



# Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.





2287 e. 3

S. Hist. Eng.  $\frac{89m}{2}$

S. Hist. , 9 112.  $\frac{18}{2}$

BOD: M05.E17297











WRAXALL'S  
HISTORICAL AND POSTHUMOUS  
MEMOIRS.



VOL. II.



**Ballantyne Press**  
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

1

1

1

1

1

1





M<sup>rs</sup> Thrale

THE  
HISTORICAL AND THE POSTHUMOUS

emoirs

OF

Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall

1772—1784

423/2

*EDITED, WITH NOTES AND ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS  
FROM THE AUTHOR'S UNPUBLISHED MS.*

BY

HENRY B. WHEATLEY, F.S.A.

*WITH NUMEROUS PORTRAITS*

*IN FIVE VOLUMES*

VOL. II.

LONDON  
BICKERS & SON, LEICESTER SQUARE  
1884

2287 e. 3.







LIST OF PORTRAITS IN VOL. II.

MRS. THRALE . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
DR. JOHNSON . . . . .	<i>page 237</i>
EDWARD GIBBON . . . . .	<i>„ 287</i>









HISTORICAL MEMOIRS  
OF  
M Y O W N T I M E.

—o—  
*PART THE SECOND.*

*(Continued.)*



AFTER having surveyed the members of the Cabinet and the principal parliamentary characters on the Ministerial side of the House of Commons, it is natural to proceed to the great individuals who composed the Opposition in that assembly. Mr. Fox,<sup>1</sup> from the union of birth, connections, talents, and eloquence which met in his person, had become, in the beginning of 1781, confessedly without any competitor their leader. Having attained his thirty-second year, he united all the ardour of youth to

<sup>1</sup> Charles Fox was third son of Henry Fox, first Lord Holland, and of Lady Georgiana Lennox, eldest daughter of the second Duke of Richmond. He was born in 1749 and died 13th September 1806.—D.

the experience acquired in maturer life. It was impossible to contemplate the lineaments of his countenance without instantly perceiving the marks of genius. His features, in themselves dark, harsh, and saturnine, like those of Charles II., from whom he descended in the maternal line, derived a sort of majesty from the addition of two black and shaggy eyebrows, which sometimes concealed, but more frequently developed, the workings of his mind. Even these features, however, did not readily assume the expression of anger or of enmity. They frequently and naturally relaxed into a smile, the effect of which became irresistible, because it appeared to be the index of a benevolent and complacent disposition. His figure, broad, heavy, and inclined to corpulency, appeared destitute of elegance or grace, except the portion conferred on it by the emanations of intellect, which at times diffused over his whole person, when he was speaking, the most impassioned animation. In his dress, which had constituted an object of his attention earlier in life, he had then become negligent to a degree not altogether excusable in a man whose very errors or defects produced admirers and imitators. At five-and-twenty I have seen him apparelled *en petit maître*, with a hat and feather, even in the House of Commons;<sup>1</sup> but in 1781 he constantly, or at least usually, wore in that assembly a blue frock-coat and a buff waistcoat, neither of which seemed in general new, and sometimes appeared to be threadbare. Nor ought it to be forgotten that these colours, like the white rose formerly worn by the adherents of the family of Stuart, or the Corsican violet of more modern times, then constituted the distinguishing badge or

<sup>1</sup> He and Lord Carlisle wore *les talons rouges* (or shoes with red heels), the distinguishing mark of the privileged orders at Versailles.—ED.

uniform of Washington and the American insurgents.<sup>1</sup> In this dress he took his seat, not upon the front Opposition bench, but on the third row behind, close to a pillar supporting the gallery, and near to the Speaker's chair. It was not till 1782, or rather till the beginning of 1783, that, with Lord North by his side, he began to sit on the Opposition bench, technically so denominated in ordinary language. I am sensible that these minute particulars are in themselves unimportant, but they nevertheless approximate and identify the object; and that object is Mr. Fox.

His paternal descent was not illustrious, nor was the elevation of his family sufficiently ancient to shed over it that genealogical respect to be derived from the lapse of time. Collins, indeed, very equivocally observes in his "Peerage," when treating of the barony of Holland, that "there were Foxes in England before the Norman conquest." But I have always understood that his grandfather, who rose by his abilities to very considerable eminence, and was knighted by the name of Sir Stephen Fox,<sup>2</sup> as well as raised to the dignity of a Privy Councillor, had been a chorister boy in the Cathedral of Salis-

<sup>1</sup> The colours are still seen on the cover of the "Edinburgh Review."  
—D.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stephen Fox, Paymaster of the Forces, is spoken of by Pepys in 1660 as a fine gentleman. Pepys knew his wife "when she was a maid, Mrs. Whittle," and gave her "a gilt tankard" after she became Mrs. Fox. Her husband was knighted in 1665. Pepys speaks of the pleasant mystery by which Sir Stephen contrived to make a considerable income by King and army at a time when the officers were four years in arrear. Sir Stephen, too, could give warrants for the delivery of bucks out of Hampton Court, as he did to Pepys when the latter was about to give a dinner. If Pepys valued the knight's friendship, he did not care for his anger on matters of business. Evelyn's Diary may also be consulted for notices of Sir Stephen. Of the latter he says, when Chelsea Hospital was about being established, "Sir Stephen had not only the whole managing of this, but was, as I perceived, himself to be a grand benefactor, as well it became him, who had gotten so vast an estate by the soldiers." He was not the last of the family who thus coined wealth.—D.

bury when, in 1651, he accompanied Lord Wilmot to France after the defeat of Charles II. at the battle of Worcester. I have heard it asserted that their names were originally Palafox, that they formed a branch of that noble Aragonese family so distinguished in the present age by the glorious defence of Saragossa, and that they first came into this country in 1588, when one of the Spanish Armada being stranded on our coast, the survivors, among whom was a Palafox, settled in England. I have, however, always regarded this story as a mere fable. Sir Stephen Fox, towards the end of a long life, during which he made great advances to honours and dignities, having married, became at seventy-five years of age the father of two sons born at the same birth. These twins were both in process of time elevated to the peerage, a fact which had antecedently been realised to a certain degree in the Cecil, as well as in the Herbert family, under James I. Charles I. again exhibited it in the house of Rich, and we have since seen it exemplified in the families of Walpole, of Percy, of Hood, of Wellesley, and various others.

While the elder son of Sir Stephen Fox was created Earl of Ilchester by George II., the youngest, Henry, acquired a barony in the beginning of the present reign by the title of Lord Holland.<sup>1</sup> He was a man of eminent attainments, possessing a classic mind, cultivated by study, adorned by travel, and illuminated by a taste for poetry, as well as all the elegant arts. But he is better known in the political history of the late reign, where he performed a principal part in the Ministerial ranks no less than in the parliamentary

<sup>1</sup> Henry Fox was created Baron Holland (of Foxley, co. Wilts) in 1763, his wife having been previously created Lady Holland (of Holland, co. Lincoln). He died 1st July 1774.—ED.

annals, till he sunk under the superior ascendant sustained by the irresistible eloquence of the first Earl of Chatham, as Antony's genius is said to have been rebuked under that of Augustus. Of immeasurable ambition and equally insatiable of wealth, Lord Holland was enabled, by possessing the lucrative post of Paymaster of the Forces, which he held during several years in time of war, and subsequent to the peace of Fontainbleau down to 1765, to accumulate an immense fortune. It was not, however, attained without great unpopularity and obloquy, which accompanied him to the grave, and exposed him to much, perhaps to unmerited, abuse or accusation. His moral character did not indeed stand as high in the national estimation, either in a public or in a private point of view, as did his abilities; but he cemented the greatness of his family by allying himself in marriage with the ducal house of Lennox.

Of his three sons, Lord Holland early perceived the extraordinary talents which nature had conferred on the second;<sup>1</sup> and, in anticipation of that son's political elevation, exhausted on his education every effort which might expand or mature his capacity. But he adopted a vicious principle in ordering that the boy should neither be contradicted nor punished for almost any acts in his power to commit of puerile misconduct or indiscretion. "Let nothing be done to break his spirit," said Lord Holland; "the world will effect that business soon enough." When he made the tour of France and Italy, he was accompanied by a gentleman of eminent parts, Mr. George Macartney, who afterwards, towards the close of a life passed in the public service, attained himself in his own person to the peerage.<sup>2</sup> We may see in the

<sup>1</sup> *Third.* Stephen, Henry, Charles James, and Henry Edward were the sons (in order of birth) of the first Lord Holland. The second son, however, died young.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Earl Macartney. See *ante*, vol. i. p. 404.—ED.



letters of Madame du Deffand to Horace Walpole the species of impression which Mr. Fox's endowments and the sallies of his juvenile impetuosity made on the minds of the Parisians. They seem to have considered him as a sort of phenomenon, which dazzled and astonished more than it pleased or delighted them. Before he attained the age at which he could constitutionally vote, though he might speak in Parliament, his father procured him a seat in the House of Commons;<sup>1</sup> and his talents, aided by his connections, placed him, towards the close of 1772, on the Ministerial bench as a member of the Board of Treasury. He occupied the situation about two years.

This early association to Lord North's Administration might nevertheless be considered as an unfortunate circumstance in its results, since it involved him in the unpopularity attached to various measures then adopted by the Government, which led to a rupture with America. That even previous to his attainment of office he was regarded by the enemies of Administration as a partisan of Ministry in training for future desperate service is evident from the manner in which "Junius" speaks of him. Writing to the Duke of Grafton in June 1771, he says, "In vain would he (the King) have looked round him for another character so consummate as yours. Lord Mansfield shrinks from his principles. His ideas of government perhaps go farther than your own, but his heart disgraces the theory of his understanding. *Charles Fox is yet in blossom*; and as for Mr. Wedderburn, there is something about him which even treachery cannot trust." These Ministerial fetters did not, however, long detain him in parliamentary bondage. The sarcastic mode of

<sup>1</sup> Elected for Midhurst, Surrey, 22d March 1768.—ED.

expression chosen by Lord North to communicate Mr. Fox's dismissal from the Treasury Board is well known. "His Majesty," observed the First Minister to some persons near him, "has named new Commissioners of the Treasury, among whom I do not see the name of the Hon. Charles James Fox."<sup>1</sup> From that period, having enlisted under the banners of Opposition, and being aided by the errors or misfortunes of the American war, he attained, in the course of about six years, to the highest eminence among the formidable body of men who then opposed the measures of the Crown.

Pleasures of every description, to which his constitution or inclinations impelled him, divided with political pursuits the early portion of his life, some of which, if fame reported truly, might have furnished matter for a new "Atalantis."<sup>2</sup> It may be curious, nevertheless, for those persons who only remember him either as a leading member of the minority or in office as Minister to contemplate Mr. Fox when at the head of the *ton*, who were then denominated "Macaronis." The author of the "Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers," published, I believe, early in 1773, describes or produces Fox under that character. After enumerating the Asiatic diversions supposed to be exhibited for the amusement of the British sovereign, he thus concludes—I cite from memory :—

" But hark ! the shouts of battle sound from far !  
 The Jews and Macaronis are at war.  
 The Jews prevail, and thund'ring from the stocks,  
 The seize, they bind, they circumcise Charles Fox.  
 Fair Schwellenbergen smiles the sport to see,  
 And all the maids of honour cry 'Te-he.'"

<sup>1</sup> It was nearly in these words that Lord North communicated to Fox himself his dismissal.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. De la Riviere Manley's satirical work, directed against the Whigs in the reign of William III., and entitled "The New Atalantis."—ED.

