Cabinet. On the 2oth of January the conference broke up, Turkey having declared its recommendations inadmissible; and Europe withdrew to await the inevitable declaration of war. Very early in the course of that war the intentions of Great Britain were clearly indicated in a despatch of Lord Derby to the British representative at St Petersburg, which announced that so long as the struggle concerned Turkish interests alone Great Britain would be neutral, but that such matters as Egypt, the Suez Canal, the regulations affecting the passage of the Dardanelles, and the possession of Constantinople itself would be regarded as matters to which she could not be indifferent. For some nine months none of these British interests appeared to be threatened, nor had Lord Salisbury’s own department to concern itself very directly with the progress of the belligerents. Once or twice, indeed, the Indian secretary committed himself to statements which laid him open to a good deal of attack, as when he rebuked an alarmist by bidding him study the Central Asian question “ in large maps. ” But with the advance of Russia through Bulgaria and across the Balkans, British anxiety grew. In mid-December explanations were asked from the Russian Government as to their intentions with regard to Constantinople. On the 23rd of January the Cabinet ordered the fleet to sail to the Dardanelles. Lord Carnarvon resigned, and Lord Derby handed in his resignation, but withdrew it. The Treaty of San Stefano was signed on the 3rd of March; and three weeks later, when its full text became known, the

Cabinet decided upon measures which finally induced

Lord Derby, at the end of the month, to retire from the Foreign Office, his place being immediately filled by Lord Salisbury. The new foreign secretary at once issued the famous “ Salisbury circular ” to the British representatives abroad, which appeared in the newspapers on the 2nd of April. This elaborate and dignified State paper was at once a clear exposition of British policy, and practically an invitation to Russia to reopen the negotiations for a European congress. These negotiations, indeed, had been proceeding for several weeks past; but Russia having declared that she would only discuss such points as she pleased, the British Cabinet had withdrawn, and the matter for the time was at an end. The bulk of the document consisted of an examination of the Treaty of San Stefano and its probable effects, Lord Salisbury justifying such an examination on the ground that as the position of Turkey and the other countries affected had been settled by Europe in the Treaty of Paris in 1856, the powers which signed that treaty had the right and the duty to see that

no modifications of it should be made without their consent.

The effect of the circular was great and immediate. At

home the Conservatives were encouraged, and many moderate

Liberals rallied to the Eastern policy of the Govern­ment. Abroad it seemed as if the era of divided councils was over, and the Russian Government promptly recognized that the circular meant either a congress or war with Great Britain. For the latter alternative it was by no means prepared, and very soon negotiations were reopened, which led to the meeting of the congress at Berlin on the 13th of June. The history of that famous gathering and of its results is narrated under Europe. Lord Beaconsfield on two or three subsequent occasions referred to the important part that his colleague had played in the negotiations, and he was not using merely the language of politeness. Rumours had appeared in the London press as to a supposed Anglo-Russian agreement that had been signed between Salisbury and the Russian ambassador, Count Shuvaloff, and these rumours or statements were described by the foreign secretary in the House of Lords, just before he left for Berlin, as “ wholly unauthentic.” But on the 14th of June what purported to be the full text of the agreement was published by the *Globe* newspaper through a certain Charles Marvin, at that time employed in occasional transcribing work at the Foreign Office, and afterwards known by some strongly anti-Russian books on the Central Asian question. Besides the general inconvenience of the disclosure, the agreement, which stipulated that Batum and Kars might

be annexed by Russia, made it impossible for the congress to insist upon Russia entirely withdrawing her claim to Batum, though at the time of the meeting of the congress it was known to some of the negotiators that she was not unwilling to do so. In one respect Salisbury’s action at the congress was unsuccessful. Much as he disliked Gladstone’s sentimentalism, he was not without a certain sentimentalism of his own, and at the Berlin Congress this took the form of an unexpected and, as it happened, useless pushing of the claims of Greece. But in the main Salisbury must be held to deserve, almost equally with his great colleague, the credit for the Berlin settlement. Great, however, as was the work done at Berlin, and marked the relief to all Europe which was caused by the signing of the treaty, much work, and of no pleasant kind, remained for the British Foreign Office and for the Indian Government before the Beaconsfield parliament ended and the Government had to render up its accounts to the nation. Russia, foreseeing a possible war with Great Britain, had during the spring of 1878 redoubled her activity in Central Asia, and, almost at the very time that the treaty was being signed, her mission was received at Kabul by the Amir Sher Ali. Out of the Amir’s refusal to receive a counterbalancing British mission there grew the Afghan War; and though he had ceased to control the India Office, Salisbury was naturally held responsible for some of the preliminary steps which, in the judgment of the Opposition, had led to these hostilities. But the Liberals entirely failed to fix upon Salisbury the blame for a series of events which was generally seen to be inevitable. A defence of the foreign policy of the Government during the year which followed the Berlin Treaty was made by Salisbury in a speech at Manchester (October 1879), which had a great effect throughout Europe. In it he justified the occupation of Cyprus, and approved the beginnings of a league of central Europe for preserving peace.

In the spring of 1880 the general election overthrew Beacons- field’s Government and replaced Gladstone in power, and the country entered upon five eventful years, which were to see the consolidation of the Parnellite party, the reign of outrage in Ireland, disasters in Zululand and the Transvaal, war in Egypt, a succession of costly mistakes in the Sudan, and the final collapse of Gladstone’s Government on a trifling Budget question. The defeat of 1880 greatly depressed Beaconsfield, who till then had really believed in that “ hyperborean ” theory upon which he had acted in 1867 —the theory that beyond and below the region of democratic storm and violence was to be found a region of peaceful conser­vatism and of a dislike of change. After the rude awakening of April 1880 Beaconsfield seems to have lost heart and hope, and to have ceased to believe that wealth, birth and education would count for much in future in England. Salisbury, who on Beacons­field’s death a year later was chosen, after the claims of Cairns had been withdrawn, as leader of the Conservative peers (Sir Stafford Northcote continuing to lead the Opposition in the lower House), was not so disposed to counsels of despair. After the Conservative reaction had come in 1886, he was often taunted with pessimism as regards the results, and he certainly spoke on more than one occasion in a way which appeared to justify the caricatures which appeared of him in the Radical press in his character of Hamlet; but in the days of Liberal ascendancy Salisbury was confident that the tide would turn. We may pass briefly over the years of Opposition between 1880 and 1885; the only policy that could then wisely be followed by the Con- servative leaders was that of giving their opponents sufficient rope. In 1884 a new Reform Bill was introduced, extending household suffrage to the counties; this was met in the Lords by a resolution, moved by Cairns, that the peers could not pass it unaccompanied by a Redistribution Bill. The Government, therefore, withdrew their measure. In the summer and autumn there was a good deal of agitation; but in November a redistribu­tion scheme was settled between the leaders of both parties, and the Bill passed. When, in the summer of 1885, Gladstone resigned, it became necessary for the country to know whether Salisbury or Northcote was the real Conservative leader; and