since his maiden speech. He spent several days with Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, whom he found very agreeable, and noted that Lord Stanley, later fifteenth Earl of Derby, 'sought me out – for his character is so peculiar that I have always feared to be the first to make advances – this summer in London to propose various plans of foreign travel together'.[16] The unexpected fall of Palmerston's ministry in February 1858 brought Derby into office. Within three days, Carnarvon received a call from the new Prime Minister, offering him the post of Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office. At their meeting, Carnarvon typically asked for reassurances, before accepting office, that Palmerston's Conspiracy Bill would not be proceeded with.

The Colonial Secretary was Lord Stanley, whom Carnarvon considered a conscientious and efficient head of office. When, after a short while, Stanley became Secretary of State for India, Bulwer Lytton succeeded him, and Carnarvon was pleased to be given more responsibility henceforth than was the case under Stanley. While being a good speaker on colonial matters, Lytton's powers of administration were poor and he had little capacity for business. He was frequently absent from the office, and Carnarvon was often left to make decisions and to sign Lytton's letters for him.[17] Lytton told Carnarvon, 'I would

[14] E.W. Howard, Baron Howard of Penrith, *Theatre of Life: life seen from the pit, 1863–1905* (London, 1935), p. 62.

[15] 'The present condition of the Turkish Empire in Asia: address to the Newbury Literary and Scientific Institution', in H.H.M. Herbert, 4th Earl of Carnarvon, ed. R.H. Herbert, *Essays, Addresses and Translations*, 2 vols (London, 1896), I, pp. 175–6.

[16] 'Memorandum of the Session 1857', 16 September 1857: CP, BL 60892, fo. 17.

[17] L. Mitchell, *Bulwer Lytton: the rise and fall of a Victorian man of letters* (London, 2003), p. 219.

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much rather trust your signature than that of any other Secretaries of State [. . .]. As to Patronage I leave you *carte blanche*.'[18]

There was unrest at the time in the Ionian Islands, which was an independent state but under British protection, and a Special Commissioner was required to investigate the state of affairs there. It was Carnarvon who suggested that William Gladstone should be sent out for this purpose. At the same time, Carnarvon was also responsible for introducing two large measures in the Lords: the Medical Practitioners Bill to regulate the qualifications of doctors and surgeons, and a Local Government Bill. In addition, he was the instigator of a Jewish Oaths Bill, which would have admitted Jews to the House of Commons.[19]

The years out of office, 1859–1866

After eighteen months in office, the Derby government fell in 1859. For the next seven years Carnarvon was content to follow some of his non-political interests. He was delighted to be appointed High Steward of Oxford University in October 1859, and he travelled around Europe and the Middle East. In September 1861, he married Lady Evelyn Stanhope, the only daughter of the sixth Earl of Chesterfield. Algernon West described her as a person 'who had hardly emerged from girlhood to womanhood, fascinated with her almost mature beauty and charmed with her talents the men and women of an older generation'.[20] There were four children: one boy, George Edward, later fifth Earl; and three daughters, Winifred, Margaret, and Victoria. Meanwhile, Highclere Castle, Hampshire, near Newbury, became more than a domestic dwelling: Carnarvon made it a meeting place for politicians, from both Britain and overseas, throughout the rest of his life. Indeed, it was widely remarked that Carnarvon was the first Colonial Secretary to entertain ministers and other leading figures from the colonies in his home on such a scale.[21]

[18] Lytton to Carnarvon, 17 April 1859: CP, BL 60780, fo. 81. Lytton wrote to one of his officials at this time, naming Carnarvon as 'by far the first young man of his rank in public life': V.A.G.R.B. Lytton, Earl of Lytton, *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton*, 2 vols (London: 1913), II, p. 281.

[19] Memorandum for 1858: CP, BL 60892, fos 42–45.

[20] A. West, *Recollections, 1832–1886*, 2 vols (London, 1899), I, p. 239.