Neither the pleasures of refined nor of licentious love, nor the social conviviality of the table, although he might occasionally indulge in each of those gratifications, constituted, however, his predominant passion. All his inclinations from a very early age seemed to be concentrated in a more fatal attachment to play. In the prosecution of that propensity he had squandered prodigious sums before his father's decease, with which Lord Holland's paternal fondness furnished him. To the same pursuit, or rather rage, he subsequently sacrificed a sinecure place of £2000 a year for life, the Clerkship of the Pells in Ireland, of which he came into possession by the demise of his elder brother, Stephen, the second Lord Holland, in December 1774. After holding it scarcely ten months, he sold it to Mr. Charles Jenkinson, since better known as Earl of Liverpool. He disposed in a similar manner of a fine estate and a magnificent house<sup>1</sup> situated at Kingsgate in the Isle of Thanet, which Lord Holland had embellished with classic taste, at an expense that could only have been furnished by a Paymaster of the Forces. On a bleak promontory, the North Foreland, projecting into the German Ocean, destitute of a single tree, and perpetually swept by violent east winds, but rendered memorable in British history as the spot where Hengist and Horsa landed, that nobleman constructed a splendid villa worthy of Lucullus. A colonnade,

<sup>1</sup> The house still exists. Gray wrote an impromptu poem in 1766 on this place, which commences with these severe lines :—

“ Old and abandoned by each venal friend,  
Here Holland formed the pious resolution  
To snuggle a few years, and strive to mend  
A broken character and constitution.

“ On this congenial spot he fixed his choice ;  
Earl Goodwin trembled for his neighbouring sand ;  
Here seagulls scream and cormorants rejoice,  
And mariners, though shipwrecked, dread to land.”

—ED.

such as Ictinus might have raised by order of Pericles, extended in front of the edifice, which has since been demolished. This superb retreat, bequeathed him by his father, in consequence of Fox's infatuation to the gaming-table, speedily passed into the possession of Powell, who had been cashier in the Paymaster-General's office under Lord Holland, and who subsequently finished so tragically his career.<sup>1</sup> We must confess that these scandalous irregularities of conduct, or rather vices of character, remind us more of Timon and of Alcibiades than of Pericles or Demosthenes.

Fox was not one of those dupes who never understand the principles of any game. He played admirably both at whist and at picquet, with such skill indeed, that by the general admission of Brookes's Club he might have made £4000 a year, as they calculated, at those games, if he would have confined himself to them. But his misfortune arose from playing at games of chance, particularly at faro. After eating and drinking plentifully, he sat down to the faro-table, and inevitably rose a loser. Only once he won about £8000 in the course of a single evening. Part of the money he paid away to his creditors, and the remainder he lost again almost immediately in the same manner. The late Mr. Boothby, so well known during many years in the first walks of fashion and dissipation, himself an irreclaimable gamester and an intimate friend of Fox, yet appreciated him with much severity though with equal truth. "Charles," observed he, "is unquestionably a man of first-rate talents, but so deficient in judgment as never to have succeeded in

<sup>1</sup> Powell was dismissed in 1782 by Colonel Barré for a deficiency in his accounts of £70,000. Burke on coming into office restored him, but was called to account for his action in the House of Commons. A few days after Burke had made an explanation, Powell committed suicide.—ED.

any object during his whole life. He loved only three things, women, play, and politics. Yet at no period did he ever form a creditable connection with a woman.<sup>1</sup> He lost his whole fortune at the gaming-table; and with the exception of about eleven months of his life, he has remained always in Opposition." It is difficult to dispute the justice of this portrait. Perhaps we might add to Boothby's picture, that towards the close of his career Fox emulated the distinction of an historian, in the pursuit of which object he exerted laborious efforts, and with a view to facilitate or to attain it, he appears principally to have undertaken his journey to Paris in 1802. Whether he succeeded better than in the former attempts, posterity will determine, but he would certainly have attained a more elevated place in the temple of history by imitating the line of Xenophon or of Sallust, who commemorated the transactions of their own times, than by taking for his subject the reign of James II.

The first Lord Holland died when his son Charles was about twenty-four, and before he attained his thirtieth year he had completely dissipated every shilling that he could either command or could procure by the most ruinous expedients. He had even undergone at times many of the severest privations annexed to the vicissitudes that mark a gamester's progress, frequently wanting money to defray his common diurnal wants of the most pressing nature. Topham Beauclerk,<sup>2</sup> a man of high

<sup>1</sup> He preferred Mrs. (now Lady) Crewe to all women living, but Lady Crewe never lost an atom of character—I mean female honour. She loved high play and dissipation, but was no sensualist.—P.

A contemporary annotating this passage writes: "I dined in early life in company with a natural son of Mr. Fox, who was deaf and dumb. He bore the strongest possible resemblance to his father, and was extremely lively and quick of apprehension. He was under the care of a gentleman (I think) at Hackney, who taught persons thus unfortunate. Young Fox died shortly after."—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Topham Beauclerk, only son of Lord Sidney Beauclerk, third son



birth, of pleasure, and of letters, who lived much in Fox's society at that period of his life, used to affirm that no person could form an idea of the extremities to which he had been driven in order to raise money after losing his last guinea at the faro-table. He has been reduced for successive days to such distress as to be under the necessity of having recourse to the waiters at Brookes's Club to lend him assistance. The very chairmen whom he was unable to pay used to dun him for their arrears. All dignity of character and independence of mind must have been lost amidst these scenes of ruinous dissipation. In 1781 he might be considered as an extinct volcano,<sup>1</sup> for the pecuniary aliment that fed the flame was long consumed. He never indeed affected or attempted to conceal the state of poverty into which his passion for play had plunged him. Even on his legs in the House of Commons I have heard him frequently allude to it. When Lord Holland, his father's accounts as Paymaster of the Forces were brought in some measure before the view of Parliament during the session of 1781, Fox observed that, as one of the executors of that deceased nobleman, he lamented the inability under which his nephew lay to make any transfer of property while those accounts remained unsettled. "*Perhaps,*" added he, "*I have not myself any more estates to sell,* but I nevertheless feel for the persons who have purchased of me the landed property bequeathed me under my father's will, the titles to

of Charles, first Duke of St. Alban's, and therefore great-grandson of Charles II., was born December 1739. He married Lady Diana Spencer, the divorced wife of Frederick, second Viscount Bolingbroke, in 1768, and died 11th March 1780. He will be best known to general readers from his appearance in "Boswell" as the friend of Dr. Johnson.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> A gentleman inquired of Wilkes how it was that he was so silent during all the violent discussion at the commencement of the French Revolution. He replied, "I am a volcano burnt out." This reminds one of Lord Beaconsfield's brilliant description of the extinct volcanoes on the Treasury bench.—ED.

which must always remain in a certain degree precarious while his executors have not obtained a quietus from the Exchequer."

Only a few days later in the same session, on the 12th of June 1781, Lord George Germain having asserted in the course of his speech that "Ministers had some property to lose as well as the gentlemen on the other side of the House, and in ruining their country, as they were accused of doing, they must involve themselves personally in destruction," Fox answered, "*It is well known that I have no stake to lose*, but that circumstance will not abate my zeal for the public welfare." Rigby, who probably began already to foresee the termination of Lord North's Administration as rapidly approaching, if not imminent, paid Fox many compliments on the occasion. "The honourable gentleman," said Rigby, "represents himself as an insignificant person, possessing no property and having no stake in the country. No man, in my opinion, possesses a more important stake. His talents, his connections, and his prospects constitute a far more valuable possession than a rent-roll of many thousands. He is an honour to his country, which feels a corresponding public interest in him." These flattering expressions, though received by Fox with urbanity, he did not the less disclaim in his reply. At the time of which I speak Fox occupied a house or lodgings in St. James's Street, close to the club at Brookes's, where he passed almost every hour which was not devoted to the House of Commons, and during Lord North's Administration Parliament usually remained sitting, with short adjournments, from November till July. That club might then be considered as the rallying-point and rendezvous of the Opposition, where, while faro, whist, and suppers prolonged the night, the principal members of the minority in both Houses met in order to compare



their information or to concert and mature their parliamentary measures.

It must not, however, be imagined that either Fox or the club that he frequented could altogether escape some severe animadversions on the part of men who contemplated both the one and the other as objects of moral reprobation. I recollect that during the session of 1781, Mansfield,<sup>1</sup> then Solicitor-General, having brought a bill into the House of Commons for the prevention of certain abuses practised on the Sunday, Martin, member for Tewkesbury,<sup>2</sup> one of the most conscientious and honest men who ever sat in Parliament, while he highly commended it, expressed his concern that "the gaming-houses which were open every Sunday in the immediate vicinity of St. James's Palace had not attracted the notice of the learned framer of the bill. I am astonished," added he, "how men who pass their whole time in a continued round of offence to morality can reconcile it to their consciences to come down to this assembly and here make laws for the suppression of similar or even smaller violations of decency among their inferiors in rank and fortune." No notice whatever being taken of these remarks, Martin, in a subsequent stage of the bill, spoke out in still bolder language when Fox was present. He called on the Solicitor-General to answer why those abominable nurseries of gambling in St. James's Street were not suppressed. "They are," continued he, "the bane of our young men of rank, who, becoming first necessitous, lie open to the seductions of a Minister whose pernicious measures can only be sustained by corruption." Then designating Fox in colours too accurate to be mistaken, he admitted that there might be some shining excep-

<sup>1</sup> James Mansfield. See *ante*, vol. i. p. 425.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> James Martin.—ED.

tions to this depravity. "But," added he, "even if there are any individuals of pre-eminent abilities in this House who might be the scourge and the terror of any bad Administration, I trust that the learned gentleman, who is himself a representative of one of the two Universities, will not the less exert his best endeavours to extinguish so crying and so destructive an evil."

These sentiments were re-echoed, though in less pointed terms, from other parts of the House. In answer, the Solicitor-General observed, that "no country in Europe could boast of better laws against gaming than were to be found in our statute books, but that if men of rank and distinction were determined to commit crimes, which from their nature must be perpetrated in private, no law could thoroughly reach the evil." Fox not making any reply, though the allusions to himself were palpable, Sheridan rose, and with great address turned aside the weapon of which he could not altogether blunt the point. Unwilling to offend Martin, who generally voted with Opposition, Sheridan directed his attack against the Administration. "I trust," said he, "that the learned gentleman who presents himself to the House on this day in the double capacity of a Cato and a Petronius, at once the *ensor morum* and the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the age, will turn his attention towards the suppression of a species of gaming more destructive to morals than any other, and which is nevertheless patronised by the Legislature. I mean lotteries, which, by suspending all the pursuits of industry, introduce among the lower orders of people every species of depravity. This would constitute indeed an object worthy of his exertion." Mansfield was in his turn silent, and the debate took a new turn. Unquestionably the club at White's, as well as at Brookes's, was designated

by Martin when he denounced the evil itself, as he spoke in the plural number. But no member of the Cabinet being accused of a passion for the gaming-table, though more than one among them frequented White's, the blow fell heavily on Fox, Fitzpatrick, Burgoyne, and their associates, while it scarcely glanced on Ministers.

