

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF GEORGE GREY

1: Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 30 August 1826

Death of Grey's brother Thomas; the Earl implores Grey to advance professionally

I received the letter which you wrote to me, just before you sailed, & deferred answering it, till Charles's departure, who is now at Devon Port prepared to sail in the first September Packet; knowing that you wd hear in the mean time from your other correspondents here.

Your Mother's health, as was to be feared, suffered a good deal from the dreadful & unexpected affliction, which we have experienced. She has lately recovered her spirits in some degree &, owing to the finest Season I ever remember, has certainly improved also in health. Tho' I have too often had reason to complain of your thoughtlessness, I never suspected you of want of affection, & was sure you would feel, as every body who knew him must have done, for the loss of poor Tom. It will be long before I shall recover [from] it. But I have the comfort of reflecting that he has not left an unpleasant recollection behind him. A finer disposition, a more affectionate heart, a more innocent mind, no human being ever possessed. I never had a serious complaint to make of any part of his conduct, & tho' these reflections prove the greatness of the loss we have sustained, they also afford comfort and consolation.

Consider, my Dear George, how different our feelings must have been, if he had been cut off, as suddenly & unexpectedly as he was, in the midst of irregularities, & with unatoned errors;⁹⁰⁸ & let this thought amongst others, enforce upon you the necessity of a prudent & virtuous life. Let me further add a hope, that by carefully avoiding all just causes of complaint, you help to make up to me, by the comfort I shall derive from your well-doing, for the loss of that beloved

⁹⁰⁸ These years, of course, were the height of the 'age of atonement': Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1785–1865* (Oxford, 1993).

Boy. The time is fast approaching when you may hope to advance a step in your profession. This probably will not be delayed if you establish the same claims to it, as Frederick did, by a conduct that will procure for you the recommendation of the officers under whom you serve. Let this be a further stimulus to good behaviour.

2: George Grey to Earl Grey, HMS *Talbot*, 27 September 1826

Extent of piracy in the eastern Mediterranean; Grey serving on protective convoys

As the *Sybil*⁹⁰⁹ is going to sail in a few days for England and will I daresay be at home before the packet I write just a few lines to tell you that we are off at daylight tomorrow morning with a convoy of five sail of merchantmen for Smyrna, as the Pirates are robbing every thing. A vessel came in yesterday from Alexandria completely stripped.

3: Mary, Countess Grey, to George Grey, London, 24 June 1827

Illness of Sir George Grey at Portsmouth; political crisis in Portugal

I have just this moment been told that if I write instantly [...] my letter may be in time to go to you by the *Wellesley*, but that the probability is that it will have sailed before it reaches Portsmouth. Under this uncertainty I have not much pleasure in writing to you, yet I must just take the chance of telling you how we are going on here. To begin with your poor Uncle George, I grieve to say that he is very ill indeed,⁹¹⁰ & I fear that there is not the most distant hope of his recovery. There seems to be no doubt of the nature of his complaint, (something cancerous in his throat & jaw) & all that can be done for it is to endeavour to alleviate the suffering. It may last a considerable time, but it may go very rapidly & perhaps one ought not to wish this miserable state to be prolonged, yet I cannot bear to think that we are to lose so kind & good a friend. If you write to him (& you ought to do so) do not allude to the cause of his illness, for tho' I believe he is aware of it, I should be sorry to appear to be so.

⁹⁰⁹ HMS *Sybil* (1794), a 38-gun frigate, formerly the French ship *Sibylle*, captured in the Aegean Sea.

⁹¹⁰ See p. 40 for Sir George's death.

In this house we are all pretty well, your Father is remarkably so [...] We are all very anxious about Portugal, & from the last accounts we hope that there is a better chance for the Constitutionalists.⁹¹¹ The misfortune is the want of leaders, the Nobles are all such poor cowards they run away on the first alarm [...]

4: George Grey to Earl Grey, HMS *Talbot*, Navarino, 22 October 1827

Grey's first-hand account of the Battle of Navarino

I have so much to tell you that I do not know really how to begin except to tell you that I am really quite well, thank God, after so severe an action as we had the day before yesterday in this place, with the Turkish & Egyptian fleets, but for an account of it you will get a much better one from the newspapers than I shall be able to give you, as we had such a hot berth ourselves that we could not attend to anything else.

The last letter I wrote to you was when we started for Zante after the armistice was concluded with the Asia, we had not been at anchor above 24 hours before the Dartmouth,⁹¹² who had been left to watch the Turkish fleet, came in firing guns and with the signal up, they had put to sea, we immediately got under weigh and with the Asia Dartmouth and Zebra⁹¹³ stood towards the Gulf of Patras with the Turkish fleet with whom we fell in a few hours after we started, & at daylight the Admiral having hailed us we ran alongside the Turkish admiral's frigate with all hands at quarters, & told him unless he and his squadron put about immediately & stood back to Navarino, the Admiral would do his best to destroy him & his whole fleet. It had the desired effect for they all immediately put back but being next day joined by a good many more which made their number up to 57 sail they again stood towards Patras but being caught in a gale of wind they were forced to beat up again for Navarino. The armistice being concluded the English French & Russian squadrons assembled off Navarino consisting on the part

⁹¹¹ See pp. 29, 129–130 for the Portuguese crisis.

⁹¹² HMS *Dartmouth* (1813), a 36-gun fifth-rate frigate which served on the Jamaica Station before surveillance of the Turkish fleet and then action in the eastern Mediterranean.

⁹¹³ HMS *Zebra* (1815), an 18-gun brig built at Bombay which, having missed the action at Navarino, served in the East Indies; she was then wrecked in 1840 off Mount Carmel on the Palestinian coast.

of the English of the Asia, Genoa⁹¹⁴ & Albion, the Cambrian, Glasgow, Dartmouth, & Talbot, the Philomel, Mosquito,⁹¹⁵ Brisk⁹¹⁶ and Rose, besides the Hind⁹¹⁷ Cutter – the French had three Liners, two Frigates and 2 Schooners, the Russians 4 Liners, 3 Frigates and a Corvette [–] on the 18th the Dartmouth having come out of Navarino where she had been sent to get the final answer from the Ibrahim Pasha told the Admiral that he would not agree to the Terms, upon which Sir E. Codrington resolved to go in & if they would not agree to destroy the whole fleet. The plan was made out, the line of battle ships were to go in in a line, and the small craft under the orders of Capt. Fellowes⁹¹⁸ to attack the fire ships while we and the rest of the Frigates were to choose our berth. All the nineteenth we were laying to get in but on account of lightness of wind could not manage it, so that on the 20th a nice breeze sprung up about 12 o'clock when the admiral made the signal to prepare to engage and bore up for the harbour. The Asia first then the Albion and Genoa, after them the French and Russian liners in succession but unluckily a good way astern owing to not having got the wind so soon as us, the Dartmouth ourselves & the small craft abreast of the Asia, Genoa and Albion the consequence was the Asia and the other two had anchored off the line of battleships and the thickest cluster of double banked frigates the Dartmouth and the 10 gun brigs had taken their stations among the fire ships. We laid ourselves alongside a 54 gun frigate with another one of the same size and a Corvette also bearing us, the other ships were still a good way off. We had been at anchor about 10 minutes when the Dartmouth had two men raked [by gunshot] in one of its boats by one of the fireships, small arms men, and the Asia pilot shot alongside the Pasha's ship when he went to communicate. The Dartmouth immediately sent a barge to take possession of the fire ship but having the lieutenant (Mr. FitzRoy)⁹¹⁹ and 3 or 4 of the boat's crew killed she was beat off when the Rose and the brigs immediately sent their boats to her assistance but just as they

⁹¹⁴ HMS *Genoa* (1815), a 74-gun ship of the line, captured from the French as the *Brilliant* in 1813.

⁹¹⁵ HMS *Musquito* (1825), a 10-gun *Cherokee*-class brig-sloop laid up in 1830.

⁹¹⁶ HMS *Brisk* (1819), another 10-gun *Cherokee*-class brig-sloop that later served in the West Africa Squadron and on the Cape of Good Hope and South America stations.

⁹¹⁷ HMS *Hind* (1814), a 20-gun sixth-rate post ship, renamed after being built at Topsham as *Barbadoes*.

⁹¹⁸ Rear-admiral Sir Thomas Fellowes (1778–1853), a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars who commanded the *Dartmouth* at Navarino.

⁹¹⁹ Lieutenant-George William Howe Fitzroy (1803–1827) of the *Dartmouth*, son of Lieutenant-General William Fitzroy (1773–1837), and grandson of Charles FitzRoy, 1st Baron Southampton (1737–1797).

were alongside the Turks blew themselves up – it was the most shocking sight I ever saw – the loss in one boat was immense, upon this all hands immediately commenced blazing away. We had upon us the frigate we were immediately opposed to besides another one and the Corvette[,] after having been exposed to the fire of these three for about a quarter of an hour, the *Armide*⁹²⁰ French frigate came in and gallantly laid herself alongside of the frigate farthest from us, so we had then only our friend of 54 guns and occasionally some shots from the Corvette and two batteries, after having been engaged with this frigate from 2½ o'clock until 5 she stuck to us and hoisted the English ensign, the Corvette kept it up until ½ past when she was also silenced partly by us and partly by a Russian liner. The *Cambrian* and *Glasgow* came in about an hour and a half after the action had begun and silenced the batteries. About ½ past 5 all the ships had done firing, at sea the batteries also. When we had been engaged about an hour a Russian frigate coming in fired two shots by mistake right into us, upon which the captain sent me on board to tell him in our cutter with four men and I can tell you the shots were flying about at a terrible rate. Standing close alongside of us, when I went [and] got on board, they nearly pulled my arm off, crying 'English for ever', and the captain told me to give his compliments to Captain Spencer and to say he was only sorry and would take care – it did not happen again. At six when all was over, I was sent on board [to] the Admiral to see if he was alive and to tell him how we got on. When I got alongside I never saw anything like the way she was riddled, her mizzen mast was gone by the board, all her masts wounded her top gallant yard shot away, her sides full of holes and in short a complete cripple, however I was glad to see the Admiral unhurt and her two captains. I told him what we had done and Captain Curzon slapped me on the back and said, 'well done Talbot', he told me their loss was very great. I then returned on board.

We had one midshipmen and five men killed, 18 wounded among which is our 1st lieutenant clerk and schoolmaster, I may think myself very lucky for while we were in the heat of it, being rather short of shot, all the men at the nine pound long gun were down getting them except the Captain of the gun who with the schoolmaster and clerk were trying to run her out, he said, 'come, Mr. Grey, give us a pull', he and I clapt on the larboard tackle the other two the starboard, when a shot came in took off his left arm, broke his thigh bone, laid his entrails quite open, and shattered his right hand and arm – he lived an hour – the splinters broke the clerk's leg, severely wounded the schoolmaster in both arms, and I was

⁹²⁰ Commanded by Grey's friend Hugon: see pp. 67, 69.

knocked down by the poor Captain of the gun falling over me, and covered with blood I got up as quick as I could and helped the clerk below, and as soon as I could got on deck again, worked away at the guns as hard as I could, the Turkish fleet is completely destroyed, they were burning all that night and nearly the whole of yesterday, there are only a couple of Corvettes and a few transports remaining out of the immense fleet, which did consist of six Liners 4 double banked frigates, 20 large frigates, 24 Corvettes, 14 brigs besides fire brigs, transports making altogether about 110 sail. The loss on board the *Asia* is I believe her Master, Captain of marines and 18 more killed, about 20 wounded on board the *Genoa*, 27 killed and 29 wounded, among the former I am sorry to say is Capt. Bathurst,⁹²¹ the *Albion* loss is immense but I do not know it, the *Dartmouth* 7 killed and 10 wounded, *Talbot* 18 wounded and 6 killed, the *Hind* 13 killed and wounded, all the rest have lost some but not so much in comparison, the French admiral and *Armide's* loss is very severe indeed, but I cannot describe any more about it and am afraid you will not make head or tail about this. Captain Spencer has refused the *Glasgow* and says that he always liked his ship and more than ever now. Captain Maude⁹²² has the *Genoa*, the captain of the *Rose* the *Glasgow*, Lord Ingestre goes home with despatches and this among the number. As soon as we are fit for sea we go with the rest of the squadron to Malta to refit, if I get back to England I may give you the correct account, but as for writing it I cannot, we are in such confusion. Tell Bessy and all hands the news, give my very best love to Mama & sisters & brothers [...]

