

34, PORTLAND PLACE,
W. I.

24th March, 1930.

My dear Mr. Davis

Your frank letter was a very great pleasure to me. I did not gather from it that you have viewed the Naval Conference with any particular enthusiasm. I am afraid most of us here are pretty hopeless about it. Our new rulers seem to think that an agreement with America is worth any sacrifice, and have been pushing our experts unreasonably to reduce their demands, but it is really like a discussion between a full man and an empty one. No-one doubts that America can and will build any number of ships she thinks necessary if there is no agreement. But seeing that our Navy has got to perform two functions which only remotely interest America, (1) in securing our food supply and (2) in keeping our commerce on every sea, it is obvious that a nation which has no food supply to protect and whose Navy is concentrated, most always be greatly superior to ours at any point of contact. Hence equality spells inferiority in our case, and this is the more serious with the now preponderating influence of the foreign population in the States and the, as it seems to us,

incalculable working of your Constitution on Foreign relations. You and I know each other's views so well, though yours matter and mine do not, on the relations of the two countries, *that* you will not misunderstand my saying that whenever there has been temporary trouble, a President like Cleveland could accentuate it in a way that no British Government, with a Parliament to answer to, would dare to do.

Somehow or another, it seems quite impossible to settle all these questions on the rebound of the Great War. Conferences and Congresses follow each other but at the bottom of it all is the fact that France does not want to agree to anything, that Russia is a permanent source of discord and tries to create it elsewhere, and that whatever Mussolini may agree to or not agree to, he will find some means when the day comes of doing what suits Italy best.

Our loss of Balfour would have been a great one if he had been 15 years' younger. It was well said by The Times, *in reference to* ^{an inversion of} an ill-informed remark by *Bis-*
..march of Lord Salisbury that "Balfour was iron painted to look

34, PORTLAND PLACE,
W. 1.

-3-

like a lath". But as his life went on, though he did what he touched perhaps increasingly well, he left most subjects alone. Incidentally, when we were trying to settle Ireland without ^a complete cast off, which has left both North and South in very poor circumstances, he was the one man in the Cabinet who had made a great record in ~~gathering~~ ^{governing} the country, ~~to~~ ^{but} remain~~ed~~ in office though he told me himself in 1921 that he had disagreed with everything that the Government had done there.' On my last sight of him just before Christmas he, much moved by Winston Churchill's incorrect account of the conduct of England to Ireland in the last 50 years, laid on me with great emphasis as his last Will and Testament, the charge to write a true version of this country's conduct. I am wriggling about it very much, as nobody here cares one jot about Ireland, having stood her tantrums so long and being glad to be quit of her. If I do, I think you will read the chapter on "Ireland and America" with some zest.

Our Labour Government is up to the neck in trouble. They have utterly failed with Unemployment. Russia has out-Russiaded herself after she had been

taken to Henderson's breast; (their tail is visible, and their trade policy, ^{from} ~~now~~ which they cannot find an outlet has not only increased unemployment but promises to increase their £40,000,000 deficit.

All the same, the popularity of Baldwin's Government has not yet returned, and I think, as in these notable pugilistic encounters, we have got to suffer a great deal of punishment before we can trust a dole fed electorate to give a majority against them.

We had an amazing attempt at a new Party by Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere which was a 'fizzle' though the subject matter has been much advanced by their advocacy. I could forgive Beaverbrook a good deal ^{for} ~~after~~ a repartee he made to that highest product of American birth, Lady Astor, when with her usual intrepidity she flared out at him last month with a demand as to "What he did during the War?" He aptly replied that "it was most remarkable that she should ^{put} him the question that day as only the previous night he had dreamed that he was in the trenches and that Waldorf was standing beside him."

34, PORTLAND PLACE.
W. I.

-5-

If you ever have time, otherwise I should never dare to recommend it, you should read "America conquers Britain" by ~~Lid~~well Denny. It is a rather terrible forecast of future rivalry, but despite all the dire prognostications, as a man said after a long study of philosophy "Cheerfulness will out."

We are entertaining Senator Robinson to a play tonight and Senator Reid shortly at Peper Harow, skipping lightly over the Ambassador, whose pipe does not agree with the comforts of my interior when I am eating salmon.

Davis

It is so nice to read of you and Mr. Davis in good spirits - and I trust you will need to come to a calmer land later in the year.

Our joint grateful thanks to you for writing - for your kind messages

Yours ever
Middleton