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English  
Political Leaders

WILLIAM PITT

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*ENGLISH POLITICAL LEADERS*

WILLIAM PITT

BY

LEWIS SERGEANT

AUTHOR OF "ENGLAND'S POLICY, ITS TRADITIONS AND PROBLEMS,"  
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## CONTENTS.

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| CHAP.                                  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. THE SITUATION . . . . .             | I    |
| II. THE RISE TO OFFICE . . . . .       | 17   |
| III. THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER . . . . .  | 33   |
| IV. PITT AS A PEACE MINISTER . . . . . | 49   |
| V. PITT AND THE REVOLUTION . . . . .   | 68   |
| VI. PITT AS A WAR MINISTER . . . . .   | 88   |
| VII. PITT AND IRELAND . . . . .        | 104  |
| VIII. THE ENGLISH PROPAGANDA . . . . . | 125  |
| IX. PITT OUT OF OFFICE . . . . .       | 153  |
| X. PITT'S RETURN TO POWER . . . . .    | 178  |



## CHAPTER I.

### THE SITUATION.

A HUNDRED years ago England was passing through a crisis of extreme danger and significance. If the Napoleonic wars had not involved us in a yet more significant and dangerous crisis we might possibly have dated our modern era of peace and reform from 1790, instead of from 1830. But in that case also it would have been the emergence of the country from vast perplexities which prepared its entrance upon a new path of political and social progress : we should have been found renewing our strength and putting forth our national energies on the morrow of a day of great disasters, great sacrifices, and great triumphs over powerful enemies.

The quarter of a century which followed 1790, crowded with events of surpassing magnitude, has overshadowed the quarter of a century which preceded 1790. And yet this latter period, which found the elder Pitt just excluded from office, and left the younger Pitt firmly established in the confidence of his countrymen, was marked by some of the most notable occurrences in our history. It was in 1765 that Grenville—the second joint of the stunted tail of politicians to whom George III. intrusted the affairs of England in the room of Pitt—passed the ill-omened American Stamp Act. Two years before this the first joint of the tail, the Earl of

Bute, had made himself responsible for the Treaty of Paris, which abandoned much of what had been gained for us by the skill of a great statesman and by the brilliant victories of our generals and admirals. Pitt had rendered the name of England redoubtable throughout the world. In 1757 Clive had won the Battle of Plassey. In 1758 an English force took and for some time held the town of Cherbourg on the French coast. In 1759 Wolfe and his comrades in arms had subjected Canada. In 1760 we had destroyed the French empire in India. In 1762 we wrested Martinique, Grenada, and Santa Lucia from France, Havannah and Manilla from Spain. No year was without its triumphs. One man could boast that he had added three empires to the dependencies of his native country. And though the peace of 1763 deprived us of some of our conquests, the best of them still remained. The empire in America, the empire in India, and the empire of the sea were monuments of English vitality by which Chatham was wont to console himself for the evil days on which his old age had fallen.

But the credit of England sank to its lowest ebb in the decade which witnessed the death of Chatham. Under Lord North we began the fatal struggle with the American colonists. Within half-a-dozen years two British armies had surrendered to the enemy. We were simultaneously at war with France, Spain, Holland, America, India, and Ireland. In 1779 the French and Spanish fleets rode the Channel, and our admirals could not venture to meet them. A panic seized the whole country; camps were formed, the militia was actively drilled, the southern and eastern ports were in constant alarm. A royal proclamation ordered that if the Frenchmen or the Spaniards

should effect a landing at any point, all the cattle were to be driven inland without delay. The inhabitants of Plymouth were held in the utmost suspense for several days by sixty men-of-war; hundreds of them fled from the place in terror; hundreds of those who remained cut down the timber in the parks and private grounds in order to strengthen the defences of their port. There was no confidence in the Government, and apparently very little confidence in the army and navy. Mrs. Harris, mother of the first Earl of Malmesbury, wrote to her son at St. Petersburg: "We have an additional prayer in the churches; that is all we have to avail us." Deep humiliation had settled upon the minds of Englishmen. They had already lost America—they were soon to see it formally abandoned by a convention signed in Paris; valuable possessions were ceded in different parts of the world at the demand of France, Spain, and Holland; whilst in the same year, under something very like compulsion, a separate Parliamentary constitution was conferred upon Ireland—not as a remedy of wrongs or a concession to justice, but as a desperate escape from insurmountable difficulties.

The annals of the time supply abundant evidence of the critical nature of the problems by which English statesmen were confronted. Faction in the House of Commons had been vigorous and pernicious enough before King George intensified it by his bad selection of Ministers, and by the combination of partiality and obstinacy with which he intermeddled in public affairs. Whilst the King laboured to restore an exploded idea of the royal prerogative, the people at large and their champions in Parliament were firmly resolved to oppose any reactionary tendencies of this kind. In 1780 Dun-

ning moved, and actually carried against the Government of Lord North, a resolution to the effect that the influence of the Crown was increasing, and ought to be diminished. Outside the House men regarded with yet greater impatience the conduct of the discredited Ministers, and showed their dissatisfaction by public disorders. The Gordon riots are generally set down to religious fanaticism, and to the promptings of restless fanatics like the nobleman from whom they have taken their name. But a contemporary observer,\* with at least some apparent reason, avers that religion was only a pretext for the real motives of this outbreak, which he attributes to "American treachery and English treason," and which may doubtless have been caused by a sense of irritation at the misgovernment of the country. That this irritation did exist, and that it was very widely felt, there can be no question. The imperfect representation of the people in Parliament, added to the notorious corruption of the public services, tended to keep the feeling alive, and occasionally to make it break all bounds. The first Marquis of Lansdowne, who as Earl of Shelburne was Prime Minister in 1782 (the younger Pitt being his Chancellor of the Exchequer), complained of the hostility to reform displayed by "every officer and every servant" of Government, conscious of "abuses which if reformed, however liberally, would not only change their whole existence, but in the course of the examination might prove their criminality."†

The climax of distress and discontent was reached in

\* Mr. Batt, Q.C., writing to Sir James Harris, afterwards Earl of Malmesbury, June 5th, 1780.

† "Life of William, Earl of Shelburne," by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, vol. iii. p. 329.

the year just named. The ablest, the most courageous, perhaps the most honest Cabinet which had held office for twenty years, became the scapegoat of a line of more or less incompetent Ministers. It fell to the lot of Lord Shelburne and his colleagues to conclude a peace with the French, the Spaniards, the Dutch, and the Americans. It is doubtful whether any other statesmen in their place could have made better terms; it is certain that no statesmen could have made terms which would not have been condemned as humiliating, and which would not have rendered them unpopular in the country. It is in the honourable record of this Cabinet that it attempted a reform of the public services; and a swarm of enemies having influence at their command immediately waged war against it. For twenty years there had been strife and bitterness amongst the leading partisans of every political faction; but no Minister had insisted on such a thorough-going programme as that to which Shelburne had won the King's assent. Early in 1782, when the succession to the premiership lay between him and Lord Rockingham, he had declared for Parliamentary reform, for a reform of the system of revenue and expenditure, and for the impeachment of Lord North. On Rockingham's death, when a Shelburne Ministry was actually installed in office, Pitt described its policy as one of "peace, economy, and reform." That this was in the widest sense a popular policy, the General Election of 1784 may be held to have proved. But in the meantime it helped to bring Lord Shelburne into odium, and contributed to his downfall.

Even men to whom the professed principles of Shelburne were in theory most acceptable were found amongst his sharpest critics. Fox coalesced with North to drive



him from power. Burke, who had not long since procured the passing of a measure of economical reform, found in the efforts of Lord Shelburne a theme for rhetorical condemnation. No doubt there was something more than faction in the motives which determined the censure of the Cabinet in 1783. The treaties with France, Spain, and the Americans had stung the self-respect of Englishmen, though many were compelled to admit that they were the best treaties attainable under the circumstances. It was, moreover, a legitimate contention of Fox and his supporters that treaties and cessions of territory ought to be considered in Parliament before their final ratification. These arguments sufficed to justify the Coalition Whigs in their own minds; but the public opinion of that day, and more unequivocally the opinion of a candid posterity, did not acquit them of the charge of faction.

The fall of Shelburne gave occasion for the rise of the younger Pitt to that dizzy height which no man of his years had ever attained, and at which perhaps no man of his years could hope to maintain himself with equal credit. Pitt was not twenty-four when Shelburne's Administration came to an end in February, 1783. From July in the previous year he had held office as Chancellor of the Exchequer; and four months before that he had refused an inferior post under Lord Rockingham. The early test to which his powers were submitted had not found him wanting. He had grappled with the national accounts, and had not been mastered by them. He had crossed swords with Fox and Burke, and had acquitted himself in a manner which won plaudits from all sides. And he had more than once faced with credit a majority of the House—as he did in

the debate on Lord John Cavendish's resolutions on the Peace, when, defending his chief and denouncing the "unnatural coalition," he all but averted the impending disaster. "If the baneful alliance," he exclaimed in his peroration, "is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnised, I know a just and lawful impediment, and, in the name of the public safety, I here forbid the banns."

The indignation of the young Minister was not assumed. It was shared at the time by all who were not carried away by political partisanship; and it has been shared by successive generations of Whigs and Tories alike. The confederacy of sworn foes who had so often and so bitterly opposed each other did indeed attain its immediate object in getting rid of Lord Shelburne; but it was condemned by the moral sense of the country. The King was encouraged by this feeling to dismiss Fox and North soon after their appointment; and it was then that the seals of office were delivered into the hands of Pitt.

The arena of politics into which the young but highly trained athlete had descended, and where in less than three years from his entrance he figured as the most conspicuous gladiator of all, had been familiar to him from a boy. He was born and bred for Parliament. To follow in his father's steps had been his dream and aim in life. He had frequented the gallery before he had a right to the floor, and thus the face, the attitudes, the talent, and the tone of every prominent member on either side of the House were for him as the contents of a well-thumbed book. He had watched the fray from

his vantage-ground, eager to take a part in it; he had criticized the strategy of the combatants, distributed his praise and blame, overthrown every weak argument to his own satisfaction—occasionally also to the conviction of the debaters with whom he was privately brought in contact, and who marvelled at the power and wisdom concealed beneath that boyish exterior.

What must have struck him more than anything else, even if it did not move him to silent contempt, was a certain want of decisive principles and of uncompromising political integrity, especially amongst some of the prominent party chiefs, either holders of or candidates for office. When he took his seat, and for fourteen months afterwards, Lord North was Prime Minister; and every one knew that Lord North had practically given up his own individual judgment, and submitted to be the instrument and mouthpiece of the King. George III. was responsible for this amongst other things, that the ordinary and salutary distinctions of party had been weakened, whilst there was a disposition at Court and in Parliament to rank the members of the House as "King's friends" and Opposition. It was the idea of the monarch that his friends—or, in other words, the Ministers who would think as he thought and carry out the policy which he approved—ought to be always in office; and he therefore strove to keep Lord North at the Treasury long after that weak and unfortunate statesman had desired to be relieved of his duties. The character which is given of North by his contemporaries is a better and more genial one than might be expected by the student of history who judges men simply by the record of their public acts. His chief crime seems to have been weakness. Both in his earlier and more

confident period and amidst the falterings of his later official career, he displayed a subservience to the King little suited to the ruler of a self-willed country, whose fortunes had been so recently directed by the greatest Peace Minister and the greatest War Minister whom England had ever had. Lord North's popularity and power were virtually at an end when Pitt entered the House as member for Appleby ; and it must have been with a grim satisfaction that the son of Chatham watched the last flickering of an authority which the King and the King's friends had extolled above the authority of his father.

The Prime Minister who had succeeded North was not a man to arouse much enthusiasm. The Marquis of Rockingham was as weak in his way as Lord North had been ; and, though personally one of the most amiable of leaders, he had not the vigour of mind, nor the skill in managing his colleagues and subordinates, which were necessary for success in 1782. In Lord Shelburne Pitt found a captain who appealed more directly to his loyalty and esteem than Lord Rockingham could have done. Shelburne had been a friend, a follower, and a pupil of Chatham, and under him the son of Chatham found himself associated with Camden, Grantham, Townshend, Temple, and other men of undoubted honour and ability, who made it their boast that they were guided by Chatham's principles. The leader of this section of the Whig party took his stand on a declaration of the elder Pitt, that England ought not to be governed by any oligarchical faction or by any mere family connection, and that it could not be so governed without danger to the Constitution. He assumed office with more of independence than his three predecessors at the Treasury ; and his programme was one in which the youngest and

yet the haughtiest of his colleagues was able to concur without a moment's hesitation. He undertook to make peace and to save the public money, and he sanctioned, if he did not initiate, a course of economical and departmental reform. His Administration would have endured longer and his achievements would have been greater if it had not fallen to his lot to arrange treaties based on a renunciation of English territory. But he did enough, and administered the affairs of the country sufficiently long, to establish a high reputation as a patriotic English statesman.

Amongst the politicians with whom Pitt was brought into collision at the outset of his career were the group of Whigs who abandoned their posts on the death of Lord Rockingham, rather than continue in office under the lead of Shelburne. Of these Fox was the most prominent, whilst "the families" were represented by the Duke of Portland and Lord John Cavendish, and the talent of the party was placed beyond dispute by Sheridan and Burke.

Charles James Fox; third son of the first Lord Holland, was born ten years before his future rival. Like Pitt, he had entered the arena of politics when scarcely more than a boy. He took subordinate office under a Tory leader at the age of twenty-four, was a champion of prerogative and privilege, classed himself with "the King's friends," denounced Wilkes, and strenuously opposed the popular party. As his mind matured a change came over him. In 1774 he was ranged amongst the Whigs, and for the next few years his powerful eloquence was directed against Lord North and the American war. Rockingham made him a Secretary of State in 1782, and for four months he had charge of

the foreign relations of the country ; but his inability to agree with Shelburne, or his unwillingness to act as Shelburne's lieutenant, led to the division of the party on Rockingham's death. It was not the only occasion, as we shall see, on which the attitude of Fox demoralised and disorganized the party of his adoption. It was perhaps more his misfortune than his fault—for he lived in searching and critical times—but it is a fact that he combined in his political conduct the extremes of devotion to principle, at the cost of long exclusion from office, and of lax renunciation of principle when a personal or party ambition had to be served. He would not combine with Shelburne or Pitt, though both were Whigs of high ability and character. He coalesced with North, though North was a Tory whom he had talked of impeaching for maladministration.

In Burke and Sheridan Pitt was to find opponents sufficiently formidable in the tribune, though neither of the two could vie with him in statesmanlike breadth or force. Burke was a rhetorician, and perhaps little else. In his later career, when the spontaneous eagerness of youth had given way to the censorious pessimism and the oratorical fervour of advanced life, his spirit was frequently adverse to the claims of personal and popular liberty. He was as coldly unsympathetic towards the progressive aspirations of the age as Pitt was naturally in sympathy with them. Even when he styled himself a Whig, and followed the fortunes of Rockingham and Fox, it was difficult to recognise in Burke's political character the instincts or tendencies of freedom.

He was opposed to reform of almost every kind. He set a low value on truth, and on the independent quest of truth. He hated the man who did not believe in the

same religion as himself, and despised all who would tolerate such a man. He was for holding everybody fast to the narrowest doctrinal tests, and he could scarcely find words strong enough to brand freethinkers, "out-laws of the human race," "fanatic atheists"—"with every disposition" (as he said of Condorcet) "to the lowest as well as the highest and most determined villainies." The honourable men whom he "detested" or aspersed were at least as numerous as the honourable men whom he admired. As a member of the Whig party, Burke was intractable and heretical. As a representative, he claimed the right to set the opinion of his constituents at naught. As a follower, he held himself free to criticize and protest against the plans of his leader. No man could depend upon his judgment. When his friends spoke of extending the franchise, he declared that it would be better to increase the independence of the voters by diminishing their number. He had no faith in the people—not because they were without political education, but because he believed that the widening of the franchise, by making the new voters politicians, would make them "more lawless, more idle, more debauched." The reformers thought (as we know to be the case) that increased political privileges would elevate rather than degrade the people, and they wished not only to multiply voters but to appeal to their decision with greater frequency. Burke strongly opposed both these wishes; and he was so little dissatisfied with the representative system as he found it that he defended the privileges of placemen and pensioners on the very ground which he denied to those who claimed the elementary privilege of a vote. "Is it not better, he asked, that the greater part of those who hold civil employments, and of such mighty and im-

portant bodies as the military and naval establishments, should have even a corrupt interest in the forms of the constitution than that they should have none at all? ”\* No champion of prerogative and divine right could have discriminated more nicely between the privileges of placemen and the pretensions of the unenfranchised classes.

Burke made his peace with Pitt after the latter was fairly embarked in his policy of antagonism to France. In 1794 he received the offer of a peerage, and it was mainly the death of his son which prevented him from becoming the first Lord Beaconsfield. In lieu of this honour he received a pension of £1,200 a year, augmented in 1795 by a further grant of £2,500. There were few who grudged this solace to the old age of a politician who, though his judgment seems to have been occasionally blinded by prejudice, was doubtless sincere in the opinions which he formed.

Sheridan was a more persistent adversary. He declared war on Pitt as early as 1783, when he tacked to the young Minister the nickname of “the Angry Boy;” and he maintained the assault up to the year of Pitt’s death, when he spoke of his return to power as “the greatest national calamity.” The personal antagonism in this case was thoroughly mutual, and the passages at arms between the two men were often characterized

\* Burke’s argument is quoted in the words of Mr. John Morley (“Edmund Burke: a Historical Study,” p. 108). Mr. Morley holds that “nothing can be more rational and well-considered” than this line of argument. Certainly such an argument would have been rational and well-considered if it had been applied to advocating an extension of the franchise—if Burke, for example, had maintained that it would be better to give the claimants an interest in the government of the country than to deny them any interest at all.



by very shrewd thrusts from the younger. None of Pitt's thrusts was shrewder than one which he delivered in 1804, in the course of a debate on the state of the Navy. Pitt had given a discriminating support to Addington's Administration. In this instance he unsuccessfully asked the House for a vote which would have implied censure upon Lord St. Vincent. Sheridan defended the Admiralty, and in his reply Pitt made cruel reprisals upon the eloquent *bon viveur*. "Among the many assaults," he said, "which I have had to repel this evening was one from a very brilliant flash of lightning, a meteor which for some time has moved neither on the one side nor on the other; a meteor whose absence all may with me have regretted; a meteor which, on its return, concentrating its force, has fixed its rays of resentment and indignation against me—but in whose blazing face I can look without fear or dread."

The sally was scarcely in bad taste according to the canons of the time, and it must have been highly relished by a House which well knew why Sheridan's face was given to blazing—a House whereof, not long after, some of the members saw him prepare for an attack on Pitt by pouring a bottle of Madeira into a bowl and drinking it off at a draught.

These were amongst the most prominent of the men who occupied the political stage when Pitt added himself to their number. But beside his seniors, who had supported or opposed his father—including the excellent Camden, Thomas Townshend, Dunning (afterwards Lord Ashburton), Grafton, and the Grenvilles, with the Duke of Portland, Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville),

Lord George Germain, and others whose names have already been mentioned—there were men of the new generation, coevals and companions of Pitt, such as Edward Eliot, the friend of his boyhood, and subsequently the husband of his youngest sister, Arden (afterwards Lord Alvanley), William Wilberforce, the Duke of Rutland, and his other brother-in-law, Lord Mahon. Some of these were in the House when he entered it, and were ready not merely to receive his maiden speech with indulgence but to demand and insist upon a hearing for the son of Chatham. Others were to follow close upon his footsteps, to fight by his side, and to be raised with him to office. When he accepted the invitation of the King to form a Ministry in 1783, he drew largely upon his personal friends. The Duke of Rutland became one of his Cabinet of seven. Richard Pepper Arden was made Solicitor-General; Eliot, Rose, and Steele were placed at the Treasury, Lord Camden's son at the Admiralty, and the younger Grenville in the Paymaster's office. Thus early Pitt had a party; and there was all the elation and confidence of youth amongst the eager aspirants for fame who now planted their feet upon the first rung of the ladder. The elasticity of their minds is manifest in the reminiscence which Wilberforce has given us of the night following the completion of the new Government. "We had a great meeting," he writes, "of all Pitt's friends in Downing Street. As Pratt, Tom Steele, and I were going up to it in a hackney coach from the House of Commons, 'Pitt must take care,' I said, 'whom he makes Secretary of the Treasury; it is rather a rogueish office.' 'Mind what you say,' answered Steele, 'for I am Secretary of the Treasury!'" Lord Mahon was of the party, though he had declined the post which had

been offered to him. "What am I to do," Pitt lightly asked, "if they stop the supplies?" "They will not stop them," Mahon answered; "it is the very thing which they will not venture to do."\*

The question, nevertheless, was not a superfluous one. Pitt's marvellous leap from the associations of boyhood to the summit of responsibility and authority was more than enough to raise for him a host of adversaries. Nearly all the talent and a majority of votes were arrayed against him in the Lower House. He was called upon to dissolve Parliament; an Address was presented to the Crown for the dismissal of Ministers; Pitt himself was assailed in St. James's Street by a malignant band. So precarious did his tenure of office appear that some of his father's friends were afraid to risk their political repute by siding with him.

It was just before Christmas, 1783, that the young First Lord buckled on the armour of Chatham and Shelburne. A sharp-tongued lady said of him, with a sneer, that he might do what he liked during the holidays, "but, depend upon it, it will be only a mince-pie administration." The prophecy was curiously wide of the mark. For every day that those Christmas holidays endured—from December 26 to January 12—Pitt's Administration was destined to outlast a year.

\* The anecdote is quoted by Lord Stanhope in his "Life of Pitt."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE RISE TO OFFICE.

PITT, it has been said, was born and bred for a career in the House of Commons. As the second and not the eldest son of his father, it was possible to prepare him for the particular kind of Parliamentary work which the Lower House demands, without the paralyzing chance of removal at any moment from the front of the political stage. No doubt this fact in the first instance impelled Lord Chatham to train his younger son for Parliament, as he trained his heir for the army; and when the original impulse had been given there was no need to reconsider or abandon the plan. Nature had seconded the design of the parents—for Pitt's mother would seem to have played no inconsiderable part in shaping the mind of the boy. It was to their care that he owed his excellent education, and his entrance under the best conditions into the field of his future work and fame. But it was to Nature that he owed his mental faculties, his genius, his lofty and blameless disposition.

The precocity of Pitt in his boyhood and early youth has been dwelt upon by all his biographers. Bishop Tomline, Lord Stanhope, Lord Macaulay, have made us familiar with the story of his rapid development—of the almost instinctive appreciation which he brought to the study of the classical authors, of his proficiency in classics

and mathematics before he had ceased to be a boy, of his perseverance and steady application, of the indomitable energy with which he primed and armed himself at all points for the struggle which lay before him. His father was his first and best tutor, who directed his reading when he was not actually teaching him, who cleared his path of every obstacle, and brought him with a loving assiduity "past the bitterness of his learning." It was a happy thing for the younger Pitt when George III. dispensed with the services of the elder Pitt. It is not given to every competent father to draw out and cultivate the mind of his son; but no father could use his opportunity with more skill or to better effect than Lord Chatham. The principal aim of the statesman was to make his pupil a finished orator, and he found no better way of accomplishing his object than by casting his ideas in the moulds of Greek and Latin orators. The boy was familiar, long before he went to the University, with the language of Isocrates and Cicero. At fourteen, when he was taken in hand by Pretzman, at Cambridge, he set to work on Thucydides and Quintilian. Of English models his father had taught him to shape his sentences on the strenuous and supple style of Barrow, whilst he found a living master in the vehement, pungent, and ruthless author of the Junius letters.

Pitt went very scrupulously through the routine of Cambridge life, dining in hall, keeping two chapels every day, never once spending an evening outside the walls of Pembroke, or failing to keep his appointment with Mr. Pretzman. The account which the latter has given of his pupil's life during the six or seven years of his residence bears witness to the remarkable intensity of his devotion, and to the no less remarkable success of his

efforts. Pretymán, himself a Senior Wrangler, tells us that his mathematics were up to the standard of the first class, whilst of his classics it is sufficient to know that he read Lycophron "with an ease at first sight which" (his biographer says) "if I had not witnessed it I should have thought beyond the compass of human intellect."

Lord Chatham had specially recommended to his son the plan of reading off his Latin and Greek authors into correct English—pausing if necessary for the right word, but never failing to construct and pronounce his sentences; and it was to this plan that the future Minister ascribed his success as an orator.

The fame of the scholar preceded him to London. At Lincoln's Inn he had an excellent reception; but his heart clung too closely to Westminster to admit of any very assiduous work at lectures or on circuit. As often as was possible he had attended the debates, and in particular he took care to hear all the later utterances of his father. He was present in the House of Lords when Chatham for the last time raised his voice against the policy of North in America—on the 7th of April, 1778. With his brother-in-law, Lord Mahon, he carried the veteran out of the House, and took him to his country seat at Hayes, where he died five weeks afterwards. In June, 1780, William Pitt was called to the bar. By this time he had taken up his residence at Lincoln's Inn, and his visits to Cambridge were no longer made in the character of a student, but as a recognised candidate for the representation of the University. It was, of course, as the son of Chatham that Pitt sought this distinguished honour almost as soon as he had come of age; and it was as the son of Chatham that he subsequently claimed a hearing in the House of Commons. But his personal

worth, his reputation for learning, for talent, for oratorical ability, for dignity and modesty of demeanour, had already acquired for him a credit which was entirely his own.

The attempt at Cambridge was unsuccessful, but three months later the coveted seat was found for him at Appleby through the mediation of a friend. The young Duke of Rutland, who had lately succeeded to the title, no sooner heard of Pitt's defeat at Cambridge than he employed his family influence to secure for him an entrance into Parliament; and thus it was that in January, 1781, when the House of Commons reassembled after its Christmas recess, William Pitt the younger took his oath of allegiance.

We have seen how the political forces were disposed at this particular crisis, and under what conditions the son of Lord Chatham was introduced to the scene of his father's greatest triumphs. It is necessary to a true understanding of Pitt's memorable career to bear in mind from the beginning that he was not in the ordinary acceptance of the term a Whig. Chatham had been a Whig in the reign of George II.; but from 1760 onwards the party outlines had been confused. The personal influence of George III. was fatal to the strict observance of the older limits. Political feeling had been degraded in consequence, and a less lofty standard of action had come to be accepted by the majority of public men. But there was an honourable exception to the rule. Without doubt the best principles of English statesmanship had been preserved by the disciples of Lord Chatham—by Shelburne and Camden and their friends. These men formed a party within a party, and it was to them that Pitt naturally joined himself at the

outset of his Parliamentary career. Whatever he may have subsequently become—whether a Tory, or the leader of a new departure yet more distinct than that originated by his father—he was certainly never a Whig in the sense that Fox and Burke and his uncle, Lord Temple, were Whigs.

It is in fact more true of Pitt than of any other English Minister that he was what the circumstances of his time made him—an English statesman first and before all; a Peace Minister in Lord Shelburne's Cabinet because peace was then a necessity; a War Minister ten years later because he conceived that war 'was at that time inevitable; an arbitrary and even oppressive Minister in the later years of his life, because it was then deemed indispensable for the well-being of society that the growth of revolutionary ideas should be stifled. He was to a great extent moulded by the events of his generation; and this is not incompatible with the fact of his marked individuality, and his constraining influence over the minds of his contemporaries.

We must consider Pitt successively under the three main aspects which he presents to the reader of English history; and it need not be said that the several phases of his political development will be found to have been naturally and logically evolved the one from the other. First, an advocate of peace and a champion of reform, he appeals to us as the rising hope of a nation attached to the principles of freedom and progress—a disciple of Chatham, but at the same time an inheritor of the peaceful traditions of Walpole. Next, carried away by official and popular prejudice, we see him wielding the forces of Europe against the greatest general of modern times, and, for a chimerical future profit, making the present



interests of his country subservient to this one design. Lastly, the career of Pitt has a special lesson for Englishmen in its final stage, and regarded from a purely domestic point of view. The influence of his foreign policy upon the character of his policy at home was very distinctly marked, and it illustrates a familiar law of history.

Pitt's maiden speech was delivered within five weeks of his entrance into Parliament, in the course of a debate on Burke's proposal for the "economical reformation of the civil and other establishments." The chief professed aim of this measure was to increase the independence of Members of Parliament by diminishing the means of corruption which every successive Government had at its command, and the mover had explained and commended his plan in one of the most brilliant speeches ever heard in the House. When Pitt was called upon, suddenly and almost unexpectedly, he hesitated with the intelligible reluctance of the youngest man in a venerable and critical assembly. But he had no hesitation on the score of his ability to express his opinion in a suitable manner, and still less on account of the principles involved. The effect produced upon his hearers was in every way favourable. It was admitted on all hands that the son of Chatham was worthy of his birth and name. Good judges hailed him as already an orator of the first rank, entitled to cross swords with the most practised debaters in the House. Fox congratulated him in hearty terms; Burke declared that he was not a chip of the old block, but rather "the old block itself." Men who had seen and heard his father speak in his palmiest days assured each

other that it was the old Pitt come to life again. "Never," says his tutor and biographer, "were higher expectations formed of any person upon his first coming into Parliament, and never were expectations more completely fulfilled." \*

The second speech, like the first, was on an economical subject ; and Pitt, though he voted in a minority on both occasions, displayed a remarkable aptitude for dealing with this class of questions. He was by training and disposition a reformer, and circumstances led him to declare himself thus early in favour of administrative economy.

In his third speech Pitt supported a motion made by Fox for an inquiry into the conduct of the American war. Of his three utterances during the session of 1781 this is the most interesting, because in it he found an opportunity to refer to and defend the attitude of his father towards the policy of Lord North, and to proclaim himself, in this respect, an advocate of conciliation and peace. So far as his own opinions were concerned, he had clearly made up his mind beforehand as to the line which he intended to take. Nothing could be more emphatic than this statement. A member who had preceded him had called the American struggle a holy war on England's part, and had reproached Fox and others for describing it as wicked and accursed. But Pitt was not satisfied with these epithets. "I am persuaded," he said, "and I will affirm that it is a most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unnatural, unjust, and diabolical war." We had spent unprecedented sums of money, and in return we could only show temporary victories over our brethren, or "defeats which fill the

\* Bishop Tomline.

land with mourning for the loss of dear and valuable relations slain in the impious cause of enforcing unconditional submission."