[21] 'In this period Colonial Secretaries were for the first time required to cultivate personal relations with prominent colonists. Canadian ministers from 1857 and Australians from 1866 onwards began to make the long journey across the oceans to deal direct with London. The earlier Canadian visits did not achieve much; the later ones successfully begot Confederation. Carnarvon, who was Under-Secretary or Secretary of State during most of them, put the visits to imaginative use. He would not allow the delegates to confine themselves to business

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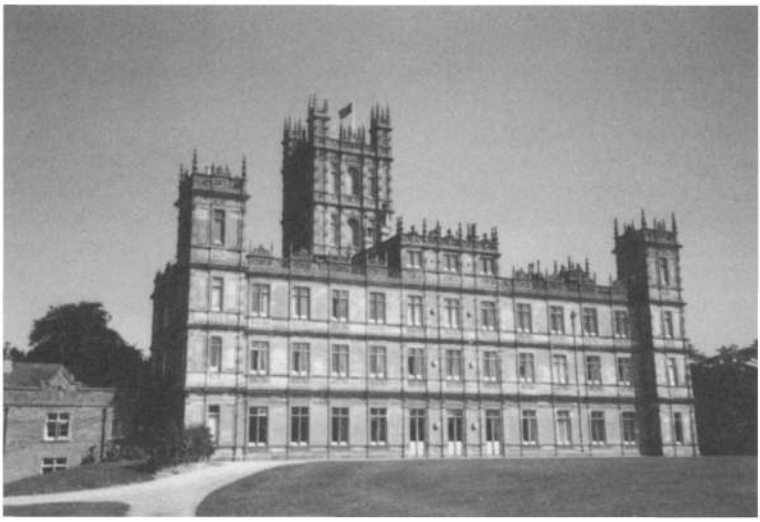


Fig. 1 Highclere Castle from the south-east, restored by Sir Charles Barry and completed in 1842.

The original Georgian house was set in a spectacular park landscaped by Capability Brown in 1770–1771. When the third Earl took up residence at Highclere, he called on the services of Charles Barry to transform the building into something more exotic. While retaining the inner core, the outside now resembles in many ways Barry's other best-known building, the Houses of Parliament, with its system of grid-like encrusted decoration with a Gothic feel.[22] The design was approved by the Earl and the foundation stone of the new great central tower was laid by the eleven-year-old Porchester. The latter completed the interiors in an Italian style, thus adding to the mixture of styles in the building. One of the many visitors, Disraeli, on seeing the front of the house for the first time exclaimed, 'How scenical! how scenical!'[23]

One of Carnarvon's lifelong interests was the relationship between penal policy and prison administration, he believing, like many of his contemporaries, that there was a need for a move from the penitential

but had them to stay with him at Highclere. The result was that they commonly returned home contented' (E.A. Benians, J. Butler, and C.E. Carrington (eds), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol. 3: the Empire-Commonwealth, 1870–1919* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 735).

[22] M. Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven, CT and London, 1979), p. 133.

[23] Lady D. Nevill, *Reminiscences* (London, 1906), p. 141.

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and reformatory ideal towards one of punishment and deterrence. A Select Committee of the House of Lords that he chaired on the subject, reporting in 1863, recommended that 'during short sentences or the earlier stages of a long confinement, the prisoner should be made to dispense with the use of a mattress, and should sleep upon planks'.[24] He was appointed chairman of the Judicial Committee of Quarter Sessions in February 1860 at the age of just twenty-nine, and, at a local level, he took part in the deliberations at the Winchester Assizes. He also served on several Parliamentary Commissions on aspects of the penal system, and spoke as an authority on the subject in the Lords, introducing legislation such as the Reformatory Schools Bill in 1857.[25]

Derby's 1866 government and the second Reform Bill

When Lord Derby formed his new administration in July 1866, Carnarvon was once more appointed to the Colonial Office, though now as Secretary of State, with a seat in the Cabinet.[26] One outstanding issue that needed to be settled was the future constitution of Canada. The policy of confederation, announced in 1848 by Sir Edmund Head, Governor-General of British North America, involved the unification of Canada – including the United Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick – and the creation of its own parliament. The seat of government was to be Ottawa. Not all Canadian politicians were in favour of this move: some from the Maritime Provinces preferred their own parliament and, more worryingly, the United States of America showed a lively interest in impeding the establishment of such a confederation.