PS. I will try my hand at writing a better letter from Malta. You really must excuse this, you can have no idea of the state we are in, our wounded being up on the steerage deck, thank heaven the captain does not leave us.

5: Captain R.C. Spencer to Countess Grey, October 1827

Captain Spencer informs Countess Grey of Grey's safety and conduct

I wish you joy from my heart, your boy is safe & well and has seen as hard fought an action as need be. The *Talbot* for 2 hours engaged

⁹²¹ Walter Bathurst (1764–1827), who had served in the Navy since 1780; he was one of the 36 children of Sir Benjamin Bathurst (1692–1767), the long-serving Tory MP for Gloucester (1713–1767).

⁹²² Sir James Ashley Maude (1786–1841), the son of Cornwallis Maude, 1st Viscount Hawarden (1729–1803); he was entered into the French Order of St Louis and the Russian Order of St Anna in honour of his service at Navarino.

closely & finally beat & took possession of a 60 gun frigate on 2 decks. Talbot is particularly mentioned in the Com'r in Chief's public & private despatches to the Ld H.A.⁹²³

6: George Grey to Earl Grey, HMS *Talbot*, 4 November 1827

Grey writes to his father from Malta after Navarino; allied casualties, damage to ships

Here we are up Dockyard creek with our masts out, getting all ready to go into the lofts when our quarantine is out, which it will be next Friday. We arrived here on the 31st of last month in company with the Brisk, having met the Isis⁹²⁴ on her way to join the Admiral, with letters for everybody on board except me. She had been told of the action by a brig that heard the cannonading and explosions at the distance of 65 miles dead to windward. The Asia, Albion, & Genoa with the Philomel and Mosquito brigs came in yesterday, the Dartmouth is gone with Lord Ingestre to Ancona and is then to bring the Admiral's family here from Leghorn, the Rose is gone to Smyrna. The Glasgow and Cambrian, owing to their not having come in until the action was nearly over, are so little damaged as to be able to return to their stations.

One of the forts here has been given up entirely to the sick and wounded of which I am sorry to say there are a great number and, owing to the quantity of grape and all sorts of double-headed shot and old bits of iron, they are mostly very bad wounds, but they are doing very well considering. When the Russians come in, there will be about 360 wounded, that is counting both squadrons.

It is I believe very doubtful whether they can repair us here or not as we have two lower deck beams all shot away, besides I don't know how many timbers. One gun [is] dismantled and all our spars wounded, [so] we shall be forced to have a new Mainmast. The other two will do. Our three line of battle ships will be forced to go home. The Genoa in particular is very much cut up; she has got a marble shot which cut away both her transoms⁹²⁵ and it weighs 102 pounds. We have got a 60 pounder and one or two 46s that stuck in us. No shot went through the Asia's lower deck, her sides are so thick and being built of teak. They talk of us sending us home but

⁹²³ The lord high admiral at the time was the duke of Clarence, later William IV.

⁹²⁴ HMS *Isis* (1819), a 50-gun frigate which became a coal depot at Sierra Leone.

⁹²⁵ The crossbeam planking which reinforces the sterns of ships.

I hope not, not that I shouldn't like, of all things, to come home, but I want to see it out, because it cannot last much longer and if the Greeks are worth their salt they will soon have the upper hand.

The *Alacrity*⁹²⁶ sails in a day [or] two for England and is to touch at Lisbon to send the Line of Battle ships that are there here immediately, at least so they say. If I was sure I would write to Charles; if you write, give him my love. Good bye. I have no news to tell you. You will hear all about the action in the newspapers. I suppose you have got the letter I wrote by Lord Ingestre long before this. Give my best love to all [...]

7: Countess Grey to Grey, Howick, 22 November 1827

Relief of Grey's mother at his safety; discontent at British involvement at Navarino

No words can express what I have felt ever since the account of that dreadful battle. Captain R. Spencer, with a kindness I must ever bless him for, wrote to me directly, & I owe him, having been assured of your safety before I had heard of the action. Your letter came the next day. I still shudder when I think of the danger you have been exposed to, & I never can be sufficiently grateful to Providence for having preserved you to me, my beloved boy. Good God! When I reflect upon the misery which I have escaped from, & which other wretched Mothers are at this moment suffering, I must indeed be thankful! I am grown foolishly nervous about all my Children, who are, if possible, become more precious to me since we have been deprived of that beloved one, who is always present to my mind, & whose loss must for ever embitter every moment of my life. But my dearest George these melancholy reflections have no business in a letter which ought only to express gratitude to Heaven for your preservation. I trust that there *can* now be no more fighting, as there seem to be no enemies left. It is dreadful to think of the loss by which this Victory has been purchased, & particularly when the policy of fighting at all seems to have been, at least, doubtful. I hear the public feeling is very much against the Gov't for their breach of faith towards the Turks,⁹²⁷ but this detracts nothing from

⁹²⁶ HMS *Alacrity* (1818), a 10-gun *Cherokee*-class brig-sloop built at Deptford.

⁹²⁷ Despite allegations of a 'breach of faith' and the discussion of an 'untoward event' (see pp. 37, 40), it is worth underscoring that the Treaty of London (1827) permitted the allied commanders 'to exert all the means which circumstances may suggest to their prudence'.

the brilliancy of the action & the bravery with which it was fought. The little Talbot appears to have had more than her share of the danger but has also the fame she deserves. Give my love to Cap'n Spencer & tell him how heartily we wish him joy of his triumph. I was in hopes the Talbot might come home to be repaired, but I am now afraid you will go to Malta & be absent another year. I hope you have received all the things you asked for. I believe they were sent by the Dartmouth [...]

8: George Grey to Earl Grey, HMS Windsor Castle off Mytilene, 2 September 1829

Grey complains of a stalling career; Navy keeps watch on Russo-Turkish War; Grey reports on the expected Treaty of Adrianople

As there will be a ship going in a few days to Egina, and it may be some time before there is another, I take the opportunity of writing to explain to you the reason why I have not joined the Madagascar. She joined the squadron about a fortnight ago with a sick Lieutenant, who has since invalided, and Sir Rob't Spencer was good enough to apply for me to join him but, for some reason which I cannot make out, the Admiral would not appoint me, but told him he might have any other he liked. I breakfasted with the Admiral the next day and all he said was that he thought I had much better remain in this ship for the present, and desired me to remember him to you. Capt. Bouverie is very much against my going, and asked me if I disliked remaining in his ship, [and] I told him that I liked her very much but that I was desirous of joining the Madagascar because she was less likely of being ordered home, and that you also wished me to do so. I think another vacancy is very likely to occur in her, before we are ordered home, and if one should, Capt. Spencer has promised to apply for me again. Not that I think it is possible for me to be more comfortable in any ship than I am in this and Capt. Bouverie has been exceedingly kind to me. I have not had an angry word from him since I joined, [and] I also think it has done me a great deal of good being in a sea-going Line of Battleship for a short time, especially as we have all been cruising together for some time and the Admiral has been putting us through every Evolution that it is possible for a fleet to perform; we were divided into two squadrons about a week ago and had a sham fight, firing blank cartridges at each other as hard as we could, for two hours and a half; the liners are a great deal more at sea than the small craft, therefore I think if I can get into

the Madagascar by the end of the year, or before this ship is ordered home, I don't think I shall have lost anything by not having joined her sooner, for if we should come to blows with the Russians the Liners are sure to have the most of it.

Sep'r 5th. We arrived here last night and are now at Anchor off the plains of Troy about five miles below the Entrance of the Dardanelles. There is a formidable squadron here of 20 sail, 13 English, 5 Russian & 2 French and nine of them liners. We expect the news of all being settled every hour; the Ambassadors are at Adrianople for the purpose of settling it and the demands of the Russians are extremely moderate; they have an army of 90,000 infantry, & 14,000 cavalry, before Adrianople, and they do not allow even an Officer to enter the town without leave. Both parties are very anxious for peace [...]

[P.S.] Sep'r 8th. The treaty of peace is to be signed on the 14th.⁹²⁸

9: Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 3 December 1829

Frederick Grey without a ship; fears for peace in Europe

I received a short time ago your letter begun on the 2nd & finished on the 8th Sept'r. I am afraid you have not heard from us so often as you ought to have done. I trusted that others would write, [and] the same excuse will probably be pleaded by them, & you have, I must acknowledge, too much cause to complain of us all.

I read with great pleasure your account of your comfortable situation, in the *Windsor Castle*, of Captain Bouverie's kindness to you, for which I feel truly obliged to him, & of the advantageous way in which you have been employed. I could not wish you to be in a better Ship, or under a better Captain. My only reason for recommending the Madagascar was that I thought that a Frigate wd be more at Sea than a Line of Battle Ship, & that I had experienced Captain Spencer's kindness & attention to Frederick.⁹²⁹ What the Admiral's reasons could be for refusing to appoint you at Ld R. Spencer's request, I have no notion, but I have no doubt that he did it, as thinking it best for you. After what you say, I have not the least wish that you should leave the *Windsor Castle*, unless you find it more advantageous to do so, on account of that Ship's coming home, & being paid off, before you will have served your time. I feel however most grateful, as you should also, to Ld R. Spencer for his

⁹²⁸ See n. 219 for the Treaty of Adrianople.

⁹²⁹ A compelling reminder of the role of patronage in the Grey brothers' naval careers.

wish to have you with him, and beg that you will express this feeling to him, with my kindest remembrances. Say also every thing that is civil & proper for me to the Admiral [...] I hear nothing as yet of a Ship for Frederick, but I hope it will not be long before he gets one. I shall be sorry to part with him, but he ought not to remain too long out of practice.⁹³⁰ I hope all danger of war is over for the present, but all Europe is so uncertain & [in] so critical a state that I cannot count with any confidence on the continuance of peace⁹³¹ [...]

10: Countess Grey to George Grey, London, 29 March 1831

Countess Grey reports on the Reform Bill in the Commons; speeches on Reform in the Lords

[...] We are all in high spirits, quite uplifted at having carried the Reform Bill tho' only by One, that number has much increased in popularity since it has done us such good service.⁹³² It really was a great triumph in such a H. of Commons, & against the immense exertions of the enemy, they had mustered the sick & dying (I had almost said the dead). There was one man with leeches actually on his head⁹³³ in one of the waiting rooms & Sir R. Peel was desired not to speak at last, but to hasten the division as the sick could not possibly hold out half an hour longer!