The bitterness of the denunciation is accounted for in some degree by the fact that, less than a year before, Pitt had lost his younger brother on active service in the West Indies.

This was the burning question in 1781-2, and it will be readily understood that the eloquent championship of the popular views by the son of Lord Chatham sufficed at once to establish his fame. When Parliament met again in November, the pressure of the Opposition upon the Government of Lord North became irresistible. The news of the surrender at Yorktown had just been received; the country was enraged, and the Cabinet had neither the heart nor the ability to repel the assaults made upon them. Amongst the assailants none was more vigorous or effective than Pitt. Friend and foe alike sounded his praises. It was not merely that he vindicated his father against the criticisms of the past three years; his own reasoning and eloquence produced new conviction, and were efficacious even where Fox and Burke had almost ceased to make an impression. Of course the crowning disaster of Cornwallis lent new persuasiveness to the speeches of the Opposition; but there is evidence that the arguments of Chatham in the mouth of William Pitt were specially powerful at this crisis.

Fox, who had already been warned that he would have to renew with this fresh rival the combats of a former generation, effusively declared, in one of the debates of December, 1781, that he could no longer lament the loss of Lord Chatham, for he lived again in his son, with all his virtues and all his talents.\*

\* "Life of Romilly," i. 192, as quoted by Lord Stanhope.—The

[REDACTED] wit and humour, as well as  
 [REDACTED] ing. His confidence sur-  
 [REDACTED] House, who had been wont  
 [REDACTED] notation in the recruits of  
 [REDACTED] who could not recall a  
 [REDACTED] tural dignity of this youngest  
 [REDACTED] on, Pitt, arguing for peace,  
 [REDACTED] torious disagreement amongst  
 [REDACTED] between Lord North and Lord  
 [REDACTED] latter of whom was obstinately  
 [REDACTED] whilst the Premier was wavering.  
 [REDACTED] Ministers above named began to

[REDACTED] Welbore Ellis, on the bench  
 [REDACTED] his tiny head (as Lord Stanhope  
 [REDACTED] Then Pitt stopped short, and  
 [REDACTED] said, "I will wait until the unanimity  
 [REDACTED] ed. I will wait until the Nestor  
 [REDACTED] reconciled the difference between the  
 [REDACTED] the Achilles of the American war."  
 [REDACTED] of the next year the Government  
 [REDACTED] One division followed another with  
 [REDACTED] out North felt that even his majorities  
 [REDACTED] He insisted on resigning a position which  
 [REDACTED] rred to is quoted by the same biographer from  
 [REDACTED] Memorials of Fox." When Pitt had concluded his  
 [REDACTED] and Fox had hurried up to wish him success, "an  
 [REDACTED] id to have been General Grant, passed by them and  
 [REDACTED] Mr. Fox, you are praising young Pitt for his speech.  
 [REDACTED] ell do so; for, excepting yourself, there is no man in  
 [REDACTED] can make such another; and, old as I am, I expect and  
 [REDACTED] ar you both battling it within these walls, as I have heard  
 [REDACTED] re before you." Mr. Fox, disconcerted at the awkward  
 [REDACTED] compliment, was silent and looked foolish; but young  
 [REDACTED] great delicacy and readiness, answered, 'I have no doubt,  
 [REDACTED] you would like to attain the age of Methuselah!'"

was practically divorced from power, and at length the King was obliged to summon the Marquis of Rockingham to form a new Cabinet (March 20, 1782). Fox and Shelburne entered this Administration as Secretaries of State; Lord Thurlow and Dundas retained office; the Duke of Grafton, Lord Camden, Lord John Cavendish, Burke and Townshend and Dunning, accepted offices of greater or less importance. Pitt had the refusal of several posts, whereof the emoluments alone must have offered a strong temptation to so poor a man. But his ambition soared yet higher than an income of £5,000 a year at the age of twenty-two. He had declared that he would enter no Government save as a Cabinet Minister; and, though there must have been some who laughed at his audacity, it was soon to appear that he had not overrated his prospects.

If Pitt retained his independence, he did not forego the influence or the occupation which a subordinate office might have given him. His special friends amongst the older generations of statesmen took care that he should have work to do of a more dignified and important kind than would in ordinary circumstances fall to the share of a private member. Like Lord Chatham a quarter of a century before, he had expressed himself in favour of Parliamentary reform; particularly in the direction of a disfranchisement of the worst of the close boroughs. Of course he would be met by the argument that these boroughs had provided seats for many an able man who would otherwise have had long to wait for admission into the House of Commons—his own case and that of his father being apt illustrations. In principle the member for Appleby  
agency, and by way of

example he had scores of more flagrant instances than the borough for which he had himself been returned. Indeed the cause which he pleaded no longer required an advocate. All his contentions had been logically conceded years before ; it was a simple question of time, and in the case of many members on both sides there was a natural inclination to put off the evil day of reform as long as possible.

But the minority with whom Pitt now allied himself, and by whom he was chosen as spokesman, was in no way contemptible, either by numbers or by moral weight. It included Cabinet Ministers, and nearly every man of commanding talent. When the vote was taken on Pitt's motion for an inquiry, 140 members were told for him out of a total of 300.\* Of course Burke was against him. So also was Dundas, and so was the Marquis of Rockingham. The Ministers of the day had at this time the control of about sixteen seats, independently of their family interest as individuals. It may have appeared to the Premier and some of his colleagues an impossible act of renunciation to abandon the public and private patronage implied in the nominations for these close boroughs ; but to others the act did not seem impossible. Fox voted with Pitt, in addition to speaking in favour of his motion. Sheridan took the same course ; and so did Sir George Savile, who admitted that he had been sent to Parliament from Lord Rockingham's dining-room. The Duke of Richmond, who sat in the Cabinet as Master of the Ordnance, had been a prime mover in this abortive attempt at reform.

It was, as Lord Stanhope observes, due in some

\* The numbers were 161 to 141 (May 7th, 1782).

measure to the influence of the Rev. Christopher Wyvill that the subject was brought forward in 1782. Mr. Wyvill, a member of an old Yorkshire family, had been rector of Black Notley, in Essex, for five or six years past; and he held the living until the year of Pitt's death, when he resigned it on a point of conscience. He was one of the most active political parsons of his time, and it speaks well for him that he consistently advocated reform in State and in Church during the whole of his life without receiving and apparently without seeking preferment. He had agitated the question of Parliamentary reform when William Pitt was still a boy, and he was present at the Duke of Richmond's house when the youngest member of that meeting was invited to open a debate in the Commons.

Ten days after the defeat of his own motion Pitt spoke in favour of a Bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments; and in the following June he supported a measure introduced by his relative, Lord Mahon, for the prevention of bribery. Both measures were defeated, and it is worth while to note that Pitt found himself arrayed in the first instance against Burke, and in the second against Fox. The occasions were significant enough in their way. Sheridan speaks of Burke "attacking William Pitt in a scream of passion;" whilst in the June debate the characteristic laxity of Fox caused him to shrink from the drastic remedy which the son of Chatham courageously endorsed.

The first disagreement of the future rivals took place on a simple matter of detail. The time was close at hand when their antagonism was to become more marked and definitive.

The Marquis of Rockingham died on the 1st of July,

and his Administration at once collapsed. It had been discordant from the beginning, chiefly by reason of the incompatibility of Shelburne and Fox. They could scarcely have continued to work together if their chief had lived ; and his death caused an immediate rupture. Weak though Lord Rockingham was as Prime Minister, he had succeeded perhaps better than any one else could have done in holding the discordant elements of the Whig party together. When he died it was necessary either that a new First Lord should take his place without disturbing the other chief members of the Cabinet—which was what Fox demanded—or that one of the two Secretaries of State should form an Administration unacceptable to the other. Fox would have liked the Duke of Portland to take up the rôle of the Marquis of Rockingham. But the King sent for Lord Shelburne, and thereupon Fox and his friends thought fit to retire. Now Shelburne, as we have seen, entertained a feeling of special kindness to Pitt, which the younger man reciprocated. It did not need the offer of a seat in the Cabinet to attach the son of Chatham to the Prime Minister, or to set him in some sort of opposition to Fox, Portland, Lord John Cavendish, Burke, Sheridan, and the other Whig seceders.

It may have been that a few Whigs here and there, at this particular crisis, avoided office through fear of incurring odium on the conclusion of peace with America, which was now recognised to be inevitable. At any rate it was foreseen that odium, however unreasonable, would be likely to fall upon those who conducted the negotiations. Nevertheless Shelburne, with the Secretaries, Grantham and Townshend, deliberately undertook the thankless part ; and when the First Lord



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The first disagreement of the future rivals took place on a simple matter of detail. The time was not yet come when their antagonism was to become personal and definitive.

The Marquis of Rockingham di

of the Treasury offered to Pitt the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, which in this instance implied the rhetorical leadership of the Lower House, the latter felt himself not merely entitled but compelled to accept it.

Enough has been said in a former page of the short and honourable Administration of Lord Shelburne, of his negotiations with the United States, France, Spain, and Holland, and of his expulsion from office by the coalition of Fox and North. Pitt need not have shared the fall of his leader. The King invited him to form a Government of his own; the Coalition urged him to retain his office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. But invitation and pressure were alike in vain. The prudence of the young statesman was as great as his ambition, and whatever his inclination might have been he was able to subordinate it to a feeling of loyalty to his friend. So long as the Coalition persevered in its hopeless attempt to govern, he studiously held himself aloof from party movements. "I shall act," he said, when resigning the Chancellorship, "with whichever side I think is acting right." We cannot wonder at this indifference, and still less can we blame it. The melancholy spectacle of men like Fox, Cavendish, Burke, and Sheridan holding office with North, Stormont, and Rigby, justified the attitude of Pitt and others at the time, as it justifies the condemnation which almost every historian has passed upon that barren intrigue.

Throughout these changes and transformations, whereof each one brought him increased repute and influence, Pitt never lost his reforming zeal, and never missed an opportunity of employing it. He went to the Treasury

with the full understanding that the domestic policy of the Shelburne Cabinet was one of economy and reform, as well as of peace. A few months after taking office he wrote to his mother, "We are labouring at all sorts of official reform, for which there is a very ample field, and in which I believe we shall have some success." Barely were the terms of the treaties arranged when he began to frame a Bill to amend the representative system, and he was only deterred from bringing it forward by the collapse of the Government. The Coalition had not been in power five weeks when, from his vantage-ground as an independent member, he moved his three Resolutions on Parliamentary Reform. This was on the 7th of May, 1783, precisely one year after he had moved for a Committee at the instance of the Duke of Richmond; and now, as then, his motion brought to light a considerable divergence of opinion in the Cabinet.

These Resolutions aimed at the prevention of corrupt practices, and not merely at an amendment of the representation. The first was directed against bribery and the inordinate cost of elections. The second was penal in its scope, providing for the disfranchisement of corrupt boroughs. The third recommended the transfer of a hundred seats to the counties, and an increase of members for the metropolitan area. The majority by which the motion was rejected—293 against 149—illustrates the condition of public opinion on this subject, at any rate in Parliament, in the year 1783. Two years later, when he was First Lord, Pitt introduced a measure based on the principle of his third Resolution. This also was defeated, but the adverse majority was reduced by one-half. There can be no doubt that if things had

gone smoothly with us, and there had been no French War, he would eventually have carried a Bill anticipating in some important respects the Reform Act of 1832.

How far Pitt's ideas on the subject of popular progress might have developed under such conditions it is impossible to say, and it would be hardly seasonable in this place to inquire. It may be contended that the man who was ripened by a policy of war into something anti-popular and oppressive would never have become a vigorous reformer in a period of settled peace. The terms on which he accepted office in 1783 were not such as to encourage the hopes of the more advanced school of politicians. But on the other hand he had at any rate identified himself with the demand for electoral and representative reform; and his friends knew him to be prepared for modifications of the Constitution which even now, a hundred years later, might shock the mind of the boldest official Liberal. In the year just named, whilst Fox and North were engaged in their bootless struggle with the King, Pitt visited France in the company of Wilberforce and Eliot. Lord Stanhope relates of him that, being asked by a French abbé what part of the British Constitution might be expected to decay sooner than the rest, he paused for a moment, and then answered, "The part of our Constitution which will first perish is the prerogative of the King and the authority of the House of Lords."

Of course an expression like this does not commit the speaker to much, even in the matter of opinion. It is remarkable that, within two months of this conversation, Pitt attained the highest object of his ambition as the result of a most unconstitutional exercise of the prerogative, backed by a subservient vote of the Upper House.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER.

NOTHING could better illustrate the complications of party and the incongruities of political conduct at the moment when Pitt received the seals of office than the intrigue by which the King in 1783 contrived to rid himself of an unacceptable Ministry.

George III. had never liked Fox. Though he had for many years relied upon the assistance of Lord North, it is not surprising that the recent attitude of that statesman should have excited his distrust, if not his actual dislike. And perhaps the combination of the two men for party purposes was more distasteful to him, as it was to his subjects, than either of them in his individual capacity. He declared from the beginning that he could never give them his confidence, and that he would take the first opportunity of dismissing them. When he had to write to them he did it with coldness, occasionally with reproof; and it was manifest to both sides that a struggle for predominance was sooner or later inevitable. The opportunity was not long in coming. Fox and Burke between them had drawn up a Bill for the better government of India—a Bill committing the control of the dependency to a board of seven persons, under the direct supervision of Parliament. Unquestionably a measure of this kind was called for by the circumstances

of the time and by the opinion of the country, and it was not easy to contest the value of the contemplated reform. But the scheme had one fatal flaw in the eyes of the King, and of all who could not pin their faith to the Coalition Cabinet. It practically transferred to the Ministry of the day a patronage variously estimated at from three hundred thousand to two millions sterling, and it would, if passed into law, have given to the nominees of Fox and North an enormous and a formidable power.

The Government majority in the House of Commons was overwhelming. The second reading of the India Bill was carried by nearly two to one. Pitt warmly attacked the measure as unconstitutional ; but, even after the new Board had been nominated entirely from the friends of the Ministers, the third reading was carried by a larger majority than the second. The ordeal of the House of Lords remained behind, and in the House of Lords the King had resolved to defeat a Bill which he deemed injurious to his prerogative. In this design he had the assistance of Lord Thurlow, the late Chancellor, and of Earl Temple, the late Viceroy of Ireland. To these lords, and particularly to the latter, he gave the commission to employ his personal influence with their brother peers. He authorised Lord Temple to say that "whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy ; and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose." Seventy-six peers were found to brave even this unjustifiable menace ; but they were not numerous enough to prevail over the opponents of the Bill, which was accordingly thrown out.

The rage of the Ministerialists was very great. A

motion was carried in the Lower House, declaring that "to report any opinion or pretended opinion of his Majesty upon any Bill or other proceeding depending in either House of Parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, is a high crime and misdemeanour, derogatory to the honour of the Crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of Parliament, and subversive of the Constitution of this country." Pitt spoke against the motion, but it is clear that the weight of argument was on the other side. He was in a false position. Fox had him at his mercy, and did not see fit to spare him. Once more his juvenility was cast in his teeth. "Boys without judgment," said the leader of the House, after some bitter generalities, "without experience of the sentiments suggested by the knowledge of the world or the amiable decencies of a sound mind, may follow the headlong course of ambition thus precipitately, and vault into the seat while the reins of government are placed in other hands. But the Minister who can bear to act such a dishonourable part, and the country that suffers it, will be mutual plagues and curses to each other."

The reproach would have been more telling if the manner of Fox's own accession to power had been less objectionable. In both cases, it may be, the ambition had been a little too keen. But keen ambition was one of the characteristics of the age. It had led North, after being the chief of the King's friends, to accept office as the colleague of a Whig on whom his royal master had constantly frowned. It had led Fox to combine with Tories whose impeachment he had formerly demanded. It led Pitt also to associate himself with politicians with whom he had little sympathy, and to be the champion of ideas not to be reconciled with his guiding principles.

The India Bill was rejected by the Lords on the 17th of December. On the same day the Commons passed their resolution above quoted, with another pledging them to persevere in redressing the abuses of Indian government. On the 18th Fox and North received the command of the King to deliver up their seals of office, which were temporarily intrusted to Lord Temple.

Pitt's time was now fully come. On the 19th of December, 1783, he accepted the responsibility thrown upon him by the King, and proceeded to form his Administration. It is related that when his friend Arden moved for a new writ for Appleby, there was a burst of laughter from the Opposition benches. The "boy without judgment," as Fox had called him, was already selected to fill the most responsible office in the Government of the nation. The derisive laughter of his rivals was about as genuine as Burke's dagger and as pertinent as Scott's comparison of the India Bill to the beast with seven heads. They had expected nothing else than his elevation, and had reproached him with it beforehand. No doubt the appointment of Pitt to the Premiership was in some sense an experiment, but it was an experiment warranted by his achievements in the House, as well as by his hereditary repute and influence. The circumstances, it must be admitted, were unfortunate. Fox was not fairly beaten, and the new Administration was not inaugurated under conditions best calculated to render it independent. But, in spite of this initial fault, Pitt took and wielded the reins of power with a manly vigour and in a lofty spirit from which his friends—and especially



those who had avowedly followed the precepts of his father—were justified in hoping the best.

There were probably few persons, in or out of Parliament, who anticipated a complete success for the new Minister against his experienced and popular rival. It remained for Pitt to prove that he could use the opportunity which had come to him. Nothing is more perilous to a young and ambitious man than to find himself prematurely at the turning-point of his life, with a chance of distinction at an age when the faculties are not wont to be developed. Failure in such circumstances is likely to be failure of the whole career. There were many who thought as Gibbon thought in 1784—that the “painted galley” of Pitt’s reputation must sink under the “black collier” of Fox. But, like Gibbon again, there were many who before the end of the year admitted that the fact of Pitt’s raising himself at his age “to the government of an empire by the power of genius and the reputation of virtue” was one unparalleled in history, and “not less glorious to the country than to himself.”

Pitt’s first Cabinet was originally constituted as follows:—

|                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| First Lord of the Treasury and |                                |
| Chancellor of the Exchequer    | . William Pitt.                |
| President of the Council       | . . . Earl Gower.              |
| Lord Privy Seal                | . . . Duke of Rutland.         |
| Secretaries of State           | . . . { Marquis of Carmarthen. |
|                                | . . . Lord Sydney.             |
| Lord Chancellor                | . . . Lord Thurlow.            |
| First Lord of the Admiralty    | . . . Lord Howe.               |

A few weeks later the Duke of Richmond entered the Cabinet as Master-General of the Ordnance, thus bringing the number up to eight, whereof only two sat in the House of Commons. Within a year from this time, on

the withdrawal of the Duke of Rutland, who had assumed the Viceroyship of Ireland, Earl Gower took the Privy Seal, and the post of President of the Council was occupied by Lord Camden, whose accession to the Cabinet was all the more advantageous for Pitt because in the first instance he had cautiously declined to enter it.

So long as the Parliament of 1780 continued to sit, the position of the new Government was difficult and critical. Large majorities voted against them day after day; their will was thwarted; they were called upon to resign and then to dissolve; they were threatened with a stoppage of supplies, and were formally declared to be violating the spirit of the Constitution. North reproached them, Fox thundered against them, Burke and Sheridan exhausted on them the vials of their rhetoric. When, after a short Christmas recess, the Houses met again for the dispatch of business, not a moment was lost by the Opposition leaders in renewing the attack (January 12, 1784). No doubt Fox and his friends believed what they said—believed that the continuance of Ministers in office was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, which it was their sacred duty to defend. Unfortunately for them, the independent Whigs did not see much to choose between the circumstances of Pitt's acceptance of the seals and the circumstances in which the Coalition had taken and retained office. They compared one objectionable crisis with the other, and at the same time they recognised the virtues of both the leaders who had now been brought into such sharp contrast. A small section of the older adherents of Fox would gladly have seen him associating himself with the son of his father's great rival, and they openly suggested the propriety of this course. But it was already manifest

to every close observer that neither Fox nor Pitt would consent to belong to an Administration of which the other was chief.

How would the history of the world have been affected if these two prominent Whig statesmen—for Pitt was still a Whig—had been able to coalesce, and had candidly sunk their differences in order to consolidate their party? The consideration may be an unprofitable one, but it is at least curious. The thing was no longer possible. The conditions of the age, the political tone of the country at this period, the individual tendencies of the men constrained them in the grooves on which they had entered. But if they could have worked together, each supplementing what the other fell short in, each modifying what the other exaggerated, is it not credible that the annals of Europe would have been very different from what they are, and that for England in particular the marvellous record of progress in the nineteenth century might have been antedated by a score of years?

The struggle continued. Pitt brought in a Bill to amend the Government of India without depriving the Company of its patronage. It was thrown out. The Opposition leaders again demanded a dissolution, or at any rate a declaration of the intentions of the Ministry. They adjured, they taunted, they scolded, they flagnated, but Ministers were obstinately silent. In answer to one grey-headed member Pitt jumped up for the purpose of repudiating an accusation of bribery, and he sat down with one of those apposite quotations which at all times came so readily to his tongue. "If in no other way," he said, in the words of Scipio to Fabius, "I shall at any rate excel my elders in modesty of demeanour and speech."

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and his friends were persistently baffled. The fact was that the young Minister counted on the support of the constituencies, which he had soon found reason to anticipate. He was one of the first to detect this favourable change of public opinion; and the King was only too pleased to look for the popular mind (as his grandfather had once said to Chatham) "elsewhere than in the House of Commons."

It is doubtless an unfortunate chapter of political history which shows us a Minister practically thrust upon the country, nominated and supported by the Crown, opposed to a Minister with a majority at his back, and by sheer force of obstinacy and circumstance defeating this majority, and wresting the popular judgment in his favour. In principle, of course, this process is diametrically opposed to the Constitution, and it is easy to imagine a condition of things in which it would be intolerable and inadmissible. But circumstances alter cases; and the manner of Pitt's accession to power may be judged less by the letter than by the spirit of our representative institutions. Fox's position was untenable. It may not have been untenable at the moment of his dismissal from office; for though his coalition with North was indefensible, and though his India Bill was something like a gigantic job, still it cannot be denied that the act of the King in sending for his seals was an arbitrary exercise of power. But his attacks on Pitt and his royal master in 1783-4 were violent, unmeasured, and scarcely decent. He pitted his tongue, as Johnson said, against the sceptre of George III. His conduct, and the conduct of his followers, to use the words of Lord Russell, "was wanting in dignity and in adherence to the spirit of the Constitution." If the popular voice was won over to

Pitt, there was not wanting an adequate cause for this effect. The country recognised that Pitt was superior to his rival in moral worth and disinterestedness. It saw that, whereas the Coalition had been built upon insincerity and even suspected of corruption, the Government of the son of Lord Chatham was conspicuously able and honest. And it ended by warmly accepting the choice of the King, not because it was his choice, but because it happened to be, on the face of it, a good one.

Pitt's Government was to be good or bad according to the determining conditions of the time. So far as the country could see in 1784, it was likely to be a Government of peace, of economy, and of reform. It was impossible to anticipate what the next ten or twenty years were to bring forth.

From the very beginning Pitt had powerful supporters. The moral influence of his father's name and school was with him, and the influence of men like Camden and Thurlow. The House of Lords was on his side, and condemned the action of the Commons by nearly two to one. The East India Company—no insignificant factor—infinitely preferred him to Fox. The City was with him; and a hundred years ago the sentiment of the City of London was happily identified on almost every occasion with the popular sentiment of the metropolis. On the 27th of February the Corporation presented him with the freedom of the City and a formal vote of thanks; and the day is rendered memorable in his history by a remarkable expression of the public favour, and by a despicable outrage committed upon him at the instigation of some undeclared enemy. After the ceremony, which took

place at the house of Pitt's brother, in Berkeley Square, "the whole party (Lord Stanhope writes) went on together to the hall of the Grocers' Company, in the Poultry, where the Prime Minister was engaged to dine. Great crowds had been assembled in Berkeley Square from an early hour in the morning, and an immense concourse of people joined in the procession after it left Lord Chatham's house, marching through the City amidst the loudest acclamations and shouts of welcome. At Grocers' Hall Pitt was also loudly cheered as he took the usual oath administered to freemen, and was addressed in a speech of most laudatory purport by the Chamberlain—no other than John Wilkes. In returning at night there was the same throng, there were the same acclamations. Such tokens of the rising popular favour to Pitt must have been of course gall and wormwood to those who desired to be called exclusively the 'Friends of the People.' Thus, at night, when the crowd of artisans was dragging up St. James's Street the coach in which sat Pitt himself, Lord Chatham, and Lord Mahon, and when they had come opposite Brooks's Club, at that period the stronghold of his political opponents, the coach was suddenly attacked by men armed with bludgeons and broken chair poles, among whom—so at least it was at the time asserted and believed—were several members of the club. Some of the rioters made their way to the carriage, forced open the door, and aimed blows at the Prime Minister, which were with some difficulty warded off by his brother's arm. At length Mr. Pitt and his companions, after a severe struggle, made their way into White's Club."

The battle in the House of Commons was continued up to the 9th of March, when Fox made his last motion





ability to lead. Almost single-handed in the Commons he had foiled the eloquence and ingenuity of his opponents. The battle had been long and wearisome, occupying day after day without intermission ; but Pitt never lost sight of the true objects of power. He eagerly anticipated the time when he should be able to lay aside the *rôle* of mere self-defence, and apply himself to the passing of needed and serviceable reforms.

Fox had in a sense been out-manceuvred, and it was impossible for him to resist the fulfilment of the programme as arranged by Pitt. A dissolution in December, or before the end of January, would have suited him well enough. He might not have shrunk from a dissolution in February ; but long before Lady Day arrived he saw that his former advantage was slipping away from him, and that the Government would make their appeal to the country with fair prospect of success. Yet he was far from dreaming that the prize on which his fingers had closed just a year ago was now removed from his grasp for so long as the life of Pitt should continue.

The dissolution took place on Lady Day. Some embarrassment was caused by the mysterious disappearance of the Great Seal from the house of the Lord Chancellor on the morning of the 24th. The thief was never discovered, nor did the Great Seal turn up again at any subsequent time. The coincidence of the theft with the expectation of an immediate dissolution gave rise to suspicions, and even imputations, against those in whose interest it might have been to delay the General Election. But there was no ground whatever for so grave a doubt except the strangeness of this coincidence ; and if there had been any idea that the removal of the Seal would retard the dissolution of Parliament, it was not justified

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Cecil Wray by more than two hundred votes. But half the electoral period had barely elapsed when it was evident that the total number recorded on the official lists exceeded the number of registered voters in Westminster. On the 23rd of April Pitt, in a letter to a cousin, suggested the necessity of a scrutiny; and the fact is worth noting because his subsequent attitude in this matter laid him open to much pertinent criticism. There can be no doubt that the Westminster election was specially corrupt, that the result was tainted in more than one sense, and that the circumstances of the canvass were scandalous throughout. But both sides were tarred with the same brush, and neither could afford to challenge comparison. It would have been better to accept the drawn battle represented by the first official list; but the High Bailiff, acting in the interests of the Court, refused to make a return, and granted a scrutiny. Nearly a year elapsed before the question was settled, which it eventually was in favour of Fox—both on the scrutiny itself and on a vote of the House of Commons. The obstinacy of the Minister and his friends cost some £18,000, and brought discredit upon the Cabinet.

Pitt was clearly misled by his advisers, but it might have been a more generous course on his own part if he had insisted on the admission of his rival without cavil or delay.

The first divisions in the new House of Commons showed majorities for Ministers of 150 and 170. From this time forward, indeed, there was no such thing as strong numerical opposition to the Government of Pitt. His influence preponderated more and more as long as he lived. Everything combined to make him powerful—his own great abilities, his father's name, the adaptation

of his measures to the conditions of the time, the unpopularity incurred by the parties to the Coalition, the gradual accession to Pitt of both Whigs and Tories, who preferred his lofty standard to the controversial tactics of their former leaders—with other reasons of a similar kind. It was indeed to some extent a new party which was being formed from the ruins of the old, neither Tory nor altogether Whig, and to which the traditional names were scarcely applicable. Its policy was to be practically what Pitt chose to make it—in other terms, that which a high-minded and incorruptible Minister deemed to be most advantageous for the people at large, and most in harmony with the public opinion. Peace above all things was regarded by Pitt as the basis of his policy ; for he took the helm at a moment when disastrous wars had been brought to an end, and when the country was anxiously bent on recovery and reconstruction.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PITT AS A PEACE MINISTER.

PITT'S position on finally assuming office with the command of a large majority was in some respects like that of Walpole in 1721. Walpole had to redress the balance of the national finances after a period of lavish military expenditure and mad speculation, and he effected his task with comparatively little disturbance of classes or individuals. His adjustments of taxation were for the most part excellently conceived. His principles and maxims were those of a free-trader, and he would have gone much further in this direction if he could have got the House of Commons or the country to go with him. As it was, he began by reducing and abolishing the duties on some hundred and fifty articles of import and export ; and a few years after this, thanks to the general stimulation of trade, the national debt had been diminished by £20,000,000.

Pitt had similar difficulties to contend with in the first instance, and he was not indisposed to adopt certain of Walpole's methods in his attempt to overcome them. Walpole had commercial ideas in advance of his age. If in political matters he disclaimed the title of reformer, in finance he was an innovator and a revolutionist. Pitt had no fear of reform, and the lapse of sixty years had ripened most of the measures which

Walpole or his contemporaries thought premature. The earlier statesman had proposed to strike a blow at the smugglers and other defrauders of the revenue by the system of bonded warehouses, and by diminishing the taxes on the chief items of illicit trade. The first provision was contained in the Excise Bill of 1733, which Walpole found it impossible to enact. The diminution of taxes he did contrive in a limited sense to bring about, but it was not thoroughly effectual for the purpose of paralyzing the smugglers, who had never thriven more than they thrive in the middle of the eighteenth century. Pitt found them preying upon the revenues of the State, a hungry and insatiable horde. Their offence was almost as respectable as bribery in our own days, and vast fortunes were made by it. Pitt resolved, amongst his first public acts, to put an end to the trade, or at any rate to make the attempt. He reduced the Customs duties on tea and foreign spirits to such an extent that it became scarcely worth while to run the risk of smuggling them; and at the same time he increased this risk by giving authority to the revenue officers to pursue and seize suspected vessels within a distance of four leagues from shore.