Nature, besides the extraordinary endowments of mind which she conferred on Fox, had given him likewise a constitution originally capable of prodigious exertion. But he had already impaired his bodily powers by every variety of excess, added to the most violent mental agitations. These acts of imprudence had produced their inevitable consequences, though for some time counteracted by youth or obviated by medical aid. As early as 1781 Mr. Fox was already attacked with frequent complaints of the stomach and bowels, attended by acute pain, to moderate the symptoms of which he usually had recourse to laudanum. The strongest frame must indeed have sunk under such physical and moral exhaustion if he had allowed himself no interval of relaxation or repose. But, happily, his passion for some of the amusements and sports of the country almost rivalled his attachment to the gaming-table. No sooner had the shooting season commenced than he constantly repaired to Norfolk. Lord Robert Spencer<sup>1</sup> generally accompanied him, and after visiting various friends they sometimes hired a small house in the town of Thetford, rose at an early hour, and passed the whole day with a fowling-piece in their hands, among coveys of partridges and pheasants, for successive weeks during the autumn.<sup>2</sup> The salutary occupation never failed

<sup>1</sup> Son of Charles, fifth Earl of Sunderland and third Duke of Marlborough, and brother of Lady Di. Beauclerc. He died in 1831.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> On one occasion he is said to have met with a serious accident from the bursting of his fowling-piece.—ED.

of restoring the health that he had lost in St. James's Street and in the House of Commons.

Nor did the rage for play ever engross his whole mind or wholly absorb his faculties. Nature had implanted in his bosom many elevated inclinations, which, though overpowered and oppressed for a time, yet as he advanced in life continually acquired strength. If ambition formed the first, the love of letters constituted the second of these passions. When he contemplated the extent of his own parliamentary talents, and compared them with those of Lord North, or of every other individual in either House, it was impossible for him not to perceive the moral certainty of his attaining by perseverance, in the course of a few years, almost any public situation to which he might aspire. In the possession and enjoyment of power he necessarily anticipated the recovery of that independence which he had sacrificed at the gaming-table, as well as the means of recompensing the zealous friendship or devotion of his numerous adherents.

No man in public life ever possessed more determined friends or exercised over them a more unbounded influence, though he was by no means as tractable and amenable to reason or to entreaty on many occasions as the apparent suavity of his disposition seemed to indicate. Even interest could not always bend him to a compliance with the dictates of his judgment, nor expostulation induce him to pay the most ordinary attention to persons who had materially served him. In 1784, at the election of a member for Westminster, which was very obstinately contested, Horace Walpole, afterwards Earl of Orford, whose age and delicate health prevented him from almost ever leaving his own house, yet submitted to be carried in a sedan-chair from Berkeley Square to the hustings in Covent Garden

to vote for him. But no remonstrances could prevail on Fox to leave his name at Mr. Walpole's door, though he passed it continually in his morning walks. Hare himself, who was one of his most favoured associates, vainly exerted every effort to make him say a few civil words to a lady of quality, the late Mrs. Hobart, afterwards Albinia, Countess of Buckinghamshire, by whom he was seated at supper in a great public company met at Mrs. Crewe's expressly to celebrate the success of his election. That lady, as he knew, had contributed by every means in her power to his success, and as her reward only aspired to attract his notice or attention for a few minutes. He turned his back on her and would not utter a syllable. Hurt at Fox's neglect, Hare,<sup>1</sup> who sat nearly opposite to him, and who was accustomed to treat him with the utmost freedom, took out a pencil, wrote three lines, and pushed the paper across the table to his friend. The lines I shall not transcribe, as they were too energetic, or rather coarse, to allow of their insertion; but they abjured Fox (in language as strong as Mæcenas used to Augustus when he wrote to the Emperor, "Siste tandem, Carnifex!") to turn himself round towards the lady in question. He calmly perused the billet, and then, having torn it in small pieces, which he placed on the table, without appearing to pay any attention to Hare, he turned his back, if possible, still more decidedly on the person in whose behalf the expostulation was written. These facts were related to me by a great nobleman, a friend of Fox, who was present on the occasion.

<sup>1</sup> James Hare, son of an apothecary at Winchester, and grandson of Bishop Hare. At Eton he was a contemporary of Fox, with whom he remained in close intimacy through life. He was famous for wit in a brilliant circle, and his company was so much courted that the Duchess of Gordon described him and his associates as the "Hare and many friends." He died at Bath on the 17th March 1804.—ED.



If ever an individual existed in this country who from his natural bias would have inclined to maintain in their fullest extent all the just prerogatives of the Crown, and who would have restrained within due limits every attempt on the part of the people to diminish its constitutional influence, we may assert that Fox was the man. The principles of his early education, the example and exhortations of his father—for whom he always preserved an affectionate reverence which constituted a most pleasing feature of his character—his first political connections, all led him to the foot of the throne. He had tasted the comforts of office under Lord North, and his very wants rendered indispensable to him a return to power. Nor, whatever moral disapprobation his private irregularities unquestionably excited in the breast of a sovereign whose whole life was exempt from any breach of decency or decorum, could those defects of conduct have formed any insurmountable impediment to his attainment of the highest employments. In point of fact, neither the Duke of Grafton, whom “Junius” stigmatises as a “libertine by profession,” nor the Earls of Rochford and Sandwich, nor Lord Weymouth, nor Lord Barrington, nor Lord Thurlow had been distinguished by sanctity of manners, though they had all occupied the first situations in the state. Sir Francis Dashwood, who afterwards became premier baron of England under the title of Lord Le Despenser,<sup>1</sup> and whom Lord Bute made Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1762, for his skill, as Wilkes asserted, in casting up tavern bills, far exceeded in licentiousness of conduct any model exhibited since Charles II. He had founded a club or society, towards the end of George II.’s reign, denominated, from his own name, “The

<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis Dashwood obtained a confirmation of the barony of Despenser in 1763. He died in 1781.—ED.

Franciscans," who, to the number of twelve, met at Medmenham Abbey, near Marlow in Bucks, on the banks of the Thames.<sup>1</sup> Wilkes was a member of this unholy fraternity, of which he makes mention in his letter to Earl Temple, written from Bagshot in September 1762. Rites of a nature so subversive of all decency, and calculated by an imitation of the ceremonies and mysteries of the Roman Catholic Church to render religion itself an object of contumely, were there celebrated, as cannot be reflected on without astonishment and reprobation. Sir Francis himself sometimes officiated as high priest, habited in the dress of a Franciscan monk, engaged in pouring a libation from a communion-cup to the mysterious object of their homage. Churchill, in his poem of "The Candidate,"<sup>2</sup> has drawn him under this character at Medmenham. Immorality, or even profligacy, abstractly considered, formed, therefore, it is evident, no insurmountable bar to employment under George III.

Fox's error arose, if not wholly, yet principally, from a different source. In the ardour of political opposition, stimulated perhaps by domestic wants of many kinds, finding himself so long excluded from office, and conscious that he was become personally obnoxious to the sovereign, not so much from his irregularities, as by embracing the cause and the defence of the King's revolted subjects beyond the Atlantic, Fox did not always confine himself within a constitutional and temperate resistance to the measures of the Crown. Mingling the spirit of fac-

<sup>1</sup> The best account of these horrors, and the least offensive, is in "Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea," written by Smollett.—P. Mrs. Piozzi is mistaken as to the authorship of "Chrysal," which work was written, not by Smollett, but by Charles Johnston.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Written in 1764 on the contest between the Earls of Hardwicke and Sandwich for the High Stewardship of the University of Cambridge, vacant by the death of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke.—ED.



tion with the principles of party, while he appeared only to attack the Minister, he levelled many of his severest insinuations or accusations at the King. He consequently obstructed the attainment of the object which lay within his grasp. As the American war drew towards its termination, he observed scarcely any measure in the condemnation which he expressed for the authors of the contest.

When the new Parliament met on the first day of November 1780, and it was proposed in the address to the throne that the House of Commons should acknowledge "the sole objects of the King's royal care and concern were to promote the happiness of his people,"—words merely complimentary,—Fox, rising in his place, exclaimed, "We are called on to recognise the blessings of his Majesty's reign. I cannot concur in such a vote, for I am not acquainted with those blessings. The present reign offers one uninterrupted series of disgrace, misfortune, and calamity." Only a few weeks afterwards, in January 1781, when the debate on the Dutch war took place, "The reign of Charles II." observed Mr. Fox, "who twice engaged in hostilities with Holland, has been denominated an infamous reign; but the evils inflicted on this country by the Stuarts were happily retrieved by the revolution, while the ills of the present reign admit of no redress." He even proceeded to draw a sort of parallel, or rather contrast of the most invidious description, between Catherine II. and George III., two sovereigns who, having ascended the thrones of Russia and of Great Britain nearly about the same time, had exhibited an opposite line of conduct, the former empire rising under Catherine into eminence, while England, governed by George, sank into contempt. I recollect that towards the close of the same session of Parliament, in June 1781, during

the progress of a debate which arose relative to the payment into the Exchequer of the balances in the hands of public accountants, Fox, who was well aware of the obloquy under which his father's memory lay as "the defaulter of unaccounted millions," entered largely and warmly into his defence. The evil, he said, resulted from that most unfortunate circumstance of his father's life, his ever having been connected with Administration in the commencement of the *present reign*. "Such," continued Fox, "has uniformly been the impenetrable mystery and the intricacy of Government throughout this unfortunate reign, such has been the dark, perplexed, and ambiguous system pursued by Ministers, that no person who contemplates it can pervade the obscurity or pierce the clouds that invest their measures. It is become impossible to distinguish the *real* from the *ostensible* Minister. Hence the guilty author of nefarious or ruinous measures escapes without censure, while the detestation and the disgrace fall upon the innocent." The House was at no loss to guess at whom these reflections were pointed.

In November 1779, he exceeded in severity of language even the foregoing remarks, when he did not hesitate to compare Henry VI. with George III., and to assimilate their characters, qualities, and the disgraces of their respective reigns as affording the most complete resemblance. "Both," he observed, "owed the crown to revolutions, both were pious princes, and both lost the acquisitions of their predecessor." The speeches of Fox breathed a revolutionary spirit throughout the whole progress of the American war. Smarting under such reflections, the King began to consider the principles and the doctrines of Fox as inseparably implicated with rebellion. From that instant the splendour of

his talents only enhanced the magnitude of his offence. His uncle, the Duke of Richmond, who seemed to emulate the same distinction, and who indulged himself in remarks equally severe on the supposed interference of the Crown in perpetuating the struggle, might find pardon in the mediocrity of his abilities, but Fox's fault necessarily inspired deeper feelings of resentment, and may be said to have eminently contributed to the misfortunes of his political life.

Amidst the wildest excesses of youth, even while he was the perpetual victim of his passion for play, his elegant mind eagerly cultivated at intervals a taste for letters. His education had made him early acquainted with the writers of Greece and Rome, historical as well as philosophical and poetical. Beautiful passages from Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, Juvenal, and Cicero seemed always to present themselves to his memory without an effort. When speaking in Parliament, he knew how to avail himself of their assistance or to convert them to his purpose with a promptitude and facility that it is difficult to imagine. Burke himself was not his superior on this point. So well had he been grounded in classic knowledge, that he could read the Greek no less than the Roman historians, as well as poets, in the original; and however extraordinary the fact may appear, he found resource in the perusal of their works under the most severe depressions occasioned by ill success at the gaming-table. Topham Beauclerk, whom I have already had occasion to mention, and who always maintained habits of great intimacy with Fox, quitted him one morning at six o'clock, after having passed the whole preceding night together at faro. Fortune had been unfavourable to Fox, whom his friend left in a frame of mind ap-

proaching to desperation. Beauclerk's anxiety respecting the consequences which might ensue from such a state of agitation impelled him to be early at Fox's lodgings, and on arriving he inquired, not without apprehension, whether he was risen. The servant replying that Mr. Fox was in the drawing-room, he walked upstairs, and cautiously opening the door, where he expected to behold a frantic gamester stretched on the floor bewailing his misfortunes or plunged in silent despair, to his equal astonishment and satisfaction Beauclerk discovered him intently engaged in reading a Greek Herodotus. "What would you have me do?" said he; "I have lost my last shilling!" Such was the elasticity, suavity, and equality of disposition that characterised him, and with so little effort did he pass from profligate dissipation to researches of taste or literature.<sup>1</sup> After staking and losing all that he could raise at faro, instead of exclaiming against fortune or manifesting the agitation natural under such circumstances, he has been known to lay his head on the table, and, retaining his place, but extenuated by fatigue of mind and body, almost immediately to fall into a profound sleep.