Last night I was in the House of Lds during the whole debate⁹³⁴ & I was nearly dead of the fatigue, but quite repaid for it by hearing your Father speak at last. He was not well, & very tired, yet there was nobody to compare to him, tho' I was lucky enough to hear almost all the good speakers. On the side of the Opposition, the debate was wretched. Ld Wharncliffe⁹³⁵ was the only person who could speak at all, & his speech, tho' rather good, was more

⁹³⁰ It was not until November 1830 that Frederick Grey obtained command of the *Actæon*.

⁹³¹ The description of 'peace' in December 1829 appears to exclude Austrian naval operations against Morocco and the Liberal Wars in Portugal; still, the earl was correct that the coming months would be precarious, with conflicts soon breaking out in France, Poland, Belgium, and Algeria.

⁹³² On 22 March 1831, the second reading of the first Reform Bill passed the Commons by 305 votes to 304, which was the largest division in parliamentary history at the time.

⁹³³ Unidentified.

⁹³⁴ *Hansard*, Lords, 28 March 1831, 3rd ser., vol. 3, cc. 983–1085.

⁹³⁵ James Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie, Baron Wharncliffe (1776–1845), the grandson of the former prime minister John Stuart, the earl of Bute (1713–1792), and a future minister

calculated to serve our cause than his own. The D. of Wellington was lamentable⁹³⁶ [...]

11: Countess Grey to George Grey, London, 3 October 1831

Death of Charles Lambton; struggles of Reform in the House of Lords

You probably expect a letter, but will be grieved at receiving the dreadful news it must bring you. Poor Charles Lambton⁹³⁷ died a week ago at Brighton & to describe the dreadful state in which Lambton & Louisa are is beyond my power [...] Your Father has been so dreadfully affected by it, that He has not been able to turn his mind to the struggle that awaits him.⁹³⁸ Tomorrow will be an eventful day. They tell me we are to be beat in the House of Lds, which will probably cause a row, but which will not defeat the measure in the end.⁹³⁹ The people will never abandon it. I long to hear from you dearest George & to know how you like your Ship & your Officers.

12: Countess Grey to George Grey, East Sheen, 13 November 1831

Family affairs; cholera at Sunderland; defeat of Reform in the Lords; Bristol riots

Henry tells me there is an opportunity of writing, which I eagerly seize to ask you how you do? I wish my own dearest boy that you were near enough to answer me, but one of the greatest miseries

in both of Peel's governments; Wharncliffe's speech is at cc. 983–1010 of the debate cited immediately above.

⁹³⁶ Wellington's speech is from cc. 1063–1074. The remaining sheets of this letter are missing.

⁹³⁷ Charles Lambton (1818–1831), the elder son of John Lambton and Grey's sister Louisa. He died of tuberculosis but is remembered in *The Red Boy* (1825), a portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830).

⁹³⁸ When an amendment proposed by General Isaac Gascoyne (1763–1841) wrecked the Reform Bill in committee, the earl requested the dissolution of Parliament, pursuant to which the Whigs won a majority (370 seats) in the general election of April–June 1831. There remained, however, an anti-Reform, Tory majority in the Lords.

⁹³⁹ Following five days of debate, the second reading of the Bill in the Lords was defeated by 41, an event which prompted rioting throughout Britain, especially in Nottingham and Bristol (see nn. 290, 291).

of absence is the uncertainty as to the actual state of those we love, at the moment I write you may be ill or unhappy! But I will rather look on the bright side of the picture, & imagine you in perfect health & in the full enjoyment of your own ship. I was delighted to hear both from Fred'k & Charles that she really is a very fine one, notwithstanding her bad reputation formerly, & that she sails as well as the Actaeon. I hope you will have many opportunities of trying this by being together at Corfu, where besides Frederick's company I believe the shooting may be an attraction. Henry talks of going to Howick next week to have some in Chevington wood. Georgiana goes with him & I do not quite like the plan as they say the real Cholera is come to Sunderland.⁹⁴⁰ The Doctors are not agreed in opinion & some still say is not the Indian, but it is something that kills nearly as expeditiously & will answer the purpose of thinning the population as well. I cannot say that I am at all frightened as yet tho! When I see it I probably shall not be more courageous than my neighbours.

We expect Charles every day. His Horses are come. Francis is gone to Cambridge, & I hear he likes it very much. Harry must alas! soon join his Reg't & William is going somewhere but it is not exactly decided where. I cannot bear the thoughts of losing them all. Your Father has had a most dreadful cold, which has weakened him exceedingly, nothing relieves his cough & I am growing quite unhappy about him. It has lasted ever since the debate upon the Reform, however Mr Hammick⁹⁴¹ expresses no alarm & I trust to his assurances. The news papers will have given you a full account of all public events. The rejection of the Bill, & the Bristol riots, which I hear might have been easily checked at the beginning had not the Magistrates been utterly helpless, & the Commanding Officer of the troops there, something worse.⁹⁴² Nothing could have been better than the soldiers. The disposition of the middle classes seems to be so excellent, that I hope all will go well, that is supposing that the Bill is carried; it never can be either modified or abandoned [...]

⁹⁴⁰ The second cholera pandemic (1826–1837) arrived in Britain, first at Sunderland, in late 1831 (see n. 282). Attributed to passengers from the Baltic, the epidemic prompted the Grey ministry to impose quarantine restrictions on all ships sailing from Russia, where St Petersburg was the epicentre, to Britain.

⁹⁴¹ Sir Stephen Love Hammick (1777–1867), surgeon extraordinary to George IV and William IV.

⁹⁴² For the Bristol riots see nn. 290, 291.

13: Countess Grey to George Grey, East Sheen, 17 April 1832

Threat of civil war or revolution in England; Grey's prospects of promotion

You ask me two questions which you might as well expect the man in the Moon to answer as me, viz: Whether there is to be war⁹⁴³ & when you are to be promoted? I really know nothing about either. I sincerely hope War may yet be avoided in spite of the wickedness of the tories who wish to drive us into one merely to turn us out tho' if they should succeed in their object, I do not see what they would gain. Probably the people who are now satisfied with a reasonable reform would insist upon a radical one, & if refused we should have a revolution. I do not believe the tories would like losing their estates better than we should. As to your promotion, it has, as you say, been long promised, & I hope it will come at last. Your Father spoke to Sir J. Graham about it yesterday, when he said there was no vacancy at present. If you go out, you may be sure he will promote you before he leaves the Admiralty.⁹⁴⁴ I do not know how the fleet is likely to be employed, but while there is a chance of its being wanted at all, I cannot hope to see you as you cannot be absent. I suppose however this must be soon decided.

14: Countess Grey to George Grey, Sheen, 29 April 1832

Busts arrived from Malta; difficulties for the Third Reform Bill in the Lords

Your letter of the 22nd arrived a week ago, my dearest George & I was delighted to hear that you were well & happy. I am so very glad you like your Ship better than you expected, as certainly we had not heard a good report of her. I hope you will meet Frederick & be a good deal together.

The Busts arrived safe, for which I thank you very much, tho' less than I should do if you had vouchsafed to send me one of yourself! Why did you not do so? Did you suppose I did not care about your ugly phiz & did not wish to see it? If you can suppose so, you do not

⁹⁴³ 'War' refers not to foreign affairs, but to the possibility of civil war should the Reform Bill fail: the subsequent 'Days of May', when Britain came 'within an ace of a revolution', were the realization of such concerns.

⁹⁴⁴ Despite the earl's later contempt for 'jobbery', he had exploited the networks of patronage and favour which informed 'Old Corruption'; indeed, Grey and his brother Frederick had advanced rapidly in the Navy, while two sons-in-law, George Barrington (see n. 959) and Charles Wood (see n. 807) held office at the Admiralty.

deserve to be contradicted. Ly Emily is very like but not flattered. I never saw Ld Cochrane but he is reckoned very like by those who know him, & tho' I have not seen Sir W. Scott for many years I think him very like indeed.⁹⁴⁵

We have been here a fortnight, but I am sorry to say that our Holydays expire on Wednesday when we must return to Downing St. We shall I suppose have a hard fight for the Reform Bill in the Committee, but I feel very confident that it will all end well.⁹⁴⁶ Your Father is better for having been here & I hope will keep up during the struggle. Lambton is but very indifferent & very low about poor Harriet who is, I fear, in a most alarming state. She had a spitting of blood some time ago, & I own⁹⁴⁷ [...]

15: Countess Grey to George Grey, East Sheen, 30–31 May 1832

Continued debate in the Lords; Tories expected to 'suffer' Reform

Thank you, dearest George, for your letter, which was well bestowed on your old Mother, whose heart is always with you. It is sometimes a very painful feeling to reflect upon the distance that separates me from my dear boys & to know that they are exposed to a life of danger, yet there is some comfort too in knowing that you are beyond the reach of whatever bad weather I may see, & when it blows hard here I say to myself I hope it is fine in the Mediterranean!

I am to-day at Sheen entirely by myself. We came to sleep two nights here, & your Father was obliged to return early this Morn'g for the levee first, & then the House of Lords. There are only two clauses of the bill left to be discussed & we hear the Tories mean to suffer it to pass quietly.⁹⁴⁸ They are so devoid of all truth & gentlemanlike feeling, that I should not wonder at their trying to defeat it by surprise on the Report, or 3rd Reading, yet people say they dare not. I really believe that their lives would not be safe were they to attempt it.

⁹⁴⁵ See p. 54.

⁹⁴⁶ In April 1832, when the Reform Bill went through the committee stage in the House of Lords, having passed by a large majority in the Commons, opponents of reform gutted large sections of the bill, especially those that would have disfranchised large numbers of rotten boroughs.

⁹⁴⁷ The remaining sheets of this letter are missing.

⁹⁴⁸ 30 May 1832 was the seventh day of committee debate on the Reform Bill in the House of Lords.

DOWNING STREET, 31 MAY 1832. I was seduced by my desire to enjoy a most beautiful day in the garden at Sheen yesterday, to interrupt my letter, which I now resume from this most dismal town. They got thro' the two remaining clauses of the Bill last night with scarcely any opposition. The report will be tomorrow & the 3rd Reading on Monday, after which, & the Royal assent being given, we may breathe more freely. We shall I dare say have many difficulties to encounter after it, but it is a glorious triumph [...] Caroline & belongings are all well. Upon the whole tho' your Father is sometimes much worn out by his business & his attendance in Parl't. I think his health is as good as we could expect.

16: Countess Grey to George Grey, 3 June 1832

Reform Bill passes the report stage; expected to pass third reading

I hear that the letters will not go till tomorrow or Tuesday. I therefore shall write another line as an appendix to my long letter. The Report of the Reform Bill passed on Friday almost without opposition,⁹⁴⁹ & we expect the third reading to do so tomorrow when the thing will be over!⁹⁵⁰ What a wonderful triumph to have achieved! & what a glorious thing for your father to have at last had the satisfaction of carrying the measure which he proposed 40 years ago⁹⁵¹ [...]

17: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 30 September 1832

Howick and Bulteel standing for the new Parliament; canvassing already underway

[...] I am sorry to say that our time here is nearly come to an end. We set out on the 4th of Oct'r & must hasten to town, where your

⁹⁴⁹ The Lords indeed received the report on the Reform Bill on 1 June 1832.