These measures were both effective and economical, though the harassing "commutation tax" on houses, rated according to the number of their windows, damped the gratitude of men who were disposed to rejoice at the diminution of smuggling.

In most other respects Pitt was not able to adopt the pattern of Walpole's finance. There was far more to contend against in 1784 than there had been in 1724. The credit and resources of the nation had been more grievously affected. Its recuperative energies were not

so great, and they were more speedily neutralised by foreign complications. Instead of reducing the debt and moderating the tariff, Pitt was called upon at the beginning of his career to issue a fresh loan and to impose a number of fresh taxes. His first Budget involved nearly a hundred and fifty petty imposts, in order to meet a deficit of close upon a million sterling. Many of these new burdens, with others which were to come after, were to hang round the necks of Englishmen—to stint them in food and raiment, to besiege them in their houses, to hamper them in their sports, to check their enterprise and limit their comforts—for the next sixty years. No man ever taxed his country so much as Pitt, and no man is likely to tax it so much again. He dwelt upon the pain with which he entered on a course so repugnant to his wishes, and no doubt these expressions were entirely genuine. Nevertheless, there was scarcely a year in which he had not to ask his countrymen for new sacrifices. The Sinking Fund established in 1786 was, indeed, fully justified by the appearance of returning prosperity, and as late as 1792 Pitt took steps to abandon some of the taxes which he had imposed. But the French war snuffed out this gleam of promise, and condemned the greatest financier of the age to display his talent in the ingenious accumulation of a monstrous load of debt.

The disinterested character of Pitt was attested at the very outset of his official life, and was maintained to the day of his death. He handled millions and hundreds of millions, but not a penny stuck to his fingers. If his friends were ennobled and enriched, it was because he could not refuse to them what must otherwise have gone to men not a whit more deserving; but he was parsimo-

nious enough when it came to be a question of conferring titles upon himself. He refused lucrative sinecures and honourable decorations over and over again. For some years he had practically no income except the salary of his arduous offices, and this was not sufficient to meet the expenditure of a generous patron and host: The Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, which the King insisted on his accepting in 1792, was the first and almost the last addition to his official salary as Minister which he would consent to take. Soon after he had come into power the Clerkship of the Pells was vacated. If Pitt had taken this sinecure for himself he would have been acting in accordance with precedent; and the income of £3,000 a year would have enabled him to put his affairs in order, and to avoid the pecuniary difficulties which troubled him more or less all his life, but from which the First Minister of a great country ought at all times to be free. Lord Thurlow, in a debate in the Upper House, referred soon afterwards to Pitt's conduct on this occasion. "I must acknowledge," he said, "that I was shabby enough to advise Mr. Pitt to take this office, as it had so fairly fallen into his hands; and I believe I should have been shabby enough to have done so myself, since other great and exalted characters had so recently set me the example." But what Pitt actually did with the preference was to give it to Colonel Barré in exchange for a pension which had been conferred upon him by Lord Rockingham, and in reference to which there had been not a little scandal. This was a clear gain of £3,200 to the nation, and public opinion did not fail to recognise and appreciate the disinterested character of the whole transaction.

The manipulation of the loan already mentioned,



which Pitt was compelled to issue in 1784, afforded another illustration of the same high-minded attitude towards public affairs. An unscrupulous man could at once have made a fortune out of this business, or at any rate the fortunes of his friends. The mere choice of one contractor in preference to another, where both were equally competent for the work in hand, might have brought thousands of pounds to his credit at Coutts's. Almost any public man would have gone as far as this under the standard of morality which then existed. But the son of Chatham was not tempted. Call it temperament or call it principle, he did not care to amass a fortune, now or at any time. Perhaps it was no absolute merit in him to remain scrupulously honest in face of the opportunity of being dishonest; but in those days it was regarded as a merit. As men witnessed the ability with which he had overcome his Parliamentary difficulties and vanquished the most eloquent and experienced politicians of the day, they recognised in him a great and powerful leader. When they saw that he was above the reach of greed and corruption, indifferent to wealth though notoriously a poor man, they felt that he was destined to the very loftiest rank of English Ministers.

When Pitt took office, the State owed some thirteen or fourteen millions in addition to the national debt already funded, and it was necessary, both for economy of management and for the public credit, that the floating loans should be placed on the same footing as the remainder of the debt. In his Budget of June, 1784, Pitt announced a loan for this purpose, amounting to six and a half of the unfunded fourteen millions; and he simultaneously gave notice through the Bank of England that the contracts would be assigned to the lowest

bidder. Not a penny was unjustly added to the national burdens by this transaction, and—so great is the effect of well-timed example—it is doubtful whether any subsequent loan, of the whole series from that time until now, has been made the subject of jobbery by an English public servant.

In his private affairs (and a short digression on this subject will not be out of place in the present chapter) Pitt was no less disinterested. It was an age of pluralities and pensions and sinecures, and Pitt was a pluralist in the sense that he received three official incomes at the same time, one of them being partly in the nature of a sinecure. He was First Lord and he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he took the salary assigned to him in both capacities. But he did all the work if he drew all the pay. When in addition he drew the pay of Warden of the Cinque Ports it was against his better judgment, or in the teeth of his scruples; and yet even then he had barely enough of income to make him independent.

There were others for whom he was infinitely more solicitous than he was for himself. His correspondence with Lady Chatham during his first years of office displays a notable, not to say an affecting solicitude for the interests of his mother. The Countess had not been left in affluence. She lived with her youngest daughter in quiet comfort and comparative ease, but in common with many others of the poorer creditors of the State she was occasionally embarrassed by the impecuniosity of that unsentimental paymaster. The grant payable to her was charged upon what was then known as the Four-and-a-

half Fund, and when this Fund, as was often the case, fell below the charges made upon it, there was no authority for the Treasury to draw upon other resources. When Lord Chatham died his pension was in arrear; and for some time afterwards his widow was straitened by the same discreditable cause. Pitt took steps to remedy this, not hastily, through mere zeal of personal motive, but in the dignified performance of a manifest duty. In the meanwhile he opened a credit for his mother at Coutts's bank, and pressed her over and over again to have recourse to this fund—which was simply the margin of his salary created by filial self-denial. His letters dwell so frequently upon Lady Chatham's needs, and on his pleasure in being able to relieve them, that they almost suggest the idea of importunity on her part. Nothing, apparently, could be further from the truth. It was his own generosity which was importunate; and the importunity of a generous son is an eloquent testimony to the deserts of the mother.

In the dispensation of patronage Pitt was lavish enough. The instance already mentioned, in the case of Colonel Barré's appointment to the Clerkship of the Pells, proves that he was a discriminating patron, and one who would not be likely to bestow without caution. In those days, as soon as a Minister was in office, or on the high-road to office, he was wont to be besieged by applications for a place. The applicants were all eminently deserving in their own eyes, and all firmly persuaded that the great dispenser would deem it a privilege to grant their petitions. Pitt had not been many days at his post when, young as he was, these ingenuous prayers began to pour in upon him. His mother and his sister each had a client whose titles to

consideration were brought to his notice. Later on he showed that he could appreciate as well as any of his predecessors the political value of the patronage at his disposal. The number of peerages created by him in the course of his Administration became proverbial. Pitt's peers stand out prominently in any classification of the aristocracy of England, and it may be that he approached more nearly to favouritism in this respect than in any other.

The remaining domestic events of Pitt's Ministry before the outbreak of war with France may be somewhat briefly dismissed. Reserving the question of Ireland for a separate chapter, we have to deal with the India Bill of 1784, the impeachment and trial of Warren Hastings, the economical and administrative reforms, the arrangements relating to the illness of the King and the position of the Prince of Wales, the agitation for the abolition of slavery, and the general condition of the country previous to the elections of 1790.

The Bill which Pitt introduced for the better government of India established a new Board of Control, whilst it left to the Company almost all its patronage and resources. The Ministry, on behalf of the Crown, formally undertook a responsibility which had already virtually weighed upon it. From this time forward the affairs of India came more frequently and directly under the notice of the House of Commons, and for the next seventy-five years our enormous and constantly growing empire in Asia was held under a double and not always harmonious rule. The long experiment failed; but it can hardly be said that any better course was open to

Pitt than that which he actually took. The assumption of exclusive control and patronage, possible in 1858, was not possible in 1784, if for no other reason than because the Prime Minister had led the opposition to the Bill of 1783. It was not possible in 1783, because neither the King, nor the House of Lords, nor the minority in the House of Commons could be induced to place such enormous power in the hands of the Ministry of the day. Fox and his friends vainly contended that a majority of the representatives of the people had been willing so to trust them, and that a majority of the constituencies would in all probability have renewed their confidence in the coalesced Ministers. The last assertion was incapable of proof. It is doubtful whether the Coalition could have secured a majority in December, whereas it signally failed to secure one in April. Unconstitutional as the four months' delay really was, we can only assume that the verdict of the country implied the same want of trust which had been declared by the King and the Lords.

The East India Company was left with the consolatory belief that only an eminently moral Cabinet would ever be strong enough to rob them of their treasure, and that the years of their life had been indefinitely prolonged.

The familiar story of the impeachment and trial of Warren Hastings affords further testimony to the intense interest which Englishmen had begun to feel in the affairs of India. Hastings, who had been censured by a vote of the House of Commons in 1782, on the motion of Dundas, returned to England in 1785; and he found both foes and friends ready to welcome him home.

Dundas, now at the head of the Board of Control, had softened wonderfully towards the late Governor-General. Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, was ardent in his favour. Pitt himself was neutral in the matter; but when the charges against Hastings were brought forward in the session of 1786, and when the principal members of the Opposition had thrown themselves with energy into the impeachment, the Minister loftily declared that "Mr. Hastings, notwithstanding all the assertions to the contrary, might be as innocent as the child unborn; but he was now under the eye and suspicion of Parliament, and his innocence or guilt must be proved by incontestable evidence."

On the other hand, the open enemies of Hastings were many and powerful. Burke (who was already beginning to earn his unenviable title of "the dinner-bell of the House of Commons") had been one of the first to take up the cause of the Indian natives. He had no special motive for vindictiveness, and was doubtless guided by pure conviction in a matter which, however hotly contested at the time, is no longer the subject of controversy amongst Englishmen. He was instructed in his brief by Philip Francis, whose rancour towards Hastings does not seem to have been too highly coloured even on the canvas of Macaulay. Fox and Sheridan added their dazzling eloquence to an assault which, based as it was on transparent justice, it was impossible for Hastings to resist. One division he obtained in his favour on the Rohilla Charge; but it was his only success. As soon as Pitt had fairly studied the subject his candour enlisted him on the side of the accusers. The Benares Charge was carried soon after the Rohilla Charge had been rejected. The Begum Charge, in sup-

port of which Sheridan made a speech, declared by his rivals to have been the best ever delivered in the House, was carried early in the session of 1787. Then Burke moved the impeachment, and his resolution was agreed to without division. The impeachment resulted in a State trial, of which Burke, Fox, Sheridan, Charles Grey, and three other members of the Opposition were appointed managers. This memorable trial was opened in Westminster Hall on the 13th of February, 1788, and it did not close until eight years later.

Time and human nature interposed in behalf of Hastings. His accusers quarrelled amongst themselves; death or retirement changed the identity of his judges; the detrition of events, and some said the lavish expenditure of money, had converted public opinion. The House of Lords acquitted him, and he lived for nearly four-and-twenty years to ruminate on his sweet and bitter memories. But, after all, the impeachment and trial had served their purpose. They created a precedent which has been continually before the eyes of our viceroys and governors from that time to the present day. And for this Pitt deserves our thanks as much as Burke and his coadjutors, for if he had not been candid enough to act upon his convictions in 1786, and resolute enough to insist on what he thought right, even in spite of the King's wishes, no striking example would have been made, and the subsequent government of India would have been more difficult than it actually was.

The temporary madness of George III. in 1788 not only raised a question of considerable delicacy and difficulty for his Ministers, but menaced the removal of Pitt

from office. As soon as the character of the King's malady was apparent, and the Prince of Wales perceived that he might be called upon to discharge the functions of royalty, he sent his brother to Lord Loughborough, with a message plainly indicating his intention to rely upon the counsels of Fox. Fox was at this moment in Italy, but his friends were sufficiently active. It was clear to everybody that a Regency must be constituted, and that the powers of the Prince must be in some manner defined. Pitt was chiefly anxious that the right thing should be done in the right spirit—that the possibility of the King's recovery should be borne in mind, and that the authority of the Regent should be duly limited in accordance with this possibility. His rivals were afraid that he would try to debar the Prince from choosing new Ministers. But Pitt had no such idea. Pride alone would have prevented him from making a proposal of this kind. He seems to have faced his position very calmly. The King might die, or the Prince might give authority to Fox. In either case he was prepared; and he coolly began to contemplate his retirement from public life, and his resumption of practice (or rather of his quest of practice) at the bar.

The King's madness had declared itself on the 5th of November. Parliament met on the 20th, and was prorogued until that day fortnight. After due declarations and formalities, after an examination of the physicians and a search for precedents, Pitt moved three resolutions—the first declaring the indisposition of the King, the second laying down the duty of Parliament to supply the defect of royal authority, and the third enjoining the two Houses to determine means for giving the royal assent (by putting the Great Seal in commission) to a



**Bill of Regency.** The resolutions were carried by large majorities.

It is at once painful and amusing to read the accounts which have reached us of the discussions in both Houses at this critical juncture of affairs. The King's insanity and the prospect of a Regency were assuredly a delicate test of the moral dignity of every man who opened his mouth on the subject. Pitt had never exhibited a loftier spirit. Fox let slip an unworthy insinuation that the Minister would not have proposed to limit the Regent's authority "if he had not been conscious that he did not deserve the Prince's confidence, and would not be the Prince's Minister." Pitt repudiated the attack as "unfounded, arrogant, and presumptuous." "As to my being conscious," he said, "that I do not deserve the favour of the Prince, I can only say that I know but one way in which I or any man could deserve it—by having uniformly endeavoured in a public situation to do my duty to the King his father and to the country at large. If, in thus endeavouring to deserve the confidence of the Prince, it should appear that I in fact have lost it, however painful and mortifying that circumstance may be to me, and from whatever cause it may proceed, I may indeed regret it, but I will boldly say it is impossible I should ever repent it."

Burke was one of those who lost their heads on this occasion. Speaking of the proposed use of the Great Seal, he ridiculed the intention "to set up a man with black brows and a large wig." "I do not approve of any robbery," he cried, "whether housebreaking, highway robbery, or any other; yet each of them in my opinion is more excusable than this." And when his best friends tried to cough him down, and his opponents

cheered him on, so that his indiscretions were drowned in a confusion of noises, he screamed, "In vociferation and noise some persons are very great, but I know a set of hounds that would eclipse them."

The Lord Chancellor made perhaps the worst slip of all. He had been plotting behind Pitt's back to retain the Seal in the expected new Administration, but he repented his design when the King began to give evidence of recovery. Speaking on the 15th of December on the condition of the royal invalid, he is described as bursting into a flood of tears; and shortly afterwards he uttered a pious ejaculation, "When I forget my king, may my God forget me!" Wilkes (writes Lord Stanhope), who was standing under the throne, "eyed the Chancellor askance, and muttered, 'God forget you! He will see you damned first!'" Burke at the same moment exclaimed, with equal wit and with no profaneness, 'The best thing that can happen to you!' Pitt also was on the steps of the throne. On Lord Thurlow's imprecation he is said to have rushed out of the House, exclaiming several times, 'Oh, what a rascal!'"

The Regency Bill proposed by Pitt was framed on the basis already mentioned—that nothing should be done during the King's illness which it might be conceivable his Majesty would desire to undo on his restoration to health. Thus no peerages were to be created, no office was to be granted in reversion, or otherwise than "during his Majesty's pleasure"—except such offices as would naturally be granted on their vacation in ordinary course. The provisions of the Bill were submitted to the Prince, who objected to them with considerable warmth. The contest was keen between Ministers and Opposition—recruited as the Opposition was by a new party of

“Prince’s friends.” But it happened that there was no necessity to carry it to its conclusion. The Regency Bill had passed the Commons on February 12, 1789, and was ready to come up for third reading in the Lords, when the King’s illness took a favourable turn; and before the end of the month George III. was in his right mind again. Thus unexpectedly was the cup dashed from the lips of the Prince and his party; whilst Pitt had decidedly strengthened himself by his tact and judgment in a most difficult situation. At the height of the crisis, when it seemed probable that the Prime Minister would have to give way, and to carry out his purpose of returning to the bar for a livelihood, his friends met together, and in the course of two days contributed a hundred thousand pounds, which they sought as delicately as possible to urge on his acceptance. But Pitt told the mediator, Mr. George Rose, his Financial Secretary and intimate personal friend, that no consideration on earth should induce him to take the money. A hundred thousand pounds and a hundred pence are much the same to a man who has no ambitions that money can purchase.

Amongst the earliest of Pitt’s administrative measures—a measure illustrating the sense and impartiality of his mind at the outset of his official career—was one which restored to their owners the Scottish estates forfeited to the Crown in the last rebellion. This was effected by a Bill of which Dundas had charge in the House of Commons, though Pitt himself was mainly responsible for the act of rehabilitation. Every one was by this time ready for clemency towards Scotland; but it was to Pitt’s credit

that he determined so quickly upon a course which, contemplated by his father and even by Lord North, had always been deferred to more pressing measures.

It is superfluous to say that the reformer in office found it extremely difficult to carry into effect the plans which he had conceived in Opposition. The one matter on which the decisive Parliamentary conflict had taken place—reform of administration in India—was settled out of hand by virtue of the first prestige of victory; but thereafter it was by no means easy for Pitt to redeem his pledges. In the case of Parliamentary reform it was, as already mentioned, impossible. In the session of 1784-5 a noted member of the advanced Liberal section, Alderman Sawbridge, took up the question where it had been left in the previous year, and moved a resolution. Pitt thought the occasion unsuitable, and again pledged himself "in the strongest language" to bring the measure forward "on the very first opportunity next session." But as the Alderman would not give way, and as there was manifestly a great desire on the Ministerial side to go to a division, Pitt voted for the motion, the result being that he was left in a minority of 125 out of a House of 324.

The pledge which had been given in the course of this debate was not forgotten. Amidst the cross-currents of political life at this period there were eager reformers both on the right and on the left of the chair; and from either side the Minister knew that he should obtain a certain measure of support. But the question was surrounded by perplexities. The King disliked reform, and only agreed to the introduction of a measure out of personal regard for his Minister. The letter which he wrote to Pitt on this subject is characteristic of him.

It is dated March 20, 1785, and is in these terms :—\*

“I have received Mr. Pitt’s paper containing the heads of his plan for a Parliamentary Reform, which I look on as a mark of attention. I should have delayed acknowledging the receipt of it till I saw him on Monday, had not his letter expressed that there is but one issue of the business he could look upon as fatal; that is, the possibility of the measure being rejected by the weight of those who are supposed to be connected with Government. Mr. Pitt must recollect that though I have thought it unfortunate that he had early engaged himself in this measure, yet that I have ever said that as he was clear of the propriety of the measure, he ought to lay his thoughts before the House; that out of personal regard to him, I should avoid giving any opinion to any one on the opening of the door to Parliamentary Reform except to him: therefore I am certain Mr. Pitt cannot suspect my having influenced any one on the occasion; if others choose for base ends to impute such a conduct to me, I must bear it as former false suggestions. Indeed on a question of such magnitude, I should think very ill of any man who took a part on either side without the maturest consideration, and who would suffer his civility to any one to make him vote contrary to his own opinion. The conduct of some of Mr. Pitt’s most intimate friends on the Westminster Scrutiny shows there are questions men will not by friendship be biassed to adopt.

G. R.”

This was evidently an admonition to Pitt, as much as a concession and self-defence from the King; and his Majesty’s views on the subject were too well known to his “friends” not to produce upon them an effect practically fatal to reform. But Pitt had gone too far to retrace his steps. He had promised Wyvill that he would exert his power and credit, “as a man and as a Minister,” to carry his Bill; and Wyvill had taken care to make this promise public—not a little to Pitt’s disgust.

On the 18th of April Pitt brought forward and explained his scheme. The gist of it was contained in a

\* As quoted in Lord Stanhope’s “Life,” vol. i., Appendix,

proposal to disfranchise thirty-six rotten boroughs, to compensate their proprietors, and to transfer their privileges to London, Westminster, and the most populous counties. His eloquence and his arguments were equally unavailing. After a warm debate the reformers were left in a minority of 174 out of a House of 422—each side having added 49 to their numbers in the preceding session.

The question of Parliamentary Reform was never again mooted by Pitt or by his immediate successors. In the matter of administrative reform, however, the Ministry of 1784 was more successful. Various measures of economical re-adjustment were introduced into the public accounts; and at least the first steps were taken towards an important modification of the national expenditure. In dealing with the commercial interests of the country, Pitt entered on a path which would have led him naturally in the direction of free trade. In 1787 he concluded a Treaty of Commerce with France, which proceeded on the principle that a careful and timely reduction of duties increased instead of diminishing revenue. It removed, as far as was possible at that time, all restrictions on the free commercial intercourse of the two countries; it reduced tariffs, abolished passports, abandoned the right of privateering, and made many mutual concessions for the furtherance of international trade. The relations between England and France were instantly improved; and in the next year, within a few months of the outbreak of the French Revolution, we find the two Governments agreed upon a policy of disarmament.

The sessions of 1788 and 1789 were distinguished by the first deliberate efforts in Parliament to secure the

abolition of the Slave Trade. Wilberforce, member for Yorkshire, and a personal friend of Pitt, had taken up the subject with great fervour, and he was encouraged by the Minister himself to bring it forward in the House of Commons. Pitt, indeed, moved the original resolution (committing the House to an inquiry) on behalf of his friend, during his temporary absence on the ground of illness. The resolution passed; and so did a Bill introduced by Sir William Dolben, providing sundry alleviations in the treatment of slaves on shipboard. In the following year Wilberforce himself brought the matter before the House in an eloquent and forcible speech, but victory was delayed by the storm which was at that moment breaking over Europe.

The same fate also befell many another movement of the friends of progress—such as the agitation for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which received the support of 102 members out of 224 in the House of Commons. It is worthy of especial note that the tendency of Parliament and of the country at this crisis of our history was on the whole distinctly liberal—distinctly in favour of the views of the Liberal party. And whatever Pitt's opponents might say, whatever his conduct may have been on certain questions as a rival of Fox, he was, in spirit and in act, the popular leader of the popular mind. His career was sharply divided by the French revolutionary wars into two contrasted portions. We do him great injustice when we magnify his work as a War Minister at the expense of his services and talents as a Peace Minister.

## CHAPTER V.

### PITT AND THE REVOLUTION.

**I**N a work of necessarily small compass it would be out of place to deal with the French Revolution in any way save as a familiar historical landmark—an occurrence whereof the effects upon Europe at large, and England in particular, are sufficiently well ascertained to be taken for granted.

The condition of this country during the earlier years of the life of Pitt was in some degree a reflex of the general condition of the civilised world, which had been passing through a revolution of mind and morals before the revolution of kingdoms and of empires had begun. But in England there were special circumstances affecting our own national growth and development, with which the continental States had nothing to do. Our rulers had already given way before the spirit of change which was gradually passing over the face of the world, and their prudence rendered us more capable than any other nation of bearing the shock when it came. They had bowed to the revolution in America, and that chapter of English history was not unworthily closed. They had bowed to the revolution in Ireland—though that was a chapter which they subsequently deemed it necessary to reopen. They bowed to the revolution in England—a revolution very different in outward form



from the other two, but still the same in principle and theory. And thus it happened that for us, when the fury of our neighbours was deluging the streets of Paris in blood, the work of the eighteenth century was in great measure fulfilled. The fruits of this achievement, poor as they seemed in the eyes of many, were enough to satisfy the calmer aspirations of the majority, and made a contribution of permanent value to the accumulations of English freedom.

In the first place, the emancipation of the British settlements in North America, wrung from us as it was by force of arms, nevertheless took the shape of a national display of high moral courage. It was a just concession, and it became a noble precedent; it elevated the sentiments of the people, and was a new departure in policy. It was clearly better for Shelburne to make peace on the basis of American independence than it would have been to fight the colonists to the last extremity, in the hope of ultimately beating them by our superiority of resources. That it was technically a rebellion to which he was yielding made little difference in the right or wrong of the act; his conduct must be judged with reference to all the surrounding conditions; and, so judged, he has been held blameless by posterity for the surrender of the States.

In Ireland there had been a rebellion not so much forced upon the people by English misrule as calculated and timed to take advantage of the various wars in which we were engaged. England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity; but here also, as in the other case, a concession was due from us, and our rulers made it in all good faith. It may be said that both concessions were forced, and therefore valueless in point of credit. Yet

in the majority of cases England has clung to her first intentions against all the forcing that the world could bring to bear upon her. She has been obstinate enough in the wrong to take credit for doing a just thing under compulsion.

The important consideration is not whether the Governments of that day deserved credit for their acts, but rather that their acts did defer in some sense to the revolutionary spirit of the age, and thus appeased and partially satisfied it. The same thing is true in reference to domestic affairs. Our forefathers in the eighteenth century were bent on liberty of speech, on a free press, and on individual immunity. They struggled obstinately and persistently ; and the measure of success which they had gained previously to the year 1790 was doubtless a main cause why the revolution in France did not extend to us in all its madness and malice.

In no field was the struggle more severe, or better rewarded, than in the arena of public opinion. Men claimed to speak and write as they thought, not without due limits of law and propriety, but without being at the mercy of official caprice, or of political spite, or of half-obsolete enactments harshly administered. Authority long and resolutely vetoed this claim ; but the nation at large was almost always on the side of those who defied authority and braved the penalties of the law. So enthusiastic was the popular admiration for all who would speak and print their opinions without reserve that many a dull man rose to fame through mere courage in expression. Very poor was much of the stuff which our forefathers relished a hundred years ago ; but audacity gave it a flavour, and the risk run by all who took part in producing it added a nameless charm to the feeblest

flights of satire or humour. The political diatribes of the age of "Junius" and "Peter Pindar"—greatly as they varied in intrinsic value—have acquired a notoriety out of all proportion to their merits. Read in our day the greater number of them are flat and tame. But they were neither flat nor tame to their first readers, for whom they smacked of daring sedition and justifiable breach of the law.

The early years of the reign of George III. were distinguished by the contest between John Wilkes and the House of Commons—the central fact of a wide and vigorous agitation, in which "Junius" and the printers of "The Senate of Lilliput" bore a prominent part. The publication just mentioned was condemned for the heinous offence of reporting debates in the House of Commons, and in 1771 the House issued a formal order against the repetition of this offence. Certain printers who disobeyed this order were admonished; one was imprisoned; and when the Court of Aldermen declared the action of the House illegal, and set the man at liberty, the Lord Mayor was committed to the Tower. The popular indignation was not confined to London; it spread over the whole country, and brought the Government of Lord North, and the King himself, into direct collision with popular opinion. The desire and demand for information on all that concerned the interests of the nation were as enthusiastic as the demand for an unshackled expression of sentiment and comment. To the former demand were due the sudden rise and rapid success of a number of daily newspapers—the *Times*, *Post*, and *Herald* amongst them—which were not long in becoming powerful national institutions. Freedom of speech increased from year to year. Men

legal to write and speak more freely. Fewer prosecutions were attempted and fewer successful. In the case of *Stockdale*, prosecuted in 1789 for an alleged libel in 1747, Pitt, who had himself been attacked in the incriminated pamphlet, virtually secured the acquittal of the publisher by declaring in Parliament that he could see "nothing so peculiarly heinous as to warrant our singling out this publication from the general mass." This was spoken in rejoinder to Fox, who had demanded the prosecution of *Stockdale*; and it attests both the common sense and the magnanimity of the speaker. Eighteen months later the two rivals combined to support a Bill for defining in a liberal sense the rights of juries in cases of libel.

On the whole, the tendency of the age was towards a broader and sounder interpretation of popular liberties, in this as in most other directions—in the direction of free trade, of provident finance, of State retrenchment, of peaceful foreign policy, and even of Parliamentary reform. On the eve of the French Revolution England was beginning to reap the fruits of her own more timely and frugal revolt. But now the continuity was to be interrupted. Thanks to the Convention, to the international dependence of the European community, and in part, it may be, to the infatuation of our own rulers, the development of English institutions was to be arrested and delayed for more than a quarter of a century.

The outbreak in Paris in the summer of 1789, the successful violence of the autumn and winter, with the complete shaming of all the privileged classes, had created for the world a portentous fact and spectacle,

before which the opinions of men in every land began to shape and range themselves anew. In England especially the divergence manifested itself in a very striking manner, and sharp lines of division were revealed between politicians who had hitherto been closely associated. Fox and the majority of his party welcomed the change with fervour, foreseeing a new order of things distinctly favourable to their adopted principles. When the Opposition leader heard of the capture of the Bastille, he declared with exultation, "How much it is the greatest event that ever happened in the world! And how much the best!" Sheridan spoke in the same strain, and so did Grey and most of the prominent Whigs. But a few of the party already began to break away. Burke in particular took alarm at the first symptoms of revolution; and he was not slow in proving how shrewd the alarm of a rhetorician may be. It was perhaps natural that a Whig who had so greatly dreaded the consequence of extending the limited franchise in his own country should be transported with terror by the revolt of the Parisian mob. He could see no ground or opening for congratulation in the recovery of the usurped supremacy of a people; and he began without a moment's compunction to wage his long war upon the French Revolution. Parliament met in January, 1790, and at the earliest opportunity he delivered himself of an impassioned speech against "the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto existed in the world."

Opinion outside the House corresponded with opinion inside the House. The friends of the popular cause were found in all classes, and amongst all sorts and conditions of men. It is curious to note how little terror there was at this time, on the part of some whose terror would

have been pardonable, in the word revolution. The reason was to be found in the affectionate remembrance by Englishmen of their own bloodless Revolution, then just a hundred years old. The cult of the ideas of 1688 was as fervid then as the cult of the ideas of 1789 is fervid now in France. The centenary of that notable turning-point in our history had been commemorated in the preceding year by a vote of the House of Commons (snuffed out by Thurlow in the Lords), recommending an annual Day of Thanksgiving for the Revolution of 1688. In anticipation of the centenary a Revolution Society had been set on foot, which held its yearly rite of congratulation. Events in France gave a fillip to the activity of this society, whereof Earl Stanhope was one of the leading spirits, and Dr. Price, the friend of Shelburne, was orator in chief. The Society had held its annual meeting on the 4th of November, 1789, three months after the National Assembly had confiscated the privileges of the clergy, nobles, and magistracy, when it voted an address of congratulation to the *de facto* Government of France, which Lord Stanhope signed as chairman.