Mr. Fox was not only conversant with the works of antiquity; modern history, polite letters, and poetry were equally familiar to him. Few individuals were better instructed in the annals of their own country. Having travelled when young over France and Italy, he had studied the finest productions of those countries, so fertile in works of genius, at the fountain-head. Davila and Guicciardini he read in the original. Dante, Ariosto, and

<sup>1</sup> I have heard this story before, and believe it is true. Topham Beauclerk, wicked and profligate as he wished to be accounted, was yet a man of very strict veracity. O Lord! how I did hate that horrid Beauclerk!—P.

Tasso constituted the frequent companions of his leisure hours, whom he perused with delight, and the striking parts of which authors, as he proceeded, he constantly marked with his own hand. For the "Orlando Furioso," one of the most eccentric but wonderful productions of human genius, I know that he expressed great partiality, preferring it to the "Gierusalemme Liberata." Nor was he devoid himself of some portion of poetic talent, as many compositions of his pen which remain sufficiently attest, though for ease, delicacy, and playful satire he could not stand a competition in that branch of accomplishment with his friend and companion Colonel Fitzpatrick.<sup>1</sup> The verses or epigram written on Gibbon's accepting the employment of a Lord of Trade in 1779, beginning—

" King George, in a fright  
Lest Gibbon should write  
The hist'ry of England's disgrace,  
Thought no way so sure  
His pen to secure  
As to give the historian a place,"—

I have always understood to be from Fox's pen, though it is disowned by Lord Holland as "certainly not his uncle's composition." I know, however, that some years afterwards, when his effects in St. James's Street were seized for debt, and his books were sold, a set of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," in the first leaf of which work Fox had with his own hand inserted the stanzas in question, produced a very considerable sum, under the belief or conviction that he was their author.

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Richard Fitzpatrick, son of John, first Earl of Upper Ossory, was born 30th January 1747. In 1782 he was appointed secretary to the Duke of Portland, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and in the following year he became Secretary at War. He was a General in the army, and Colonel of the 47th Regiment of Foot. He died 25th April 1813.—ED.



Fox conversed in French nearly with the same purity and facility as he did in English, writing in that language not less correctly, nor with less elegance.<sup>1</sup> A man of his high birth and connections, possessing qualifications so rare, independent of his parliamentary abilities, seemed to be pointed out by nature for the superintendence of the Foreign Department of State. Those persons who anticipated the fall of Lord North's Administration already imagined that they beheld Mr. Fox in that situation, for which talents and education had evidently designed him. Yet, after contemplating the portrait which I have here sketched, and which I imagine even his greatest admirers, if they are candid, will admit to do him no injustice, it is for impartial posterity to determine whether, on full examination of his merits and defects, George III. may be considered as most deserving of approbation or of blame in never having at any period of his reign voluntarily called Mr. Fox to his counsels. If energy of mind, enlargement of views, firmness of character, amenity of manners, acquaintance with foreign courts and languages, facility in conducting business, and prodigious intellectual powers, combining eloquence, application, as well as discernment—if these endowments are considered as forming an incontestable claim to public employment, unsustained by correct moral deportment or by property, we must condemn the sentence of exclusion passed upon him. Those persons, on the other hand, who consider all talent, however eminent, as radically defective unless sustained by decorum and a regard for opinion, as well as all who prefer sobriety of conduct, regularity of manners, and the virtues of

<sup>1</sup> Mons. Simond ("Tour in England") says that he was surprised to find Fox's French not very good in his correspondence with Talleyrand.—ED.

private life above any ability which nature can bestow on man; lastly, all who regard judgment under the control of strict principle as the most indispensable requisite of a Minister to whom the public honour and felicity are in some measure necessarily intrusted—such persons will probably hesitate before they decide too hastily on the degree of censure or of commendation which the King's conduct towards Fox ought to excite in our minds.

If Fox occupied the first place in the ranks of Opposition, Burke<sup>1</sup> might be pronounced the second person in that powerful body. His endowments of mind superseded every defect of birth, fortune, connections, or country, and placed him on an eminence to which no subject in my time, unassisted by those advantages, with the single exception of Sheridan, has ever attained in the public estimation. For it may be justly questioned whether the splendid talents of the first Mr. Pitt would have forced his way into the Cabinet unaided and unsustained by his alliance with the family of Grenville, though his own paternal descent was most honourable. Of years much more advanced than Fox, Burke had already attained to the acme of his fame as an orator, and could not well augment the reputation which he had acquired in that capacity. Perhaps if we were to point out the period of his life when he stood on the highest ground as a public man in the estimation of all parties, we should name the year 1781. His recent exertions in bringing forward the bill for the reform of the Civil List, which had engaged such general attention in the last session

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, the son of a Dublin attorney, was born in 1730. He entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1746, quitted it three years later, and in 1753 he became a member of the Middle Temple, maintaining himself by literary labour. He was returned for Bristol in 1774. He died at Beaconsfield, Bucks, in 1797.—D.

of the preceding Parliament, continued still fresh in recollection. Whatever opinion might be entertained respecting the necessity or the eligibility of those proposed regulations in the royal household, only one sentiment pervaded the House and the nation on the unexampled combination of eloquence, labour, and perseverance which had been displayed by their enlightened author. They covered with astonishment and admiration even those who from principle or from party appeared most strenuous in opposing the progress of the bill itself through every stage. The very rejection which had attended many clauses of it, and the address with which others were finally evaded or eluded, had conduced to raise him in the national opinion.

While, however, I do this justice to his talents and intentions, it is impossible not to consider with very different feelings the splendid eulogium which he made on that occasion of which Necker formed the subject. Burke, in sublime and animated language, described the system of public credit adopted by Louis XVI. under the guidance of his Genevese financial Minister, which he depicted as the consummation of human ability, economy, and judicious calculation. Neither Sully nor Colbert, he said, could compete with Necker; while the sovereign of France, unlike his predecessors on the throne, who had recourse when in distress to the bold frauds or plunges of bankrupt despotism for raising pecuniary supplies, built all his plans on the firm basis of national confidence, sustained by pecuniary regulations calculated to pay the interest of the debt thus incurred. Such were the assertions by which George III., Lord North, and the American war became objects of reprobation! If Burke really believed the facts that he laid down, what are we to think



of his judgment!<sup>1</sup> The intoxication insensibly dispersed after 1789, and before 1792 he beheld Louis XVI., Necker, and their pernicious measures through a just medium. He then endeavoured to counteract the effect of his own orations. In 1781 the delusion subsisted in all its force. The unqualified condemnation which he had always bestowed on the American war from the period of its commencement seemed to be at least justified by the result of the contest, and in that sentiment he was then supported by a majority of the British people. When to the operation of these combined causes we add the acknowledged mediocrity of his fortune, which left him in a sort of dependence on the Marquis of Rockingham, together with his long exclusion from office and his unimpeached moral character, contrasted with the irregularities of Fox's conduct, we shall not wonder at the high place which he occupied within no less than without the walls of the House of Commons.

All those persons to whom his memory is dear may like to contemplate him at this point of time, when he appears most resplendent, as well as free from many of the weaknesses, inconsistencies, and infirmities to which our nature is subject, and from which he was by no means exempt. His admirers will recollect with concern the querulous lamentations and unseemly reluctance with which in 1782

<sup>1</sup> Burke troubled himself but little to think on what he said; he spoke for present and immediate effect, rarely if ever raising his aim, because, like Dr. Johnson, he always *spoke his best*, whether on great or small occasions. One evening at Sir Joshua Reynolds', it was his humour to harangue in praise of the then ceded islands, and in their praise he said so much, that Mrs. Horneck, a widow with two beautiful daughters, resolved to lose no time in purchasing where such advantages would infallibly arise. She did so, and lost a large portion of her slender income. "Dear sir," said I when we met next, "how fatal has your eloquence proved to poor Mrs. Horneck!" "How fatal her own folly," replied he. "Od's my life! must one swear to the truth of a song?"—P.

and 1783 he each time quitted the Pay-Office on the change of Administration. They will remember the acts of imprudence and indiscretion which characterised his tenure of office during the existence of the Coalition Ministry, to defend or to palliate which demanded the utmost efforts of Fox's parliamentary abilities. They will probably admit and lament his too ardent prosecution of Hastings for asserted political errors or trespasses, which, even though they had existed in their utmost extent, ought to have found their apology in the difficulties of his situation, beset as he was with domestic and foreign enemies, in charge of a vast empire, and necessitated to find resources on the spot against internal commotions no less than against external hostility. They will reprobate with severity his intemperate and indecorous conduct as a member of Parliament in 1788, on an occasion when the country at large felt the deepest sympathy and distress for the intellectual illness of the sovereign. And, finally, though they will exult in the meritorious line of action which he embraced on the commencement of the French Revolution, as equally honourable to himself and beneficial to the cause of order and government throughout the civilised world, yet they cannot forget that he received from Pitt soon afterwards two pensions for three lives of £1800 a year each as his reward;<sup>1</sup> and they will perhaps incline to admit that, on impartial survey, Mr. Burke appears greater and more elevated in 1781 than at any subsequent period of his political life.

He was then more than fifty years of age, of which he had passed fifteen in the House of Commons. I believe he owed his first seat in that

<sup>1</sup> Burke's pensions were—(1.) £1200 a year out of the Civil List for his own and Mrs. Burke's life; (2.) £2500 a year, payable out of the West India 4½ per cents.—ED.

assembly, not to the Marquis of Rockingham, but to the late Earl Verney, with whom he had formed some connections of a pecuniary nature, during the continuance of which both that nobleman and Mr. Burke became purchasers to a considerable amount of East India stock. The latter, as it was asserted, sold out in time, after clearing so large a sum by the transaction as with it to have purchased the estate or house at Gregories, near Beaconsfield in Bucks, where he always resided when not in London.<sup>1</sup> Lord Verney, less fortunate or less prudent, though possessed of a vast landed property, was almost ruined by his East India purchases, and Richard Burke, Edmund's brother, who was then a practitioner at the bar, being likewise involved in the same losing concern, was said to have been unable to fulfil his stock engagements, or, in the language of Change Alley, to have *waddled*. Hence, in allusion to this circumstance, his enemies, instead of Dick Burke, commonly called him Duck Burke. Edmund in 1781 rented a house in the Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, conveniently situated for his attendance in Parliament, but entertained very little company; and his pecuniary obligations to the Marquis of Rockingham, which were known to be great, sufficiently indicated the limited nature of his private fortune.