⁹⁵⁰ Although 22 peers were 'not content', the duke of Wellington – for the same reason, fear of civil war, that he had consented to Catholic relief in 1829 – prevailed upon most of his Tory allies to abstain from voting on the third reading, thus allowing the Bill to pass. The Reform Act received royal assent on 7 June.

⁹⁵¹ 'A great number of Peers immediately crowded round Earl Grey, apparently to congratulate his Lordship upon the final success of the Bill': *Hansard*, Lords, 4 June 1832, 3rd ser., vol. 13, cc. 349–79, at c. 373. The earl had founded, with James Maitland, 8th earl of Lauderdale (1759–1839), the Society of the Friends of the People in 1792 for the purpose of advocating parliamentary reform.

Father seems to be much wanted. He has not improved as much as I expected during his respite, & I dread for him the renewal of all his vexations & fatigue in Downing St. The question between Holland & Belgium is still in a most nervous state,⁹⁵² & if they have not already begun to fight, I am afraid it cannot be avoided much longer [...]. Henry has been about the Country canvassing & seems secure of his election, tho' Ld Ossulton's standing too is not advantage[ous].⁹⁵³ His principles are at least so doubtful that we must disclaim all connexion with him, tho' he tries to have it supposed that we make common cause with him [...] Mr. B stands for the Southern division of Devonshire⁹⁵⁴ & is I hope sure of success [...] Your Brothers are going in the three days we have left, to make a *smash* among the Pheasants.

18: Countess Grey to George Grey, 5 November 1832

Enduring anxiety about the Belgian crisis; electioneering continues

Having been three days at Lord Sefton's⁹⁵⁵ where I had no opportunity of writing to you, I am now in a hurry as I am told my letter must go early tomorrow, [and] I would willingly go to sleep in my arm chair instead of trying to squeeze out a stupid letter, but I cannot let the packet go without a line to say that we are all well. Your Father complains occasionally, but He looks well & is in good spirits, tho' it is a moment of great anxiety about the King of Holland. I am sadly afraid he will insist upon fighting it out with the Belgians.

We were delighted with our excursion to Howick & only very sorry indeed to return here. However your Father was fortunate in being allowed even a month's holyday. I quite dread for him the meeting of Parl't as I hear the conservatives are more violent than ever. They say, nevertheless, that the elections are going well almost

⁹⁵² After the Ten Days' Campaign of 1831, the Dutch had garrisoned the citadel of Antwerp in newly independent Belgium; in November 1832, French forces would expel them (see p. 50).

⁹⁵³ Henry, then Viscount Howick, would be elected for the new constituency of North Northumberland alongside Ossulton at the general election of 1832–1833, the first to the reformed Parliament.

⁹⁵⁴ Bulteel would be elected alongside Russell for the new constituency of South Devon: see n. 135.

⁹⁵⁵ William Molyneux, 2nd earl of Sefton (1772–1838) and MP for Droitwich (1816–1831). A stalwart opponent of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, Sefton was known as 'Lord Dashalong' for his fondness of horse-racing, which included sponsoring the steeplechase that became the Grand National at Aintree.

every where. I hope Mr Bulteel has a very good chance of coming home for Devonshire.

19: Countess Grey to George Grey, 4 December 1832

Belgian and Portuguese crises; Radical threats to Liberal candidates; Charles Grey standing at Wycombe

We are in great anxiety at this moment about all public affairs. Portugal,⁹⁵⁶ Holland, & the elections, & your Father is exceedingly worried. We expect every day to hear that decisive measures have been taken at Antwerp, but I begin to despair of ever conquering the old Dutch King's obstinacy, tho' it is possible that having taken so many of their most valuable ships, that the Merchants may find out that it is a losing concern to them. In Portugal they seem to do nothing for themselves, & I begin to lose all interest about them, [and] the worst of it is that Miguel's success will be a triumph to the Conservatives. As to them I hear they are more outrageous than ever, but I hope the elections will go well in most places & that we shall beat them hollow in the next Parl't. In some Counties they are not ashamed of joining with the Radicals⁹⁵⁷ to beat the Liberals. Henry goes in a day or two to Alnwick, [and] I do not very well know how Charles is doing at Wycombe⁹⁵⁸ but I hope he is safe [...]

20: Countess Grey to George Grey, Lambton Castle, 31 January 1833

Illness and resignation of George Barrington

I have to thank you for your letter of the 28th Dec'r & to tell you how happy I always am to hear that you are well & comfortable. I wish I could say that we were equally so here, but you have probably heard that I am here in consequence of poor George Barrington's⁹⁵⁹ most

⁹⁵⁶ The ongoing Liberal Wars: see pp. 129–130.

⁹⁵⁷ Among the Radicals who defeated Whig candidates was the journalist William Cobbett (1763–1835) at Oldham.

⁹⁵⁸ See n. 5: Charles Grey had defeated Disraeli in a by-election of June 1832, then retained his seat at the general election, winning 140 votes to Disraeli's 119 to be elected alongside Robert Carrington, 2nd Baron Carrington (1796–1868), who topped the poll with 179 votes.

⁹⁵⁹ Grey's brother-in-law Captain George Barrington (1794–1835), the Royal Navy officer who was elected as a Whig MP for Sunderland, only to resign his seat almost immediately on grounds of health.

alarming illness, brought on by the fatigue of his election at Sunderland, when he was already very much weakened by a fit of illness. I came without much hope of finding him alive to try to support poor Caroline's courage.⁹⁶⁰ Thank God, He is so much better that the Doctors are quite confident of his ultimate recovery, but I am afraid it will be very tedious [...] I am happy to say I have good accounts of your Father's health, & I trust it will resist all the fatigue he must encounter.

21: Countess Grey to George Grey, 1 August 1833

Problems with the Church Temporalities Act; news from society

I hope that before this gets to the Mediterranean that I may flatter myself you will be on your way home [...] To begin with the most material, your Father, I hope that upon the whole he is nearly as well as we could expect tho' he has been more tired & knocked up than I ever saw him with the fatigue of the House of Lds during the progress of the Church Reform Bill.⁹⁶¹ It was unaccountably carried the night before last by a Majority of 54, & if the Commons do not take offence at a trifling amendment the whole thing will be over, & more easily than was expected.⁹⁶² Your Father seems better to day & I hope we may soon get to Howick for a few holydays [...] As to London I know but a little except that there is no end to the marriages, your love Mary Hardy to a Mr. Macgregor,⁹⁶³ [and] they say they will have one hundred a yr. & a Scotch Castle, but seriously I am afraid they are to be as poor as Job [...] old Lord Ailesbury to the beautiful Miss Tollemache!⁹⁶⁴ & his Daughter is actually married to Ct. Donnishield⁹⁶⁵ poor man he cried bitterly during the wedding & said,

⁹⁶⁰ Grey's sister, Lady Caroline Barrington (1799–1875), later a lady of the bedchamber to Queen Victoria.

⁹⁶¹ The Church Temporalities Act undertook a major reformation of the established Church in Ireland, providing for the abolition of ten dioceses upon the deaths of the incumbent bishops.

⁹⁶² In fact the day before last: *Hansard*, Lords, 30 July 1833, 3rd ser., vol. 20, cc. 113–129.

⁹⁶³ Mary Hardy (1813–1896), the daughter of Thomas Masterman Hardy, had married Sir John Murray-Macgregor, 3rd baronet (1810–1851), who died at Tortola only weeks after assuming the presidency of the British Virgin Islands.

⁹⁶⁴ Charles Brudenell-Bruce, 1st marquess of Ailesbury (1773–1856) and formerly MP for Marlborough (1796–1800, 1801–1814) had married Maria Elizabeth Tollemache (1809–1893), some 36 years his junior.

⁹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Brudenell-Bruce (1807–1847) had married the Danish nobleman Count Christian Conrad Sophus Danneskiold-Samsøe (1800–1886).

'I wish she was a little more pretty, but I am afraid I never can lofe [*sic*] her'. I think I have now exhausted my gossip & your patience.

22: Countess Grey to George Grey, 31 December 1833

Concerns about Russian encroachment on Constantinople and the Mediterranean

It is very long since we have heard from you, & as we have been forced to give up the hope of seeing you for some time, it is harder to reconcile oneself to remain in absolute ignorance about you [...] There is no news here, every thing is tolerably quiet at present, & if we should have a storm from Russia,⁹⁶⁶ it will not be unpopular here. I hope however most sincerely that it may be avoided & Peace preserved. I dare say that you are more disposed to be warlike. London is very melancholy at this season, there is scarcely a person in it that I know excepted the Hardys. Mr & Mrs Macgreggor are living with them at the Admiralty, & Ly Hardy says there never was such a loving couple [...]

23: Countess Grey to George Grey, 13 April 1835

The formation of the Melbourne ministry; Peel breaking with the Ultras; marriage of Russell

I begin writing to day tho' I cannot yet tell you any news worth hearing. I much doubt Ld Melbourne's having as yet made any progress in the formation of his Cabinet, however perhaps before tomorrow something may be decided.⁹⁶⁷ Your Father was much distressed yesterday by a most pressing entreaty from Ld Melbourne & several of his Colleagues that he would consent to return to the head of the Gov't. The King also wrote in the most pressing terms again to urge it. They tried all that was possible to prevail on him, & proposed that if the Treasury was too laborious, that he should undertake the Foreign Office. I was for a moment inclined to that expedient, for I

⁹⁶⁶ Earlier in 1833, Nicholas I had despatched Russian troops to protect Constantinople, revered as the fount of Eastern Orthodoxy, from the Egyptian forces that were in revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Then, by a secret clause of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi (1833), the Ottomans agreed in the event of war to close the Dardanelles to Russian enemies. Russian encroachment upon the Mediterranean is surely the crisis to which Grey's mother refers.

⁹⁶⁷ Upon the resignation of Peel's minority government earlier that month, the King invited Melbourne to form a ministry. As the Countess notes, the earl was offered either the premiership or the Foreign Office but declined, with Melbourne himself assuming the former and Palmerston the latter.

am vain enough to think that his appointment to that office would have been agreeable to most of the Foreign Governments & Ministers. But the attempt only distressed him as it was painful to refuse both his friends & the King. I feel sure that considering all things & the state of [the] parties, that he has judged wisely for his own happiness, but His name & character is much wanted to strengthen the Ministry. Till the Irish Church question is settled there are people who cannot act with us, but if that is ever disposed of, your Father says there is nothing to prevent a union with Ld Stanley & Sir R. Peel & then th Gov't might be strong enough.⁹⁶⁸

I certainly do not like Peel, & cannot respect him, but his conduct has been very skilful, & he has so far separated himself from the old Tories,⁹⁶⁹ as to leave little or no difference of opinion between him & your Father except on that one question. However, let what will happen, my mind is relieved by your Father's absence from the mess [...] Still I can tell you nothing. Ld Melbourne dined with us yesterday but I believe there is as yet no Gov't settled. We are told that on Thursday they may be ready to submit their plan to the King & to Parliament. Poor Ld John, who was married on Saturday,⁹⁷⁰ was sent for from Woburn yesterday. He has had a short Honey moon, [and] Sydney Smith calls it a Johnny moon [...]