Burke vigorously denounced what he regarded as an act of constructive treachery; and from time to time he set himself to counteract the popular sympathies with the revolutionists across the Channel. His most laboured and brilliant effort—or the most brilliant which has come down to us in a finished state—is his “Reflections on the Revolution in France,” published in October, 1790. It was in this essay that he took to task the declarations of the Revolution Society, and of Dr. Price in particular; and no doubt his arguments had a very significant effect upon large numbers of his countrymen.

Thirty thousand copies of the "Reflections" are said to have been sold within a few years of its publication, and it instantly made the former colleague of Fox a recognised champion of French monarchical principles. One of the most familiar passages in the "Reflections" is the panegyric on Marie Antoinette, and the accompanying laudation of the age of chivalry. This is how the enchanter used to wave the wand of his oratory over the men and women of his generation :—

"It is now sixteen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she was just beginning to move in—glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. . . . I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. The unbought 'grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiments and heroic enterprise,' is gone. It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

Burke's essay, and his other philippics against the French revolutionary spirit, elicited a number of replies; amongst others from Earl Stanhope and Sir James Mackintosh, from Dr. Priestley and Thomas Paine. The consequence of the attitude which he assumed, and of the vehement invectives by which he sought to justify it, was a definite breach between him and his political friends. It was impossible that he should be railing at the "robbers," the "bloodthirsty democrats," the "swinish multitude" of Paris, whilst Fox, at his side, was rejoicing

at their achievements, without an ultimate severance of their former ties. On one occasion there was a peculiarly glaring contrast between the words used by these two leaders in reference to the French Government. Burke spoke of the pain which it had given him to differ from his associates; and when Fox warmly protested that there was no loss of friendship, the other declared that it was inevitable. "I know the price of my conduct," he said. "I have done my duty at the price of my friend." And from that time he began to act with Pitt and the Ministerialists. With him went Windham and a few other Whigs, to be followed later by many more.

For some years, however, Pitt was by no means a leader such as Burke and his proselytes desired to find. They had proclaimed war against the Revolution, and would gladly have transferred the struggle from the field of thought and words to the arena of physical conflict. Pitt was not so hasty in his judgments. He had the balance and the caution of a statesman; and he had moreover the instinct of popular emancipation more fully developed than any of the men who urged him to make common cause with the enemies of France. From 1789 to 1792 he held a middle course between Fox and Burke. If it would be too much to say that he began by sympathizing with the French people against the monarchy, he undoubtedly looked forward with hope to the triumph of the best and most moderate men in the Assembly and Convention. So long as he thought this possible—and no one undeceived him except the Convention itself—hostility against France was the last idea that could have entered his mind. In one of his first references to the Revolution, in the session of 1790, he declared that "the convulsions of France must sooner



or later terminate in general harmony and regular order; and though such a situation might make her more formidable, it might also make her less obnoxious as a neighbour." He could not, he added, regard with envious eyes "any approximation in neighbouring States to those sentiments which are the characteristics of every British subject."

This was the ground which he took during the General Election in the summer of 1790, when the country for the second time returned a large majority in his favour. The Cabinet had been modified a year before by the appointment of William Grenville as Secretary of State in the room of Lord Sydney, Addington being chosen Speaker in succession to Grenville. Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas represented the Cabinet in the House of Commons; but as soon as the new Parliament assembled the latest accession to this Administration took his seat in the House of Lords. Pitt had recommended Grenville for a peerage in the hope that he would take a leading part in the debates in the Upper House, and give him a firmer hold upon that House than Lord Thurlow had been willing to give him. In some respects his hopes were justified; but the appointment was naturally an unwelcome one to several of the peers who deemed themselves to have been superseded by it. The Duke of Richmond read Pitt a lecture upon his hasty act, threatening to retire from public life, assuring him that the recent appointment of Lord Chatham to the Admiralty would be considered as "engrossing too much in one family," hinting that Dundas was not sorry to have Mr. Grenville out of his way in the House of Commons, and predicting that Lord Grenville would be almost isolated as a representative of the Cabinet in the Upper

House, inasmuch as the Duke of Leeds would be huffed, the Chancellor would be hostile, Lord Camden would continue to be "idle," Lord Stafford would seldom speak, and Lord Chatham perhaps never. In the event of his own retirement, he promised that he would "endeavour not to give it the appearance of any dissatisfaction with you, for in truth I feel none, believing as I do that your conduct does not proceed from any intentional want of kindness towards me, but from (you must forgive me for saying so) an idleness in your disposition that too often makes you neglect to cultivate the friendship of those who are most attached to you, and which makes you expose your judgment to be biassed by the opinion of the narrow circle to which you confine your intimacy."

This was not an encouraging prospect for the remodelled Administration; but the event proved that the Duke under-estimated the capabilities of Pitt and his second in command.

Meanwhile Pitt was patiently waiting for the development of affairs in France. He had met Parliament in the beginning of 1790 with strictly economical estimates. Not a man was added to the 18,000 who then constituted the peace establishment of the country; and his new majority at the elections was given to him in implied reliance on this policy of guarded peace. It is true that a million sterling was voted before the dissolution for the purpose of strengthening the navy; but this credit was asked and granted in consequence of a misunderstanding with Spain, and under a menace of war from that country. There was indeed already a war party in France which would gladly have renewed the old

compact with the Spaniards, and which sought to pick a quarrel with England. They took for granted our enmity to the Revolution ; but assuredly no such enmity existed on the part of our Government at this moment. Burke's defiant essay had not yet circulated by tens of thousands ; and most of the moderate French leaders, such as Mirabeau, Barnave, De Noailles, did their utmost to establish peace and amity with England.

They found Pitt entirely disposed to second their efforts. There is a very significant passage in a letter from the former to Mr. Hugh Elliot, who had taken upon himself to act in an extra-official capacity in Paris, and whose zealous endeavours to promote a good understanding were privately encouraged by the English Government. The passage referred to may be taken as an expression of Pitt's deliberate opinions, held by him with no perceptible change up to the outbreak of war in 1793. The letter was written in October, 1790, and is quoted at length by Lord Stanhope in his *Life of Pitt*.

The English Minister, after discussing the Spanish complication, and rejecting the notion that France might come forward as a mediator or arbitrator in that business, concluded by laying down a formal stipulation—“That no assurances shall be given, directly or indirectly, which go farther than that this country means to persevere in the neutrality which it has hitherto scrupulously observed with respect to the internal dissensions of France, and from which it will never depart, unless the conduct held there should make it indispensable as an act of self-defence ; and that we are sincerely desirous of preserving peace, and of cultivating in general a friendly intercourse and good understanding between

the two nations. But the utmost care is necessary, under the present circumstances, to use no language which can lead to an expectation of our taking measures to forward the internal views of any political party, or of our being ripe to form any alliance between the two countries, which, even if such a thing should be really wished in France, various events might make it impossible for us to accede to, and which would, in any case, at least require great consideration."

The scrupulous neutrality which Pitt here privately and incidentally enjoins was in fact the central principle of his policy towards France in the first three years of the Revolution. He held that we had no right, and still less object or desire, to interfere in the internal dissensions of our neighbour, whether in the interests of a dynasty, or in defence of the monarchical institution, or as the ally of one party against another. He conceived it to be our duty to hold aloof from partisanship of any kind, and he doubted, if he did not deny, the propriety or possibility of an alliance between the two States. Though there is much to be said on both sides of this latter question, it would be difficult to contest the soundness of Pitt's judgment on the whole problem. But there was clearly abundant reason for anxiety as to the future. The maintenance of peace was a work of great delicacy and difficulty from the beginning. The excitement of popular opinion in France might, under all the circumstances, have rendered war inevitable. The excitement of popular opinion in England, which Burke and others laboured so incessantly to create and foster, expanded the danger into a moral certainty. But neither Pitt nor the King can be held responsible for this outcome of the situation.

The disagreement with Spain, arising out of the affair of the Nootka Sound, was brought to an end by a Convention signed towards the close of 1790. The King took the opportunity of offering to Pitt a vacant Garter. The Minister, with his characteristic indifference to purely personal honours, declined this mark of the royal favour; but he did not scruple to ask that the insignia might be conferred upon his elder brother. King George assented to this, "as a public testimony of approbation, which will be understood as meant to the whole family." The ribbon, therefore, went to Chatham; but the honour remained with Pitt. He had declined the Garter as he had declined the hundred thousand pounds offered to him by his friends, and as he had declined half-a-dozen sinecures when they came within his reach—mainly because titles and emoluments were not within the scope of his ambitions, and partly, no doubt, because to accept them might have impaired the independence and authority of his political standing.

When we pass from the first and peaceable stage of Pitt's career to the stage in which his policy was conditioned by the predicaments of a great European war, it seems well to observe that it was not exclusively the Revolution, with the conflicts arising therefrom, which interrupted the domestic policy of the Minister, and led him to take an active part in controlling the affairs of the Continent. Pitt had his system, or systems, of foreign policy before he was compelled to deal with the challenge of the French Republicans, and before the Revolution and its enemies had begun to set Europe in a blaze. In the first place, he had a lofty idea of the

dignity of his country, and of the necessity of maintaining that dignity with special and emphatic firmness. He was as it were under an hereditary constraint to carry us back from the traditions of 1780 to the traditions of 1760—not, perhaps, aggressively, but vigorously and haughtily, as occasion might serve. And, in the next place, he did give evidence of a spirit which tended towards aggression—that is to say, towards an active interference in continental disputes for the purpose of upholding a particular system of the balance of power.

It would not be exact, therefore, to say that Pitt was transformed from a Peace Minister to a War Minister by the French Revolution. That would not be the precise truth, inasmuch as he displayed some of the attributes of a War Minister several years before the Convention declared war on England.

We have noted the firmness of his attitude towards Spain. Though he had acted with considerable prudence and caution in supporting the position of Holland during the French intrigues of 1787, he had nevertheless assented to the adoption of the significant measures proposed by Sir James Harris (the first Earl of Malmesbury), whereby the Court of Versailles was warned against impending danger in the Low Countries—a diplomatic chapter not without a distinct effect on the subsequent relations of the two greater Powers. But it was in connection with the Russo-Turkish war of 1787—91 that Pitt first displayed on a large scale the originating force of his mind in questions affecting the state of Europe.

Pitt, unlike his father, was a Russophobe. No doubt he had more reason than his father—if Russian progress southwards could be deemed a reason at that time—for opposing the                      of the Muscovite frontier. The

Empress Catherine was manifestly, professedly, incontinently aggressive. The exploits of Potemkin and Suwarrow were well calculated to alarm all who started from an apprehensive point of view. The capture of Oksakoff and Ismail, deeply impressive by the sanguinary character of the victories, was yet more impressive from the fact that the permanent possession of these two fortresses would have secured to Russia the command of the Black Sea and the Danube. Pitt was not prepared for this aggrandisement of a Power which he considered to be a standing menace to the peace of Europe. He rehearsed in some sense the part which he was afterwards to play against France, by forming combinations, by detaching Russia's allies from her, and by arming England for war. He brought about an understanding with Prussia and Holland, whereby those countries were more or less pledged to fight by our side as soon as the word should be given. When Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, attacked Russia on the north, and the Danes caused a diversion in favour of Russia by taking their Scandinavian neighbours in the rear, Pitt insisted on the withdrawal of the Danish troops. When Austria sought to make capital out of the extremity of Turkey, and lent her aid to Russia, the vigorous action of the three Allies compelled her to return to a condition of neutrality. And as these measures were not sufficient to curb the ambitions of Russia, Pitt urged his colleagues in the Cabinet to decide upon a naval armament, for the express purpose of overawing the Empress by a resolute threat of war. The Duke of Richmond and other Ministers assented to this course with reluctance ; money was actually spent, and fresh vessels were put in commission. But no sooner had this policy been made public than it

encountered the ardent opposition of Fox and his friends, whilst with the country at large it was evidently unpopular.

For the first time since he had led a majority in the House of Commons, Pitt was decisively checked on a matter of primary importance. He had made an error of judgment, at any rate to the extent of misjudging the popular mind. It may be that he had fallen into the groove of merely traditional policy, and had attached too much importance to the balance of power and the supposed advantage of regulating Europe by systems and combinations. It may be, as his political opponents hinted, that his energies had begun to develop themselves beyond the seas, since he found it difficult to carry the King with him on a course of active domestic legislation. Be this as it may, Pitt soon recognised that he had overstepped the line, and, in less than two months from the day when the Russian armament had been agreed upon, orders were sent to our representative at St. Petersburg to hold more conciliatory language. The idea of compulsion was abandoned; the "combination" fell through; and the Powers acquiesced in the retention by Russia of her conquests on the Black Sea.

This sudden change of front, together with the dissatisfaction caused by the original design, unquestionably weakened the position of the Prime Minister, and rendered him by so much the less able to assume a strong and independent attitude when he was disposed to do so. One result of the disagreement which had arisen in the Cabinet was the retirement of the Duke of Leeds, formerly Lord Carmarthen. The Duke was succeeded at the Foreign Office by Lord Grenville, who



had already justified his promotion to the House of Lords, and who was shortly afterwards linked to Pitt on yet more intimate terms by his marriage with Anne Pitt, the daughter of Thomas, Lord Camelford. Grenville's place at the Home Office was taken by Dundas, who also continued to hold the Presidency of the India Board. The Cabinet lost one member by these arrangements, and perhaps it lost an element of strength. But at the same time it became more tractable under the guidance of its chief; and the dismissal of Lord Thurlow in the following year tended yet more signally in the same direction.

Pitt and Thurlow had long been on terms which could not be maintained for a day between a Premier and a Lord Chancellor in our own age. Thurlow had apparently taken a delight in thwarting his colleague, and it was to this fact in particular that the preferment of Grenville had been due. During the first aberration of the King, as we have seen, the Chancellor had entered into a disloyal compact with the enemies of Pitt. On various occasions he had opposed in the Lords, more or less openly, measures proposed by Pitt in the House of Commons. In the session of 1792 he surpassed himself in jealousy and spite. In introducing the Budget of this year Pitt had been able to show a continued surplus, amounting to an average of £400,000 for the past four years. On the strength of the national prosperity he remitted taxes to the amount of half the surplus above mentioned; he proposed to devote the other half to the Sinking Fund; and he resolved, in addition, to reduce the armaments of the country. In further elaboration of his financial scheme, the Prime Minister passed through the Commons a Bill providing for the establishment of a

separate Sinking Fund in connection with all future loans ; and, when this Bill came up to the House of Lords, Thurlow conceived the extraordinary idea of trying to throw it out. The scheme, he said, was nugatory and impracticable : " the inaptness of the project " was " equal to the vanity of the attempt."

Pitt would have been more than mortal and less than sensible if he had passed over this display of petty spite. He wrote to the King, asking him to decide the matter between himself and the Chancellor ; and on the same day Dundas was sent to Thurlow with a message of virtual dismissal. The Great Seal was put in commission, and eventually intrusted to Lord Loughborough.

The measure by which England reduced her armaments nearly a year after the Declaration of Pilnitz emphatically defined the position taken up by the Ministry in 1792. Pitt had steadily declined to enter into a combination with Prussia, Austria, and the other monarchical Powers in the interests of the French royal family. He refused either to go to war or to assist the enemies of France with money. In spite of all the influence which could be brought to bear upon him—and King George at this time would gladly have responded to the appeals of the royal and imperial courts—he clung to his statesmanlike opinion that our neighbours must manage their internal affairs for themselves. But, on the other hand, he was far from coinciding in the liberal opinions of Fox and Sheridan, of Grey and Lauderdale and Stanhope, concerning the French Revolution. He took a middle course between the two extremes, and as long as it was possible he induced his followers to remain firm and calm amidst the hundred anxieties of the crisis. The ardent reformers in the House of Commons attempted what they honestly

believed would have been a safe and judicious movement on the lines of gradual national progress. Grey, one of the leaders of the Society of "Friends of the People," gave notice that in the session of 1792-3 he would bring forward a motion in favour of Parliamentary Reform.

The Opposition chief conceived that this proposition would prove to be a pitfall for the Minister who had himself, a few years previously, introduced a similar motion; and so, no doubt, in a sense it was. Pitt had no alternative but to confess that a reform of Parliament, which he had sincerely desired to effect, was at that time unattainable. "I see no chance of succeeding, in the first place," he said, "and I see great danger of anarchy and confusion in the second." It may be that he was right. At any rate he had the best means of judging as to the practicability of the attempt. He had already begun to taste what must surely be the bitterest draught which a statesman can be called upon to swallow—the necessity of falling back when he desires to push forward, and of apparently delaying the advance of freedom when his highest ambition is to promote it.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PITT AS A WAR MINISTER.

**P**ITTS manifest desire to hold an even course between the declared enemies of France and the zealous advocates of reform in England was frustrated by the French declaration of war in February, 1793. Up to this moment he had not abandoned hope. It is true that he had recalled our ambassador from Paris when the King was thrown into prison, and he expostulated with and warned the Convention when it declared itself the enemy of every Government and the ally of every people. It is true that he had held vigorous language when the position of Holland appeared to be menaced by the French. But his efforts to avert war were continued to the very last. The cooler heads amongst the revolutionary leaders, who had incessantly laboured to secure an alliance with England, conceived as late as the autumn of 1793 that he would still recognise the Republic; and indeed Pitt formally offered the friendship of this country to France on condition that the latter would respect the independence of the Netherlands. He was the more eager to arrive at this good understanding because he knew that the three Eastern Powers were on the point of absorbing Poland, and he could see little to choose between the aggrandisement of Russia and the aggressive tendency of France. He had

no object to serve in merely destroying the Republic. He thought that he had a high and important object to serve in checking Muscovite ambition.

But the French were intoxicated with their newly acquired freedom and with the first victories of their arms. Already they deemed themselves a match for Europe, and did not hesitate over another enemy more or less. Holland was attacked, although in attacking her the Convention knew that it was smiting England in the face. The French King was guillotined, although the Republicans must have known that they were thus sacrificing friendships in every civilised State. By these two acts they deliberately cast away the sole remaining hope of peace. So far as England was concerned they threw down the gage of battle in violating the territory of Holland. The declaration of war which followed was only a matter of form.

The power of Pitt as a Minister was doubled as soon as he found himself at war with France; but it was doubled only on the condition that he entered into that war with vigour and pursued it with energy. Further reluctance would have been his ruin. He might have clung to his principles or his preferences, but it would have been on the terms which Walpole had accepted more than fifty years before—retirement from office and from power. This price he was not prepared to pay. Power and office had become a necessity to him. He lived for nothing else than to serve his country in the loftiest station; and as the country decided for war, he simply considered that his mandate was modified—not that it was at an end. Both now and through the varying fortunes of the continental strife he regarded himself as the natural and necessary servant of the King

and instrument of the people. With his temperament it would have been impossible for him to abandon his post as the director and controller of England's destinies, even when he had to direct and control them against his better judgment. But so far as there was self-seeking in his ambition it was the self-seeking of a keen and passionless intellect, or of an intellect passionate only in the desire to govern men and to control events.

As a War Minister, then, Pitt was all-powerful. In Parliament, scores of those who had hitherto opposed him began to rally to his side. Burke was followed by Windham, by the Duke of Portland, by politicians in both Houses who could no longer feel the unbroken confidence of Fox. In the country he had even more support than in Parliament. Few men of influence and leading opposed the warlike bent of the nation; and though the Government were not deaf to the arguments of the English reformers, they never for a moment doubted that it was their duty to set these arguments firmly on one side. There was, indeed, little difficulty in setting aside the arguments of a hopeless minority, at any rate so far as public action was concerned. In a state of war, and especially of a popular and enthusiastic war, the minority is wont to fall into odium. Fox and his followers, but more particularly the active spirits out of doors who had been carried away by the impetus of the French popular successes, fell into extreme disfavour with their fellow-countrymen, and the task of routine government became easier and easier during the first few years of the struggle. The internal discords of France played into the hands of her enemies by intensifying their dislike or terror, and by discouraging and alienating thousands of those who would gladly have continued to

be her friends. Between the defeat of Dumouriez and the death of Robespierre the blackest chapter of the Revolution intervenes. It was during this period—extending from March, 1793, to July, 1794—that the Republic lost nearly all its moderate supporters in England. Blow after blow fell upon the susceptibilities of men who in the first instance had been its eager champions, until the majority of them were compelled to acquiesce in, if not to approve, the new Ministerial policy. The worst predictions of Burke seemed to be outdone by the Reign of Terror; and when the prowess of the French armies was coupled with the unrestrained cruelties of the *de facto* Government, no wonder that excitable men grew eloquent in counselling a European combination against a common enemy.

The earliest exploits of our troops on the Continent brought us but little credit. Ten thousand men under the Duke of York were landed at Ostend, and in conjunction with a Dutch force repulsed the French under Dampierre. The Duke subsequently reduced Valenciennes, but failed in an assault on Dunkirk. It is possible that he might have won further successes if the counsels of the Allies had been more united; but at this critical moment there was nothing like union amongst the Allies. Pitt had already begun to open the purse of England for the benefit of the continental States, and it was no more than natural that he should claim for the English commander an influential voice in the direction of military operations. There were Austrians, Hanoverians, Dutch and Belgians, French Royalists, and mercenaries of other nationalities; and it soon became

apparent that these forces had very little cohesion. It was not an army so much as a voluntary aggregation, lasting only so long as the various generals saw fit. The Duke, indeed, though he gave some promise of achievement, was not strong enough to take the position at which he aimed; but at the same time it was painfully clear that we had no general at home in whom the English army or the contingents of our allies could be expected to place thorough confidence. Our army in 1794 had no reputation worth speaking of. We had entered with less than 20,000 men, all told, on a struggle against an enthusiastic Republic, which was already hurrying to its frontiers something like a million veterans and recruits. Our colleagues in the armed coalition, though cheerfully reckoning upon our material resources in other respects, only laughed at our scanty regiments. At the close of the first campaign Pitt was in despair as to making headway against the French in the open field, and came to the conclusion that the best thing we could do was to attempt isolated descents upon the coast in order to relieve and succour the Royalists.

The Duke of York was recalled in November. Encouraged by the manifest lack of vigour in the councils of the Allies, Pichegru, who had been lying on a bed of sickness, took advantage of a severe winter, flung himself with his ill-equipped troops across frozen rivers and plains of snow, drove back and dispersed his enemies, and reduced Holland to submission. From that time forward the Low Countries were a base of operations for the French, from which they kept us in constant apprehension. Though in the succeeding years we made occasional efforts to cope with the Republic by land—sometimes ingloriously, as at Quiberon, sometimes with



good fortune, as in the West Indies—our action was mainly confined to the high seas, where we carried all before us. The victories of Hood, Jervis, Duncan, and Nelson sufficed to maintain our naval supremacy, and to guarantee the continuance of our vast maritime trade with other countries, on which our participation in the war depended from beginning to end. Without this trade, and the free intercommunication afforded by English ships, we should have been able to render little active assistance to our allies, and still less should we have been accepted by them as the virtual director of the combinations against France. No one saw this better than the French Government and the French commanders, and they made repeated attempts to cripple our naval power and to paralyze our trade. In these attempts they were more than baffled. It may fairly be said that there were moments in the long internecine struggle when English ships and English sailors alone stood between the formidable Republic and the independence of Europe.

If the prowess and prestige of England on the sea acted as a counterpoise to the numerical weakness of her armies, and made her voice influential in council, there is no doubt that we took the lead as often as not by the simple virtue of our enormous expenditure. We were paymasters to whom almost every State on the Continent applied at different times, and some of them frequently and greedily. We bought governments, we bought individuals, we bought armies. Nations had to be bribed to fight for their own freedom and honour. Pitt saw his power, and used it lavishly; and, though our grandfathers complained bitterly, yet they continued to pay. The Minister who had begun as an economist,

concerned, it is one which depends partly upon the original justification of the war, and partly upon the manner in which we might be disposed to estimate the actual achievements of our arms, or of the European combinations, during the lifetime of Pitt. On the ocean, as already mentioned, our triumphs were grand and significant. In distant climes we took valuable compensations from France or from her allies. But so long as Pitt survived we were never able to move large armies of our own in the field; nor did we reap any great success commensurate with the efforts put forth. The expedition of the Duke of York in 1793 practically failed, as we have seen, through disunion, want of due preparation and experience, inferior management and enterprise on the part of the combined generals. The expedition to Quiberon in 1795, where English money and equipments were engaged, but not English soldiers, failed from somewhat similar causes, and because Hoche proved himself as skilful a general as Pichegru. The next expedition undertaken on the Continent, the third and last in the century, was perhaps more unfortunate in its character than the others.

It was in every sense a most critical moment. We had crushed the French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets in the successive victories of the 1st of June, of Cape St. Vincent, and of Camperdown. In 1798 Nelson had destroyed the French squadron which took Bonaparte to Egypt, and the tenacity of Sir Sidney Smith at Acre led to the capitulation of a Republican army. Bonaparte, prudently withdrawing before the catastrophe, reached Europe only to find that his generals had been driven back across the Alps and the Rhine. That which Russia and Austria had done in Italy and Germany, England

was to have done in Holland. Hence the expedition of August, 1799, commanded by the Duke of York, Lord Chatham, and Sir Ralph Abercromby. After a first check by the elements Sir Ralph landed, and gained some not inconsiderable victories. When the Duke of York came up to him with the Russian contingent there was a force of some 33,000 troops; but the Dutch auxiliaries on whom our generals had relied were not forthcoming, and without them the Allies were unequal to the task of driving the French out of Holland. After a few more or less indecisive engagements, the Duke of York was compelled to sign a convention which implied virtual defeat. At all events the object of the expedition was not gained, and the century closed without our having once been able to maintain an English army on the continent of Europe.

The century closed, moreover, with an event of the utmost importance and significance, not only with respect to the general conduct of the war, but also with respect to the policy of the Government under the direction of Pitt. When Bonaparte hastened home from Egypt, on the news of the reverses suffered by the French arms in Italy and on the Rhine, his hearty welcome encouraged him to take a step which he seems to have been contemplating for some time previously. By the aid of the army, which was already devoted to him, and having the popular opinion decidedly in his favour, he put an end to the Directory, substituting for it the authority of three Consuls, he himself being, as a matter of fact, the wielder of supreme power. As First Consul he was thenceforth the spokesman of France with foreign Governments. If his authority was usurped, the usurpation was practically acquiesced in by the country, and it became at least

possible for the Governments of the other Powers to treat with him as the representative of France. One of his first acts was to write a letter to the King of England suggesting the opening of negotiations for peace. The consideration arises whether the Government might not have taken advantage of this offer, and whether, by so doing, they might not have brought the devastating war to an end.

On the last day of December, 1799, Pitt mentioned the First Consul's letter in a note to Dundas, who was absent at the time from London, and he added his reasons for thinking that it could not be taken as a basis of negotiation. "I think," he wrote, "that we can have nothing to do but to decline all negotiation at the present moment, on the ground that the actual situation of France does not as yet hold out any solid security to be derived from negotiation, taking care at the same time to express strongly the eagerness with which we should embrace any opening for general peace whenever such solid security shall appear attainable. This may, I think, be so expressed as to convey to the people of France that the shortest road to peace is by effecting the restoration of royalty, and thereby to increase the chance of that most desirable of all issues to the war; but at the same time so as in no degree to preclude us from treating even with the present Government if it should prevail and be able to establish itself firmly, in spite of Jacobins on the one hand and Royalists on the other."

Dundas and the other members of the Cabinet concurred in these views. A letter was written by Lord Grenville to Talleyrand declaring that the King saw no reason to depart from "the forms long established in

Europe for transacting business with foreign States."\* The King, it was added, could see no useful purpose in "entering at the present moment into negotiation with those whom a fresh revolution had so recently placed in power, until it should appear that the danger had really ceased, and that the restless schemes of destruction which had endangered the very existence of civil society were at length finally relinquished."

Of course this despatch was in every way calculated to neutralise whatever good intentions the First Consul may have entertained, and to offend the French nation at large as much as it offended the head of the French army. Bonaparte must efface himself, the Republic must efface itself, the Revolution must be stultified and disowned, before England could think of peace—or, as an alternative (taking Pitt's letter as interpreting the despatch), the First Consul must establish his new authority beyond all cavil. It was inevitable that Bonaparte and the prevailing public opinion of France should prefer the latter alternative. The continuance of the war was accordingly assured, and this by the deliberate option of the English Government. The Opposition strongly condemned the rejection of Bonaparte's offer, and specially condemned the despatch of Grenville; but an overwhelming majority in Parliament endorsed the action of the Ministry. It was urged that very little reasonable hope could be entertained in England of securing a stable peace at that moment. The "Dix-huit Brumaire" was, as Grenville contended, only a new revolution in a series of revolutions. There was no one to treat with in France except a successful general who would be compelled to maintain his power by means similar to those which he had

\* Stanhope, ii. 342.

employed in gaining it. His offer, moreover, was addressed exclusively to England, and there could be no peace such as England could accept or value without a simultaneous arrangement with the other Powers, which Bonaparte did not offer to make, and to which he could not ask his fellow-countrymen to agree. Pitt was probably right when he applied to the existing situation the words of Cicero in his seventh Philippic, "Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest." The First Consul had tendered what it was not in his competence to give; and if the English Government clearly saw that peace was unattainable, they had an apparent justification in refusing to treat about a shadow at the risk of losing what they thought to be the substance.

These are the arguments which have been employed in justification of the course pursued by Pitt at the beginning of 1800. On the other hand, there was the actual rejection of an offer to treat, which might in willing hands have been made to lead to something better. It is true that Bonaparte applied to England alone; but the English Minister had led Europe in making war, and could doubtless have led Europe in making peace. At any rate, it was said by Fox and his friends, Lord Grenville's despatch was an unjustifiable rejoinder to the letter of the First Consul—needlessly offensive to the *de facto* Government of France, needlessly insulting to the Republic, and unwarrantably hasty in rejecting a chance of agreement. The Ministers ought to have given a "civil, clear, and explicit answer to the overture which was fairly and honourably made." "If," argued Fox, addressing the occupants of the Treasury bench, "you were desirous that the negotiation should have included

all your allies as the means of bringing about a general peace, you should have told Bonaparte so ; but I believe you were afraid of his agreeing to the proposal." Two years and a half before there had been negotiations, in which Pitt and his colleagues had gone so far as to consent, provisionally, to a French annexation of Belgium and a suzerainty over Holland. The people of both countries were then admittedly eager for peace, and the English Cabinet had made a great point of insuring simultaneous arrangements between France and the other Powers. Why were they unwilling to take up the matter where it had formerly been left ? The English people were as anxious for peace in 1800 as they had been in 1797 ; but, said Fox, " by the laws which you have made restraining the expression of the sense of the people, their opinion cannot now be heard as loudly and unequivocally as before."