Nature had bestowed on him a boundless imagination, aided by a memory of equal strength and tenacity. His fancy was so vivid that it seemed to light up by its own powers, and to burn without consuming the aliment on which it fed; sometimes bearing him away into ideal scenes created by his own exuberant mind, but from which he sooner or

<sup>1</sup> The history of this purchase is by no means clear, but it has been generally asserted that he bought the estate with money borrowed from Lord Verney on his bond.—ED.

later returned to the subject of debate, descending from his most aërial flights by a gentle and imperceptible gradation till he again touched the ground. Learning waited on him like a handmaid, presenting to his choice all that antiquity had culled or invented most elucidatory of the topic under discussion. He always seemed to be oppressed under the load and variety of his intellectual treasures, of which he frequently scattered portions with a lavish hand to inattentive, impatient, ignorant, hungry, and sleepy auditors, undeserving of such presents.<sup>1</sup> Nor did he desist, though warned by the clamorous vociferation of the House to restrain or to abbreviate his speeches. Every power of oratory was wielded by him in turn, for he could be during the same evening, often within the space of a few minutes, pathetic and humorous, acrimonious and conciliating, now giving loose to his indignation or severity, and then, almost in the same breath, calling to his assistance wit and ridicule. It would be endless to cite instances of this versatility of disposition, and of the rapidity of his transitions "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," that I have myself witnessed. I will only mention as a proof of his wit an occurrence of the session of 1781, not many months after I first came into Parliament. The Secretary at War (Jenkinson) having laid on the table of the House an account of the extraordinaries of the army, where the sums remitted to America during the preceding year exceeded £2,700,000; Mr. Harley,<sup>2</sup> through whose hands the greater part of the money had passed, rose in order to give some account of its applica-

<sup>1</sup> "And thought of convincing whilst they thought of dining."—GOLDSMITH'S *Retaliation*.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Harley, Lord Mayor, 1767-68, M.P. for the county of Hereford. He had previously sat for the City of London.—ED.

tion. For that purpose the Alderman, who was no orator, and who very rarely obtruded himself on the Speaker's attention, read from a paper which he held in his hand a few gross sums or items which constituted the greater part of the enormous expenditure under examination. His recital scarcely took up five minutes. Burke instantly rising exclaimed, "This account is, I believe, the most laconic that ever was given of so great a sum of money expended in the public service. Considering the magnitude of the sums that the right honourable gentleman has swallowed, he really merits admiration for the promptitude with which he has either digested or disgorged them. His charge and his discharge are equally expeditious. He is a species of canal through which the profusion of the Government passes. I imagine, however, it does not flow off altogether without contributing something to his nourishment. No doubt such remittances, like the mud of the Nile, have in them a fattening quality, or, to use a vulgar phrase, they stick to the ribs. Oh, how I long for an inspection of this *Harleian Miscellany!*"

Alderman Harley, the subject of these metaphors, listened to them with great composure, and did not even attempt to make any reply; but no ordinary muscles could resist their effect. I remember on another occasion where Burke had covered Lord North with ridicule (I think it was upon the report made by the Commissioners of Accounts in 1781), that nobleman answered all his arguments at considerable length. "And now, Mr. Speaker," said he, "I believe I have replied to everything which has fallen from the honourable gentleman, except his wit. That, I readily acknowledge, is unanswerable, he being greatly my superior in that respect." Notwithstanding, indeed, the acrimonious personal



virulence with which Burke frequently treated Lord North, no man in the House of Commons appeared to enjoy his sallies of wit more than the First Minister. He laughed immoderately when Burke compared the sympathy or mutual dependence of Administration and the American war to the porter's breech and Taliacotius's nose in "Hudibras." "They will both," said he, "expire together :—

' When life of parent Nock is out,  
Off drops the sympathetic snout.'

So, with the termination of the present war will their places be extinguished." Yet, with such an assemblage of endowments, which would have sufficed to form many orators, though Burke instructed, delighted, and astonished, he frequently fatigued because his faculties were not controlled by a severe judgment.

In his dress and exterior he was not less negligent than Fox; but the spirit of party did not blend with the colour of his apparel, and he rarely or never came to the House in blue and buff, though I heard him eulogise Laurens, the American ex-President, while a prisoner in the Tower, in terms such as Pope uses when speaking of Atterbury under the same circumstances.<sup>1</sup> On that occasion he did not scruple to read as part of his speech a letter addressed to him by Dr. Franklin from Paris, in answer to his own application on the subject of

<sup>1</sup> Henry Laurens, born at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1723. In 1777 he was chosen President of the Continental Congress, but resigned his office in 1778, and was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to Holland. On his way there he was taken prisoner by the English and committed to the Tower. After his release he went to Paris, and with Franklin, Adams, and Jay he signed the preliminaries of peace in 1783. He died in South Carolina, 8th December 1792. A portion of his correspondence was printed by Frank Moore at New York in 1861.—ED.

effecting or facilitating General Burgoyne's release by his exchange against Laurens. I have always considered Burke's conduct in thus opening a correspondence with the representative of a revolted body of men, who was then residing at the court of France, with which nation we were at war, as one of the greatest insults on the Government, on Parliament, on the laws, and on the majesty of the sovereign which has been committed in our time by any subject with impunity. It was only exceeded by Fox's sending a delegate from himself, as head of the Opposition, to Petersburg in 1791,<sup>1</sup> an act for which, it seemed to me, he might justly have been impeached. Hastings and Lord Melville<sup>2</sup> were both sent to take their trial at the bar of the peers under the present reign, while Fox and Burke escaped prosecution. When the latter ventured to boast in the House of Commons of his intercourse with Franklin, he relied on the passive endurance of an unpopular Cabinet, divided among themselves, and sinking under the contest with a combination of European powers leagued against us for the emancipation of America. There were not wanting, however, individuals, even at that moment of British humiliation and embarrassment, who rose and expressed their indignation at Burke's temerity. "Good God!" exclaimed Lord Newhaven,<sup>3</sup> "do not my senses deceive me? Can a member of this assembly not only avow his correspondence with a rebel, but dare to read it to us?" George Onslow, member

<sup>1</sup> Robert Adair, travelled in Russia in the years 1788-89, and was graciously received by the Empress, who was then preparing for war with England. He was called the "Opposition Ambassador."—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings was acquitted of extortion and cruelty, and Melville, charged with criminal acts in his capacity of Treasurer of the Navy, was pronounced guiltless by the House of Lords, who tried him on the impeachment of the Commons in 1805.—D.

<sup>3</sup> William, Lord Newhaven, an Irish peer, sat for Gatton.—ED.



for Guildford, seemed disposed to adopt measures of censure against Burke, but the Speaker interposing, stopt him as disorderly, there being no motion before the House. Neither Lord North nor Lord George Germain, who were both present and spoke on the question, alluded to Burke's correspondence, and he treated Lord Newhaven's animadversions with contemptuous levity. Burke constantly wore spectacles. His enunciation was vehement, rapid, and never checked by any embarrassment; for his ideas outran his powers of utterance, and he drew from an exhaustless source. But his Irish accent, which was as strong as if he had never quitted the banks of the Shannon, diminished to the ear the enchanting effect of his eloquence on the mind.<sup>1</sup> Dundas, who laboured under a similar impediment, yet turned it to account, if I may so express myself, some of his expressions or allusions, by the variation in pronouncing a single letter or pressing too hard upon a vowel, frequently producing such an equivocal sound, conveying at the same time so strange an impression on the ears of his audience, as put to flight all gravity and convulsed the House with laughter. In brilliancy of wit Lord North alone could compete with Burke, for Sheridan had not then appeared. Burke extracted all his images from classic authorities; a fact of which he displayed a beautiful exemplification when he said of Wilkes, borne along in triumph by the mob, that he resembled Pindar elevated on the wings of poetical inspiration—

—“Numerisque fertur  
Lege solutis,”—

a pun of admirable delicacy and the closest application.

His personal qualities of temper and disposition

<sup>1</sup> Very true.—P.

by no means corresponded with his intellectual endowments. Throughout his general manner and deportment in Parliament there was a mixture of petulance, impatience, and at times of intractability, which obscured the lustre of his talents. His features and the undulating motions of his head while under the influence of anger or passion were eloquently expressive of this irritability, which on some occasions seemed to approach towards alienation of mind. Even his friends could not always induce him to listen to reason and remonstrance, though they sometimes held him down in his seat by the skirts of his coat in order to prevent the ebullitions of his violence or indignation. Gentle, mild, and amenable to argument in private society,<sup>1</sup> of which he formed the delight and the ornament, he was often intemperate and reprehensibly personal in Parliament. Fox, however irritated, never forgot that he was a chief. Burke, in his most sublime flights, was only a partisan. The countenance of the latter, full of intellect but destitute of softness, which rarely relaxed into a smile, did not invite approach or conciliation. His enmities and prejudices, though they originated in principle as well as in conviction, yet became tinged with the virulent spirit of party, and were eventually in many instances inveterate, unjust, and insurmountable. Infinitely more respectable than Fox, he was nevertheless far less amiable.<sup>2</sup> Exempt from his defects and irregularities, Burke wanted the suavity of Fox's manner, his amenity, and his placability. The one procured admirers, the other possessed friends. Though acting together to a common point as members of the House of Commons, and

<sup>1</sup> Not very.—P.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Piozzi proposed to replace the word "amiable" by "respected."—ED.

embarked in the same cause, their intimacy seemed always to commence and to cease at the entrance of the lobby. Burke retired from the discharge of his parliamentary functions exhausted, chagrined, and often irritated, to repair immediately to his family or to the duties and avocations of political and domestic life. Fox, never more alert than after a long debate, on quitting the House always drove to Brookes's. Even in their nearest approximations there existed essential and striking distinctions between the two Opposition leaders. In genius, in learning, in eloquence, in politics, they were assimilated; but in their occupations, amusements, society, companions, and modes of life never were two men more discordant. They continued, nevertheless, to act together through succeeding Parliaments, in prosperous and in adverse fortune, till the French Revolution finally dissevered them. The obvious defect of Burke was want of temper and self-command. Fox's latent blemish lay in his dissolute habits and ruined fortune, which enabled his enemies to compare him with Catiline. Both wanted judgment to perceive that even under the free constitution of Great Britain the Cabinet, though it may be taken by storm, cannot be long held except by favour. Mr. Fox in 1806, when, unfortunately, at the end of his career, appears to have thoroughly come up with this great truth, of which, in 1781, he was either regardless or ignorant.

In surveying the Opposition side of the House of Commons at this period, the idea of Barré<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Barré was born about the year 1726. He served at Quebec under Wolfe, and was made Adjutant-General and Governor of Stirling Castle for his services in America. He was deprived of these offices for voting against Government in Parliament, where he owed his seat to Lord Shelburne. The Rockingham Administration pensioned him, but when Pitt appointed him to the Clerkship of the

naturally and unavoidably suggests itself after that of Burke. Both were natives of the same country, Ireland, and both had attained to vast celebrity in their adopted country, England. But no sort of comparison could be made between their talents, acquirements, or claim to general admiration, in all which Burke possessed an infinite superiority. Of an athletic frame and mould, and endowed with extraordinary powers of voice, Barré, as a speaker, roughly enforced rather than solicited or attracted attention. Severe and sometimes coarse in his censures or accusations, he nevertheless sustained his charges against Ministers with considerable force of argument and language. He, too, as well as Burke, lavished his encomiums on the banker of Copet, the financier of France, whose example for enlightened economy and impartial pecuniary retribution Barré recommended to Lord North's imitation. But he was more measured in his panegyrics than Burke, and did not elevate Necker above Sully and Colbert. Slow, measured, and dictatorial in his manner of enunciation, he was never carried away by those beautiful digressions of genius or fancy with which Burke captivated and entertained his audience. Master, nevertheless, of his subject, and more attentive than Burke not to fatigue the patience of the House when he saw it eager to rise, he frequently obtained a more indulgent hearing. Deprived already of one eye, and menaced with a privation of both, advanced in years, grey-headed, and of a savage aspect, he reminded the beholders when he rose of Belisarius rather than of Tully. Yet possessing a cultivated

Pells, he gave up his pension—£3200 a year. He filled various offices, was a powerful but coarse speaker, and violently opposed to the American war. He died, after some years of blindness, in 1792.—D.

understanding, conversant with the works of antiquity, and able on occasion to press them into his service, he sometimes displayed a great diversity of information.