24: Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 10 September 1835

The Earl meets Grey's expenses for entertaining on the Cleopatra

I yesterday received your letter acknowledging mine with the closed Bill for £300.⁹⁷¹ I am quite willing to make every reasonable allowance for the expenses, which occasioned a demand which came so inconveniently upon me, & trust implicitly to your assurance, of a careful attention to a prudent and, let me add, an indispensably necessary economy for the future. Having said this I thought it would be a comfort to you to know that you leave England without

⁹⁶⁸ The appropriation of 'surplus' ecclesiastical revenues for secular purposes was a major cause of the fall of Grey's government, and a point of difference between Whigs and Conservatives between 1835 and 1841.

⁹⁶⁹ By 'old Tories' the Countess means the 'Ultra' or 'High' Tories who broke with moderates over the issues of Catholic Relief, Reform, and the tentative embrace of change as suggested in Peel's Tamworth Manifesto.

⁹⁷⁰ Russell had married Adelaide Lister (1807–1838), the widow of Thomas Lister, 2nd Baron Ribblesdale (1790–1832).

⁹⁷¹ A brief but illuminating example of how Royal Navy officers were expected to meet the often considerable expenses of entertainment which attended their quasi-diplomatic responsibilities.

any feeling on my part, but that of the sincerest affection for a son, whose general conduct, & the character he has established in his profession, have been to me a source both of satisfaction & pride [...] I am sure I need not to beg you to avail yourself of every opportunity to write, during your passage, & after your arrival at Cronstadt.

25: George Grey to Charles Grey (brother), Buenos Aires, 12 September 1836

Dismay at Melbourne's compact with the Radicals and the Irish Repeal Party

You are a good fellow, I always thought so, and am more convinced of it now than ever [...] No person ever gives me any news except yourself and besides what little I know of Politicks makes me agree very much in your idea of things and my creed is very much that of my friend Tom Holtby, the driver of the York mail, who says 'Well Sir, them ben't Gemmin, them Rads!!' and the more one sees the language they use, the more one is convinced that he is right. If the principles of the Government are right and which I think they are, why don't they stand upon them, and not bring forward every measure as if O'Connell⁹⁷² was the only person to be thought of. It certainly is a very, very different Governm't to that of my Father's in every way and those members of it who had the luck to act with him, ought to be ashamed of their subscriptions and truckling to the Radicals. I grant that the fault lies principally with the Lords who have driven them to it, but it is not the line my Father would have taken. He is in short, too honest, & too good for their comprehension. At this distance things seem in a queerish state and beyond me, so I will spare [you] any more of my remarks.

26: Countess Grey to George Grey, Berkeley Square, 30 June 1836

Grey's pursuit of slavers; the Earl's speech on Irish municipal reform; the scandal of Melbourne's alleged affair with Caroline Norton

Till you are transformed into an old woman & have sons at sea, you will never understand how completely one's happiness depends upon

⁹⁷² By the Lichfield House Compact of February 1835, the Whigs, Radicals, and Irish Repeal Party (led by O'Connell) agreed to act in concert against the Conservatives. Because Melbourne would depend upon this alliance to bolster a diminishing majority, many observers – the Greys among them – regarded the Compact as giving too much power to O'Connell.

the winds & waves! Your last letter is dated at sea the 3rd of May. The heat appears to be excessive but I hope you have got over the season of violent rain, which must be intolerable in a ship. As to your success in your pursuit of the Slavers I know not what to say. If I thought they would submit without a struggle I should pray for your overtaking them, but I do not like the thoughts of a single shot being fired; after all, it may [prove] as fatal to me as an important action, far worse than Navarino where you escaped so narrowly, but I must not talk upon a subject that deprives me of all courage, & will now turn to the land [...]

You will be glad to hear that your Father, on Monday last, broke thro' his long silence in the House of Lds & made a speech on the Irish Corporations,⁹⁷³ which I am assured was quite excellent. It is very ill taken in The Times, which is the only paper we see. I hope you will read it in the Morning Chronicle where it is better. He is himself satisfied with his speech but it has been universally admired. Even O'Connell yesterday praised it, which rather affronts me, & all the reasonable Tories, yet the House of Lords will not alter its course, I hear, to try to avail itself of the expedient he proposes to reconcile it to the House of Commons, & what is to happen next?⁹⁷⁴ However, I am content, caring as I do about nothing but your Father's reputation; his speech, whether attended to or not, has made me happy. You may suppose how people have gossiped about the trial! I am glad it is over [and] that we may have a new topic. I am also glad that Ld M. has escaped the danger of being forced to marry Mrs N.⁹⁷⁵ The verdict, they say, could not have been different, for no credit could be given to the principal witness. This has been fortunate for us, for as to the lady I do not think there is any difference in the general opinion about her. During all the time the trial was pending, the jokes were endless on the subject & some were rather good. One on the Catechism [was]: 'What is your name?' 'M or N as the case may be!' Mrs N. removed to Downing Street, demanding on Premier? Then the Gov't was called

⁹⁷³ *Hansard*, Lords, 27 June 1836, 3rd ser., vol. 34, cc. 874–967 at cc. 918–931; in a slight on Melbourne, Grey spoke from the crossbench. This debate was one of many during the Melbourne ministry's time in office that concerned the reformation of local government, both in Britain and Ireland.

⁹⁷⁴ It was not until the summer of 1840 that Parliament passed the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act.

⁹⁷⁵ In 1836, George Chapple Norton (1800–1876), former MP for Guildford (1826–1830), had sued Melbourne, alleging an affair with his wife, the author Caroline Norton (1808–1877). A jury threw out the suit but the scandal damaged Melbourne socially and politically.

the Crim. Con.⁹⁷⁶ Administration, now it is called the Magdalen Ad'n.

27: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 25 December 1836

Resentment of the Earl's reputation; the de Ros gambling scandal

I have not heard from you since I last wrote, but I expect to do so every day. I cannot say how much I hate to think of the distance which separates you from us, & of the two years which must still be passed before we meet again! However I will hope, old as I am, to live to see that happy time! Your Father is really so well that it would do you good to see him. He is also in very good spirits, & never troubles his head about politics, which perhaps helps to preserve his health. Thank Heaven He has nothing to do with them, for I am disgusted with all I hear of them. Is it not strange however, that the person who carried the Reform bill, who proposed it before half those who now claim the merit of it, were born, should be totally forgot by the Country? His health never given at any public meeting, His name never mentioned, or mentioned to be disparaged! Never talk to me of public gratitude, or indeed of private gratitude, which is equally an illusion, I suppose, when I see him so entirely neglected by his old friends & those who owe every thing to him. It is enough to make me a conservative. But why do I write upon so disagreeable a subject? [...] You will see in the papers the correspondence between Ld de Ros⁹⁷⁷ & his accusers. I hear that public opinion is strongly against him & I am afraid there can be doubt of his having for years been guilty of cheating at cards. They say he has won at different times above £70,000, & great sums from his most intimate friends. It is quite shocking, & one must feel for his family [...]

⁹⁷⁶ Under English common law, 'criminal conversation' was a tort which arose from adultery.

⁹⁷⁷ Henry FitzGerald-de Ros, 21st Baron de Ros (1793–1839) and former MP for West Looe (1816–1818), had been accused of cheating at cards at the private members' club Graham's. De Ros lost his suit for libel and is thought to have inspired the character Sir Mulberry Hawk, a pernicious swindler, in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–1839).

28: George Grey to Earl Grey, Rio de Janeiro, 24 February 1837

Accounts of the Falklands and the Brazilian slave trade

I am obliged to you for your letter which I only received upon arriving here about a week ago from the Falkland Islands, where I had been since November, having gone there from the river Plate;⁹⁷⁸ I expected to have found a difficult navigation and to have been exposed to one continued gale of wind, but on the contrary we had generally very fine weather; and during the three months I was employed in exploring the different harbours. I never saw it blow so hard as I have constantly seen it do in England, there is nearly always a strong breeze, and seldom a calm, but gales are not frequent and the Barometer always gives ample warning, nor do they ever last more than two days, and seldom more than twelve hours. The summer months, and particularly January, are considered the most windy. The cold is not much greater in winter, never being below 30°; we never saw it below 38° or above 65, but it generally was about 55° on board, in the shade, and on shore in the valleys, I have oftener suffered from heat than from cold. The climate is remarkably healthy, sickness being almost unknown among the settlers.

At present we have only a Lieut. with four men and a jolly boat stationed at Port Louis on East Falkland, which had much better be withdrawn, as such a paltry force is a disgrace to the flag, and subjects it to insults from the American sealing vessels, some of which have from 25 to 30 men, all armed with rifles and are little better than Pirates, finding themselves in food from His Majesty's wild cattle, and of course laughing at the Admiral's circular forbidding them to do so. There are several instances of seamen who have deserted from Merchant Vessels, and having had nothing to depend on except their rifles, having made fortunes and being now the masters of fine schooners. There are at this moment some eight or ten worthless seamen at Port Louis, who landed without a sixpence and those same men have now two or three hundred dollars a piece. While I was there in one day they killed 96 seals, the skins of which sell in America at 12 & 14 dollars each, and the vessels which call will always give from 8 to 10 at Port Louis. None of these men will remain, but as soon as they have made a little money they will no longer consider themselves as English subjects but return to America & laugh at us. There were 30 fine American Whale ships among the islands last year & four French ones. One vessel got

⁹⁷⁸ For accounts of the Falklands and the Brazilian slave trade, see pp. 105–128, 131–134.

4,000 barrels of oil, and they all got good cargoes. I found out all their hiding places and hoisted the English flag in every harbour. I came upon a great quantity of oil buried, but I did not allow any of it to be touched; in one creek I found a small schooner stowed away with a gun in her, with not even a name on her stern, and as I had reason to believe that she was a vessel that had been built by some deserters, in which they had been little better than robbers, I took the liberty of using her as fire wood, of which we were in want.

With so many excellent harbours and every bay a watering place, it is a great pity that the Government does not send a respectable force to protect the fisheries. If settlers were to be encouraged, in a few years all expenses would be more than paid, and vessels bound to the Pacific would no longer have to put in to this place or to St Catherine's where the detention is much greater, and the Port dues very heavy. At the Falklands they would get excellent beef for a penny a pound, good water and fuel for the trouble of sending for it, and fish in any number, and as for geese, ducks, rabbits & snipes you may load a boat with them. I can't bear to think that the Yankees should have all these advantages to themselves, while, from ignorance and prejudice, they are of no benefit to us. While their position is so good in every way for vessels bound to the Pacific, I am certain that a ship would rather gain than lose in time by touching at them, and watching her time for starting. As the best method of showing how simple the navigation is, I have sent a chart, marking both the track of the ship and of the boat, to all those places I visited [...]

The Slave trade is carried on here nearly as publicly as the Coffee or Sugar trade. There is not a week that two or three vessels do not arrive, [and] those engaged in it from this port alone are calculated at nearly a hundred. 4,000 negroes were landed in the month of January in the neighbourhood of the harbour, and one Vessel under three hundred tons, sailed from Angola with 700 slaves on board, and, from close stowage and want of water, 400 died on the passage. The Admiral has no vessels to send out to cruise, and from Pernambuco to the River Plate they may land with perfect safety, the risk of being caught by any of our men of war is very small.