Fox had, as we shall see, a foundation for his statement ; but the fact remains that there was little public expression of dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Ministry on this occasion.

Meanwhile the war had raised the annual expenditure of the country to something like forty millions ; and the nation, heavily taxed and greatly distressed by its additional burdens, was often at a loss to know what valuable considerations had been gained for it by this lavish outlay. Much of the money had gone in the forming and maintaining of the foreign combinations on which Pitt was obliged to rely in his struggle with France. England could pay, even if she could not fight, better than any other nation ; and the English Government pointed for its justification to the widespread animosity

of the country against the French, and to the popular fear of an invasion.

Throughout the first period of the war, from 1793 to 1802, the difficulty of establishing sound and effective alliances with the continental Powers was immense. There was little union or approximation of views amongst the enemies of France, and it was a long time before Pitt was able to form a close international bond sufficiently formidable to hold the warlike Republic in check. On the eve of the Revolution we had ourselves been perilously near a war with Russia, and we had reason to suspect her for some years later. The three Eastern Powers took advantage of the chaos introduced into Europe by the French outbreak to advance their own interests. Pitt's concern at the unscrupulous partition of Poland was natural, not only on the grounds of his former policy, but also because this cynical crime was a bar to the common action which he desired to promote.

The immediate neighbours of France were for the most part excluded from the Anglo-Continental alliances. Their territories were overrun by the Republican armies, with which a great number of their inhabitants fraternised. The Dutch and Spanish fleets, as we have seen, were used as instruments against us, whilst we rarely secured any effectual aid even from the patriotic minorities. Austria and some of the West-German States conducted the struggle in a more or less desultory fashion for a few campaigns, but it was not until 1798 that anything like a strong confederation was formed against France. Then the Russians under Suwarrow did good service, whilst the Austrians and Neapolitans were driving back the enemy in Italy, and the English gained a notable success over Bonaparte himself in Egypt. But the effort was



not sustained, and the Peace of Amiens, following on the renewed triumph of Bonaparte in 1800, left France in possession of nearly all her conquests on the Continent, and England, after her long struggle and vast expenditure, practically without a friend.

Simultaneously with the war in Europe, England was involved in wars, partly of defence and partly of aggression, in India. The exploits of Cornwallis in 1792-3, and of Lord Mornington in 1798—1805, extended and strengthened our Eastern empire; and thus in three continents at one and the same time the indomitable spirit and energy of Pitt were signally displayed.

We may pass now to the two final domestic chapters of Pitt's career as a Minister, in order to estimate the effect of the revolutionary epoch on the condition and prospects of the country at large.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PITT AND IRELAND.

THE history of the sister kingdom at the close of the last century affords a curious though not a specially notable parallel with the official career of Pitt. Ireland obtained its independence in the year before Pitt came into office, and lost the boon in the year before he resigned. One of the first imperial questions in which the young statesman concerned himself on his entrance into Parliament was but an earlier phase of the question which he was attempting to solve when he lost the royal favour in 1801.

Irish independence was a direct outcome of the American Revolution and the quadruple war of 1779. The demands of the Patriots, of Grattan and Lucas and Flood and Yelverton, would never have been conceded if it had not been for the extremity of England beyond the seas. Swift and Molyneux had written in vain, and their disciples or successors would have produced no better effect on the obstinate King and the prejudiced English people. But the national dangers in which Lord North's Cabinet had involved us did for Ireland in a few years what ninety years of logical conviction had been unable to effect. In 1775 the English Government were in want of troops for America, and as a desperate resort it was determined to withdraw from Ireland one-third

of the small force of 12,000 which constituted the Irish military establishment. In their place the Viceroy proposed, after the fashion of those times, to supply the vacancy with a Hessian force. The Irish Parliament—which was rapidly developing its strength under the encouragement of the Octennial Act of 1768—agreed to despatch these armed negotiators, as Flood described them, but rejected the Hessians by a large majority.

The departure of the troops acted as a spur to the ambition of the Patriots, at the same time that it weakened the hands of the Viceroy. A cry was raised that the French were preparing an invasion, and when the Parliament passed a Militia Bill in 1778 the Government were obliged to assent to it. Volunteers were called for, and forthwith an army of over 70,000 sprang into existence. These were more than enough to repel a French invasion, but it was not for any such purpose that they had mustered at the invitation of their leaders. They were from the first a political rather than a military body, and they relieved the monotony of their drill by discussing in public meetings the grievances of the country. They conferred, debated, and passed resolutions: “they knew their duty to their Sovereign, and they were loyal; they knew their duty to themselves, and they were resolved to be free.” Of course it was not long before this show of physical power gave to the Irish Parliament just that force which it had never hitherto possessed. Opinions and votes had gone for nothing so long as England clung to her old bad plan of holding Ireland in complete subjection—stifling her trade and industry, governing the country through a handful of corrupt “undertakers,” excluding the Catholic majority from all office or power whatsoever, and confining Parliamentary representation

to a small minority of the Protestant classes. But when opinions and votes of the House were backed by an armed body full of enthusiasm and self-assertion, and when neither the King nor his Ministers could dream of overawing this army by English troops, it became impossible to resist the Irish demands. The volunteers and the national party in the House of Commons at Dublin had everything in their own hands. There was no denying what they chose to ask within the bounds of reason; and it fortunately happened that Grattan and his friends, violent as their language occasionally was, determined on a thoroughly patriotic course. Much, no doubt, was due to the fact that the volunteers were mostly Protestants, and that amongst their leaders were the most stable of the Protestant "Englishry" who had a considerable stake in the country. It would not have suited men like Lords Charlemont and Bristol to cut themselves off from the support of England; and even Grattan and Flood did not ask for independence in its absolute form.

Many Englishmen—and this was just at the moment when Pitt was maturing his political convictions—looked upon the volunteers as simple rebels. Lord Shelburne spoke of them as an "enraged mob," and was almost inclined to treat them as one. But their friends in Parliament did not act as spokesmen of a mob. They asked for freedom of trade, for the power of exporting Irish produce and extending Irish manufactures. When in 1779 the Government moved for two years' supply, an amendment was brought forward limiting the vote to six months; and this was carried by a substantial majority. In the next session a petition for free trade was voted as an amendment on the Address, and the

House resolved to carry this petition forthwith to the Viceroy. A demonstration of the volunteers, who mustered in the streets of Dublin between the House and the Castle, added to the impressiveness of the occasion. Lord North could not gainsay a formal appeal of this kind, and he persuaded the King to grant (though only in a partial way) the prayer of the petitioners.

The next step was taken in the following spring, when Grattan moved three resolutions, declaring "that His Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the consent of the Lords and Commons of Ireland, is the only power competent to enact laws to bind Ireland; that the Crown of Ireland is and ought to be inseparably annexed to the Crown of Great Britain; and that Great Britain and Ireland are inseparably united under one sovereign by the common and indissoluble ties of interest, loyalty, and freedom." The gist of these resolutions was contained in the first of the three. The members of the House were almost alarmed at their own boldness in discussing them, and Grattan did not ask for a division; but we find Lord Temple informing his superiors, "with the utmost concern," that the repudiation of the force of imperial statutes in Ireland was practically unanimous in the Irish Parliament. The Declaration of Independence was made at Dungannon in 1781, and in the succeeding year the Marquis of Rockingham was constrained to grant to Ireland the independence which she had coveted. For eighteen years she was bound to England only by the union of the Crowns; but, as Mr. Green justly observes, her independence "was a mere name for the uncontrolled rule of a few noble families. The victory of the volunteers had been one simply to the profit of the undertakers, who returned the majority of

members in the Irish House of Commons, and themselves formed the Irish House of Lords. . . . When the Catholics claimed admission to the franchise or to equal civil rights as a reward for their aid in the late struggle, their claim was rejected. A similar demand of the Presbyterians, who had formed a good half of the volunteers, for the removal of their disabilities was equally set aside. . . . The ruling class found government too profitable to share it with other possessors. It was only by hard bribery that the English Government could secure their co-operation in the simplest measures of administration."

This was the situation of Ireland as Pitt found it on assuming the reins; and so much it was advisable to premise, if only to show how harmless, and indeed how worthless a thing it was which the English Minister, under stress of foreign menace, destroyed in 1800.

Pitt followed with the closest attention all that took place in Ireland. He had made his friend, the Duke of Rutland, Viceroy; and Lord Rutland constantly impressed upon him the miserable and anarchical state of the country. The "calculator," as Burke afterwards called him with a sneer, saw plainly whence the evils of Ireland mainly sprung, and he resolved to do what he could to alleviate the wretchedness of the masses, to develop industry, and to strike off the fetters of the subjected classes. It is a significant commentary on the Act of 1782 that neither the Viceroy nor the English Minister regarded his responsibility as coming to an end with the simple maintenance of the prerogatives of the Crown. The following sentence, from one of Pitt's con-

Confidential letters to Rutland (as quoted by Lord Stanhope), shows that the government of Ireland from London was by no means abandoned by the Prime Minister. "I own to you," Pitt wrote in 1784, "that the line to which my mind at present inclines is to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages, if we can receive in return some security that her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common contingencies of the empire." Irish taxation for English needs was scarcely contemplated in the Resolutions of Grattan.

The trade of Ireland had made no great strides since North's concession in 1779; and, so far from free trade having been established between the two countries, Manchester was still demanding prohibitive tariffs, whilst Irishmen were tarring and feathering the merchants who trafficked in English goods. In 1784 Pitt devoted himself to the elaboration of a scheme by which a real free trade should be set on foot. His eleven Resolutions on the subject, drawn up by him in January, 1785, provided, amongst other things, for the abolition of duties on the importation of foreign goods from England into Ireland, or from Ireland into England—for the equalisation of duties on the same articles of produce and manufacture, as between the two countries—and for "an equivalent" to the English exchequer, in the shape of an increase of Irish "hereditary revenue" (due to Customs and Excise), above the sum of £656,000. The revenue in 1784 stood at £652,000, so that Pitt was not asking for an immediate contribution from Ireland, but only for a reversion of profits. He thought that these profits, which would doubtless have been realised under the

scheme, might fairly be applied to relieve the naval expenditure of the empire, whereby Ireland, of course, benefited with the rest of us.

Both the Irish Houses accepted the Resolutions, and Pitt warmly advocated his plan in the House of Commons at Westminster. It was evident that the establishment of free trade with Ireland was to him no mere financial expedient. He spoke of it as the most important object of his political life that he had ever been engaged in; "nor do I imagine," he added, "that I shall ever meet another that shall rouse every emotion of my heart in so strong a degree." Surely, he appealed to the House, "after the heavy loss which our country has sustained from the recent severance of her dominions, there ought to be no object more impressed on the feelings of the House than to endeavour to preserve from further dismemberment and diminution, to unite and to connect, what yet remains of our reduced and shattered empire."

There was a great struggle over Pitt's proposals. First of all they aroused a lively opposition amongst the followers of Fox and North, and a yet more desperate opposition in the English manufacturing districts likely to be affected by Irish competition. One protest against the measure contained the names of no fewer than eighty thousand Lancashire manufacturers. Pitt was obliged to compromise and complicate his project; the boon which he had hoped to grant to the sister kingdom was shaped and limited and reshaped until it went back to Dublin in a very different form from that which it originally possessed. Under these circumstances the Irish House of Commons, on the advice of Grattan, assumed such an attitude towards the measure that the



Government were constrained to abandon it, vastly to Pitt's annoyance.

It seems hardly fair to say, as some have said, that Ireland on this occasion rejected Pitt's offer of free trade. She not only accepted the offer when made to her, but had previously, as we have seen, demanded free trade as her right. That which she rejected was a mutilated measure, which would have continued to place her hopelessly behind the manufacturers, producers, and merchants of England.

A promising method of conciliating Ireland, and of redeeming the masses of her population from misery, had thus been thrown away, and the evil consequence was soon apparent. The discontent of the country steadily increased, and became gradually more and more aggressive. Pitt saw this with the utmost concern. There are few things more honourable in the whole of his record than the correspondence which he held on the subject with the Duke of Rutland, up to the death of the latter in 1787. The affection of the two for each other had been very close; and the private letters from the Minister to the Viceroy—some of which are quoted by Lord Stanhope—reveal the great anxiety with which they regarded the unhappy state of affairs in Ireland. The correspondence reveals something else, and that is the clear, candid, and impartial view which Pitt was able to take of a problem so much beset with difficulties. He recognised the grievous oppression of the Catholics, severely condemned the system of tithes collection on behalf of the Establishment, and set himself boldly to the task of providing remedies for existing grievances. The Government, he was persuaded, "ought not to be afraid of incurring the imputation of weakness by yield-

ing in reasonable points, and can never make its stand effectually till it gets upon right ground." That was the spirit by which his whole conduct was guided in matters of public policy. It was a spirit which guided him aright, especially so long as his good fortune permitted him to be a Peace Minister. But the French Revolution balked his good intentions in this as in so many other respects.

Pitt, as already said, for a long time struggled against the reactionary influences excited by the French outburst, and laboured to convince himself and others that England might safely pursue her onward course without being drawn into the continental vortex. So late as 1793 he acted on this principle in Ireland, assisting to carry measures for the relief of the Catholics from some of their disabilities. They were to be allowed to vote, and to hold many official positions hitherto barred against them ; and in this way a beginning was made of the reforms on which he had set his mind. But events were too strong for his patriotic resolution. French emissaries, and the letters of French revolutionists, had already sown the seeds of a grander hope in the breasts of Irishmen. The soil was peculiarly favourable to the seed, and there was a spirit abroad which no legislative reforms at all likely to be wrested from England could be expected to satisfy. The association of "United Irishmen" had sprung into existence in 1791. This society was originally led, as has been so often the case in Irish revolutions, by the Protestants of the north. But the Catholics were not long behind their more adventurous compatriots, and they were equally amenable to the

temptations spread before them by the busy propagandists in Paris.

From the moment when the war broke out Pitt's power of remedy was practically gone, and little remained to him but the necessity of coercion. The situation was very much what we have seen it in our own day, when English Ministers with every disposition and desire to carry large measures of reform have been met by the counteraction of popular animosities, and have been constrained by the force of opinion in the middle and upper classes, aided by a section of the lower classes, to postpone everything else to the maintenance of public order.

The chief bane of Ireland was to be found in the disunion of its people, and especially the disunion created by religious monopolies and disabilities. The leaders of the United Irishmen aimed at sinking the differences between Catholics and Protestants in the common interests, and they partially succeeded. The Catholic relief of 1793 was the first fruit of this union; but the agreement did not last long. There was a violent disruption in the committee which had been formed to promote the Catholic claims, and which comprised men as incompatible with each other as Lord Kenmare and Wolfe Tone. The internal quarrels of Irishmen multiplied and deepened throughout the country. Sedition in a hundred forms, all more or less concealed from the public eye, covered the land as with a network; but the mutual hostilities of the Irish patriots were even more bitter than the hostility of any of them against England. The Peep-of-Day Boys harried the Catholics, and the Defenders harried the Protestants. There was so little guarantee of personal safety amidst these conflicting

bands of fanatics or freebooters that in many districts the gentry and tenant-farmers began to form associations for defence, and to maintain troops on their own account, which now and then caught the prevailing infection, and became aggressive in their turn. When to this condition of anarchy we add the treasonable correspondence of the more desperate leaders with the French Government, it becomes clear that the situation lacked no element of anxiety for Pitt and his colleagues.

Zealous to the last for conciliation, the Prime Minister left nothing undone to bring about an understanding with the Irish Parliament. He conferred with Grattan in the most confidential terms, and with every disposition to discover a *modus vivendi* with Ireland. Lord Fitzwilliam was sent over to Dublin as Viceroy, in the place of Lord Westmoreland, for the express purpose of inaugurating a more liberal policy; and if the former had proceeded with greater caution, and avoided an immediate open breach with the officials whom it was necessary for him to control, he might have effected a great reform. Apart even from his precipitancy and want of tact, his appointment had been regarded in Ireland as a species of capitulation on the part of the English Government. He was expected at once to remove every grievance. He was received with gushing welcome by the Catholics and Presbyterians; and this at once set up the backs of the Protestants. Grattan drafted a measure for full emancipation, which the Viceroy approved. These acts of Lord Fitzwilliam embarrassed Pitt, alarmed the majority in the Irish Parliament, and roused the anger of the King, who wrote to his Minister one of the longest and most ungrammatical letters he had ever penned, describing the measure for the relief of the Catholics as

“contrary to the conduct of every European Government, and I believe to that of every State on the globe.” The Earl found his position untenable, and returned to England amidst something like a national mourning on the part of the country he had been anxious to befriend. His want of political wisdom had done much to prevent what might have proved to be one of the greatest triumphs of Pitt's Administration.

Little chance of conciliation occurred after this failure. Something was done to secure the good-will of the Catholics by the establishment of the College of Maynooth—a measure which was completed soon after the return of Lord Fitzwilliam. But matters had gone too far with the Societies, and with the friends of France, and with the Republicans in Paris, to admit of the prevalence of peaceful counsels. Treason was already rife in the country, and the French leaders naturally struck at Ireland as the weakest and most vulnerable spot in the empire.

The United Irishmen, now guided by the least scrupulous of the original body of members, employed their organization for the purpose of forcing on the separation of Ireland from Great Britain ; and for a few years to come there existed an active conspiracy for this object both in Ireland and in France. The indiscretion of the unfortunate Jackson, a Protestant clergyman in Paris whom Wolfe Tone had trusted against his judgment, put the English Government thoroughly on their guard, and the conspirators were apparently discouraged. But Wolfe Tone, now in America and now in France, seized every opportunity of urging the Republic to send

an expedition to Ireland; and, after some disappointments, he at length received a promise which he deemed sufficiently large and definite to justify immediate action. He wrote to his friends, the secret leaders of the Society—Arthur O'Connor, T. A. Emmett, and others—recommending them to put themselves in direct communication with the Republican Government; and accordingly, in the summer of 1796, Lord Edward Fitzgerald was despatched to the French Directory in order to signify their acceptance of the proffered aid.

Pitt was not long in ignorance of the intentions of the enemy; and he was able to take adequate measures of defence. It was the year of the Loyalty Loan. Two millions of fresh taxation were levied without difficulty. Fifteen thousand men were voted for the navy; 60,000 were to be enrolled and trained in the militia; arrangements were made for the creation of a new force of irregular cavalry numbering 20,000. Even the gamekeepers were fallen back upon, by virtue of their licenses to carry fire-arms, as an element of defence in the case of invasion. The large Ministerial majority in both Houses supported all these proposals with acclamation. Fox, Grey, Sheridan, and their handful of supporters, were never more unpopular amongst their colleagues in the House of Commons than when they opposed the measures of Pitt on this occasion.

The expedition of Hoche—15,000 men with a vast quantity of ammunition and other equipments—was hopeless from the beginning. If it had not been defeated by what has always been and always will be our first line of defence—the rough seas, the stormy winds, the thick fogs of the British coasts—it would have stood no chance on dry land. The very leaders of the conspiracy in

Ireland never knew where the descent of the French was to be made. There was no muster of the malcontents to meet them ; whilst not only the regular English troops and the Irish Volunteers, but a large portion of the peasantry were eager to try conclusions with the invaders. The attempt, in short, failed almost as completely as the absurd Black Legion of 1,200 galley-slaves, who about the same time were to have begun their exploits with the burning of Bristol, and who were brought to the point of capitulation by the Welshwomen of Fishguard Bay.

The fear of invasion continued to hang over England, and it was indeed no insignificant factor of the unshaken ascendancy of Pitt over the minds of his countrymen. But our admirals—in spite of the alarming discontent amongst the sailors—were equal to the call which was now made upon them. The victories of Cape St. Vincent and Camperdown saved us from the two most portentous threats of our enemies, who, from Gibraltar to the Texel, held us in perpetual alarm during the whole of the year 1797. The hopes of Wolfe Tone were never higher than in the summer of this year, when, in the company of Hoche at the Hague, he exulted in the strength of the Dutch armament, and thought nothing wanting to its success but a fair easterly breeze. But once again the winds were adverse, and whilst he tried to wile away his impatience by playing duets on the flute with De Winter, the English fleet gradually increased until it was a match for the Dutchmen, as Duncan and Onslow showed at Camperdown.

It was in this same year that the career of Hoche came to an end. But the danger of attack was not

yet over. In the following year the Directory conceived the design of creating a grand army on the northern coast, under the command of Bonaparte, and intended for the invasion of England. It may have been no more than a brag, or a blind for the Egyptian expedition. At any rate it did not come to anything of a practical kind. The Irish conspirators built their hopes upon the *Armée d'Angleterre*, as they had built their hopes upon the many former promises and efforts of the Directory; but it may be questioned whether at this time the French leaders were doing anything more than sport with the aspirations of their would-be allies. And yet it was precisely at this time that the aspirations of the discontented Irish called most urgently for support. The various societies had gradually raised themselves to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Rebellion was openly prepared and attempted. Thousands of the more hardy patriots were eager for the appearance of foreign allies, or of competent generals, or, in the absence of both, for a mere signal or opportunity to put their valour to the test. In the absence of English enemies the United Irishmen fell upon the Orangemen, who in their turn displayed a bitter and cruel animosity. So desperate had the state of the country become in 1797 that immediate civil war on a large scale was generally regarded as inevitable. The whole island was given over to anarchy and bloodshed. Frightful excesses were committed on both sides—by the Orange Lodges as well as by the United Irishmen and Defenders, by the English and Irish regular troops as well as by the disaffected natives. Insurrection and Indemnity Acts had been passed without avail. The Habeas Corpus Act had been suspended, the country had been proclaimed, the populace wherever



possible had been disarmed, and still no advance had been made towards pacification.

The storm broke in the summer of 1798, though not until some of the most promising of the leaders had been captured. Arthur O'Connor, Oliver Bond, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and several others who had taken part in the active preparations for revolt, were thus secured before the outbreak; but it is doubtful whether any single Irishman, in or out of the country, would have been able to command and guide the undisciplined patriots. Some of the rebel bands gained successes here and there, notably at Enniscorthy and Wexford; but the triumph was short-lived. Pitt acted with his usual promptitude from the moment when it became evident that the problem was one for military solution. Lord Cornwallis was sent to Dublin as Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief, not simply to carry war into the country, but also to proffer an amnesty and to attempt a conciliation.

The work of suppression had already begun. On the day after Cornwallis landed, General Lake stormed the rebel camp on Vinegar Hill, and General Moore retook Wexford. The bloodshed on this decisive day was so slight as to be barely worth mention. It was only in the hunting down of fugitives, from whom there was scarcely anything to fear, that the soldiers showed a remorseless and sanguinary spirit. Both the Viceroy and his Secretary, Lord Castlereagh, made strenuous efforts to mitigate what the former described as "the ferocity of our troops." Throughout this unhappy period of civil commotion in Ireland, it is some satisfaction for Englishmen to note that the more direct representatives of the Imperial Government were constantly on the side of clemency,

whilst the cry for revenge proceeded almost exclusively from Ireland.

So contemptible had this rebellion proved to be from a military point of view that we may doubt whether it would ever have been very formidable to the English Government even if the French co-operation had been more prompt and vigorous. As it was, the Directory failed to keep its promises, and the Irish leaders were disappointed in their audacious hopes. It is true that the Republic did strike a blow for its friends, but the assistance came too late to be of much service. The hopes of Ireland were practically crushed when, towards the end of August, General Humbert landed with about 1,000 men near a Killala Bay. An advanced guard of Lord Cornwallis's army, under General Lake, attacked the French without success owing to the desertion of several Irish regiments on the day of battle. Cornwallis himself was more fortunate since he compelled Humbert and his army to surrender. In the meantime an expedition of some 200 men had been preparing to land on the coast of County Mayo. On the 1st of October nine French ships sailed from Killala Bay. But the leaders of this armada did not wait for a landing. Several of the vessels were burnt and a heavy fight on the following day; and although the French were strong enough to attempt to land, they were driven off by the British which saved them with the British.

The French expedition was yielded to discussion, and the British were able to take with the Irish question. The British were long before the fighting had come to a close. It was concluded that the relations of the two

countries would need to be placed on another footing. He had scarcely at any time, as we have seen, recognised Irish independence in the sense in which it had been understood by Grattan, or even by Rockingham in 1782. He had claimed authority in Dublin, before and after the outbreak of the French war, which had been nominally abandoned by the English Cabinet. It now appeared to him that the rebellion justified, or rendered indispensable, a closer connection between the two countries than had yet existed. When he sent Cornwallis to assume the Lieutenancy he gave him to understand that the suppression of civil war was only the first and preliminary step, and that the ultimate aim of the Government was to constrain the friendship of a people whom we could not afford to have for our enemy. In other words, he had resolved upon a definitive reunion of the Crowns.

The work was tedious and delicate. The single fact that the Irish were a disunited and an irreconcilable nation amongst themselves precluded the possibility of their complete union with England. Cornwallis put his finger on the chief flaw of the scheme when he wrote to Pitt, soon after his assumption of office, "The principal people here are so frightened that they would, I believe, readily consent to an Union; but then it must be a Protestant union." Half the difficulties of the situation in the past had sprung from the supremacy of a favoured minority over a cruelly injured majority, and from the bitter animosities due to this oppression. And yet it was now admitted that the only chance of binding Ireland in the Imperial bund was by making a compact with the grasping Parliamentary leaders, and subjecting the majority to them more ruthlessly than ever.

Pitt saw all this as clearly as any man, and he would have boldly emancipated the Catholics by the Act of Union if he could have hoped to overcome the prejudices of the King and the rancour of the Irish Protestants. But he knew that the last thing at any rate was impossible. He could not do what he would have preferred ; and he was fully determined to carry his measure, all its imperfections notwithstanding. Ready as he was to do justice to the Catholics, if it had been in his power to do so, he did not hesitate to oppose the argument which the Whigs based upon the religious inequalities of Ireland. "No man," he said, in explaining his scheme to the English House of Commons, "can say that in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the Catholics without endangering the State, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre."

The influence of the recent rebellion, and of the national danger arising from the war with France, overshadowed every other consideration, and weighed more with Englishmen and Scotchmen than the grievance of the Catholics. There can be no doubt that Pitt and his colleagues believed in the absolute necessity of the Union ; and this belief explains, if it does not excuse, the unscrupulous means adopted to carry their purpose into effect. Little by little the opposition in Ireland was diminished, and it was diminished in many instances by pecuniary bribery. Gold and peerages were lavished on the powerful individuals whose consent it was indispensable to secure and who could not be won over by the force of argument. "There were many promises of a barony or some other step in the Irish peerage. There were many promises of a barony in the English

peerage. There were many promises of an office, a pension, or a favour of some other kind." So writes Lord Stanhope, dealing with this chapter in Pitt's career; and he quotes a confidential letter from Lord Cornwallis to a friend, in which the Viceroy, disgusted with the meanness of the policy imposed upon him, candidly exclaimed, "How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court!"

The Act of Union itself, as eventually passed in June, 1800, appropriated one million and a quarter sterling of public money, partly for the purpose of buying the rotten boroughs from their so-called proprietors, and partly in order to compensate the Irish office-holders whose work came to an end with the Parliament in Dublin. Pitt had reason to believe that without these compensations the measure would not have been voted; and, if it might have been, the struggle would have extended over a longer time, and would have demanded greater exertions, than in such a critical state of affairs he could afford to devote to it. For the rest, the provisions of the Act were reasonable enough. Two members for each county, and borough members bringing up the total to one hundred, were transferred to the Imperial House of Commons; and thirty-two peers were to be elected by their fellows in each successive Parliament. In the matter of trading rights and privileges the two countries were placed (with some few exceptions) on an equality; commercial intercourse between England and Ireland was freed from obstruction, whilst the latter country was called upon to undertake its due proportion of taxes for Imperial purposes.

Thus ended, after an existence of eighteen years, the legislative independence of Ireland, established in 1782;

and in considering the policy of the English Government under the direction of Pitt we must start with the admission that an entirely unprecedented and unexpected set of circumstances had given occasion for an Act which perhaps nothing else could have justified. It can scarcely be maintained, though the contention is sometimes hazarded, that the experiment of an Irish Parliament in Dublin had been made and had failed. There had been no fair experiment, because there had been no period of comparative calm at home and abroad during which the influence of representative institutions in Ireland as a distinct national unit could be estimated. The country, it may be said, was not greatly disturbed before the introduction of the French leaven. But the first seven or ten years of Irish Home Rule ought not in any case to be regarded as having supplied a test of the fitness of Irishmen for self-government. Time was needed to develop, to modify, to reform; and the events which brought the last century to a close interfered with this necessary process. Therefore many of those who believe that Pitt was justified in demanding and enforcing the union are unwilling to allow that parliamentary home rule in Ireland had been proved to be impracticable.

The lapse of a century brings us once more face to face with the difficulty of Irish government; and in more than one or two particulars the conditions of the problem in our own day are similar to the conditions of the problem with which Lord Rockingham had to deal. The parallel may be more or less closely drawn as time proceeds. But it would be a great pity if the statesmen or the public opinion of the nineteenth century were to be unduly warped by the idea that Pitt's action in the year 1800 was based on anything more conclusive than motives of Imperial expediency arising out of the Continental war.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ENGLISH PROPAGANDA.

SOMETHING has been said in a former chapter of the influence exerted on English statesmen and the English people by the developments of Continental politics after the outbreak of the French Revolution. Any survey of the career of Pitt would be a most imperfect one if it did not include a distinct estimate of his position in regard to the masses of his fellow-countrymen during the last fifteen years of his life, and more especially of his attitude towards the pioneers of popular progress who acted on the fond idea that England might and should attend to her own social evolution in spite of all that was coming to pass in other countries.