Near him, on the same bench, in the front ranks of the minority, usually sat his friend and colleague, Dunning. Never perhaps did nature enclose a more illuminated mind in a body of meaner and more abject appearance. It is difficult to do justice to the peculiar species of ugliness which characterised his person and figure, although he did not labour under any absolute deformity of shape or limb.<sup>1</sup> A degree of infirmity, and almost of debility or decay in his organs, augmented the effect of his other bodily misfortunes. Even his voice was so husky and choked with phlegm that it refused utterance to the sentiments which were dictated by his superior intelligence. In consequence of this physical impediment, he lay always under a necessity of involuntarily announcing his intention to address the House some time before he actually rose by the repeated attempts which he made to clear his throat. But all these imperfections and defects of configuration were obliterated by the ability which he displayed. In spite of the monotony of his tones and his total want of animation as well as grace, yet so powerful was reason when flowing from his lips, that every murmur became hushed and every ear attentive. It seemed, nevertheless, to be the acute sophistry of a lawyer rather than the speech of a man of the world or the eloquence of a man of letters and education. Every sentence, though admirable in itself, yet resembled more the pleading

<sup>1</sup> Sir Joshua alone could give a good portrait of Dunning. His picture of Lord Shelburne, Lord Ashburton, and Colonel Barré has surely no superior. The characters so admirable, the likenesses so strong.—P.



of the bar than the oratory of the senate. So difficult is it for the most expanded or enlightened intellect to throw off the habits of a profession. Dunning rather subdued his hearers by his powers of argumentative ratiocination, which have rarely been exceeded, than he could be said to delight his audience. His legal talents soon afterwards raised him to the peerage,<sup>1</sup> just in time to attain that elevation, as his constitution speedily sunk under accumulated disorders, which hurried him prematurely to the grave. This distinguished man, who was not exempt from great infirmity of mind, felt or perceived so little his corporeal deficiencies as to consider his person with extraordinary predilection. Fond of viewing his face in the glass, he passed no time more to his satisfaction than in decorating himself for his appearance in the world. He and Barré, who were fellow-labourers in the same vineyard,<sup>2</sup> represented likewise the same borough, Calne, and belonged, or at least looked up to, the same political chief, Lord Shelburne. They consequently were animated by no common principle of union or of action with Fox and Burke except one, that of overturning the Administration. On all other points a secret jealousy and rivalry subsisted between the adherents of the Shelburne and the Rockingham parties.

Admiral Keppel<sup>3</sup> might likewise be accounted among the principal members of Opposition in

<sup>1</sup> He was created Lord Ashburton.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Dunning named his son, who succeeded him as second Lord Ashburton, Richard Barré.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> He was the second son of the second Earl of Albemarle, William Anne Keppel. He was born in 1725, and had performed many distinguished services before the affair of Ushant in 1778, when the French fleet escaped him. He was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, and created Viscount Keppel in 1782. He died in 1786.—D.



the House of Commons at this period, though his oratorical talents were not more conspicuously exerted in debate than his naval skill as a commander had been displayed on the quarter-deck during the memorable action of the 27th of July 1778. But the persecution which, as it was pretended, he had undergone for his conduct on that day, the accusation brought against him by Palliser, and the ministerial as well as royal enmity which he had incurred—these political merits, when added to his connection with the Duke of Bedford, whom the Opposition had already marked as their own, though he was not quite sixteen years of age at this time, elevated him to a consideration which he could not otherwise have attained. Excluded from representing the borough of Windsor at the recent general election in 1780, the popular effervescence of the moment, inflamed at his rejection, where it was supposed that the influence and personal exertions of the sovereign among the tradesmen of the town had considerably operated to his prejudice, brought him in for Surrey, a county in which he possessed no property nor any hereditary interest. There appeared neither dignity in his person nor intelligence in his countenance, the features of which were of the most ordinary cast, and his nose, which, in consequence of an accident that befell him in the course of his professional life, had been almost laid flat, gave him an equally vulgar and unpleasant air. His abilities were indeed of a very limited description, altogether unfit for such a theatre as Parliament; but the minority having already destined him to succeed and to supplant Lord Sandwich as soon as they could gain possession of power, it became indispensable to sustain him on every occasion with all their efforts.

Another distinguished naval commander, Lord

Howe,<sup>1</sup> who then filled a seat in the House, might likewise be numbered among the determined opponents of Government. Since his return from America he had not enjoyed the smiles of the court, but his professional character supported him with the public. His steady, cool, and phlegmatic courage, sustained by great nautical experience and skill, when added to the wholesome severity of his discipline while on service, deservedly placed him high in the estimation of all parties. Among the sailors he was known from his dark complexion by the epithet of "Black Dick." If no genius could be discovered in the lines of his face, there was in them an expression of serene and passive fortitude which could not be mistaken. His profile bore, indeed, a very strong resemblance to the portraits of George I., from whom by his mother he descended. She was the natural daughter of that prince by his mistress, Madame von Platen, whom he created Countess of Darlington some years after his accession to the crown of Great Britain. In Parliament as an orator, Lord Howe made, if possible, a worse figure than Keppel, who, when he addressed the House, was at least intelligible, though he might not greatly illuminate the subject. Lord Howe's ideas were commonly either so ill conceived by himself, or so darkly and ambiguously expressed, that it was by no means easy to comprehend his precise meaning. This oracular and confused mode of delivery, rendered still more obscure by the part of the House where he usually sat, which was on a back row at a distance from the Speaker's chair, increased, however, the effect of his oratory, and seemed to

<sup>1</sup> Richard, third son of the second Viscount Howe, was born in 1722. Like Keppel, he served under Anson. He was cool, courageous, liberal, and void of envy. He was created Earl in 1797. The last public act of his life was at the suppression of the mutiny at Spithead. He died in 1799.—D.

exemplify Burke's assertion that "Obscurity is a source of the sublime."

Sir George Saville,<sup>1</sup> who represented the county of York, attracted from his descent and alliances great consideration. His known integrity and disinterestedness joined to his extensive landed property elevated him in the public opinion more than any endowments of intellect or parliamentary ability. He possessed, nevertheless, plain manly sense, and a facility of utterance which, even independent of his high character and ample fortune, always secured him attention.

Lord John Cavendish<sup>2</sup> was listened to whenever he rose with similar deference or predilection, nor was he altogether destitute of some pretension to eloquence. His near alliance to the Duke of Devonshire, the head of the Whig interest, his very name connected with the revolution of 1688, which secured the liberties of Great Britain, his unblemished reputation, and his talents, though in themselves very moderate—all these qualities combined to impress with esteem even those who differed most from him in political opinion. Homely in his figure, of manners simple, unassuming, and destitute of all elegance or dignity, he presented the appearance of a yeoman or a mechanic rather than of a man of high quality. Nature had in the most legible characters stamped honesty on the features of his countenance, but she had not accompanied it with any ornamental present. The Oppo-

<sup>1</sup> Saville was born in 1721 and died in 1784. He was the introducer of the bill in favour of Roman Catholics which caused the riots of London. Burke called him "a true genius." He was wealthy and munificent. On one occasion, when serving as a juror on a trial at which the plaintiff claimed £1500, he reluctantly acquiesced in a verdict for the defendants, and then drew a cheque for the plaintiff to the full amount.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Brother of William, fourth Duke of Devonshire. He was born in 1732 and died in 1796.—ED.

sition already considered him as future Chancellor of the Exchequer, in defiance of his inaptitude for the employment.

General Conway,<sup>1</sup> brother of the Earl of Hertford, though by no means a man of eminent capacity or a superior speaker, yet surpassed in these respects either of the two last-mentioned individuals. His military experience, acquired in Germany during the Seven Years' War; his birth and illustrious descent, together with the recollection of his having already occupied one of the most eminent situations under a former Administration, as he filled the post of Secretary of State for the Home Department during the short period of ten months, when Lord Rockingham presided at the Treasury in 1765, and the following year; so many pretensions authorised him to expect a place no less conspicuous in any future Ministerial arrangement. He had already passed his sixtieth year, yet his figure and deportment were exceedingly distinguished; nor did he want abilities; but his enunciation, embarrassed and often involved, generally did injustice to his conceptions.

Mr. Thomas Townshend, commonly denominated "Tommy Townshend," and commemorated under that name in Goldsmith's celebrated poem of "Retaliation," where he describes Burke—

"Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat  
To induce Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote,"

looked confidently forward, no less than General Conway, to a high post in some future Ministry

<sup>1</sup> Henry Seymour Conway was the brother of Francis, Earl and subsequently Marquis of Hertford. The General was born in 1720 and died in 1795. His daughter, born in 1748, was the celebrated Mrs. Damer, who died in 1828, the widow of Mr. Damer, son of the first Earl of Dorchester, who shot himself. The General was the friend of Horace Walpole, who bequeathed Strawberry Hill to Mrs. Damer. He was emphatically a "lovable" man.—ED.

when Lord North should be driven from power. Nor were his expectations eventually disappointed. Having held the lucrative post of Joint Paymaster of the Forces at an early period of his Majesty's reign during about six months, he was already a member of the Privy Council. He possessed, likewise, a very independent fortune and considerable parliamentary interest, present as well as prospective—two circumstances which greatly contributed to his personal no less than to his political elevation; for his abilities, though respectable, scarcely rose above mediocrity. Yet, as he always spoke with facility, sometimes with energy, and was never embarrassed by any degree of timidity, he maintained a conspicuous place in the front ranks of Opposition.

General Burgoyne<sup>1</sup> would scarcely deserve any mention in this list if respect were had only to his parliamentary talents; but his sufferings in the cause of Opposition, which elevated him to the rank of a martyr, like Keppel; Fox's attachment towards him, and his connection by marriage with Lord Derby, one of the minority chiefs,<sup>2</sup> these merits supplied every deficiency. In his person he rose above ordinary height, and when young must have possessed a distinguished figure; but years had enfeebled him though he was cast in an athletic mould. His military services in the field had never been resplendent. He seemed more fitted for the drawing-room or for the closet than for the camp, for pleasing in society than for commanding armies.

<sup>1</sup> The General was the natural son of Lord Bingley (an ancestor of the Yorkshire family Lane Fox). He married Lady Charlotte Stanley against the will of her father, Earl of Derby. He served with distinction in Spain and Portugal, but was unfortunate in America, where his turgid proclamations obtained for him the name of Chronothologos. He died in London 1792.—D.

<sup>2</sup> He who married Miss Farren the actress.—ED.



No man possessed more polished manners. His manifestoes were more admired for their composition while he was at the head of the British forces in America than his tactics or his manœuvres. Of his dramatic talents the comedy of the "Heiress" forms an eminent proof;<sup>1</sup> and I believe he contributed his aid to the celebrated "Probationary Odes."<sup>2</sup>

It was difficult to contemplate him without recollecting the disgraceful colours under which "Junius" has designated him, as "taking his stand at a gaming-table, and watching with the soberest attention for a fair opportunity of engaging a drunken young nobleman at picquet," as "drawing a regular and splendid subsistence from play," and as "sitting down for the remainder of his life, *infamous and contented*, with the money received from the Duke of Grafton for the sale of a patent place in the customs." These cruel aspersions, which never received any public answer, did not prevent his occupying a distinguished place in Fox's regard, who exhibited a strong proof of it when he became Burgoyne's nominee on the committee appointed to try the contested election for the borough of Preston, which he represented in the spring of 1781. Supported by such ability, the General kept his seat. I have been assured that when he returned on his parole from America in May 1778, the Opposition, apprehensive of his taking part with Administration, and fearful that he might accuse the adherents of Congress in this country with having contributed by their language in Parliament, if not by other modes of encouragement, to the resistance

<sup>1</sup> Another of his popular pieces was "The Maid of the Oaks."  
—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Better known as "The Rolliad."—ED.



that produced the disaster of Saratoga,<sup>1</sup> determined if possible to gain him. For that purpose Fox went down privately to Hounslow in a hired post-chaise, where he met Burgoyne soon after he had landed, on his way from Plymouth to London. In the course of a long and confidential interview, Fox convinced him so thoroughly that the Ministers would not support him, that Lord George Germain must accuse him in order to exculpate himself, that the King had imbibed very strong prejudices against him, and that the Administration could not last a twelvemonth, as to induce the General to transfer his charges of misconduct from the Opposition to the Treasury bench. Present protection and future employment whenever they should attain to power followed of course. I have no doubt of the accuracy of this fact, as I received it from high living authority.