29: Countess Grey to George Grey, 1 July 1837

Death of William IV; accession of Victoria; Grey's sister, Caroline Barrington, appointed lady of the bedchamber

The Newspapers will give a much better account than I can do, of all that has passed since I last wrote, [of t]he death of the poor old

King,⁹⁷⁹ & the wonderful popularity of the young Queen. His illness was thought nothing of at first & it was only about ten days before he died that people began to despair of his recovery. He died beautifully, with the greatest firmness & nothing ever equalled his patience, & kindness to those around him. Most of the accounts of his sayings are true, & particularly his wishing to live thro' the anniversary of Waterloo [18 June]. His loss is a dreadful one to his Children, some of whom are very poor, & to them all it will be a sad change of position in the world, poor Ld. Frederick is I fear in very bad circumstances, tho' the King has given them all the same share, yet as he kept an account of all the money He gave them, some have eat[en] their cake already. The poor King was so kindhearted & so good to us in particular that I regret him sincerely, but I hope the [new] Queen is really very well disposed, [and] every body is delighted with her, & they say she is as calm & as full of self possession as if she [was] 60, & had always been a Queen. She directly told Ld. Melbourne that she should make no change in the Gov't at present, & the Tories who had been sure of her support (why I don't know) are perfectly furious. She has appointed most of her ladies & as yet they are well chosen [...] all of the liberal party, [and] she has also appointed Caroline one of her women of the bed Chamber. We have not yet had time to receive her answer, but I hope she will accept it for the sake of her Children. The Salary is 300 a yr. & the duty very trifling, but unless Caroline can also get apartments in one of the Palaces, the expense may be greater than the profit. However, we shall see about it & not refuse it hastily. The Queen has done it in the kindest possible manner [...] Charles goes out of Parliament as he cannot afford to come to London to attend it.⁹⁸⁰ I hope Henry will have no opposition. Mr Liddell⁹⁸¹ is now trying for North Durham where I hope he will not succeed. London has been very stupid owing to the King's death, & now most people are gone to prepare for the elections, [and] they seem to think the Gov't will lose by them for want of money, but I know nothing about it [...]

⁹⁷⁹ William IV had died at Windsor Castle on 20 June.

⁹⁸⁰ MPs received no salary until 1911 and it seems that even the son of an earl could not afford the attendant expenses. Instead, Charles would travel to Canada with Lord Durham.

⁹⁸¹ Henry Liddell, 1st earl of Ravensworth (1797–1878), formerly a Tory MP for Northumberland (1826–1830) and an opponent of Reform. Liddell did win election for North Durham in the general election of 1837.

30: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 30 September 1837

Nepotism of the Duchess of Bedford

You say that Ld. Ed'd Russell was talked of as being preferred to you in being sent to Mexico. We should think such an injustice impossible, were not scotch people so sure of always meeting with the best luck, & Ld. Minto being a Scotsman will be glad to favor his Countrywoman (the D'ss of B.)⁹⁸² who on her part will neglect nothing to get her sons on. I do not blame her, but I envy her her skill in such matters[.] I shall however be very angry if you are cheated of your fair turn, a little money is very much wanted in the family, but we were all born, as they say, under a twopenny planet [...]

31: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 1 December 1837

Whig reliance on the Repeal Coalition

We have been for some time quite alone with the exception of Louisa's Children, & really the life we lead here is so very uninteresting & unvaried, that it furnishes nothing to say, particularly when my letter is to go to the other end of the world [...] Caroline is also in the Queen's household & I hope that her situation is not likely to depend upon politics. You will be glad to hear that the Queen has been particularly kind to her, & has given her an apartment at Windsor, which will in future be her home. I do not know exactly when she is to take possession of it, but I hope soon. I am delighted to hear that she does not appear to be either shy or awkward in her attendance, which surprises me however. The Queen is very fond of her little Girl who is a beautiful & very amusing child.⁹⁸³ Nothing ever equalled the praises that we hear of our young Queen, [and] parties agree in saying that she is most amiable & considerate towards everybody who comes near her. She is very fond of Ld. Melbourne & unless he is forced out by the Radicals,⁹⁸⁴ I think she will not change

⁹⁸² Georgiana Russell, duchess of Bedford (1781–1853), the mother of Lord Edward Russell and the step-mother of Lord John Russell.

⁹⁸³ Caroline's and Barrington's daughter, Mary Barrington (1833–1894).

⁹⁸⁴ At the general election of July–August 1837, the Whigs – leading a coalition including Radicals and Irish Repeal candidates – won 344 seats, giving Melbourne a slim majority which depended on O'Connell's continued support.

her Ministry, but your Father thinks that their folly in yielding to them formerly, will now very likely produce this result. They are weak enough to give way, & no concession will continue to satisfy people who only wish for mischief. Had your Father's Gov't not been broken up, he never would have suffered it to come to this, indeed in 1833, O'Connell & his clique were entirely beaten, & never would have rallied again had they not been encouraged & supported by our Radical friends. I believe they are sorry now for the state of things, which they have themselves occasioned [...]

32: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 28 January 1838

Lambton sails for Canada, Charles Grey with him

I know that you like to receive anything in the shape of a letter, so that I write without having a word to say, or any sort of security that you will ever receive this stupid attempt [...] You will probably see before this reaches you that Lambton is going out to Canada as Governor,⁹⁸⁵ Louisa, & the Children accompany[ing] him, & unless something unforeseen occurs they will embark in April. I need not tell you how painful this new separation from poor Louisa is to me, particularly to such a distance & under all the present circumstances. I was at first very much alarmed at the idea of the climate which I feared might be injurious to her health & that of all their family, but I am now assured, (& I must hope with truth) that tho' intensely cold, the climate is not an unhealthy one, & I believe it to be preferable to that of St Petersburg. However, be this as it may, I must resign myself to what I cannot prevent, & hope if I can, to live to see them return in safety. It will be an arduous undertaking, but if Lambton is fortunate enough to succeed in quieting the Country, & preventing the horrors of a civil war, it will I own be a satisfaction to him. Nothing can be more gratifying than the universal satisfaction which his appointment appears to have given, at the same time the Gov't have in this, as in most other cases, very much mismanaged the business, & it seems still to be doubtful whether the Tories will suffer them to give Lambton such powers as may justify his accepting of the mission. I am not sure that Charles may not accompany him as his Military

⁹⁸⁵ See pp. 4, 177: Lambton was appointed governor-general of British North America and arrived there in May 1838. Within months, however, he had lost Melbourne's confidence and resigned in October.

Secretary.⁹⁸⁶ He wishes to do so, but there is some doubt whether it may be a prudent step for him to take [...]

33: Countess Grey to George Grey, Berkeley Square, 25 March 1838

Grey's relations in government; resentment of honours

I missed writing to you at the beginning of this month which I have been reproaching myself for ever since [...] Caroline I find much improved both in looks & spirits [and] I think her being in the Queen's household has been very useful to her. Mary & Mr Wood⁹⁸⁷ are going on just as you left them at the Admiralty, & Henry at the War Office.⁹⁸⁸ Their tenure however seems to be rather an insecure one, as I believe it depends entirely on the will of O'Connell, [and] they certainly neglect no means of propitiating him as they say he has the entire disposal of the Patronage in Ireland, & much influence in England. He dined yesterday with Ly Holland! I like Ld Melbourne personally & he has been good natured enough about Charles & Caroline so that I should be sorry to see him turned out, but I cannot feel any thing like respect for him or his Colleagues. Some of their appointments have caused great disgust, particularly giving the Red riband to Colonel Evans,⁹⁸⁹ [and] they say the Army & Navy are equally indignant at it. We have dined one day at the Palace & were delighted with our young Queen. Her manner is most pleasing, & in everything she has shown a degree of good feeling & right judgment that is very wonderful at her age. It would be a pity to see her fall into the hands of the Tories [...]

34: Countess Grey to George Grey, London, 1 May 1838

Theft of the Duchess of Leinster's diamonds

Here is the time for writing to you come round again, but instead of any thing agreeable to say to you, it has only brought to me an

⁹⁸⁶ See n. 23: Charles indeed went to Canada but returned with Lambton.

⁹⁸⁷ See n. 807: Grey's sister Mary had married Charles Wood, then-first secretary of the Admiralty.

⁹⁸⁸ Howick had been secretary at war since 1835, serving until 1839.

⁹⁸⁹ Evans was knighted in 1838 in recognition of his command of the British Legion during the Carlist Wars.

increase of stupidity, which is also added to, by the uncertainty of your ever receiving my letter. I have not the slightest idea of where you are, but I like to flatter myself that you are already bound towards home, & that we shall have the happiness of seeing you in October or November [...]. Of London I can tell you very little as I never stir out of my Chimney corner. I believe the Balls & parties are beginning, but the weather has been so dreadful that people are unwilling to go out at all at night. The town has been ringing of a scandalous story, which I am afraid will prove true[. Y]ou may have seen in the papers that the D'ss of Leinster⁹⁹⁰ had been robbed of her diamonds worth from 15 to 20,000£. She has, it is said, recovered them, & the robber is strongly suspected to have been her own Brother, Mr. Francis Stanhope!⁹⁹¹ The jewels were stolen from her room in Dublin where she went to go to some ball. The police it seems immediately suspected Mr. Stanhope who came to England & is supposed to have sent them to a Jew, who, when a great clamour ensued, took fright & restored them to the Duke. It was hoped the story might be hushed up but tho' the exact version may not be known, it soon became public, & the wretched man is gone to America. I cannot conceive a greater calumny to a whole family than such a disgrace being proved against one of them. The Duchess of Leinster is unlucky in her relations, for Ld de Ros is her first Cousin [...].

35: Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 27 September 1838

The Earl expresses dismay at Grey taking the Cleopatra to St Petersburg

Tho' your Mother has written to you both to day & yesterday, I cannot help writing a line to express for myself, the happiness I felt in hearing of your safe arrival at Portsmouth. I had looked forward with a pleasure which I cannot easily describe to seeing you here almost immediately, & I have felt disappointed in proportion, at the determination taken by the admiralty to send you to the Baltick. It is very hard both on you & the crew to be sent on such an expedition so immediately after your arrival, & is a new proof

⁹⁹⁰ Charlotte Augusta, duchess of Leinster (1793–1859), wife of Augustus FitzGerald, 3rd duke of Leinster (1791–1874).

⁹⁹¹ Major Sir Francis Stanhope (1788–1862). The *Court Gazette* of 5 May 1838 reports that the magistrates at Henry Street, Dublin, issued a warrant for Stanhope's arrest 'on a charge of being concerned in the robbery of the casket of diamonds belonging to the Duchess of Leinster'.

of the total want of arrangement with which the Naval Service is now conducted. Why the *Pique*⁹⁹² originally intended for this service was sent to another destination where, as it appears to me, a single ship of her force can be of little use; why the *Actaeon*, then ordered for the Baltick, is not now to proceed there, and why a Ship after a long absence & which probably is not without defects, with little time to prepare, is now selected for a service which, at any rate, has been delayed till a period much too late, are questions which I find it impossible to answer, except in the way that I hear the whole conduct of the admiralty criticised, that there is neither system nor foresight, in any part of their management. I really feel quite angry; but we must look forward with the hope, that after this unexpected & unnecessary delay, we may at last be able to spend our Xmas here comfortably together [...]