If this notion was a simple one on the part of our would-be reformers, from Fox down to Thelwall and Hardy, and if the zeal bred of their convictions led some of them ultimately into conflict with the law, yet surely the miscalculation was pardonable. That which became an offence in 1796 had been a harmless matter of opinion in 1790, or even in 1793. Words and actions for which obscure men in the height of political excitement were put upon their trial, charged with misdemeanour and sedition, had been indulged in a few years before by Ministers of the Crown. Pitt himself, as we have seen, was slow to see a menace for England in the

upheaval of France ; he reduced the armaments in 1792, and withstood the alarmists to the last possible moment. In the course of conversation with Burke, when the latter had been expounding his views on the pernicious and dangerous principles of the Revolution, the Prime Minister is reported to have said, "Depend upon it that we shall go on as we are till the day of judgment." And this was evidently the prevailing sentiment of the country before Burke and other alarmists—mouth-pieces, rather than originators, of a reactionary alarm—gave an impetus to public opinion in the opposite direction. A White Terror was preached up as a counterpoise to the Red Terror. Little by little the hopes which had been inspired by the Revolution began to fade away ; men who had looked for the immediate establishment of a new order of things were discouraged ; every fresh act of violence in France increased the timidity of the English middle classes, and added to the unpopularity of the "sophister" whom Burke had denounced.

In the summer of 1791 riots broke out in Birmingham ; the mob declared itself for "Church and King." Its enthusiasm found a notable victim in Dr. Joseph Priestley, a learned Nonconformist, who had written one of the most vigorous rejoinders to the famous "Reflections on the French Revolution." His chapel and his private house were burnt, and he himself was driven in disgust to seek an asylum in the United States. The alarm spread and deepened with each manifestation ; men who had put by a little money, or who had lived in the hope of doing it, or who were genuinely afraid that French license would soon extend itself to England, were worked up into a frenzy by newspaper invectives, by caricatures and pamphlets, by fulminations from a thousand pulpits.



This new development of opinion was too strong to be resisted by any but a few of the stoutest and staunchest Whigs. One after another the politicians of all parties gave way before the panic, either admitting the subtle influence in their own breasts or recognising the necessity of leading in order that they might not be coerced. At length, in May, 1792, Pitt showed the earliest overt sign of yielding to a sentiment which he had condemned and ridiculed by issuing a proclamation against seditious writings.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that in taking his new departure, cautiously at first, but with less and less reserve as he became more fully committed, Pitt was actuated by other motives than those of fear and concession to clamour. In the beginning of 1792 a somewhat general desire had been expressed amongst the various sections of the two Houses of Parliament to bring about a coalition between the Pitt Administration and the most prominent Whig leaders. This, too, was the moment when the anti-Russian policy of the Cabinet had been practically vetoed by public opinion, and when the reputation of the Prime Minister had suffered its first notable check. Even the King seems to have wavered in his confidence, or, as Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice surmises in his "Life of Shelburne," to have grown "weary of the domination of Pitt;" for he sent to Lord Lansdowne and asked him for his views on the situation. Pitt did not at this time stand unduly on his dignity, or presumptuously imagine that he was the only statesman capable of carrying on the King's Government. He was ready to coalesce, and did actually make some offers which, if accepted, might have virtually abolished the Opposition in the House of Commons. But, as

Burke put it, Fox's carriage stopped the way. He would not, or could not, believe that the combination suggested by his younger rival had in it the elements of success. Thus the labours of the mediators came to nothing, and the chance of "weathering the storm" under an harmonious and fully representative Cabinet was lost.

But Pitt had had his warning. He saw how frail would be his tenure of office—how slender the hope of continuing to serve his country—if he persisted in balking the popular desire to take a high-handed course with France. We may fairly conclude that motives of expediency were amongst those which impelled him in 1792-3 to put himself at the head of the reactionists, and, first at home, then abroad, to enter on a desperate struggle with the forces of the Revolution.

The significant dates of this modification of policy fall within a single month of the spring of 1792. On the 26th of April the "Friends of the People" voted a declaration in favour of Parliamentary reform. On the 30th they published it in the papers, and Grey gave notice of his intention to moot the subject in the House of Commons. On May 1 the King complained in a memorandum to Pitt of this "most daring outrage to a regular Government." On May 26 the Corresponding Society issued an address to the nation, asserting amongst other things, on behalf of the people, "their natural and inalienable right of resistance to oppression, and of sharing in the government of their country." Two days later Pitt issued the royal proclamation against tumults and seditious writings. It is possible to detect behind this series of transactions not merely the influence of the

French Revolution on English popular feeling, and the influence of the strong-willed King upon the counsels of his Ministers, but also, perhaps, the constraint exercised upon the mind of Pitt by his parliamentary embarrassments.

The proclamation to which reference is here made seems to have been generally regarded as a decisive first step, committing the Government to something like an aggressive policy against reformers and potential revolutionists. It was welcomed by most men of social rank, wealth, and responsibility; but at the same time it was sharply criticized in both Houses. The Opposition, however, was divided in each instance, and Addresses were voted to the Crown, thanking his Majesty for the proclamation, and assuring him of support. Outside Parliament the effect of the instrument was soon perceived. It completed the demoralisation of the "Friends of the People," who as a body figure but slightly after this date in contemporary annals. The more ardent spirits enrolled themselves in the newer "London Corresponding Society," which gradually drew to itself the desultory forces of the "Revolution Society" and the "Society for Constitutional Information." The object of the Corresponding Society, as its name implies, was to propagate by circular and private letters the ideas which it had become dangerous to spread openly through the press. It began with caution at the point where the older organizations were found to be gravely compromised. The Constitutional Society, for instance, had extolled and disseminated the writings of Thomas Paine; and Paine was the subject of a Government prosecution at the time (March, 1792) when the Corresponding Society was formed.

There was something jesuitical—or at any rate antirical—in the comments of the Society on the royal proclamation. “After reading it with great attention,” the Committee wrote in a letter to the Constitutionals, “we discard an idea thrown out by some, that it had been drawn up and sent forth at this juncture with a view of raising unfavourable prejudices in the minds of the people against Mr. Paine and his works, now under a prosecution; inasmuch as such an attempt, if it could be proved, would not only bear malice on the face of it, but would likewise be a most daring violation of the laws. We are the more willing to discover therein his Majesty’s great goodness of heart and paternal care, anticipating our warmest wishes, giving the greatest encouragement to our different societies, and holding forth the same strong desire with us of abiding by the constitution in its pure and uncorrupt state; of securing the public peace and prosperity; of preserving to *all* the full enjoyment of their rights and liberties, both religious and civil, and seeming, in fact, to encourage them . . . to join us, and unite their endeavours with ours in guarding against all attempts aiming at the subversion of wholesome and regular government, and to discourage and repress, to the utmost of their power, all proceedings tending to produce riots and tumults.”

But in spite of this complacent interpretation of the royal proclamation, it was, naturally, not long before the Corresponding Society was as thoroughly in odium with the Government as any other; and towards the end of 1792 the rash addresses of the various associations in London and the provinces to the French National Convention rendered it impossible for the Executive, however indifferent it might have been, to ignore their public

utterances. If Pitt needed justification for his new departure, or incentive to a policy of repression, it must be admitted that he received both from the ill-judged action of the Societies at this crisis. It is essential to our estimate of the quality of his statesmanship that the terms of these addresses should be clearly borne in mind. Here are the most striking passages of the address drawn up by the Corresponding Society, signed by Maurice Margarot and Thomas Hardy, which, with others of a similar character, was widely circulated in France, and copied into the English papers.\*

“Frenchmen”—thus the document begins—“while foreign robbers are ravaging your territories under the specious pretext of Justice, Cruelty and Desolation leading on their van, Perfidy with Treachery bringing up their rear, yet Mercy and Friendship impudently held forth to the world as the sole motives of their incursions—the oppressed part of mankind forgetting, for a while, their own sufferings, feel only for yours, and with an anxious eye watch the event, fervently supplicating the Almighty Ruler of the universe to be favourable to your cause, so intimately blended with their own.

“Frowned upon by an oppressive system of control, whose gradual but continued encroachments have deprived this nation of nearly all its boasted liberty, and brought us almost to that abject state of slavery from which you have emerged, 5,000 British citizens, indignant, manfully step forth to rescue their country from the opprobrium brought upon it by the supine conduct of those in power. . . . Though we appear so few

\* Many of the documents relating to the popular movements of this period have been recently brought together in a volume by Mr. Edward Smith, entitled “The Story of the English Jacobins.”

at present, be assured, Frenchmen, that our number increases daily; it is true that the stern uplifted arm of authority at present keeps back the timid . . . . and that court intimacy with avowed traitors has some effect on the unwary, and on the ambitious. But with certainty we can inform you, Friends and Freemen, that information makes a rapid progress among us. Curiosity has taken possession of the public mind; the conjoint reign of Ignorance and Despotism passes away. Men now ask each other, What is Freedom? What are our Rights? Frenchmen, you are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so!

“ Casting far from us the criminal prejudices artfully inculcated by evil-minded men and wily courtiers, we, instead of natural enemies, at length discover in Frenchmen our fellow-citizens of the world. . . . Seeking our real enemies, we find them in our bosoms; we feel ourselves inwardly torn by, and ever the victims of, a restless, all-consuming aristocracy, hitherto the bane of every nation under the sun! Wisely have you acted in expelling it from France. . . . Our Government has pledged the national faith to remain neutral in a struggle of Liberty against Despotism. Britons remain neutral! O shame! But we have entrusted our King with discretionary powers; we, therefore, must obey; our hands are bound, but our hearts are free, and they are with you. Let German Despots act as they please. We shall rejoice at their fall, compassionating, however, their enslaved subjects. We hope this tyranny of their masters will prove the means of reinstating, in the full enjoyments of their rights and liberties, millions of our fellow-creatures. With unconcern, therefore, we view the Elector of Hanover join his troops to traitors and robbers; but the King of

Great Britain will do well to remember that this country is not Hanover. Should he forget this distinction, we will not. . . . Dear friends, you combat for the advantage of the human race. How well purchased will be, though at the expense of much blood, the glorious, the unprecedented privilege of saying, Mankind is free! Tyrants and Tyranny are no more! Peace reigns on the earth! And this is the work of Frenchmen."

The date of this enthusiastic address is the 27th of September, 1792. The Tuileries had been stormed and the Royal Family made captives on the 10th of the preceding month; whilst, only a few weeks before the dispatch of the address from England, the cold-blooded massacre of more than six thousand prisoners in Paris alone had shocked the civilised world. It was at this moment—the "Septembriseurs" triumphant in the capital, and the French army already victorious over the Allies in the provinces; royalty just abolished by the National Convention, to which Dr. Priestley and Thomas Paine had been elected—that the Societies thought fit to hail the Revolution, to beard the Government, and to admonish the King. No wonder the friends of order were seriously alarmed. No wonder, again, that Pitt's resolution to keep himself clear of foreign entanglements was rendered more and more difficult to maintain in face of the growing clamour at home.

The popular sympathy with the Republicans was not confined to words. In many of the large towns there were vast gatherings, ostentatious rejoicings at the most sanguinary deeds of the Parisian mob, seditious speeches and riots, with other violent imitations of the violence of the French populace. The Ministry was forced to take measures of safety, or, at any rate, measures

calculated to calm the public mind. One of the first of these was the calling out of the militia. Writing to Dundas on the 4th of December, Pitt refers to his step in terms which plainly indicate the attitude of parties and of public opinion at the close of 1792. "The impression from calling out the militia," he says, "is as favourable as we could wish. . . . I believe myself that the chief danger at home is over for the present, but I am sure there is still mischief enough afloat not to relax any of our preparations. . . . The reason of my sending this letter is to ask whether you have or can procure a complete narrative of all that passed relative to the disturbances at Dundee. . . . The calling out of the militia was so clearly right and necessary that people will not much be inclined to cavil as to the application of the term Insurrection, which was the ostensible ground of our taking the measure. I have, however, some reason to suppose that some part of the Opposition will try to criticize the measure in that respect; and . . . what passed at Dundee furnishes the specific ground which seems best to be relied on. After all, there will be no difficulty in avowing that, at any rate, we thought it necessary to take this measure for the public safety."

If Pitt was influenced by his desire and duty to maintain order, he was supported as well as encouraged in the effort by a large section of the community. Special organizations were spontaneously formed in London and the provinces "for the defence of liberty and property against Republicans and Levellers." Declarations of loyalty were poured in from nearly all the great centres of industry; and the Government responded by increasing the armaments, concentrating troops near the capital, strengthening the Tower and the Bank, and otherwise



displaying a constant watchfulness and activity. It was in vain that Fox and his friends protested against these measures as unnecessary, and demanded the recognition of the French Republic. Their followers in the House of Commons rapidly diminished in number, whilst their unpopularity in the country as rapidly increased.

So far, it must be admitted, the Government had made no considerable error in procedure, and had shown no especial harshness. But, unfortunately, the law was now set in motion against the writers, printers, publishers, and circulators of sedition—or of language construed into sedition—with a rashness and cruelty which tended more to create sympathy with than abhorrence of it. Beginning with an unhappy bill-sticker who could neither read nor write, and passing on from him to men who commanded the esteem of society, the Courts condemned, and the Executive punished, scores of victims who might have been safely left alone. The convictions only resulted in stimulating the sale of the incriminated writings, whilst every acquittal—and there were many—was boasted of as a triumph over the Government. The trial of Paine, and his eloquent defence by Erskine, were followed by the inauguration of a new Society, the “Friends to Liberty of the Press;” and thus a rallying-point was provided which stood entirely distinct from the discredited popular laudations of the French Republic. The demand for freedom of speech gathered strength from the State trials of the next few years, and caused much more embarrassment to the Ministry than the free distribution of political tracts could ever have done.

The trial of Paine was followed by many others. At

times the crime was that of reprinting or selling matter already condemned—Paine's works in particular. In default of better evidence, the common informer was resorted to, and hasty words, as well as deliberate acts, were visited with severe penalties. In Kent, a man was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for one hasty word of disrespect towards the King. A number of respectable booksellers underwent from one to four years' imprisonment. The proprietors and printers of the *Morning Chronicle* were prosecuted for giving publicity to the address of a political Society; but in this case Erskine's adroitness saved them. A minister at Plymouth was punished for a too enthusiastic sermon. Judges, magistrates, and even juries seemed to consider the stamping out of every approach to sedition as their most sacred duty, and they lost no opportunity of performing it thoroughly. It was not so much the Ministry as the Law which was responsible for these vindications of loyalty. Lord Chancellor Loughborough, who had been the first of the Opposition leaders to come over to the side of Pitt, and John Scott, the Attorney-General—afterwards Lord Eldon—were amongst the stoutest champions of what may not inaptly be spoken of as literary order. The Chancellor, appealed to in the case of the Kentish inebriate, refused to interfere with the barbarous verdict, on the ground that "the authority of all tribunals, high and low, must be upheld" if the country was to be saved from revolution.

In 1793 a blow was struck at the Corresponding Society, and at the Convention in which the members and their friends delighted to imitate French fashions, by the arrest of Margarot, Gerrald, and Skirving, at a gathering of the "citizens" at Edinburgh. These three

men were sentenced to the heavy penalty of fourteen years' transportation. Their evil fortune was due, perhaps, to the intemperance of speech indulged in by various members of the Convention as much as to the deliberate severity which the Scottish judges deemed salutary to the public weal. Certainly there was little or nothing in the ostensible objects of the Convention, or in its mode of conducting business, which made these enthusiasts fit subjects for transportation. Skirving and his companions were accused of "a determined purpose to overturn the constitution;" but their own definition of their work declared its object to be the attainment of "thorough Parliamentary reform." They opened and closed every meeting with prayer, and quietly discussed their resolutions in a tone of benevolent sympathy with their fellow-countrymen. Gerrald, acting with Margarot as a delegate from the London Corresponding Society, took to Edinburgh a paper of instructions to which no reasonable objection can be made. These are the main articles of the document:—

"He shall on no account depart from the original objects and principles of this Society, namely, the obtaining annual Parliaments and universal suffrage by rational and lawful means. He is directed to support the opinion that representatives in Parliament ought to be paid by their constituents. That the election of sheriffs ought to be restored to the people. That juries ought to be chosen by lot. That active means ought to be used to make every man acquainted with the rights and duties of a jurymen. That the liberty of the press must, at all events, be supported; and that the publication of political truths can never be criminal. That it is the duty of the people to resist any Act of Parliament repugnant to the

principles of the constitution, as would be every  
 legal association for the purpose of

action and punishment of these retrograde or  
 unauthorised courses, a most bitter feeling in  
 all that associated and tremed with them  
 became the consequence of their utterances,  
 and led to what an aggressive course Society  
 embraced the vigorous action of the images  
 followed by more strongly the measures of public  
 and policy, such as the creation of a volunteer  
 and the so-called of French Royalists which  
 it by laws enforced in Parliament. A similar  
 motion in 1800 House proceeded against these  
 measures as preparation of the war with France.  
 In the case of the out of doors which gave most  
 to the Government. The Corresponding Society  
 accordingly a list of its delegates at Edinburgh:  
 and a more general Convention was decided on.  
 In 1801 a long and great address in the  
 House of Commons they dwelt upon the limita-  
 tions which had been introduced into the  
 of government—not only the limitations  
 of the war with France, but also the limita-  
 tions of the Convention, which had as they  
 were a vestige of the "venerable  
 of the ancestors." As for the Edinburgh  
 they urged that "the wisdom and good  
 of the Legislature had been "such as to defy  
 to name the law which they had  
 "disgraced by their excellent men had been "disgraced  
 by the arbitrary and illegal sentences of trans-  
 they had been "cast fettered into dungeons

amongst felons in the hulks." But their wrongs were not to overawe those who remained. "We all," the address continued, "approve the sentiments, and are daily repeating the words, for which these our respectable and valuable brethren are thus unjustly and inhumanly suffering. We, too, associate in order to obtain a fair, free, and full representation of the people in a house of real national representatives. . . . There is no further step beyond that which they have taken. We are at issue. We must now choose at once either liberty or slavery for ourselves and posterity. Will you wait till barracks are erected in every village, and till subsidised Hessians and Hanoverians are upon us?"

This was almost a declaration of war. It might, at any rate, be easily construed into an incitement to rebellion; but the Government did not immediately proceed against the men who were responsible for it. Perhaps they felt the difficulty of prosecuting enthusiasts for carrying to a logical issue the very ideas which constantly found expression in both Houses of Parliament. And Pitt himself was unquestionably affected by the argument frequently resorted to by the most moderate of the agitators, to the effect that they asked no more, and proposed to go no further, than he as First Minister of the Crown had asked and proposed ten years ago.

Pitt, however, had drawn a distinction; he had given his reasons why Parliamentary reform appeared to him to be unattainable; and he had finally, though reluctantly, come to the conclusion, that the French outbreak rendered what had once been a natural and laudable demand an actual menace to the safety of the country. Under these circumstances his hesitation as to pushing things to an extreme was not likely to be very long maintained.

The resolution of the Corresponding Society, with more or less of assent from the Constitutional Society and the Friends of the People, to hold another Convention seemed to bring matters to a crisis. Soon after the Chalk Farm and Crown and Anchor meetings—at the latter of which Horne Tooke made a vehement attack on Parliament as then constituted—several of the leading agitators, including Tooke, Thelwall, Hardy, Lovett, Joyce, Adams, Bonney, and Richter, were taken into custody. Dundas introduced a royal message into the House of Commons, announcing the seizure of books and papers, recommending the contents of these to the notice of the House, and calling upon it to take such measures as might appear to be necessary “for effectually guarding against the further prosecution of these dangerous designs.”

A few days later (May 16, 1794) Pitt moved for leave to bring in a Bill suspending the Habeas Corpus Act; and his speech on this occasion reflects the lurid light in which the revolutionary Societies had come to be regarded by a majority of respectable Englishmen. He referred to the Corresponding Society as one which, “despicable and contemptible though the persons who compose it are, as to talents, education, and influence, yet when looked at with cautious attention, and compared with the objects they have in view, and the motives on which they act—namely, that great moving principle of all Jacobinism, the love of plunder, devastation, and robbery, which now bears the usurped name of liberty, and that system of butchery and carnage which has been made the instrument of enforcing these principles—will appear to be formidable in exact proportion to the meanness and contemptibility of their characters.”

This language, which seems to us almost absurdly exaggerated when taken side by side with the mild utterances of Hardy and his friends, was scarcely more than mild in the judgment of its hearers, who had the terrible French precedent constantly before their eyes, who had heard of the Sheffield pikes offered at a shilling apiece, and the night-cats supposed to be hidden away in London garrets.

We may take two further passages from the same speech of Pitt's, partly as a specimen of his oratory in its most impassioned vein, and partly because it conveys his defence of the position which he had thought it his duty to assume, and in respect of which he had been so severely criticized. "The Corresponding Society," he told the House, "being composed of the lower orders of the people, has within it the means of unbounded extension, and conceals in itself the seeds of rapid increase. It has risen already to no less than thirty divisions in London, some of these containing as many as six hundred persons, and is connected by a systematical chain of correspondence with other Societies scattered through all the manufacturing towns where the seeds of those principles are laid, which artful and dangerous people might best convert to their own purposes. It will appear in proof that this Society has risen to an enormous height of boldness, and erected in itself, in express terms, a power to watch over the progress of Parliament, to scan its proceedings, and make out limits for its action, beyond which if it presumed to advance, this august Society was to issue its mandate, not only to controvert that act, but to put an end to the existence of Parliament itself; so that if the Parliament should think it necessary to oppose, by any act of penal coercion, the ruin of the constitution,

that would be the war-whoop for insurrection ; the means of our defence would become the signal for attack, and the Parliament be made the instrument of its own annihilation. Such language as this, coming from people apparently so contemptible in talents, so mean in their description, and so circumscribed in their power, would, abstractedly considered, be supposed to deserve compassion as the wildest workings of insanity, but the researches of the Committee [the Committee of Secrecy appointed to consider the seditious writings referred to in the royal message] will tend to prove that it was the result of deep design, matured, moulded into shape, and fit for mischievous effect when an opportunity offered. . . . . Who is there that knows what Jacobins and Jacobin principles are but must see, in their pretences of reform in Parliament, the arrogant claims of the same class of men as those who lord it now in France, to trample upon the rich, and crush all ; the dark designs of a few, making use of the name of the people to govern all ; a plan founded in the arrogance of wretches, the outcasts of society, tending to enrich them by depriving of property and of life all those distinguished either for personal worth or for opulence ?”

The trial for high treason of the prisoners taken in May was delayed for six months. In November, Hardy and Tooke were separately charged, tried, and acquitted by their juries. Thelwall had the same fortune in December. The rest, though brought to the bar, were allowed to depart without any attempt by the Crown to secure a conviction. Erskine's ingenuity and eloquence were sufficient to overbalance whatever tendency there might have been to strain the existing statutes against the accused ; and the only practical issue of these trials



for the Government was a proof that the law as it stood was inadequate to prevent the associations, meetings, and utterances which they deemed incompatible with the safety of the State.

## 8

The weak-kneed members of the various Societies fell rapidly away as soon as it was perceived that the authorities had fairly declared war upon them ; but it was not to be wondered at that the failure of the prosecutions in 1794 gave the Corresponding Society in particular a temporary stimulus. The acquittal of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall was hailed with enthusiasm by vast numbers of persons who would never have dreamed of imitating their actions ; and it also nerved many others to fresh activity. This effect was manifest no less in the conduct of men of high moral courage, like Stanhope, Lansdowne, and Lauderdale, Fox, Grey, and Sheridan, than in the renewed intrigues of the most reckless revolutionists.

The year 1795 was an anxious one for Ministers and for the timid well-to-do classes. Political discontent was aggravated by social distress ; the war was not going in our favour, the taxes were growing enormously, our regular trade was falling off, and famine began to prey upon the masses of the people. Most of those who had anything to lose were alarmed by the misery and boldness of those who stood in need of everything. The panic fear of foreign enemies, added to the panic fear of the multitudes at home, deprived them of all calmness, and they exerted upon the Government a pressure which Pitt and his colleagues were unable to resist. There was, perhaps, a grain of perilous sedition to a ton of suspicion and cowardice, but the grain was enough to

—not to say a justification—for more of repression. At the beginning of the year when the King was on his way to open Parliament he was assailed by an angry crowd with cries of "Peace," "No Pitt," "Down with Pitt," and the like. Worse than that, the windows of his carriage were broken on his way to and from the House of Lords. The Marquis of Lansdowne did not suggest that this outrage was only an "alarm bell" to bring the people into weak compliances"—a measure planned and executed by Ministers in order to strengthen their position. But large majorities in both Houses took the matter seriously, voted loyal addresses, offered a thousand pounds for the conviction of any one who had assailed the King, and eventually passed the Treason and Sedition Acts, whereby the liberties of the subject were stringently curtailed. The first of these Acts made it a misdemeanour to excite to hatred of the Royal Person or of the Government and Constitution, a second offence being punished by seven years' transportation. The latter Act gave magistrates summary power to disperse any public meeting; and resistance to dispersion on the part of twelve or more individuals was made a felony, punishable, as felony then was, by death.

Pitt was showing his teeth. He certainly had not been easily roused, but, once persuaded in his own mind, he acted, as it was his nature to act in everything which he undertook, with vigour, with unshrinking energy, with courage and unflinching resolution. He had shown that he could rule with the velvet glove, by persuasion and conciliation. He now showed that he could grasp his enemies by a hand of steel.

These measures virtually killed the Societies. The

Corresponding Society met occasionally and in a desultory manner for more than two years after the passing of the Sedition Act, but its power was at an end. Partly through the terror of the new laws, and partly by the growth of the popular patriotism engendered by the war, the spirit of the 'old association had gradually ebbed away. The last flicker of activity was displayed in April, 1798; and the Government thought fit to take this opportunity of striking a decisive blow at the organization. The occasion was rather ludicrous than tragic. The general committee was discussing the propriety of offering to enrol the Society as a volunteer corps for the defence of the country—which would have implied the consent of the Government to intrust them with arms. But the Government were far from being prepared to conquer their old opponents by displaying confidence in their loyalty; and indeed the result showed that the professed patriotism of the members was regarded with something like a suspicion of treachery. The committee was interrupted in the midst of its discussion by a posse of constables, who took the whole batch into custody, and seized their books and papers. This was the end of the Corresponding Society. The scare which brought about the arrests, the tameness and languor which seem to have marked the conduct of the rank and file of the associations in 1798, bestow a certain character of absurdity on the definitive triumph of the Government over their bugbear of popular sedition.

It may be fairly questioned whether at this moment the nearest approach to sedition was not to be found in the higher social circles, amongst peers and statesmen, who made no attempt whatever to conceal their opinions from the authorities. The famous dinner at the Crown

and Anchor, held to commemorate the birthday of Fox at the beginning of the year just mentioned, was in every sense more perilous to the public weal than the gatherings of the moribund society. Two thousand guests were present. The Duke of Norfolk occupied the chair; Fox and his friends, Horne Tooke, and other marked men sat round the tables, drank the health of "Our Sovereign—The Majesty of the People," and sang the songs of Captain Morris. The Duke himself bade his hearers remember that "twenty years ago the illustrious George Washington had not more than two thousand men to rally round him when his country was attacked," and left them to "make the application." It was not to be supposed that the Government could treat this demonstration with indifference; and they did not do so. It was remembered that the Duke of Norfolk discharged the duties of a Lord-Lieutenant; he was at once struck out of the roll, and at the same time deprived of his position as commanding officer of a militia regiment. He had braved the Government, and they had accepted his challenge; but the act was regarded as unnecessarily rash, even by some who quite approved the general views of Pitt.

The toast of "The Sovereign of the People," or "The Majesty of the People," was a favourite one with the leading reforming Whigs in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and the chastisement of the Duke of Norfolk had not caused it to fall into disuse. A few months after the banquet at the Crown and Anchor, Fox had again successfully proposed it at a meeting of the Whigs, and an order was an immediate outcry on the part of the Government, who were, as Pitt expressed it, "very much obliged" to very eager for some Parliamentary

notice" of Fox's speech. The Prime Minister suggested a reprimand in the first instance, and, if Fox should offer a new insult, "as he probably would at the next meeting of the club," he might be sent to the Tower for the remainder of the session, "which would assert the authority of the House as much as expulsion, and save the inconvenience of a Westminster election."

This course was apparently considered too drastic to be applied to a former Secretary of State. But the King needed satisfaction for the insult which was supposed to have been flung at him, and with his own hand he struck out the name of Fox from the list of the Privy Council.

It was only a few days after this that Pitt, in the heat of a debate, imputed to Tierney, as the motive of his opposition to the Ministerial programme, "a desire to obstruct the defence of the country." Tierney called his accuser to order, and appealed to the Speaker for protection. Addington declared the words to be "certainly disorderly and unparliamentary;" but Pitt, in the haughty manner which his long supremacy in the House had made an inveterate habit with him, refused either to withdraw or to explain his words. The result was a hostile message from Tierney and a duel on Putney Heath, where honour was satisfied by the exchange of a couple of shots. The affair passed off lightly enough; but its origination bore witness to the heated state of parties at that moment. Fox, and a few of his friends regularly absented themselves from the House of Commons; but the two or three score who remained carried on the battle with unabated vigour.

We cannot wonder at the animosity displayed against

the advocates of reform by the Ministerialists, Tories, "friends of order," and enthusiastic patriots, when we remember that the very policy of Fox and his associates was adopted by Bonaparte and the French Directory as an element in their aggressive tactics against England. The political controversies of the time are full of references to this salient fact. The writers of the *Anti-Jacobin*, which was first published in 1797, soon after the failure of Lord Malmesbury's pacific mission, dwell constantly on the French menace, and play it as a card against Whigs and Radicals alike. Here, for instance, is a characteristic diatribe, from the eighth number, January 1, 1798:—

The French Government (says the writer), since the rupture of negotiations, have "professed it to be their object to dictate, on the banks of the Thames, such conditions of peace as should humble our naval power—extort from us a fine and ransom sufficient to reimburse their expenses in conquering us—and finally secure to their auxiliaries and confederates here" (this in italics) "the full benefits of a radical reform, the particulars of which they have not (any more than Mr. Fox) condescended to explain, but which has on the face of it this recommendation, that it will be the joint work of the Whig Club, the London Corresponding Society, and the French Executive Directory. This benevolent project they intend to execute by means very conformable to the end. They have publicly formed, and (as they term it) organized their 'Army of England.' Its advanced guard is to be formed from a chosen corps of banditti, the most distinguished for massacre and plunder. It is to be preceded, as it naturally ought, by the genius of French Revolutionary liberty, and it will be welcomed, as they tell us, 'on the ensanguined shores of Britain by the generous friends of Parliamentary reform.'"