Burgoyne always affected to consider the whole Administration as leagued against him in order to retard or to impede his exchange. Towards Lord George Germain, who presided over the American Department, he of course felt, and frequently expressed, great personal alienation, or rather asperity. I remember hearing him declare in his place as a member of Parliament, towards the close of Lord North's Ministry, in December 1781, that he would rather submit to be recalled to America by Congress, and be committed to a dungeon, there to perish, than condescend to solicit a favour from men who had oppressed him in a manner the most severe, who had refused him a court-martial, who had calumniated his private character, and had treated him with every sort of indignity. How far these

<sup>1</sup> Saratoga (New York State). Here General Burgoyne surrendered the whole of his army to the American General Gates, 17th October 1777.—ED.

charges were founded in either truth or justice, I cannot venture to say; but it appeared, both on Lord George Germain's and on Lord North's testimony, that endeavours had been exerted by our Government to obtain his exchange from Congress, which were only frustrated by an evasion on the part of the American executive power in not ratifying a capitulation where a number of their troops had fallen into our hands. Burgoyne himself admitted the justice of our claim over those captured soldiers, who had been proffered to Congress as an equivalent for him; but he maintained that when they were rejected, other prisoners should have been tendered in their place. Regulus was not, however, the character among the unfortunate commanders of antiquity whom he had proposed for his own model.

Wilkes<sup>1</sup> could not properly be considered as a member of the minority, because, though he always sat on that side of the House and usually voted with them, yet he neither depended on Lord Rockingham nor on Lord Shelburne; but his predilections leaned towards the latter nobleman. Representing, as he did, the county of Middlesex, he spoke from a great parliamentary eminence. He was an incomparable comedian in all he said or did, and he seemed to consider human life itself as a mere comedy. In the House of Commons he was not less an actor than at the Mansion House or at Guildhall. His speeches were full of wit, pleasantry, and point, yet nervous, spirited, and not at all defective in argument. They were all prepared

<sup>1</sup> Wilkes was born in 1727. In 1781 he was Chamberlain of the City, and, as he said himself, "an extinct volcano." He died 1797. During the time that his portrait formed the sign of a vast number of taverns, he heard an old lady remark that "the rascal swung from every post except the one he most deserved."—D.

before they were delivered; and Wilkes made no secret of declaring that, in order to secure their accurate transmission to the public, he always sent a copy of them to William Woodfall before he pronounced them. In private society, particularly at table, he was pre-eminently agreeable, abounding in anecdote, ever gay and convivial, converting his very defects of person, manner, or enunciation to purposes of merriment or of entertainment. If any man ever was pleasing who squinted, who had lost his teeth, and lisped, Wilkes might be so esteemed. His powers of conversation survived his other bodily faculties. I have dined in company with him not long before his decease, when he was extenuated and enfeebled to a great degree, but his tongue retained all its former activity, and seemed to have outlived his other organs. Even in corporeal ruin, and obviously approaching the termination of his career, he formed the charm of the assembly. His celebrity, his courage, his imprisonment, his outlawry, his duels, his intrepid resistance to ministerial and royal persecution, his writings, his adventures, lastly, his triumph and serene evening of life, passed in tranquillity amidst all the enjoyments of which his decaying frame was susceptible, for to the last hour of his existence he continued a votary to pleasure,—these circumstances combined in his person rendered him the most interesting individual of the age in which he lived. Since the death of Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, who died in 1751, and whose life bore some analogy to Wilkes's in various of its features, no man had occupied so distinguished a place in the public consideration. His name will live as long as the records of history transmit to future times the reign of George III.

Notwithstanding the personal collision which

may be said to have taken place between the King and him during the early portion of his Majesty's reign, Wilkes, like Burke, nourished in his bosom a strong sentiment of constitutional loyalty. He gave indelible proofs of it during the riots of June 1780, when Bull,<sup>1</sup> one of the members for London, with whom he had long been intimately connected, crouched under Lord George Gordon's mob, while Kennett, the Lord Mayor, exhibited equal incapacity and pusillanimity. And though Wilkes lent his aid to overturn Lord North's Administration, yet he never yoked himself to Fox's car. On the contrary, no sooner had the "Coalition" unmasked their battery of the "East India Bill" than Wilkes, rallying to the Crown as the only protection against Fox's ambition, took the warmest part against that measure, acting in 1784 nearly the same part which Burke did eight years later, in 1792, after the French Revolution, when he sought shelter behind the throne against the horrors of anarchy, regicide, and insurrection,—horrors which Fox never could or never would perceive, and for which he even apologised in no slight degree.

Such was the general aspect which the House of Commons then presented. Pitt and Sheridan, who have since in different ways occupied so great a share of public attention, had not either of them as yet come forward to public notice and admiration. The latter had indeed risen in his place as early as the preceding month of November, within three weeks after the meeting of Parliament, in order to complain of the facility and impunity with which petitions were presented, complaining of bribery and corruption on the part of members returned to serve in Parliament, which petitions often proved eventually

<sup>1</sup> Alderman Frederick Bull, a tea-dealer in Leadenhall Street, Lord Mayor 1773-74.—ED.

frivolous or vexatious. He stood himself in that very situation, Mr. Richard Whitworth, one of the representatives for the town of Stafford in the preceding Parliament, having just petitioned the House against the return of Mr. Sheridan and his colleague, the Honourable Edward Monckton, for the same borough. Rigby, on the occasion to which I allude, with the coarse, contemptuous, and insulting ridicule familiar to him when addressing the House, had treated Sheridan's complaints as meriting no attention. Fox instantly rose to justify and to protect his friend; but the Speaker interposing, terminated the conversation. Even while pronouncing the few sentences which he then uttered, the fame of the author of the "Duenna," the "School for Scandal," and the "Critic" was already so well established as to procure him the greatest attention.

Probably at no period of George III.'s long reign, which already exceeds that of Henry III. in duration, have the walls of the House of Commons enclosed so great an assemblage of first-rate talents on the Opposition benches as were there concentrated at the beginning of the year 1781. Their exertions were at once sharpened and propelled by the critical nature of the time and of the contest, which obviously tended to some vast catastrophe, unless a speedy amelioration of our affairs beyond the Atlantic should take place. The Treasury Bench, though Lord North, Lord George Germain, and Mr. Dundas still were seated on it, had sustained no ordinary diminution of its lustre by the removal of Thurlow and of Wedderburn to the Upper House, but on the opposite side was beheld a constellation of men of genius. In the front stood Fox and Burke, sustained by Dunning and Barré; while Pitt and Sheridan, two of the most resplendent luminaries



produced during the course of the eighteenth century, were preparing to unfold their powers. I have endeavoured to present before the reader of 1818 an imperfect picture of the assembly then sitting at Westminster, and to place him, if I may so express myself, under the gallery of the House as a spectator. In order, however, to form a more complete estimate of the principal individuals who at that time attracted general notice, either as supporters of Administration, or as candidates for office whenever the Opposition should come into power, it is still requisite to throw a glance over the House of Peers.

The great Earl of Mansfield,<sup>1</sup> though he had already advanced beyond that period of life at which the faculties of the human mind usually begin to diminish in vigour, did not appear to have lost any of the acuteness or strength of his intellect. In the Court of King's Bench, no less than in Parliament, where he constantly attended in his place, his transcendent abilities still excited equal respect and admiration. The friend of Pope, of Bolingbroke, and of Sir William Wyndham, during his youth, he united the finest accomplishments of science to the most profound knowledge of the laws. In the recent riots of 1780, the populace, whether considering him as inclined to support measures of an arbitrary nature, or supposing him a friend to principles of religious toleration repugnant to their feelings, selected him for the object of their violence. His house and his papers were consumed; but he had happily escaped any personal effects of their rage, and though not

<sup>1</sup> Lord Mansfield was now seventy-seven years of age. It was to him, on expressing an intention to preside in the Court of King's Bench on Good Friday, that Sergeant Davy remarked—"Then your Lordship will be the first judge who did business on a Good Friday since Pontius Pilate." He died, "the Cicero of the age," in 1793.—D.



individually a member of Administration, might be considered as disposed on all occasions to extend his warmest assistance to the Government. Yet did the constitutional and characteristic timidity which distinguished him in his political capacity prevent his ever standing forward in moments of crisis or danger, like Thurlow and Wedderburn, as the avowed champion of Ministerial measures. But in his judicial character he made ample amends, and manifested a devotion to the wishes of the court scarcely exceeded by any example to be adduced even under the Stuart reigns. The accusations brought against Lord Mansfield by Wilkes, in his letter from Paris of "the 22d of October 1764," addressed to the electors of Aylesbury, are of so grave a description, that, if founded in truth, a Turkish Cadi might blush to own them. He positively asserts that on the evening preceding the two trials in the Court of King's Bench, instituted against himself, as the author of the *North Briton*, No. 45, and of the "*Essay on Woman*,"<sup>1</sup> Lord Mansfield sent for his (Wilkes's) solicitor to *his own house*, and desired him to consent to such alterations in the *records*, as would ensure the certainty of Wilkes's conviction. "The Chief Justice," continues he, "sunk into the crafty attorney and made himself a party against the person accused before him as judge, when he ought to have presumed me innocent. My solicitor refused, and against his consent *the records were there materially altered by his Lordship's express orders*, so that I was tried on two new charges, very different from those I had answered. This is, I believe, the most daring violation of the rights of Englishmen, which

<sup>1</sup> An obscene poem said to have been written by a son of Potter, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the existence of which there has been much controversy.—ED.

has been committed by any judge since the time of Jefferies. Yet this arbitrary Scottish Chief Justice still remains unimpeached, except in the hearts of the whole nation." When we read these facts,—for such they must be esteemed since they remained wholly uncontradicted, we might fancy the transactions to have taken place at Saragossa or at Seville, rather than in Westminster Hall. Scarcely could a Spanish grand inquisitor have outdone the English Chief Justice. Wilkes continuing his narrative, says, "Several of the jury were by counter notices, signed *Summoning Officer*, prevented from attending on the day appointed for the trial, while others had not only private notice given them of the *real day*, but likewise instructions for their behaviour. To crown the whole, Lord Mansfield in his charge *tortured both the law and the fact so grossly*, that the audience were shocked no less at the indecency than at the partiality of his conduct. I was during all this time very dangerously ill, with my daughter, at Paris, absolutely incapable of making any personal defence, and indeed totally ignorant of the two new questions on which I was to be tried." It is not without some difficulty that we can conceive these violations of all justice or equity to have taken place in London under the reign of George III. We might rather suppose them to have been performed under Charles II. or James II.