36: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 1 March 1840

The royal wedding and Prince Albert's titles; defeat of the government

This very moment I have received your very agreeable & penitent letter of the 24th [...] Your Father is remarkably well, & enjoys as he used to do, being out all day with his wood cutters [...] Lambton does not recover as well as he ought to do, & I cannot feel at all at ease about him. He is I fear dreadfully weak, [and] they have taken a villa at Putney, but as yet he is quite unable to move. The Queen is said to be very happy & she & Prince Albert⁹⁹³ are the merriest couple possible[. P]oor people, they had better enjoy themselves while they can, for nothing can be less prosperous than public affairs. The Gov't I see by today's paper was beat again the other night by 38 in the H. of C's, ⁹⁹⁴ & I hear that the Opposition have often the power of beating them in numbers, & have always the best of it in debate. Indeed the Ministers have been making a miserable figure, yet people think they will struggle on till the end of the session[.] I

⁹⁹² HMS *Pique* (1834), a 36-gun fifth-rate frigate built at Devonport which saw action in the Crimean and Second Opium wars before serving as a receiving ship then a hospital ship until being broken up in 1910.

⁹⁹³ Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1819–1861) on 10 February 1840.

⁹⁹⁴ The government was defeated by 28, not 38, following a debate of 27 February on the pension of Sir John Newport (1756–1843), formerly Chancellor of the Exchequer of Ireland (1806–1807) and comptroller general of the Exchequer (1834–1835); *Hansard*, Commons, 27 February 1840, 3rd ser., vol. 52, cc. 669–739.

have no doubt of their clinging to their place as long as they can, at any price or sacrifice of principle[;] their chief support is the Queen's dislike of the Tories, which they have themselves aggravated by their strange conduct on Prince Albert's precedence.⁹⁹⁵ The D. of Wellington is said to be well again,⁹⁹⁶ but after an attack of Paralytic nature no dependence can be placed on his continuing so [...]

37: Earl Grey to George Grey, 3 August 1840

The death and funeral of Lord Durham

This I hope will find you well, after your melancholy voyage, at Lambton. I have written very fully to Morton,⁹⁹⁷ & I had explained myself so fully to you before left Cowes, as to every thing respecting the Funeral,⁹⁹⁸ that I hope nothing can occur to create difficulty or delay in your proceedings. Whatever you & Morton may decide, after consulting together, I am sure will be right [...] I am so beset that I hardly know what I write.

38: Countess Grey to George Grey, Howick, 5 November 1840

Grief of Earl Grey at the death of Lord Holland

[...] Your Father has felt very deeply the loss of Ld. Holland⁹⁹⁹ & the sort of separation which had unfortunately occurred between them has very much aggravated his present grief. Death is such a softener of all resentment! & then I am convinced that poor Ld. Holland never ceased to love him, tho' feeling that for the sake of keeping his place he had acted on many occasions in a manner which your Father disapproved[.] He was naturally awkward & ill at ease in his society. But I am sure he regretted his having been forced to retire

⁹⁹⁵ Although styled 'His Royal Highness', Prince Albert was denied the title of 'king', and Grey makes this entry in the context of both Conservative opposition to Albert's financial settlement and Conservative insistence on Albert's declaration of Protestantism.

⁹⁹⁶ Wellington had suffered a stroke while riding in London in February, his second in four months.

⁹⁹⁷ Henry Morton (n.d.), Lord Durham's agent.

⁹⁹⁸ Durham had died of tuberculosis on 28 July 1840 on the Isle of Wight.

⁹⁹⁹ See n. 714: Holland had died of an 'obstruction of the bowels' (*ODNB*) on 22 October.

while most of the others rejoiced in having got rid of a man who would never stoop to any dishonor, & was therefore inconvenient [...] We hear more favourable reports about Peace, & we hope it may be preserved.

39: Countess Grey to George Grey [at Pau], Howick, 22 January 1841

Possible resolution of the Oriental Crisis

[...] We grow so used to our own chair, our place at dinner, & a thousand trifling indulgences, that if any visitor happens to interfere with them, it becomes a grievance. Then we contract ugly tricks, & grow selfish, these are the evils of old age, but living entire with their own family, may produce effects as bad tho' of a different kind upon the young [...] We have heard of no news at all of late, but by the papers your Father thinks that the dispute with Mehemet Ali is at last settled by the Porte's agreeing to his terms,¹⁰⁰⁰ I only hope that we may escape war, tho' I am not sure your wishes are equally pacific [...]

40: Countess Grey to George Grey [at Pau], Howick, 7 February 1841

Macaulay insulted at the Colonial Office

[...] Sir Colin Campbell¹⁰⁰¹ called at the War Office according to custom before going to take possession of the Govern't of Ceylon. He had hardly sat down when Mr. Macaulay¹⁰⁰² began by saying that he thought it very odd that Ld. John Russell had given this appointment to him, instead of to some person of his own politics. Sir Colin was, not very unnaturally, offended at this, & answered rather sharply, that he had served the Crown very many years, &

¹⁰⁰⁰ In the Oriental Crisis of 1840, part of the wider Egyptian-Ottoman War, there loomed the prospect of France (backing Egypt) and Britain (backing the Ottomans) going to war. The French ultimately withdrew their support of Muhammad Ali Pasha, who nevertheless established hereditary rule over Egypt.

¹⁰⁰¹ Sir Colin Campbell (1776–1847), senior aide-de-camp to Wellington during the Peninsular War, who was lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia (1834–1840) and the eighth British governor of Ceylon (1841–1847).

¹⁰⁰² Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1st Baron Macaulay (1800–1859), the Whig politician and historian who at the time was MP for Edinburgh (1839–1847) and secretary at war (1839–1841).

had never found that his politics had prevented him from doing so faithfully. Upon which Mr. Macaulay began talking about the emoluments of the appointment, & said they had been fixed too high. Sir Colin answered that he had accepted what had been offered to him. But that he did not think the salary & allowances too high considering that he was to have the double duties to perform of the civil Government of the Colony, & of the Military command. Upon this Mr. Macaulay said, 'That's very true, but still I am sure that many worthy Officers might have been found who would [have] been glad to have accepted the employment with much lower emoluments'. Sir Colin replied, 'Perhaps so, & I have no doubt that in this very Office, there are many very excellent clerks who would perform the duties of Secretary at War, as well as yourself, for half the salary. I mean no offence'. This story has been ascertained to be strictly true, & those who know Sir Colin's manner are much amused at it.

41: Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 14 February 1841

Frederick Grey appointed to the Endymion; French activity in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea

[...] You will have heard that Fred'k sailed on the 2nd, in company with the Ireson's boat, to try the sailing of the Endymion. Sir Graham Moore¹⁰⁰³ praises him in the highest degree; says that the state of the ship, & her manner of going out, considering the shortness of the time she had been in commission, were quite remarkable. I need not tell you what pleasure this gave me. His first destination is, by the Cape of Good Hope & through the Mozambique Channel, to Aden. What he is to do there, I don't know, but he is I believe afterwards to look into the Persian Gulph, & then to cross to India, from whence I am not without hope that he may be appointed to bring Lord Auckland¹⁰⁰⁴ home. Everything however seems threatening as to the probability of war, & if this sh'd happen his situation may not be a pleasant one. The French have lately sent out four frigates,

¹⁰⁰³ Admiral Sir Graham Moore (1764–1843), formerly first naval lord under Liverpool (1816–1820), commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet (1820–1823), and then commander-in-chief at Plymouth (1839–1842).

¹⁰⁰⁴ George Eden, 1st earl of Auckland (1784–1849), formerly the Whig MP for Woodstock (1810–1812, 1813–1814), president of the Board of Trade (1830–1834), and first lord of the Admiralty (1834, 1835), and at the time of this letter the governor-general of India (1836–1842). With his sisters, the novelist Emily Eden (1797–1869) and Fanny (n.d.), he was the namesake of Eden Gardens, the great cricket ground at Calcutta.

of the largest class, full of troops, to the Isle of Bourbon. It is supposed that they have in vain the making of two establishments, one at Madagascar,¹⁰⁰⁵ & the other on the coast of Abyssinia nearly opposite to Aden.¹⁰⁰⁶ If this sh'd lead to a Collision I sh'd not despair, tho' he wd. be greatly matched, that Fred'k might give a good acc't of any one of the frigates single handed [...]

42: Charles Grey to George Grey, Buckingham Palace, 26 June 1850

The diplomatic and political fallout from the Don Pacifico Affair

[...] I am, never since we came to London¹⁰⁰⁷ [...] free from the chance of interruption and it sometimes tries even my [...] equanimity to its [limits] to look [...] pleased & cheerful, when I could wish my plague on Jericho at the moment. This is the part of my duty which I dislike most [...] As wrong as I believe Palmerston to be about peace, I have no doubt in the unsettled state of the Country that outrages have been committed of which British subjects in the shape of rascally Jews,¹⁰⁰⁸ and still more rascally Ionians, have come in for their share, but the height & front of this offending doubtless is that he keeps a Ministry¹⁰⁰⁹ in Office of which the French Minister is the Partisan, & ours the Opponent, on purely personal grounds both. But the fault is in our Minister¹⁰¹⁰ having any party. Even supposing our Claims are just in themselves. It is not enough that we are right in fact, we ought to be evidently so [to] the world, as it is there is not a corner of Europe where the Conduct of England in sending this fine fleet to bully such a wretched Gov't is not the occasion of our mitigated disgust. I am told too that Drouyn de l'Huis¹⁰¹¹ explains that Lord P. has completely deceived him about the acceptance of French good Offices (not Mediation!).

¹⁰⁰⁵ France would not annex Madagascar as a protectorate until 1882; it became a French colony in 1897.

¹⁰⁰⁶ It was not until 1884 that France established a colonial presence in Somaliland (present-day Djibouti).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Charles Grey was appointed private secretary to Prince Albert in 1849.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Don Pacifico: see n. 896.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The Greek government of the former naval commander Antonios Kriezis (1796–1865); despite Charles Grey's subsequent comments, Kriezis and his government were of the informal 'English Party'.

¹⁰¹⁰ Sir Thomas Wyse: see n. 157.

¹⁰¹¹ Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys (1805–1881), the French diplomat and four-time minister of foreign affairs (1848–1849, 1851, 1852–1855, 1862–1866) during the Second Republic and Second Empire.

His promises to them and his instructions to the Admiral being directly at variance, & that in consequence the French gov't has stopped the departure of their negotiators. But my paper warns me to think of finishing – I should have liked never to have said a word or two in Home Politics. – On the division of the other night,¹⁰¹² the inference to be drawn from it [...] in my opinion is shortly this – you may look upon Gladstone¹⁰¹³ and the so called Peelites who voted with him as being henceforth united with the Protectionists. Peel,¹⁰¹⁴ Graham & some dozen others remaining as before between the two parties, or rather with a great approximation [...]

43: Charles Grey to George Grey, Buckingham Palace [n.d. but December 1851]

Proclamation of the Second French Empire; removal of Palmerston

I enclose a letter from Caroline Grey. You will be astonished by the news of Palmerston's retirement, & you wd be more so if you knew the whole history – The Times has very correct information (too correct –)¹⁰¹⁵ on the subject. In spite of P's faults he will be a great loss to the Gov't & I regret this business very much. I wrote to him expressing this feeling & I have a very cordial answer from him. Happily I had nothing to do with the crash.

¹⁰¹² The government had lost a division in the House of Lords (*Hansard*, Lords, 17 June 1850, 3rd ser., vol. 111, cc. 1293–1404) on Greek affairs, but this refers to the government's subsequent victory in the Commons following Palmerston's '*Civis Romanus sum*' speech: *Hansard*, Commons, 25 June 1850, 3rd ser., vol. 112, cc. 380–444.

¹⁰¹³ William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), then a backbench MP for Oxford University (1847–1865), and later the four-time Liberal prime minister (1868–1874, 1880–1885, 1886, and 1892–1894).