Canning and his coadjutors lost no opportunity of coupling the English reformers with the French plotters. In a poem contained in the ninth number of the *Anti-*

*Jacobin* these words are put in the mouth of Reubel, addressing his colleagues of the Directory :—

“ By this excellent plan,  
On the true Rights of Man  
When we've founded our fifth Revolution,  
Though England's our foe,  
An army shall go  
To improve her corrupt Constitution.

“ We'll address to the nation  
A fine proclamation,  
With offers of friendship so warm—  
Who can give Bonaparte  
A welcome so hearty  
As the friends of a Thorough Reform ? ”

Pitt's brilliant recruit did him good service in the trenchant criticisms of the *Weekly Examiner*. The Prime Minister himself is rarely named, but his chief opponents, and the principal organs of the Opposition, are constantly subjected to the lash. On the morrow of the dismissal of the Duke of Norfolk for his indiscretions at the banquet on Fox's birthday, the *Anti-Jacobin* made a slashing attack on what it described as “ a formal act of alliance between the remains of the Parliamentary Opposition and the leaders of a faction French in principle, French in inclination, and French in conduct.” The *Morning Chronicle* had presumed to suggest that the treatment of the Duke would be unpopular—a remark to which its weekly critic made a smart rejoinder :—

“ As to the effects upon the feelings of the people, the *Morning Chronicle* may be perfectly at ease. The People are not so anxious for the possession of the Sovereignty which the meetings of the Crown and Anchor have been for ‘ forty years ’ labouring to confer upon them, as to have forgotten that they have a Sovereign to whom they owe, and to whom they cheerfully pay, their allegiance. The People are not so easily fooled as to suppose that a guzzling

riot at a tavern has anything to do with their interests, or is in any way conducive to their happiness. The People are enough alive to their real interests in the Constitution to know that justice done impartially upon the highest, as upon the lowest, subject of the realm is a valuable and vital principle of sound government. With the great body of the People, therefore, the example cannot fail to 'promote union' and 'secure exertion'—to 'promote union' because they must now see the extent and danger of the principles which they are called upon to oppose—to 'secure exertion' because they have, in the vigilance and energy of the Government, a security that their opposition to those principles will, if united, be effectual."

Appeals to public opinion like those made by Canning and his friends derived their force not only from the pungency of their expression, but still more from circumstances of the time. It is clear that the advocates of a radical reform, sincerely as they strove to avoid the evils of a violent revolution by demanding the concession of just and salutary measures, were defeated by insuperable obstacles. They laboured under vast disadvantages when compared with the enthusiastic patriots who condemned them. It was in vain that they laid claim to the credit of patriotism, and professed themselves the champions of order and legality. Prejudice was against them; the logic of events seemed to refute them; rhetoric and wit were arrayed in opposition to all that they attempted or performed. The English propaganda had fallen upon evil times, and the influences which sufficed to convert Pitt himself from a reformer into a strenuous opponent of reform were strong enough to make the cry for reform intensely unpopular during the next quarter of a century.

It was, perhaps, in some sense as a consequence of the accumulated anxieties of this period that Pitt's health, never robust, began to fail him more frequently and more seriously than ever. He had a grave attack of illness



soon after his duel with Tierney ; and from this time forward his biography and correspondence give repeated evidence of physical disorders. He was almost constantly under the doctors' hands, but they could do little for him except to enjoin rest and change of scene. The patient himself relied more upon his old port than upon advice which he could not, or would not, follow. For him, to be in office, and to grapple with the gigantic cares which engrossed his whole mind and energies, was to know life at its fullest and best. Cessation from work meant no relief to him, but only impatient endurance. If he ever admitted the precarious tenure by which his existence was maintained, the thought merely nerved him to compress more of achievement and triumph into the years which might still remain to him.

Hitherto Pitt had not known, except for a few months at the beginning of his career, what it was to be in active Opposition. Since he first measured swords with his chief political rival, he had carried all before him as the adviser of the King and the leader of Parliament. Now he was to fall for a season under the royal displeasure, and to learn on how weak a foundation the popularity of the greatest Minister may rest.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PITT OUT OF OFFICE.

THE eighteenth century closed gloomily enough for England. Oppressed with burdens, and discontented with the state of affairs both at home and abroad, the people saw little that was of a hopeful character in the prospect before them. Perhaps the great majority were tired of the war; or at any rate they were tired of subsidising Europe, and of spending blood and money without stint on enterprises which either failed altogether or left them in no better position than that which they had occupied before. Pitt's war policy had long been of the most uncompromising kind. He had steadily refused to treat or to think of peace. He had been pledged to oppose France to the uttermost extremity, and no one imagined that he would swerve from this course.

His fall was not due in any degree to the reaction which undoubtedly existed in the public mind. The King was more disposed to continue the struggle than he was himself, and no expressions of popular opinion on this score would have sufficed to bring about either his resignation or his dismissal. But the collapse of his Administration was welcomed by the advocates of peace as affording the opportunity which they had so long desired. Pitt, indeed, had not been unwilling, within the past few months, to bring the war to an end on the

basis of a compromise with France. Negotiations had been entered into in the autumn of 1800 which at one time seemed likely to result in a treaty of peace. But the stipulations of the French Government were rejected, at the desire of the King and a section of the Cabinet, against the better judgment of the Prime Minister. This is illustrated in a letter written by him to Lord Loughborough on September 5, in which he considers the situation with a manifest desire to reach a favourable issue. The difficulties which he encountered, on the other hand, at Court and in the Cabinet, were insurmountable. The attitude of his colleagues may be judged from a statement drawn up by Dundas, and forwarded to him before the end of September.\* "Some of us," wrote Dundas, "think that the only solid hope of peace lies in the restoration of the Bourbons. Some, without going so far, think there should be no peace with a revolutionary Government, and that the present Government of France is such. Some are for negotiating with the present Government of France, but only in conjunction with the Emperor of Germany." (This was approximately the idea of Pitt himself.) "Some are for negotiating on our own foundation singly, with a just sense of our dignity and honour, and of the conquests we have made out of Europe."

This statement ended with the hope that Pitt would "take these observations into his most serious consideration before it is too late." No doubt, the Prime Minister would have been very happy to take the conflicting views of his colleagues into account, in such a manner as would have justified him in concluding a peace—which was

\* "Stanhope," ii. 367.

what Dundas earnestly desired. But it is clear that no definite peaceful policy could be initiated in a Cabinet so incapable of agreement on the first principles of negotiation.

The actual cause of Pitt's retirement from office was his attempt to develop his Irish policy in a wise and liberal sense, which was rendered impossible by the unyielding attitude of the King. George III. claimed to be above all things a champion and bulwark of the Church. He had resisted everything approximating to an attack upon the Establishment, and he had seen subtle and insidious attacks in proposals of the most judicious and necessary character. Pitt's desire in 1801 was to supplement the Union by an Act relieving the Irish Catholics of their chief disabilities. Almost all his colleagues agreed with him. Castlereagh, now second in authority under Lord Cornwallis in Ireland, and steadily rising in the scale of official estimation, warmly espoused the Catholic claims, and apparently expressed himself at Dublin in such terms as to create a kind of honourable understanding that the Government would put an end to the admitted grievance.

The Cabinet went so far as to formulate a general scheme, whereby a political test should be substituted for the sacramental test then applicable to all persons holding office, to municipal corporations, to ministers of religion and schoolmasters. The nature of the new test (intended for the whole of the United Kingdom) was described by Lord Grenville in a letter to a relative,\* written after the abandonment of the project, wherein he also indicated the other items of the Government pro-

\* Quoted by Lord Stanhope, ii. 389.

gramme. The test "was to be directly levelled against the Jacobin principles; was to disclaim in express terms the sovereignty of the people; and was to contain the oath of allegiance and fidelity to the King's Government of the realm, and to the established constitution, both in Church and State. All this was to have been accompanied with measures for strengthening the powers and enforcing the discipline of our Church establishment over its own ministers, and for augmenting the income of those whose poverty now forms an insuperable bar to their residence. And a provision was also to be made in respect of tithes, which would, I think, materially operate in this country, and still more materially in Ireland, to remove the objections to that mode of provision for the clergy."

When the King was made acquainted with the designs of his Ministers—which were communicated to him, contrary to official etiquette, by Lord Loughborough, in anticipation of the meeting of the Cabinet summoned to discuss the matter—his prejudices were aroused in their strongest form. He commissioned the Chancellor to oppose the scheme in the Cabinet, and to represent to the rest of his Ministers that, whilst he was prepared to admit some modification in regard to the tithes, he could never consent to the admission of the Catholics into Parliament or to Government office. Though Lord Loughborough did not in so many words declare himself as the King's mouthpiece on this occasion, yet it was well understood by his colleagues that he rested on the royal authority in taking so bold and so unscrupulous a course. It is possible that an honest conviction on the subject of the Catholic claims prompted or enabled him to go behind the backs of his friends to secure the King's

power, and to justify the action of the Prime Minister. However this may be the effect of his interference was to postpone Catholic emancipation to an indefinite future, and to mar the Irish policy of Pitt, who had always intended to supplement the Act of Union with legislation of a remedial character.

Lord Mansfield, discussing the circumstances of this case, has expressed an opinion that Pitt might probably have encountered the King's resistance if he had been as long in the possession of the office as he had ventured to be on several occasions previously, though he doubts whether the Government could have carried their scheme even with the King's assent. Having regard to the nature of the difficulties which presented themselves in England and in Ireland, it is not surprising that so much reason should be given to the King, and that Catholics could have been so long in coming to the aid of the Government. It is at least probable that the influence of Pitt over the mind of the King was not so great as it has been supposed to be, and that the King's resistance began to wane, or that he was induced to give his assent, as to make the Government the more to shake the resolution of his royal majesty. It is probable that the King's resistance was not so long as it has been supposed to be, and that the King's assent was not so late as it has been supposed to be. It is also probable that the King's resistance was not so long as it has been supposed to be, and that the King's assent was not so late as it has been supposed to be.

scheme, and holding out his resignation as the alternative to its acceptance. The King refused to give way, though he trusted that "Mr. Pitt's sense of duty" would "prevent him retiring from his present situation" to the end of the King's life.

The strength of the royal objection lay in an obstinate belief that the liberation of the Catholics from their thralldom would involve a breach of the coronation oath. "A sense of religious as well as political duty," wrote King George in his inimitable style, "has made me, from the moment I mounted the throne, consider the oath that the wisdom of our forefathers has enjoined the kings of this realm to take at their coronation, and enforced by the obligation of instantly following it in the course of the ceremony with taking the sacrament, as so binding a religious obligation on me to maintain the fundamental maxims on which our Constitution is placed; namely, the Church of England being the established one, and that those who hold employment in the State must be members of it, and consequently obliged not only to take oaths against Popery, but to receive the Holy Communion agreeably to the rites of the Church of England."

Pitt was not won over by this argument, or by the appeal which accompanied it. He again presented his alternative, and he found that the King, if he could not always complete his predicates, could at any rate cling very obstinately to his convictions. The Sovereign (who had barely recovered from one of his chronic attacks of mental disease) parted with the Minister who had served him so ably for seventeen years, and this at a most critical period of our foreign complications; but he wrote him a few lines of doubtless sincere affection, called him

“my dear Pitt,” and repeated his sorrow for what had occurred.

For three years and three months Pitt remained in independent opposition. He was succeeded at the Treasury by Addington, the son of his father's physician, who had been for more than a decade the popular Speaker of the House of Commons, and who as Lord Sidmouth afterwards presided at the Home Office under the Earl of Liverpool. Between Pitt and Addington there was for some time to come an excellent understanding; and, though a certain coolness not unnaturally sprang up on either side, it has rarely been laid to the charge of the more eminent statesman that he wilfully or factiously embarrassed his successor in the task of administration.

The King began by leaning on his late Minister almost as heavily as on his new one. “If we three do but keep together,” he is recorded to have said to them, “all will go well.” It was a speech eminently calculated to render a long agreement impossible; but it illustrates the unwillingness of the sovereign to let his former adviser entirely escape him. The Ministry of 1801 included several of Pitt's colleagues who had proved amenable on the Catholic question—his brother Lord Chatham, the Duke of Portland, and Lord Westmoreland. Lord Loughborough, strange to say, did not profit by the change which he had done so much to bring about. He held no office under Addington, being succeeded on the woolsack by Lord Eldon—who himself found no successor (save for a brief interval) during the next quarter of a century.



On the whole, this Ministry was viewed with favour and confidence ; a fact due, in no slight measure, to the magnanimous conduct of Pitt, who gave every assistance to his friend in the extremely arduous task now devolving upon him. Addington took office as a champion of the Established Church and a guardian of the King's conscience—though of course neither of these had been assailed or threatened by Pitt. But men knew, or were soon assured, that the first great work of the Ministry must be to conclude a peace with France ; and there were some who maintained that the prospect of having to sign unacceptable terms of peace was one of the main causes of Pitt's retirement. There might have been a better foundation for this suspicion if the late Minister had now held himself aloof from public affairs, if he had enjoyed a well-earned rest at Walmer or Holwood, and left to others the whole responsibility of conducting the peace negotiations. But the fact is that Pitt's advice was candidly and constantly sought by Addington, and as candidly given. He had almost as much to do with the shaping of the preliminary arrangements as any actual holder of office ; and, so far from exhibiting reluctance to come to an understanding with the French Government, he wrote and spoke of the transaction with some thing like pride. "The terms," he wrote to a friend on the day (October 1) when the preliminary articles were signed by Lord Hawkesbury and M. Otto, "though not in every point precisely all that one could wish, are certainly highly creditable, and on the whole very advantageous. I do not expect all our friends to be completely satisfied, but the country at large will, I think, be very much so."

There was ample ground for the reserve which Pitt



The French envoy was drawn in triumph through the streets of London, and in many parts of the provinces the termination of the war was enthusiastically welcomed.

Pitt's behaviour at this crisis did not please all his friends. There were those amongst them who obstinately adhered to his own former policy, and who viewed its repudiation with disgust.

In domestic as well as in foreign affairs the late Prime Minister was regularly consulted by his successor. The two statesmen "kept together," as the King had desired that they should; and together they carried with them a large majority in the House of Commons. During the session of 1802 motions of censure against the late Administration were brought forward, and supported by the followers of Fox and Grey. Pitt took no part in the debates, though Addington did; and in the absence of the former a Vote of Thanks was accorded to him for his "great and important services to his country."

This was not the only public mark of gratitude bestowed on Pitt at this epoch of his life. A banquet was held in his honour on the 28th of May, his birthday, when his admirers mustered to the number of eight hundred and twenty-three. It was for this occasion that Canning—whose intimacy with his patron grew steadily to the time of Pitt's death—wrote his well-known song of "The Pilot that weathered the Storm."

The Parliament of 1796 came to its natural end with the session of 1802, and was dissolved in June of the latter year. It had been Pitt's Parliament in a special sense, and he had so fully retained his influence in it up to the last moment that he was allowed by Addington

to modify the Royal speech by which it was brought to a close. The new House of Commons was elected on the morrow of the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens, and under circumstances which rendered the appeal to the country a virtual appeal on the policy of the peace. The verdict of the constituencies was decidedly favourable to this policy. The Ministers, Pitt, and their friends generally, were returned; Windham and one or two others who had condemned the peace were unseated. There was an infusion of advanced Liberalism—or Jacobinism, as it was stigmatized in those days—but on the whole no great change was effected in the character, or even in the *personnel*, of the representative House.

In particular, the new House was apparently as well disposed towards Pitt as the old House had been, and its temper, or rather the temper of the country, was soon made manifest in a certain lack of confidence in the Addington Administration. There were many reasons why this should be so; but prominent amongst them were the recrudescence of the Irish difficulty in its worst form, and the renewed estrangement which sprang up between the English and French Governments. Both developments caused the eyes of Englishmen to turn more and more constantly towards the Minister who had hitherto held a front against Bonaparte, and who had inaugurated a policy of conciliation in the sister kingdom.

It has been said that the Peace of Amiens was on many hands regarded as a truce. Pitt, however, declared that he had at one time expected the First Consul to be crowned with his military fame and with his acquisitions in the Continent. At any rate he had been convinced that it was wise for England to come to terms in 1801, if only that the country might have an interval of rest. He

cannot have anticipated that the interval would be so brief or the truce so hollow. The fact was that the terms of the Treaty were not observed on either side. England did not abandon Malta, and moved in very leisurely fashion out of Egypt. France did not cease to push her designs on Switzerland and Piedmont. It was clear that neither party trusted the other, and that no long duration of the peace could be looked forward to. Throughout the year 1802 the opinion grew that the resumption of the war could not be far distant. Even if the English Government desired to avoid it, Bonaparte was evidently going the way to force a quarrel upon us. He made constant complaints of our non-observance of the Treaty—complaints which would have had some reasonable basis if he had not himself done violence to its stipulations. Amongst his other complaints was one against the extreme freedom of the English press, and in this matter the Government thought fit to give him a certain satisfaction. The Attorney-General was instructed to prosecute one Peltier, a French emigrant, who, in a paper in his own language printed in London, issued some grave libels against the First Consul, and even incited his countrymen to assassinate him.

The breach widened rapidly, and by the beginning of 1803 it had become too great to be bridged over. France had never ceased to expand her armaments, but at this period she began to show so much activity in her northern ports, and in Holland, that English statesmen were naturally alarmed. Though the armaments were ostensibly directed against St. Domingo, Bonaparte acted and spoke as though he were by no means anxious to lull the suspicions of Englishmen. In his message to the Corps Législatif (Feb. 21) he took upon himself to make



and boasts was energetic enough. There was a Royal Message announcing the necessity for measures of precaution, and there was a dutiful and unanimous Address from each House of Parliament. Money was voted, the militia was called out, ten thousand men were added to the navy. The First Consul was irrationally angry when he found that he was being taken at his word. And indeed there was a certain distinction between his own preparations and ours. There was ambiguity in the armaments of France, but there could be no ambiguity in the armaments of England. The fleets of Boulogne, Brest, Amsterdam, might be intended for St. Domingo, for Egypt, for Turkey; but the English fleet could only be intended for direct hostility to France.

There were some at the moment, and there have been some ever since, who maintained that the renewal of war—on which the Government was virtually resolved—was not absolutely necessary, and that it was consequently a blunder or a crime. But the number of these adverse critics in 1803 was very small, and scarcely a voice was raised in Parliament against the measures which preceded our ultimatum to France and our immediate declaration of war.

It was whilst the negotiations with Bonaparte were in progress, and when the question of peace or war was still at issue, that Addington entered into serious communication with Pitt for the purpose of securing the return of the latter to office. He went so far as to consent to Pitt's resumption of the Premiership, and even to contemplate his own removal to the House of Lords, where it was suggested that he might sit as Speaker, the Lord Chancellor ceasing to act in that capacity. Pitt took a very high tone in this discussion. He required

that he should be personally commanded by the King to form an Administration; that he should be left to draw up a list selected from both parties; that Lord Grenville, Lord Spencer, and Mr. Windham should have seats in the Cabinet; and that Addington himself should first commit the country to its future policy, whether of war or of peace. These stipulations, which he could not be induced to modify, were taken into consideration by Addington and his colleagues at the house of Lord Chatham (April 13), and were rejected, ostensibly on the ground of the insuperable objection entertained against an alliance with Grenville and Windham.

The negotiation thus came to an end, though not without some interchange of rather acrimonious correspondence between the two statesmen, whose friendship had been almost dissipated by their failure to arrive at a more complete understanding. The result was a great disappointment for those who earnestly desired to see Pitt in his old place, at a time when the old circumstances were manifestly being renewed. The balance of opinion seems to have been against Pitt on this occasion. It was thought that he might have sacrificed some of his personal views, and that in particular he need not have insisted on the nomination of men to whom Addington and his friends were so naturally averse. But Pitt as a Minister was nothing if not autocratic and inflexible; there was no having him in command if he was not to be master in his own ship; and it was certainly not less incumbent on Addington and Hawkesbury and Portland to give way than it was on Pitt.

Hostilities at length broke out. Early in May the English Government presented an ultimatum to the First Consul, in which they claimed a right to keep



possession of Malta for ten years, and at the end of that time to receive the small island of Lampedosa from the King of Naples, with the assent of France. There were some other stipulations, but the question of Malta had been the chief issue raised between the two countries, and it was important enough in itself to make all others hinge upon it. It was impossible to suppose that the French in their temper at that moment would agree to our retention of a strong place of arms in the Mediterranean. Such an ultimatum was equivalent to a declaration of war. The English Ministers knew this; but they had been thoroughly convinced by the acts of Bonaparte that he had determined upon war, and, as these acts precluded him from appealing to the terms of the Treaty, it was manifestly judicious to maintain ourselves at Malta against all comers. The actual declaration went over on the 18th of May. On the 20th an English privateer captured two French vessels off the coast of Brittany. On the 22nd the First Consul issued his barbarous decree whereby a large number of English travellers in France were made prisoners. On the 23rd and 24th, the House of Commons took into consideration the Address in reply to the Royal Message. The debate was one of the most impressive and earnest of all those recorded by contemporary writers. It was the climax of an excitement which had been gradually and steadily growing, and which during the past few weeks had risen to fever heat. The dislike and the dread of the French entertained by our countrymen at the beginning of the century are not easily realised in our own day, but perhaps it is not too much to say that the temper of the two Houses in reference to the resumption of the war was one of bitter, implacable, and even frantic hatred.

Pitt came once more into prominence on the 23rd of May, after several months' absence from the House. He was received with enthusiasm in the scene of his former triumphs, and instantly gained another, as brilliant as any which had gone before. His speech was not reported, but its praise was in every mouth, and we may imagine especially the effect of what Mr. Ward (Lord Dudley) described as "an electrifying peroration on the necessity and magnitude of our future exertions." This was almost the last of his great speeches, and its delivery revealed to those who knew him the extent of the ravages which sickness had already made on his slender frame. Mr. Ward writes, in the letter just quoted, of the manifest tokens of his bad health; and he adds, "Though his voice has not lost any of its depth and harmony, his lungs seem to labour in those prodigious sentences which he once thundered forth without effort."

During the remainder of that session, and in the winter session of the same year, Pitt maintained an attitude of independent opposition. On many occasions he supported the measures of the Government—always in so far as they tended to the strengthening of the national resources, though he reserved to himself full liberty to criticize their form or details. Now and then he challenged a division, and in every instance he found himself in a small minority. He could not have expected anything else. A French invasion was considered imminent; the country was more or less in a state of panic; Pitt himself strongly recommended the fortification of London. It was only natural that a large majority in the House of Commons should rally closely round the Ministers of the day, and shrink from embarrassing them so long as their Administration showed signs of efficiency. But Pitt

courted his successive defeats with deliberate pertinacity. He had counted the cost, he told one friend, and recognised that in the minds of some his repute might suffer by these reverses. But on the whole there can be no doubt that they advanced his policy, which was to push the Government as vigorously as possible in the direction of measures which he would himself have adopted if he had been in power. His position was unique, and he thoroughly understood its strength. More than once Addington outvoted him by a triumphant majority, and then frankly accepted the advice of his rival. It is a question which one ought to admire most—the calm dignity of the statesman out of office, constantly defeated but virtually master of the situation, or the candour and self-restraint of the Prime Minister, who could so readily defer to the superior talent of Pitt.

It was a curious phenomenon of the time that, although most public men looked forward to the return of Pitt to office, and saw in him the only possible Minister (so long as he might be alive) in a renewed war against France, the disposition of the weak-kneed and the ambitious appears to have been to gather round Addington rather than round the leader of the future. At any rate it was so during the year 1803. Erskine wrote a letter, intended for the Premier's eye, which hinted that in certain circumstances he would support Addington in preference to Pitt. Sheridan was another prominent man who ranged himself at this crisis under the standard of the Minister, and who did it so awkwardly that Windham likened him to a raw recruit, firing off his musket before he knew where the enemy was.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities related to the business. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the tools used for data collection.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study, including a comparison of the different methods and techniques used. It discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each method and provides a summary of the findings.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the study and provides recommendations for future research. It highlights the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of the different methods and techniques used.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a conclusion and a summary of the key findings. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining accurate records and the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

6. The sixth part of the document provides a list of references and a bibliography. It includes a list of the sources used in the study and provides a detailed description of each source.

7. The seventh part of the document provides a list of appendices and a bibliography. It includes a list of the appendices used in the study and provides a detailed description of each appendix.

8. The eighth part of the document provides a list of figures and a bibliography. It includes a list of the figures used in the study and provides a detailed description of each figure.

9. The ninth part of the document provides a list of tables and a bibliography. It includes a list of the tables used in the study and provides a detailed description of each table.

prepare the way for a possible emancipator. This was only one of the motives which contributed, as early as 1802, to unsettle the condition of Ireland.

The union had entirely failed to conciliate the sister kingdom, or even to pacify the discontented classes. In 1803 it was found necessary to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act; and the suspension was repeated on three distinct occasions within the next twenty years. The conspiracy of Robert Emmett and his friends—fostered by the renewal of war—caused both alarm and embarrassment to the English Cabinet. Paltry as this abortive rebellion actually was, it reflected no credit upon the Government, who were charged with want of vigilance and adequate precaution. In spite of Emmett's failure the spirit of disaffection remained as strong as ever; and it was only natural that when Napoleon's "banners at Boulogne armed in our island every freeman," the menace of an Irish civil war was added, as before, to the menace of a French invasion.

The apparent intention of Bonaparte was to strike a first blow at England of such a kind that no second blow would be necessary. On the opposite shore of the Channel he hastily equipped an armament for the purpose of making a descent upon our coasts; and one result of this activity was that the English nation sprang to arms with far greater vigour and enthusiasm than might otherwise have been the case. The measures of the Government were heartily backed up by men of all parties, in the country as in Parliament; and of these measures none was more popular than an Act for regulating and assisting the formation of Volunteer Corps. Pitt—whose relations with the Cabinet were growing weaker and fainter every day—rendered himself conspicuous by

raising at his own charge, in the neighbourhood of his residence at Walmer Castle, a body of three thousand men. A hundred times as many were raised in different parts of England and Scotland within a few months. Pitt himself assumed the command of his three regiments, whom he zealously reviewed and drilled.

Lord Stanhope relates that one of these regiments did not show the same readiness which distinguished the other two. "Their draft rules which they sent to Pitt were full of cautions and reserves. The words 'except in the case of actual invasion' were constantly occurring. At length came a clause that at no time, and on no account whatever, were they to be sent out of the country. Pitt here lost patience, and taking up his pen he wrote opposite to that clause in the draft the same words as he had read in the preceding, 'except in the case of actual invasion.'"

Nevertheless he was very popular with his men, and his action was regarded as a bright example of patriotism. The exertions and exposure to which he subjected himself at this period no doubt contributed to the fatal deterioration of his bodily health. From this time forward he was more rarely than ever exempt from physical suffering.

The decay of the good understanding which had originally existed between Pitt and the Addington Administration was hastened in the course of this year by an attack made upon the late Minister in an anonymous pamphlet, "Cursory Remarks upon the State of Parties, by a Near Observer," the responsibility for which was, rightly or wrongly, attributed to Addington himself. One of the charges levelled against Pitt in this pamphlet (which had a very wide circulation) was that he had

broken his promise of a "constant, zealous, and active support of the present Administration." But, as his defenders properly replied, no promise had or could have been made by him which should be entirely dissociated from the conduct of Ministers ; and, if every other consideration be set aside, Pitt deemed himself to have great cause for complaint in the inadequacy of the Government measures of national defence.

When Parliament met at the end of the year he immediately directed his criticism to this point. He made a long and practical speech on the Army Estimates, indicating many particulars in which the efficiency of the Army, and more especially of the Volunteers, might be increased. Such was the influence of Pitt at this moment, notwithstanding the coolness just mentioned, that on the very next day the Government brought in a Bill to carry his suggestions into effect. He was master of the situation throughout, in direct opposition as in independent opposition, and in office.

There had never been a systematic, that is to say a united and strategic, Opposition to Addington's Government ; but at the crisis now reached some efforts were made to establish one. Fox and Pitt had taken the same course on the Army Estimates and in their general criticism of Ministers, and amongst their friends there were one or two who sought during the winter recess to bring them together. Grenville sounded Pitt on the subject, but found him entirely indisposed to coalesce with his old opponent and rival. The negotiations fell through, and Parliament reassembled on the 1st of February 1804, with party spirit running very high, but without any appearance of a bold and united front against the Government.

The complexity of the situation was greatly increased at this juncture by a recurrence of the King's illness, which for a short time deferred anything like a Parliamentary conflict, though it gave rise to some animated debates. Pitt's advice on this occasion was the same as he had offered when himself at the Treasury—that Parliament should limit itself to the necessary measures for supplying the defect in the Executive. He was opposed to any arrangement of a permanent character, or based upon an assumption that the indisposition of the King would be of long duration. In effect, King George soon made a partial recovery, and Pitt felt himself at liberty, on the 15th of March, to call attention to the state of the war. He pressed his motion to a division, but was defeated by 21 votes in a House of 331. The numbers did not, however, accurately indicate the actual intensity of the vote in the matter of Addington's Administration. Many members voted with the Government, or abstained, at the expense of their consciences, because they did not see how they could do otherwise in a Ministerial defect.

The state of health of the monarch was manifestly improving, & every prospect opened of the throne or of a regency. The matter was now in the hands of the Government, & the King's recovery was the result of the mediation of the ministers. It was necessary to meet in his own hands, & to be in a condition to be able to bring about an alliance between the Government and the King. It was necessary to be well prepared, and the King's recovery was the result of the mediation of the ministers.

