1849–95, English statesman; son of the 7th duke of Marlborough. A sincere Tory and a founder (1883) of the Primrose League, dedicated to upholding national institutions, he was nonetheless opposed to the traditional structure of Conservative rule. On entering (1874) the House of Commons, he began to attack the Conservative ministry with the incisive rhetoric for which he became famous. During William Gladstone's Liberal ministry (1880–85) he allied with other Tory independents to form the so-called Fourth Party, which advocated a new conservatism, more democratic and more receptive to the need for social and political reforms. Acquainted with some of the problems of Ireland, having accompanied his father, the viceroy, there (1876–80), he was committed to continued union but recognized the extent of maladministration and was opposed to coercive measures. Churchill's appointment (1884) as chairman of the National Union of Conservative Associations and his advocacy of increased popular participation in the party organization provoked a breach with the aristocratic leadership of Lord Salisbury, but Churchill's popularity necessitated Salisbury's acceptance of him into the new Tory government in 1885. He was secretary of state for India (1885–86) and chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the House of Commons (1886). His first budget implicitly criticized the entire foreign policy by its proposed drastic cuts in funds for the armed services. It was rejected by the cabinet and Churchill resigned. There was no effort at reconciliation and, unexpectedly, no popular outcry. Churchill continued as a member of Parliament but had no further active political role. In his last years he was crippled by illness. His American wife, Jennie Jerome, whom he married in 1874, was a leader in London society. She was the author of Reminiscences (1908) and two plays, Borrowed Plumes (1909) and The Bill (1912). She died in 1921. Sir Winston Churchill was their son.

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