¹⁰¹⁴ Peel's speech on the Don Pacifico Affair on 28 June 1850, the last of five days of debate on the issue, was almost his last act: he fell when riding the next day and died on 2 July.

¹⁰¹⁵ On 2 December 1851, Louis Napoleon (1808–1873) had seized power and proclaimed the second French Empire, reigning as Napoleon III (1851–1870). Palmerston, as foreign secretary, had issued despatches to the British ambassador in Paris, Constantine Phipps, 1st marquess of Normanby (1797–1863), without first consulting the monarch. Accordingly, *The Times* of 25 December 1851 reported that Russell would sack Palmerston and appoint Granville Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Granville (1815–1891) in his place. This, as Grey notes, proved 'too correct'.

44: Henry Grey, 3rd Earl Grey to George Grey, House of Lords, Thursday [n.d. but 1852]

Collapse of the Derby government; likely formation of the Aberdeen ministry

As we are now so near the impending change of Gov't¹⁰¹⁶ I wish to know whether if it wd be profitable to procure such a thing for you, [if] you wd wish to have a lordship of the Admiralty?¹⁰¹⁷ I cannot be sure that it wd be got, but I think it most probable that it might, as Wood¹⁰¹⁸ I believe will certainly be a member of the new cabinet. As to myself I am not as certain as I was that I shall not be so, although I still mean to avoid embarking in a new administration which seems to me very likely to be so unqualified as to command the confidence of the country, I may find it difficult to avoid joining it.¹⁰¹⁹

I greatly doubt whether a political office of this sort which you would hold for only a very short time is desirable for you or not, as it will I fear at first expose you to some expense, & you wd also probably be expected to come into Parlt & might not find it easy to give up your seat in the event of going out of office so that you might be put to inconvenience in having to come to town to attend your duty in the H. of C without any salary to meet the encreased expenses, let me however know your wishes to guide me if an opportunity wd appear.

45: Charles Grey to George Grey, Buckingham Palace, 19 February 1853

Disraeli on French relations; the threat of invasion; British readiness

Disraeli¹⁰²⁰ broke ground last night in a two hours' speech of great power on the subject of our relations with France.¹⁰²¹ Dilating on

¹⁰¹⁶ The December 1852 collapse of Derby's minority government, which had stayed in office after the general election of that year only with the support of the Peelites, followed by the entrance of the Aberdeen ministry.

¹⁰¹⁷ There does not appear to have been a formal offer to Grey, who was still at Gibraltar at this time.

¹⁰¹⁸ Sir Charles Wood (see n. 944) who became Aberdeen's president of the Board of Trade.

¹⁰¹⁹ Henry was not invited to join Aberdeen's government and never again held high office.

¹⁰²⁰ Disraeli was leader of the Conservative opposition in the Commons from December 1852 until the second Derby ministry of 1858–1859.

¹⁰²¹ *Hansard*, Commons, 18 February 1853, 3rd ser., vol. 124, cc. 245–311 at cc. 245–282.

the policy of always maintaining a good understanding with that country. And trying to prove from the speeches of some of the present Ministers on the hustings [that] they were not the men to maintain that understanding. His speech was certainly calculated to make it difficult, & that probably was his object, & for this he should have [been] fired into by Lord John – instead of trying to reunite expressions which cannot be reconciled. He should have exposed the motives which prompted the attack, & shown how ill it became a man to talk of his wish to maintain amicable relations with France, & at the same time to take the course the best adapted for making it impossible to do so. The French papers, I hear, at least these like the *Journal des Débats*,¹⁰²² are more angry with those who have raked up, than with those who made these speeches. Nobody – not even Bright¹⁰²³ & Milner Gibson,¹⁰²⁴ heartily, agrees with this – Cobden¹⁰²⁵ in his Utopian scheme of sending a civil message to Louis Napoleon¹⁰²⁶ to ask him to disarm & to disarm ourselves!! – we should soon be in the position of the Northern Lords in 2nd part Henry IV¹⁰²⁷ who dismissed their army on appearances from Lancaster and Westmorland that they would do the same. We are to be cassé en souffrance – But cassé because everybody sees we are ready to repel attack – & as long as we are not so, we shall always be liable to sudden alarms – & expensive measures taken under the influence of panic, & abandoned as soon as the panic abates. In an economical view therefore I am convinced it would be cheap to put ourselves permanently in such a position that no one would dare even to threaten us, & I should like to see a Standing Navy of 50,000 men instead of 45,000 permanently voted [...]

¹⁰²² *Journal des Débats*, the weekly French newspaper that carried an exact record of debates in the French parliament, which then consisted of the Sénat and the Corps Législatif.

¹⁰²³ John Bright (1811–1889), the radical politician who at the time was MP for Manchester (1847–1857).

¹⁰²⁴ Thomas Milner Gibson (1806–1884), Bright's fellow MP for Manchester (1841–1857).

¹⁰²⁵ Richard Cobden (1804–1865), the free-trade campaigner who, at the time, was MP for the West Riding of Yorkshire (1847–1857).

¹⁰²⁶ See n. 1015.

¹⁰²⁷ In *Henry IV, Part 2* (1596–1599), John of Lancaster and the earl of Westmorland promise the rebels – the archbishop of York, Mowbray, and Hastings – that they will disband their armies if they do the same, but then arrest them and deliver them for execution.

46: Henry, Earl Grey to George Grey, Howick, 7 July 1855

The Earl on Russian strengths and weakness; Russia preferable to the Ottomans; Russell's apparent duplicity during negotiations at Vienna

[...] As to the 'aggressive' view of Russia, I do not think I differ from you at all.¹⁰²⁸ I have never mentioned the ambition of Russia (though I do not in this respect see any difference between her and other powers) but I differ from most People in thinking that with all her ambition she never can be at all dangerous to us. And that our true interest was to abstain from interfering between her and Turkey. I have never yet heard an intelligible explanation of the dangers we had to fear from Russia. No man in his senses can suppose that however strong she may be as a defensive power, she cd possibly attack us at home or would have the slightest desire to do so – the bugbear of her attacking India is also I think now pretty well understood to be as little really to be feared.¹⁰²⁹ Even therefore if she had got possessed of Turkey, I don't see how this would have hurt us – on the contrary, although I am far from an admirer of Russian gov't I cannot doubt that it is infinitely more favourable to our commerce and to the civilization of the world than that of Turkey. Compare the accounts of the signs of improvement and of advancing wealth which we found on the shores of the sea of Azov with the barbarism and decay which prevail under the Turkish rule, except in those provinces where the Christian population is large enough and strong enough to maintain to sort of half-independence. Surely it is better for our commercial interests and for the interests of humanity that countries richly endowed by nature should be under a government which in spite of all its faults is proved by the result not to be unfavourable to the material prosperity of its subjects, rather than under the dominion of the Turks which is found to be a complete bar to improvement and effectually to keep down industry. But it is also perfectly clear that whatever may be her ultimate views, Russia had no immediate designs on taking possession of Turkey – all she aimed at was exercising a certain amount of influence over the Turkish government, and if we had abstained from interfering the Turks would have submitted to this, & very violent disturbance of the status quo of these countries would have been averted. But this, as I argued last year, was what was most to be desired. The

¹⁰²⁸ A copy of this letter is held as GRE/B99/3/12–15 within the papers of Henry, 3rd Earl Grey, at Durham University Library's Archives & Special Collections.

¹⁰²⁹ Here, Grey invokes the 'Great Game' over the control of Central Asia.

Christians in the European provinces of Turkey were daily getting stronger, richer & more civilised. The repeal of our corn laws had given an immense impulse to improvement in that part of the world, & if peace had been maintained this population wd in a few years have become able to protect itself against the tyranny of either Turks or Russians.

But there is another consideration which is of most importance in estimating the danger of Russian power to the rest of the civilized world. In modern warfare wealth & intelligence are infinitely more powerful than mere physical force, the costly instruments of destruction which have now been invented can neither be provided nor used with effect by nations not possessing great pecuniary resources, & not able to command the services of large numbers of intelligent & educated men. This becomes more and more the case with every new improvement in the application of science to the purposes of war, & there can be no doubt that every day those nations which have made most progress in wealth & civilization are becoming more superior to others in warlike powers. Hence, unless Russia were so governed as to encourage commerce & civilization she must during peace be continually falling further & further behind the free nations of the world in all the elements of real power. If on the other hand Russia were so governed as to favour the progress of industry and the general improvement of her population, it is quite certain that increasing wealth & knowledge would gradually change the feelings and disposition of that population, & they would not long submit to being mere unreasoning instruments in the hands of a despotic sovereign. Conflicting interests between different parts of so vast an empire & different classes of its subject would also grow up, and thus if the empire were not broken up, as it probably wd be, at all events it wd become impossible for one man to use its whole united strength for his own purposes as heretofore. The result is that the continuance of peace tended every year to render Russia less dangerous to other nations because, if she discouraged education, trade & industry, these nations would become continually relatively stronger than her. If on the other [hand] she promoted the advance of her people materially and intellectually, she would gradually have undermined & must ultimately have overthrown that system of government which enables the Emperor of Russia to use so many millions of men as machines to carry into effect his own ambitious views. This is a dilemma from which Russia could find no escape and which rendered the preservation of peace the obvious policy of those who are afraid of her power. You also express regret that I should have praised Russia – perhaps I may not have expressed myself with sufficient caution, but I think if you will look carefully at what I have

said it will hardly amount to praise, altho' I have recognised (as I think it was right to do) the possession of some great qualities by the late Emperor.

Today's paper, which has reached us this evening – I get the paper by the express train the day it comes out – has filled us with astonishment. Ld John's conduct seems to me quite indefensible and his position must be greatly damaged – Can the government stand such an exposure?¹⁰³⁰

47: Admiral Edmund Lyons to George Grey, *Royal Albert*, 8 September 1856

Thanks from Lyons and Raglan for Grey's efficiency during the Crimean War

As you will probably be a Flag Officer before the expiration of your leave of absence and consequently be relieved from your Post at Gibraltar, I feel it to be my duty as Commander in Chief on this Station,¹⁰³¹ and a very pleasing duty it is, to record whilst you still hold that Post, the high sense entertained by the late Lord Raglan, as Commander of the Forces, as well as by myself, of the valuable services rendered by you in expediting the transit of the requirements of the Crimean Expedition to which we were indebted for very opportune arrivals of men, ammunition and stores at critical moments. The successful results of your exertions for the improvement of Gibraltar as a Naval Station¹⁰³² speak for themselves, and they cannot fail to be of incalculable benefit to Her Majesty's Service.

¹⁰³⁰ Russell had abandoned the Aberdeen ministry over the conduct of the Crimean War, resigning as lord president of the Council in January 1855. Invited back indoors by Palmerston, he became colonial secretary in February. Sent to Vienna to negotiate an end to the Crimean War, Russell had supported the maintenance of a Russian fleet in the Black Sea; upon returning to London, however, he backed the Allied demand for neutralization of the Black Sea. When the Austrians exposed this apparent duplicity, Russell was accused of accommodating the Russians and even of misleading the Commons, upon which he resigned once more in July.

¹⁰³¹ Lyons, with HMS *Royal Albert* (1854) as flagship, was commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Station throughout the Crimean War.

¹⁰³² Grey had remained a captain at Gibraltar and the naval officer in charge of stores (i.e. materials used for building and repairing ships).