It was necessary to be well prepared, and the King's recovery was the result of the mediation of the ministers.



obtain variable but as a rule diminishing majorities, Addington felt that his position was becoming untenable. He therefore communicated with Pitt on the 17th of April, and the result of their conference was that the Minister advised the King to commission Lord Eldon to see Pitt, and to receive from him his views as to the formation of a Cabinet. After some negotiation, and some further delay, due in part to the King's uncertain moods and in part to his Majesty's consideration for Addington, Pitt's proposals were duly made in writing. He had by this time come to the resolution to form, or at least to recommend the formation of, a Government including the leaders of nearly all the various Parliamentary groups—Fox himself, Lord Grenville and Windham, who had recently approximated to Fox, four or five members of the outgoing Administration, and several of his own friends and followers. The list which he actually drew up at this time is given as follows by Lord Stanhope, who found it amongst his papers :—

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Treasury . . . .             | Mr. Pitt.                 |
| Secretaries of State . .     | { Lord Melville (Dundas). |
|                              | { Mr. Fox.                |
|                              | { Lord Fitzwilliam.       |
| Admiralty . . . .            | Lord Spencer.             |
| Lord President . . . .       | Lord Grenville.           |
| Privy Seal . . . .           | Duke of Portland.         |
| Lord Chancellor . . . .      | Lord Eldon.               |
| Master-General of Ordnance . | Lord Chatham.             |
| Chancellor of the Duchy . .  | Mr. Windham.              |
| Board of Control . . . .     | Lord Castlereagh.         |
| Lord Steward . . . .         | Lord Camden.              |
| Committee of Trade . . . .   | Lord Harrowby.            |
| Secretary at War . . . .     | Mr. Grey.                 |
| Secretary to Ireland . . . . | Mr. Canning.              |

This list of fifteen was certainly comprehensive in every

sense of the term. No important section of either House was passed over. Such a Government would for a time have almost destroyed party distinctions, and would in all probability have inspired general confidence in the country. But it was not relished by some of the King's advisers; and it was received with aversion, and even with vehement reprehension, by the King himself. George III. positively refused to admit Fox into his councils, and his objection to Grenville was scarcely less forcible. The latter difficulty was overcome, but the first proved to be insurmountable. Fox behaved admirably on this occasion. He declared that he would not stand in the way of any arrangement. "I am too old," he said, "to care now about office, but I have many friends who for years have followed me. I shall advise them now to join Government, and I trust Pitt can give them places."

When this was repeated to Pitt he was delighted, and undertook to give Fox every satisfaction in the matter of his friends. But these friends themselves were too loyal to their old chief to accept his self-sacrifice. They refused the arrangement which was being made for them; and Grenville—who was indebted to his relative for title, for standing in the House of Lords, and for acceptance with the King—added to Pitt's embarrassment by declining to enter his Cabinet.

The Administration eventually formed was constituted as follows:—

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Treasury . . . . .             | Mr. Pitt.          |
| Secretaries of State . . . . . | { Lord Hawkesbury. |
|                                | { Lord Harrowby.   |
|                                | { Lord Camden.     |
| Admiralty . . . . .            | Lord Melville.     |
| Lord President . . . . .       | Duke of Portland.  |

|                                    |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Privy Seal . . . .                 | Lord Westmoreland. |
| Lord Chancellor . . . .            | Lord Eldon.        |
| Master-General of Ordnance . . . . | Lord Chatham.      |
| Chancellor of the Duchy . . . .    | Lord Mulgrave.     |
| Board of Control . . . .           | Lord Castlereagh.  |
| Board of Trade . . . .             | Duke of Montrose.  |

In all, ten peers and two members of the Lower House. Six of the twelve Ministers had sat in the former Cabinet. Only two of the others had been colleagues of Pitt in his first Administration. Taken as a whole, the new Ministry was a Ministry of "King's Friends;" and Pitt had the mortification—for so he undoubtedly regarded it—of sitting opposite to, and being opposed by, many of his former adherents.

He was referring to this mortification, and especially to the perplexity caused by Lord Grenville's defection, when he foreboded that the task imposed upon him "might cost him his life." The foreboding was only too well founded; but, frail as his health had already become, no one imagined that his second term of office would be limited to a brief nineteen months.

## CHAPTER X.

### PITT'S RETURN TO POWER.

THE resumption of office by Pitt had been anticipated by the country as a master-stroke of policy in the great struggle which England was called upon to wage against her enemy on the Continent. It had been felt that his name alone was a weapon which could be turned to account for the purposes of offence and defence, and that his achievements in the past were ample guarantee for his success in the future. He was before all things the War Minister of his age and generation: and not merely an English Minister, but one in whom the energies of Europe had seemed to be concentrated, and by whom the resources of Europe might once more be brought to bear against France. As such, Napoleon had reason to regard him as a redoubtable foe, and his return to power may have contributed not a little to the delay and ultimate abandonment of the projected invasion.

On the very day (May 18) when Pitt took his seat on the Treasury bench, Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor. No doubt it was supposed by many Frenchmen that this act would tend to consolidate the Government, and to disarm much of the hostility which had been directed by the European monarchs against the Republic. There was at any rate a disposition towards peace on the part of some of the leading politicians in Paris, as well as

amongst the French people. Informal overtures were made to England by the roundabout process of sending the United States Minister from the French capital to discuss the subject with Fox and Grey. The suggested basis—the placing of Malta, Switzerland, and Holland under an international guarantee—sounds reasonable enough ; but there were several circumstances, and amongst them particularly the mode of communication, which made it impossible for Pitt to take serious note of the matter. It was altogether a most undiplomatic proceeding, and we cannot wonder that the English Cabinet doubted the sincerity of the advance. But however anxious the new Emperor might have been to conciliate his former enemies, and however much the Court of St. James might have been inclined to make terms with him, this would have been found to be an impracticable policy for England in view of the attitude taken up by the Continental Courts. The Austrian, Russian, and Prussian monarchs took great umbrage at the assumption by Napoleon of the imperial style and title ; and, indeed, they had all so warmly espoused the cause of the Bourbons that it would have been absurd in the new Emperor to expect from them a recognition of his usurped dignities.

Thus Pitt found ready to his hand the materials of a new combination. It is true that some of the Continental Powers continued to maintain friendly relations with France, and that they hesitated many months before adopting the active policy of the English Minister. But when they saw Napoleon fairly embarked again on his aggressive career—when they saw him don the crown of Italy, annex Piedmont and Genoa, and bestow Lucca on one of his sisters, their alarm was intensified, and they

agreed to enter the coalition. On the 11th of April a provisional treaty was signed between England and Russia, who pledged their efforts to the formation of a Continental league, capable of putting half a million men in the field. Pitt undertook to find money, as well as ships and men, if money should be necessary to draw other allies into the confederation; and of course it was necessary. Austria signified her accession in August, on condition of receiving a subsidy of three millions sterling. Sweden followed humbly in the same direction, but Prussia was still found hesitating when Napoleon struck his decisive blow at the end of the year.

Pitt had obtained his vote of credit in June, though without informing the House of the undertaking to which he had committed himself. His plans were taken on trust by a large majority, and the demand of the Whig Opposition for more explicit statements was emphatically negated. Fox, Grey, and their friends were consistent in the critical attitude which they maintained towards Pitt during his second Administration; but if no subjects of debate or division had cropped up except those which had to do with the conduct of the war, their Parliamentary record would have been a very meagre one. There were, however, two or three questions of independent interest which distinguished the session of 1804-5. In carrying the Additional Force Bill, and in resisting Sheridan's motion to rescind it four months later, the Prime Minister obtained ample support. He was still better supported when he introduced his last Budget, in which he had to make provision for an expenditure of £44,000,000, in addition to the interest on the debt. For this purpose he was compelled to issue a new loan for £20,000,000, and to impose a round million of taxes

in order to furnish the interest. On another occasion he found himself in a minority, but it was in the company of Fox and Sheridan, with whom he voted for Wilberforce's motion against the Slave Trade.

In the same session a considerable difficulty was created for the Government by the formal raising of the Roman Catholic claims in Ireland. The Irish Catholics, as already said, had been encouraged at the time of the Union to expect their emancipation from the galling disabilities under which they laboured; and although they knew what it was which had prevented Pitt from doing them justice, they deemed it worth their while to make his return to power an occasion for renewing their demands. A deputation of five was appointed in March to proceed to London and present a petition to both Houses. The petition was introduced in the Commons by Fox and in the Lords by Grenville, and a few weeks later the two leaders of Opposition moved that it should be taken into consideration. Of course, the Government had no option but to oppose these motions. Pitt's pledge to the King had limited his freedom of action, but some of his colleagues were able to meet the arguments of the petition and its sponsors without reserve. Sidmouth and Hawkesbury combated the claims with vigour, on grounds of principle and conviction. The Duke of Cumberland supplemented their contentions on the basis of expediency. To grant the petition, he said, would be fatal to the principles on which the House of Hanover had been called to the throne. Other peers followed on the same side, maintaining that the Catholics, once relieved from their disabilities, would refuse to pay tithes,

again menaced his colleague with resignation when this hope was disappointed.

The threat was for a moment withdrawn; but after Easter, when the attacks on Lord Melville were renewed, the acerbity of the baffled place-hunters hastened a rupture which had become inevitable. Hiley Addington and Bond, who had voted with the Government on the Whitbread resolutions, now attacked Melville, and assisted the unrelenting Opposition.\* Pitt took note of this in a conversation with Sidmouth, to whom he declared that it would be impossible to give places to his relatives after their marked hostility and defiance. Thereupon Sidmouth saw fit to send in his actual resignation, and he retired from the Cabinet, with his friend the Earl of Buckinghamshire.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister never forgot the central object of his ambitions and of his exertions. He lost no opportunity of scoring in the great game which it was now his second nature to play against the genius of Napoleon. He was doing his utmost to reform and strengthen the fighting departments of his own Government; he zealously aided and encouraged the combination, staking his hopes, and as the event proved his life, upon the competency of the Eastern Powers to arrest the

\* In regard to this change of attitude, Lord Stanhope remarks that "Pitt's friends, both inside the House and out of it, were very angry. Of this we may observe a token in a caricature of Gillray's. It bears the date of July, 1805. It represents Lord Melville as 'The Wounded Lion,' lying helpless on his side, while some jackasses are preparing to assail him. One of them is made to say to the other, 'Very highly indebted to the lion, Brother Hiley!' and the answer is, 'Then kick him again, Brother Bragge!'"



progress of the common enemy. The policy which brought the Austrian armies into the field had one speedy effect, not unforeseen by the Government, in diverting from our shores the most formidable armament which the French had yet prepared for us. But Pitt was not content with diverting an attack. The sea was our own element, and on the sea, at any rate, he was able to take a bold initiative.

Whilst Napoleon was on his way from Boulogne to Ulm, Nelson had obtained, at his special request, the command of the fleet which was sent to attack the French and Spanish ships off Cadiz. The victory of Trafalgar, by which twenty of the enemy's vessels were destroyed, and the naval supremacy of England was definitely established, may be regarded as having been in no slight degree attributable to the patient forethought and energetic provision of the Minister.

Trafalgar was fought on the 21st of October. Two days before the Austrian general, Mack, cut off by Napoleon at Ulm, found himself compelled to surrender, with thirty thousand troops. The news of this ominous reverse was brought to England a few days before the tidings of the splendid triumph of Trafalgar, which it did much to dim. Nevertheless, for a brief period the grandeur of Nelson's final victory animated the Government and the whole people with enthusiasm. It was almost the last ray of sunshine that divided the shadows of Pitt's closing day. Collingwood's dispatches had reached England on the 7th of November. On the 9th his Majesty's Ministers attended the Lord Mayor's banquet. Pitt was toasted as "The Saviour of Europe;" and his reply, which barely occupied a minute, has become famous as his last public utterance. He simply thanked

in the case of the respondent, but he did not think that  
 "there was any need to be made by any other means." "The  
 case" is concerned. "The case" is made by the court  
 and it is not of course to be made by the  
 respondent.

"Let me be clear in this about myself, and let  
 me be clear in this about myself. I was in possession of the  
 case, and I was in possession of the case. The War Minister  
 is not in the case, and the property is not in the  
 case, and the case is not in the case."

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tidings of Napoleon's crushing victory, of the capitulation of Austria and the retreat of the Russians, which reached him about Christmas Day, undid all the good that the waters were supposed to have effected. What Wilberforce called the Austerlitz look came into his face. The gout flew back to his stomach. The physicians lost their faith in Bath, and Pitt, struggling bravely against his bodily weakness and mental depression, made a three days' journey to the house which he had lately occupied at Putney. There his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, who had been his faithful companion and nurse for a few years past, could scarcely recognise the decrepit man, who had left her just five weeks before, and who now tottered by her side to his bedroom, and bade her roll up the map of Europe.

At Putney Pitt saw several of his friends—Castlereagh, Hawkesbury, Wellesley, his brother, his early tutor the Bishop of Lincoln, and his nephews James and Charles Stanhope. There day by day the gout consumed him; his stomach refused food; his throat was choked by the fatal thrush. Twelve days after his arrival, on the 23rd of January, 1806, the chills of death fell upon him. Suddenly he broke a long silence, and in a clear voice exclaimed, "Oh, my country! How I leave my country!"

Those were the last words of William Pitt.

A national funeral was accorded to the statesman who from so early an age had been the nation's hope, and who by his early death had drawn a nation's tears. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the grave of Lord Chatham. Forty thousand pounds were voted to pay



Grenville and Windham are conspicuous examples ; and, though ambition may have had something to do with the changes of men to whom change apparently came easy, yet, no doubt, many Whigs, who left Fox for Pitt in the first years of the Revolutionary War, conscientiously returned from Pitt to Fox, or, at any rate, threw off their allegiance to Pitt, when his foreign and domestic policy together made too great a strain upon them. In their case, as in that of Wilberforce, we may note a declension of judgment and a modification of approval which succeeding generations have been disposed to carry still further, though not by any means to the extent of withdrawing admiration from the talent, the energy, the resolution and resource of Pitt as a War Minister. The diminution in his fame, if he has suffered it, or is to suffer it, follows from our altered estimate of the Revolution of the eighteenth century, and from the more wholesome, the more manly ideas of the present generation on the subject of war and its alternatives.

Not that Pitt is to be condemned on account of political developments made since his death. He rode the waves of opinion and passion in his own age, following rather than leading the judgments of his fellow-countrymen. He did not create the war fever in England—at all events not in 1792. But he succumbed to it then, and he fostered it later on, when he might (it is conceivable) have resisted and allayed it. From the moment when he threw himself into the current his whole soul was pledged to the success of the anti-revolutionary crusade ; and not only so, but his whole genius was embarked in a scheme of conflict vaster and wider than any English Minister ever entertained. We see less of the glory and more of the cost than our great-grandfathers saw. The

past is set in relief, and through the clear atmosphere of afterthought the triumphs of the Napoleonic wars seem less valuable, and the thousand millions which they cost us loom more gigantic.

Pitt, however, will always be measured and weighed by Englishmen according to two different modes of reckoning. Interpreted by his personal character, by the pureness, the loftiness, the public spirit and disinterestedness of his life, he stands on a higher pedestal than even his genius for organization and administration has raised for him. To have been the least self-seeking politician that had wielded supreme power up to his own times—to have established and handed down a grand tradition of republican honour and simplicity in English statesmanship—is in itself a nobler triumph than the praise of his followers, or the success of his intrigues, or the votes of Parliament, or the monument in Westminster Abbey.

## INDEX.

- ABERCROMBY**, Sir Ralph, 97.  
**Adams**, English "Jacobin," 140.  
**Addington**, Hiley, 186.  
**Addington**, Viscount Sidmouth, succeeded Grenville as Speaker, 77; succeeded Pitt as Premier, 158; his relations with Pitt, *ib.*; 162; prepared for a renewal of the war, 164; invited Pitt to take office, 165; coolness with Pitt, 172; advised the king to summon Pitt, 175; combated the Catholic claims (1804), 181; entered Pitt's second Cabinet (1805), 184; took part against Melville, *ib.*; retired, 186.  
**Arden**, Richard Pepper, Lord Alvanley, 15, 36.
- BARNAVE**, 79.  
**Barré**, Colonel, 52.  
**Batt**, Mr., *quoted*, 4.  
**Bonaparte**, 96-103, 149; concluded peace with England, 159; renewed the quarrel, 163; menaced an invasion of England, 171; proclaimed Emperor, 178; his triumph at Austerlitz, 188.  
**Bond**, Oliver, Irish patriot, 119.  
**Bonney**, English "Jacobin," 140.  
**Bristol**, Lord, Irish patriot, 106.  
**Buckinghamshire**, Earl of, 186.  
**Burke**, Edmund, 6; his character, 11-13, 22, 26, 28; assisted Fox to draw up the India Bill, 33; 44; attacked Hastings, 58; Thurlow, 62; his alarm at the French Revolution, 73; his "Reflections," 74; rupture with Fox, 76; rallied to Pitt, 90; 108, 126.  
**Bute**, John Stuart, Earl of, Prime Minister (1762-3), succeeded Chatham, and responsible for the Treaty of Paris, 2.
- CAMDEN**, Charles Pratt, Earl, 9, 14, 26; member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 38.  
**Camden**, (second Earl) in Pitt's second Cabinet, 176.  
**Camelford**, Lord (Thomas Pitt), 85.  
**Canning**, George, his support of Pitt in the *Anti-Jacobin*, 148; 161, 175, 185.  
**Carmarthen**, Marquis of (afterwards Duke of Leeds), a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37; retired, 84.  
**Castlereagh**, Viscount (afterwards M. of Londonderry), 119, 154; in Pitt's second Cabinet, 177; 189, 190.  
**Catherine**, Empress of Russia, 83.  
**Cavendish**, Lord John, 7, 10, 26, 46.  
**Charlemont**, Lord, Irish patriot, 106.  
**Chatham**, William Pitt, first Earl of, his triumphs, 2; his family, 18; his death, 19; 189.

INDEX.

Chatham, second Earl of, 43; entered Pitt's Cabinet, 77; received the Garter, 81; in joint command of the expedition of 1790, 97; 148, 160. in Pitt's second Cabinet, 122

Chatham, Countess of (Pitt's mother), 18, 24

Clive, Robert, Esq., 2

Collingwood, Admiral, 187

Cornwall, Viscount, 20

Cornwallis, Sir, afterwards Marquis, 107; victory at Ireland and commencement of War, 119; his share in dissolving the Union, 121, 122

Corwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

Cornwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

Cornwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

Cornwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

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Cornwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

Cornwallis, John, 120; defeated at the battle of Maida, 1804

Erskine, 46, 135, 142; his eagerness for office, 169.

FITZMAURICE, Lord Edmond, *quoted*, 127.

Fitzgerald, Lord Edward, Irish patriot, 116, 119.

Fitzwilliam, Earl, viceroy of Ireland, 114, 175.

Flood, Irish patriot, 104, 106.

Fox, Charles James, coalesced with North in the Portland Administration, 1783, 5; his character, 10; 23, 27; severed himself from Shelburne, 29; Secretary of State under the Duke of Portland, 30; drew up with Burke a Bill for the better government of India, 33; defeated by the king, 36; attacked Pitt, 37, 38, 61, 100; his party defeated at the polls, 40; the Westminster scrutiny, 47; attacked Hastings, 58; his joy at the French Revolution, 73; disagreement with Burke, 70; opposed Pitt's anti-Russian policy, 83; popular disfavour, 80; condemned the refusal to treat in 1800, 100; opposed Pitt's Irish policy, 110, 116; protested against the English Partition, 128, 143; demonstration of his honour (1798), 146; excluded from the Privy Council, 147; attacked in the *Anti-Jacobin*, 48; his joy at the Peace of Amiens, 60; partial reconciliation with Pitt, 173, 175; his magnanimity, 170; his efforts towards peace (1801), 170; opposed W. Pitt's motion in the Slave Trade, 181; rescinded the African petition in the House of Commons, 181; his death (1793), 100.

Erskine, 46, 135, 142; his eagerness for office, 169.



- invited Pitt to form an Administration on the fall of Shelburne, 30; his struggle with the Coalition, 33; made Pitt Prime Minister, 36, 41; his first aberration, 59; his letter to Pitt on reform, 65; offered Pitt the Garter, 81; dismissed Thurlow, 86; addressed by Bonaparte, 98; 104, 106; his attitude towards the English "Jacobins," 117-129, 144; excluded Fox from the Privy Council, 147; his disagreement with Pitt, 152; opposed Catholic relief, 155; his confidence in Addington and Pitt, 158; his illness in 1803 174; his objection to Fox and Grenville, 176.
- George IV. (as Prince of Wales), 60, 174.
- Germain, Lord George, 15.
- Gerrald, English "Jacobin," 136.
- Gibbon, his opinion of Pitt, 37.
- Gillray, the caricaturist, 186.
- Gower, Earl, a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37.
- Grafton, Duke of, 14, 26.
- Grantham, 9.
- Grattan, Irish patriot, 104, 106; his three resolutions, 107; 110, 114, 121.
- Green, Mr. J. R., *quoted*, 107.
- Grenville, George, Premier (1763-5), 1.
- Grenville, William Wyndham, Lord (Premier, 1806), entered Pitt's Cabinet, 77; raised to the peerage, 77; Foreign Secretary, 84, 98-101, 154; Pitt's constancy towards, 166, 173; refused to enter Pitt's second Cabinet, 176; presented the Catholic petition (1804) in the House of Lords, 181; his tribute to Pitt, 190.
- Grey, Charles (afterwards Earl), 59, 73, 86; unpopularity, 116; 143, 175; his efforts for peace (1804), 179.
- Gustavus Adolphus, 83.
- HARDY, Thomas, English "Jacobin," 125, 131, 140; his trial, 142.
- Harris, Mrs. (mother of first Earl of Malmesbury), *quoted*, 3.
- Harrowby, Lord, in Pitt's second Cabinet, 176, 188.
- Hastings, Marquis of, his impeachment, 57.
- Hawkesbury, Lord, 159, 166; in Pitt's second Cabinet, 176; combated the Catholic claims, 181; (*see* Liverpool).
- Hoche, 96, 116.
- Hood, Viscount, 46, 93.
- Howe, Lord, a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37.
- Humbert, General, 120.
- JACKSON, Irish patriot, 115.
- Jervis, Sir John (Earl St. Vincent), 93.
- Johnson, Dr., on Fox, 41.
- Joyce, English "Jacobin," 140.
- Junius, 18, 71.
- KENMARE, Lord, Irish patriot, 113.
- LAKE, General, 119.
- Lauderdale, Earl of, a friend of Fox, 86, 143.
- Liverpool, Earl of, 156, 158.
- Loughborough, Lord, made Chancellor, 86; 136, 153; his intrigues against his colleagues, 155; disappointed, 158.
- Lovett, English "Jacobin," 140.
- Lucas, Irish patriot, 104.
- MACAULAY, Lord, 17, 58.
- Mack, General, 187.
- Mackintosh, Sir James, 75.
- Mahon, Lord, third Earl Stan-

- hope, married Pitt's eldest sister, 15, 19, 28, 43.
- Malmesbury, first Earl of, 82; his mission to France, 148.
- Margarot, Maurice, 131, 136.
- Mirabeau, 79.
- Moir, Lord, 174.
- Molyneux, Irish patriot, 104.
- Montrose, Duke of, in Pitt's second Cabinet, 177.
- Moore, General, 119.
- Morris, Captain, 146.
- Mornington, Earl of, 103.
- Mulgrave, Lord, in Pitt's second Cabinet, 177.
- NEELSON, Admiral, 93, 96; triumph at Trafalgar, 187.
- Norfolk, Duke of, presided at the Fox banquet (1798), and discharged from his office of Lord-Lieutenant, 146, 149.
- North, Frederick, Lord (Earl of Guilford), Premier (1770-82), responsible for the American War, 2; coalesced with Fox, 5; character of his Administration, 8, 23, 30; defeated by the King, 36; 104, 107.
- O'CONNOR, Arthur, Irish patriot, 116, 119.
- Onslow, Admiral, 117.
- Otto, French emissary, 159.
- PAINÉ, Thomas, 75, 129, 133; his trial, 135.
- Peltier, tried for libelling Bonaparte, 163.
- Peter Pindar, 71.
- Pichegru, 92, 96.
- Pitt (the elder), *see* Chatham.
- Pitt, William, his early rise to power, 6, 7; a follower of Shelburne, 9; his first associates and rivals, 9-16; his parentage and training, 16; unsuccessfully contests Cambridge University, 1780, 20; enters Parliament as member for Appleby, 26; phases of his statesmanship, 21; his first speeches, 22-25; assails North, 24; advocates reform, 26-28, 30, 64; made Chancellor of the Exchequer by Lord Shelburne, 29; his attitude towards the Coalition, 30; visits France, 32; attacks the India Bill, 34; receives the seals of Office, 36; his first Cabinet, 37; his India Bill, 39; converts a minority into a majority, 40-47; mobbed in St. James's St., 43; elected for Cambridge University, 46; his disinterestedness, 51; his finance, 49, 54, 94; his second India Bill, 56; his attitude towards Hastings, 58; towards the Prince of Wales, 61; refuses £100,000 from his friends, 63; postpones reform, 66; his administrative reforms, and Treaty of Commerce with France, 66; his achievements as a Peace Minister, 67; his attitude towards the Revolution, 72, 76; reconstructs his Cabinet, 77; his reduction of armaments in 1790, 78; his neutrality, 80; refuses the Garter, 81; his system of foreign policy before 1792, 81; his anti-Russian policy, 82; demands the dismissal of Thurlow, 86; his reluctance to enter upon a French war, 88; increase of his authority as a Minister, 89; his war policy, 91, 93; refuses Bonaparte's offer of peace in 1800, 98-101; his Irish policy, 104; his eleven resolutions, 109; his correspondence with Rutland, 111; his conciliatory policy thwarted by the menaces of the French, 112; prepares for French invasion, 116; effects the Union between Great Britain and Ire-

- land, 121-124; his attitude towards the revolutionary movement in England, 125-128; his struggle with the Societies, 126-145; his duel with Tierney, 147; his failing health, 150; his retirement from office, 152; his attempt to relieve the Irish Catholics, 154; his influence in Opposition, 158; Parliamentary votes of thanks, 161; re-elected for Cambridge in 1802, 162; invited by Addington to resume office, 165; demands office for Grenville, Spencer, and Windham, 166; renews attendance at the House of Commons, 168; raises a Volunteer Corps, 171; offers active opposition to the Addington Administration, 173; approximation to Fox, *ib.*; sounded by the King, 175; forms his second Administration, 176; his increasing weakness, 177; the effect of his return to power, 178; his last combination, 179; unable to support the Catholic claims in 1804, 182; his grief at the charges against Melville, 184; his final efforts, 186; last illness and death, 188; burial and public honours, 189; remarks on his character, 190.
- Pitt, Anne, 85.
- Portland, third Duke of, Premier (1783), 14, 29; rallied to Pitt, 90; 156; in Pitt's second Cabinet, 176.
- Potemkin, 83.
- Pretyman, *see* Tomline.
- Price, Dr., 74.
- Priestley, Dr., 75, 126, 133.
- REUBEL, 149.
- Richmond, third Duke of, a friend to reform, 27, 31; a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37; lectured Pitt, 77, 83.
- Richter, English "Jacobin," 140.
- Rigby, Richard, 30.
- Robespierre, 91.
- Rockingham, Marquis of, Premier (1765-6 and 1782), 5; character of his Administration, 9; 26, 28, 107, 121, 124.
- Rose, George, 15, 63.
- Russell, Earl, *quoted*, 25, 41.
- Rutland, Duke of, member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 15; introduced Pitt into Parliament, 20; 37, 44; viceroy of Ireland, 108; his correspondence with Pitt, 111; his death, *ib.*
- SAVILLE, Sir George, 27.
- Sawbridge, Alderman, 64.
- Shelburne, Lord (first M. of Lansdowne) Premier (1782-3) *quoted*, 4; concluded peace with France in 1782, 5; relations with the Pitts, 9; 26, 29-32, 106; consulted by the King in 1792, 117; his sympathy for the cause of freedom of opinion, 143.
- Sheridan, R. B. B., his character, 13; attacked Hastings 58; 73, 86; unpopularity, 116; 143, 180.
- Skirving, English "Jacobin," 136.
- Smith, Sir Sidney, 96.
- Spencer, Lord, nominated for office by Pitt (1803) 166; 175.
- Stanhope, second Earl, his sympathy with the Revolution, 74; 86, 143.
- Stanhope, fifth Earl, biographer of Pitt, *quoted frequently*.
- Stanhope, Lady Hester, Pitt's niece, 189.
- Stanhope, James and Charles, Pitt's nephews, 189.
- Steele, Thomas, 15.
- Stockdale, 72.
- Stormont, Lord, 30.
- Suwarrow, 83, 102.

- Swift, Dean, 104.  
 Sydney, Lord, a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37.
- TALLEVRAND, 68.  
 Temple, Earl (first Marquis of Buckingham), 9; an instrument of the King in 1793, 34; 107.  
 Thelwall, English "Jacobin," 125, 140; his trial, 142.  
 Thurlow, Lord, 26; an instrument of the King in 1783, 34; a member of Pitt's first Cabinet, 37; lost the Great Seal, 45; praised Pitt's disinterestedness, 51; befriended Hastings, 58; his subserviency to the King, 62; 74, 77; his dismissal, 85.  
 Tierney, Charles, his duel with Pitt, 147.  
 Tomline (Pretyman) Bishop, tutor and biographer of Pitt, 16, 19, 23, 189.  
 Tone, Wolfe, Irish patriot, 93, 95; his efforts to procure a French invasion of Ireland, 97.  
 Tooke, Horne, 140; his trial, 142.  
 Townshend, George, Marquis, 9, 26.
- WALPOLE, Sir Robert, his political principles compared with those of Pitt, 21, 49.  
 Ward, Robert (Lord Dudley), 168.  
 Wellesley, Marquis of, 189 (*see* Mornington).  
 Westmoreland, Lord, viceroy of Ireland, 114, 158; in Pitt's second Cabinet, 177.  
 Wilberforce, William, 15; visited France with Pitt, 32; 46; his advocacy of Slave Trade Abolition, 67, 181, 189, 190.  
 Wilkes, John, 62, 71.  
 Windham, his rupture with Fox, 76; rallied to Pitt, 90; condemned the Treaty of Amiens, 162; befriended by Pitt, 166; rallied to Fox, 175; 191.  
 Wray, Sir Cecil, 46.  
 Wolfe, subjected Canada, 2.  
 Wyvill, Rev. Christopher, 28.
- Yelverton, Irish patriot, 104.  
 York, Duke of, his exploits on the Continent, 91; recalled, 92, 96; commanded the expedition of 1799, 97.

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