Carnarvon was an advocate of a union of colonies, as he was later to attempt in South Africa and in Ireland. In a speech to the Canadian

[24] Quoted in P. Priestley, *Victorian Prison Lives: English prison biography, 1830–1914* (London, 1985), p. 31.

[25] S. McConville, *English Local Prisons, 1860–1900: next only to death* (London, 1995), p. 38.

[26] The senior Under-Secretary, Frederick Rogers, contrasted Carnarvon with his predecessor, Cardwell: 'He had more of generous desire to effect worthy objects, and also more, I think, of a wish to shine before the public and to distinguish himself in the ordinary sense of the word. His failing was rather too much self-consciousness, and a disposition to be caught by showy schemes.' Rogers also observed that his chief, 'though he was fully aware of his own abilities and desirous of receiving credit for them particularly in his measures and public appearances, he was given to take a second part in conversation, always wishing to draw others out than to speak himself': G.E. Marindin (ed.), *Letters of Frederick, Lord Blachford, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1860–1871* (London, 1896), p. 263.

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delegates the following year he stated his philosophy:

> Once in the history of England it so happened that we parted from some of our great Colonies with a bad spirit and in a misunderstanding [. . .]. It taught us that conciliation is better than coercion; that if we give our confidence, it will be repaid us a hundredfold. It has taught us – and it taught the Colonies also – that their interests properly understood are not separate and distinct; but that the more prosperous the Colonies are, the greater the strength they confer on the Mother Country.[27]

At a formal meeting of delegates in London on 26 January 1867, Carnarvon and Lord Monck, the Governor-General of Canada, discussed the British North American Bill. By the time it received Royal Assent in July, Carnarvon, the architect of the measure, was out of office over a different issue. Looking back on this achievement a year later, he told Monck, 'This is after all the last chance for the great country which belongs to us in North America, but whatever the result I can see no ground for regretting the course taken in providing the Union of the Provinces.'[28]

Like his father, Carnarvon disliked the attempts by successive governments to bring about the reform of the franchise, though in this he was moving against the tide of general public feeling, and the Hyde Park Riots in July 1866 stimulated politicians to speed up the process. The Derby government came into office on 2 July, mainly owing to a group of Whigs known as the Adullamites – Liberal MPs led by such figures as Robert Lowe. By their actions, the Russell–Gladstone ministry fell. The minority government of Derby was not in a position to resist Reform but was reluctant to expedite legislation. Derby argued that the process could be slowed down by proceeding by resolutions in Parliament, which would be discussed in detail by a Royal Commission and might serve as the basis for future legislation. This approach was eventually agreed to by Disraeli, then Leader of the House, and after much discussion in Cabinet he introduced the resolutions in the Commons on 12 February 1867. However, without Cabinet approval, Disraeli pledged that a bill would be immediately introduced.

Carnarvon, together with his old friend Lord Cranborne, then Secretary of State for India, was dismayed at Disraeli's willingness to pacify Gladstone. They decided to take drastic action together. On 25 February, shortly before a Cabinet meeting to be held at midday, Cranborne wrote to Derby, pointing out that Disraeli's scheme was unacceptable, a view which was shared by Carnarvon. At the Cabinet meeting, the two men, along with General Jonathan Peel, Secretary

[27] Hardinge, I, p. 301.
[28] Carnarvon to Monck, 15 January 1868: Monck Papers, 27021 (3).

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of State for War, were the only members to express their dissent.[29] In a desperate attempt to save the situation, Disraeli introduced a Ten Minute Bill in the Commons, which was unpopular with both Conservatives and Liberals. At the Cabinet meeting on 2 March, when it was agreed to proceed with household suffrage, the three men resigned. At this, as Carnarvon noted in his diary, 'Lord Derby closed a red box with a heavy sigh and said, "The Party is ruined," and Disraeli added rather cynically, "Poor Tory Party!"' The third reading of the Reform Bill was passed without division and became law in August. The 'leap in the dark' had been made.[30]

'I am convinced that we are in a very critical position', Carnarvon wrote to the Duke of Richmond a few days later. 'Household suffrage may be good or bad: but it is a revolution.'[31] And to his former guardian and friend Sir William Heathcote he added, 'I hardly see now how we can avoid a great break in the Party.'[32] Carnarvon had no doubt as to who was to blame for the 'painful scenes in which we have been engaged during the last two or three weeks [. . .]. The truth is that the Government is Disraeli and he is dragging them through their present discredit.'[33] In reply, Heathcote admitted that Disraeli 'probably looked forward with satisfaction to getting rid of you by the strong dose of democracy which I have no doubt he has determined from the beginning', but considered that this was not a deliberate Government plot.[34] When the three 'renegades', as the Queen called them, returned their seals of office, she was so furious that she refused to shake hands with them.

Out of office: Carnarvon's non-political pursuits

Carnarvon was gloomy about his own future. 'I am sadly out of heart', he confessed, 'and I am thinking of giving up all Politics as far as possible, and dividing my time between turnips and literature.'[35] He

[29] All three were members of the 'Bath clique', named after their leader, Lord Bath, who had attempted to remove Disraeli in 1860. See J. Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power: a history of the Conservative Party since 1830* (London, 1998), pp. 94–95. See also Carnarvon's correspondence with Bath in the Longleat Papers.

[30] Diary, 2 March 1867.

[31] Carnarvon to Richmond, 11 March 1867: Goodwood Papers, 822.97.

[32] Carnarvon to Heathcote, 28 March 1867: CP, BL 61070, fo. 209a. It had been on Heathcote's advice that Carnarvon had taken an interest in prison reform: see F. Awdry, *A Country Gentleman of the Nineteenth Century: being a short memoir of the Right Honourable Sir William Heathcote, Bart., of Hursley, 1801–1881* (Winchester, 1906), pp. 123–125.

[33] Carnarvon to Sandon, 7 March 1867: Harrowby Papers, 1st series, xxix, fos 28–29.

[34] Heathcote to Carnarvon, 13 May 1867: CP, BL 61070, fo. 222.

[35] Carnarvon to Heathcote, 6 April 1867: CP, BL 61078, fo. 212.

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was anxious, however, not to appear disloyal to the Government. He wrote to Earl Grey towards the end of the year,

> I find that my presence in the House is a cause of dire irritation and I see no reason why I should not allow this feeling to cool down by a temporary absence. It will show at all events that I am not looking out for an opportunity to annoy them.[36]

Throughout his public life, Carnarvon often, in times of personal distress, turned to his great love, the classics. Thanking a fellow classicist, the fifteenth Earl of Derby, for his criticisms of a translation he had made of the *Agamemnon*, Carnarvon replied, 'It has been an amusement and an interest to me in the intervals of business: and there is, I think, a certain satisfaction in turning to some account the work on which so large a part of one's early life was spent.'[37] During a severe illness the following year he translated the fifth and eleventh books of the *Odyssey*, which he had privately published for his friends. A more ambitious project was a complete translation of the first twelve books of the same work, which he undertook shortly after resigning as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1886. While at work on the book, he wrote to Sandon, 'I am personally well pleased to have shuffled off the coil of English politics and to get in exchange Dante and Aristotle and my best beloved Homer, which every day grow more wonderful to me.'[38]

Towards the end of his life, he turned once more to discovering more about his own ancestors. The result was a book, *The Herberts of Highclere*, written in 1887 but published twenty years later, a first-hand account of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, with some interesting comments on their activities. He then undertook a project which was to be his final work. The letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), to his natural son, written daily from 1737 onwards concerning the education of a young man, and published by the Earl's wife in 1774, had long been considered a classic in the corpus of English literature. Carnarvon's first wife, Evelyn, was a Stanhope. Her father, the sixth Earl of Chesterfield, had given Carnarvon no fewer than 236 letters written subsequently by the fourth Earl to an illegitimate godson. Carnarvon had put them to one side and many years later he rediscovered them at the Chesterfields' home at Bretby. The letters, edited by Carnarvon, were published under the title *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Godson* in December 1889. In his introduction Carnarvon stated, 'I can honestly say that I began

[36] Carnarvon to 3rd Earl Grey, 27 November 1867: Grey Papers, 80/13.
[37] Carnarvon to 15th Earl of Derby, 18 April 1879: Derby Papers, 920 DER (15).
[38] Carnarvon to Harrowby, 22 February 1886: Harrowby Papers, 2nd series, lii, fo. 161.

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