Nor was Wilkes the only champion who stood forward as Lord Mansfield's accuser at the bar of the English people. With the single exception of the Duke of Grafton, no man high in office had been so severely treated by the pen of "Junius," and though time had skinned over the wound, the cicatrice still remained. That able writer, after pursuing the Lord Chief Justice with inconceivable

pertinacity through all the sinuosities of legal concealment or evasion, under which he attempted to shelter himself,—after comparing him to the most prostitute judges of the most arbitrary reigns, to Tresillian under Richard II., and to Jefferies under James II., exclaims—“Who attacks the liberty of the press? Lord Mansfield. Who invades the constitutional power of juries? Lord Mansfield. What judge ever challenged a jurymen but Lord Mansfield? Who was that judge who, to save the King’s brother, affirmed that a man of the first rank and quality, who obtains a verdict in a suit for criminal conversation, is entitled to no greater damages than the meanest mechanic? Lord Mansfield.”<sup>1</sup> These it must be owned are charges of no common magnitude, and conveyed in no ordinary language. At him “Junius” levelled his last blows, before he finally disappeared as a political writer. In his parting letter, addressed to Lord Camden, written towards the end of January 1772, exciting and invoking that nobleman to come forward as the accuser of the Lord Chief Justice of the King’s Bench at the bar of the House of Peers, “considering,” says he, “the situation and abilities of Lord Mansfield, I do not scruple to affirm, with the most solemn appeal to God for my sincerity, that in my judgment he is the very worst and most dangerous man in the kingdom. Thus far I have done my duty in endeavouring to bring him to punishment. But mine is an inferior Ministerial office in the temple of justice. I have bound the victim and dragged him to the altar.” Severe and perhaps unmerited as these accusations may appear, yet Lord Mansfield’s warmest admirers never attempted to deny that at every period of

<sup>1</sup> Earl of Grosvenor *v.* Duke of Cumberland, for criminal conversation in 1770. The Earl recovered £10,000 damages.—ED.

time while he presided in the Court of King's Bench, his opinions and his decrees, if not systematically adverse to the liberty of the press and to the freedom of the subject, uniformly leaned towards the Crown. His enemies, not without some reason, asserted that he was better calculated to fill the office of a prætor under Justinian than to preside as chief criminal judge of this kingdom in the reign of George III.

Lord Loughborough,<sup>1</sup> who owed to Lord North his recent elevation to the peerage, constituted one of his ablest advocates and most zealous supporters in that House. Wedderburn had risen through the gradations of the law amidst the discussions of Parliament side by side with Thurlow. More temperate, pliant, artful, and accommodating in his manners than the Chancellor, he equalled that nobleman in eloquence if he did not even surpass him. Churchill in one of his satires has thought proper to describe Wedderburn in colours of the deepest and most malignant dye, heightened by the charm of verse. I believe it appeared in 1762 :—

“To mischief trained, e'en from his mother's womb,  
Grown old in fraud, though yet in manhood's bloom,  
Adopting arts by which gay villains rise,  
And reach the heights which honest men despise ;  
Mute at the bar, and in the senate loud,  
Dull 'mongst the dullest, proudest of the proud,  
A pert prim prater of the northern race,  
Guilt in his heart, and famine in his face,  
Stept forth.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Wedderburn, born February 13, 1733, was gazetted as Solicitor-General in 1771, and Attorney-General in 1778. In 1780 he was appointed Chief Justice of the Common Pleas and created Lord Loughborough. In 1793 he became Lord Chancellor and was subsequently created Earl of Rosslyn. He continually changed sides, and was sometimes Tory and sometimes Whig. Charles Butler writes in his “Reminiscences,” i. 42, “The Earl of Rosslyn seldom had justice done to his heart or his talents. We have mentioned his dereliction of the Whigs, to whom he first attached himself in politics, and its having

Nor was Fox much more favourable to Wedderburn previous to the "Coalition" in 1783, which obliterated all preceding errors on both sides. In November 1781, on the day when Parliament met, Fox, while loading with execrations the American war and its authors or abettors, selected Wedderburn as an object of his strongest reprobation. Alluding to the language which that eminent lawyer had formerly held, when he designated the contest with America "to be the opposition of Hancock and his crew, not a war with the people at large;" Fox observed that "for these sentiments, and not for any other merit that he could discover, except the abusing our fellow-subjects beyond the Atlantic, the learned gentleman had been raised to the dignity of a peer." Notwithstanding these denunciations of party violence, poetic and political, no man in public life possessed more versatility of talents, or abilities better adapted to every situation. He proved himself as refined a courtier at St. James's as he was an able lawyer at Westminster. His defence of Lord Clive when under accusation before the House of Commons at an earlier period of his Majesty's reign augmented Wedderburn's legal as well as parliamentary reputation. It had been perpetually progressive since that time, and rendered him, whether as a member of the Lower or of the Upper House, one of the most distinguished ornaments of the long robe.

raised against him a prejudice from which he never recovered. . . . His judicial oratory was exquisite. The greatest detractors from his merits acknowledged the perspicuity, the luminous order and chaste elegance of his arguments."—ED.

Wedderburn was particularly happy when speaking of Franklin, who (he said) the Ministers had wantonly and foolishly made their enemy. An enemy so inveterate, said he, so merciless, and so implacable, that he resembles Zanga the Moor in Young's tragedy of the "Revenge," who at length ends the hellish plot by saying, "I forged the letter and disposed the picture; I hated, I despised, and I destroy." The quotation struck every one.—P.



Nor did the Opposition at this time want men of distinguished capacity, professional and political, in the House of Lords, though the Marquis of Rockingham<sup>1</sup> was not to be accounted among the number. His rank, his integrity, and his vast patrimonial property rather than any intellectual endowments had placed him at the head of his party. During the short period of time when he formerly filled the post of First Lord of the Treasury, he had displayed more rectitude of intention than either vigour or ability. Even his constitution and frame of body appeared inadequate to the fatigues of an official situation demanding energy and application. Lord Camden, on the contrary, though much more advanced in years,<sup>2</sup> had retained all the powers of his mind, combined with personal activity. In debate he might be esteemed equal to Lord Mansfield himself; and his exertions at every period of his life in defence of the constitutional liberties of the subject, which gave him a sort of individual superiority to that nobleman, greatly endeared him to the nation. While Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, he had approved himself a firm and intrepid guardian of the rights of the English people. On the 30th of April 1763, when Wilkes was illegally arrested under a general warrant issued by the two Secretaries of State, the Earls of Egremont and Halifax, Sir Charles Pratt, on application being made to him in his judicial

<sup>1</sup> Charles Watson Wentworth, Marquis of Rockingham, was born in 1730. He was at first a follower of Lord Bute's. He became First Lord of the Treasury in 1765, and resigned the following year. In March 1782, he again was at the head of a Ministry, but he suddenly died in the July of that year. He was one of the first peers who sanctioned the principle of a reform in Parliament.—D.

<sup>2</sup> In his old age, having exhausted all the English, French, and Italian romances, he studied Spanish, that he might read the novels in that language. For this he was absurdly called "the Spanish Cato," Cato having commenced the study of Greek when an octogenarian.—D.

capacity, instantly ordered the *Habeas Corpus* to issue, though the Ministers thought proper to evade and to violate it. His name, almost always united with the great Earl of Chatham ever since the accession of George III., seemed inseparable from the idea of freedom.

If indefatigable and laborious pertinacity could recommend to office or qualify for public employment, few members of the Upper House possessed a better title to that praise than the Duke of Richmond.<sup>1</sup> However limited might be the range of his ideas, he supplied in some measure by application the deficiency of original talent. His person, manners, and address were all full of dignity, and the personal beauty which distinguished Mademoiselle de la Querouaille, mistress of Charles II., his great-grandmother, was not become extinct in him. She is known to have retained her charms down to a very late period of her life; and the fables related of Ninon de l'Enclos, which Voltaire has exposed, were in some measure verified in the Duchess of Portsmouth. The late George Selwyn,<sup>2</sup> who had seen her at Richmond House in the year 1733,—for she survived Charles II. near fifty years,—assured me that she was even then possessed of many attractions, though verging towards fourscore. Like his nephew, Mr. Fox, the Duke did not spare the King when addressing the House of Lords, and he was considered as peculiarly obnoxious at St. James's.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The brother of Lady Sarah Lennox, whose beauty touched George III. He was born in 1735, and died in 1806. He is famous as the advocate of annual Parliaments and universal suffrage. He built Goodwood, near Chichester.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> George Augustus Selwyn, born 11th August 1719. He sat for nearly fifty years in the House of Commons, and died 25th January 1791.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> He never forgave the preference given by the King's immediate advisers when there was question of a consort to the English throne,

Accused by his enemies of wanting personal courage, he manifested at least no defect of political resolution. At the East India House, in his quality of a proprietor no less than as a peer of Parliament at Westminster, he was ever active, vigilant in detecting and exposing abuses, real or imaginary, perpetually harassing every department with inquiries, and attacking in turn the army, the Admiralty, and the Treasury.

But no individual in the Upper House attracted so much national attention from his accomplishments, talents, and extensive information on all subjects of foreign or domestic policy as the Earl of Shelburne.<sup>1</sup> In the prime of life, and in the full vigour of his faculties, he displayed, whenever he rose to speak, so intimate a knowledge of the European courts as proved him eminently qualified to fill the highest official situation. At an early period of his Majesty's reign he had occupied with great and general approbation the post of Secretary of State for the Home Department during more than two years, between 1766 and 1768. He might therefore justly look forward, on any change of Ministers, to be again employed in a similar or even in a higher place of trust and power. His acquaintance with the Continent was minute and accurate, the result of ocular inspection on many points, corrected by reflection and improved by correspondence or communications with foreigners of eminence, whom he assiduously cultivated and protected. Mr. Fox himself was far

where he hoped to see his beautiful sister (Lady Sarah) seated,—in vain. Lord Bute was too quick in providing a much safer partner.—P.

<sup>1</sup> William Petty. He was born in 1737, served in the army, senate, and ministry, and when the younger Pitt became Premier, retired from public life with the title of Marquis of Lansdowne. He died in 1805.—D.

inferior to Lord Shelburne in these branches of information. Nor was that nobleman less versed in all the principles of finance and of revenue than in the other objects of political study that form a statesman. His house, or more properly to speak, his palace in Berkeley Square, which had formerly been erected by the Earl of Bute, formed at once the centre of a considerable party, as well as the asylum of literary taste and science.

It is a fact that during the latter years of Lord North's Administration, Lord Shelburne retained three or four clerks in constant pay and employment under his own roof, who were solely occupied in copying state papers or accounts. Every measure of finance adopted by the First Minister passed, if I may so express myself, through the political alembic of Shelburne House, where it was examined and severely discussed. There, while Dunning and Barré met to settle their plan of action as leading members of the Opposition in the House of Commons, Jackson,<sup>1</sup> who likewise sat in the same assembly for New Romney, and the variety of whose information had acquired him the name of "Omniscient Jackson," furnished every species of legal or general knowledge. Dr. Price, aided by Mr. Baring, produced financial plans, or made arithmetical calculations, intended to controvert and overturn, or to expose those of the First Lord of the Treasury; while Dr. Priestley, who lived under the Earl of Shelburne's personal protection (as the celebrated Hobbes had done at Chatsworth, under the patronage of the Earls of Devonshire, in the preceding century), prosecuted in the midst of London his philosophical and chemical researches. Nor ought

<sup>1</sup> Richard Jackson, M.P. for New Romney, one of the Cinque Ports.—ED.

I to omit in this list of extraordinary men the distinguished names of Jervis<sup>1</sup> and of Jekyll,<sup>2</sup> one of whom has risen to such naval honours and dignities, while the other has attained to an equal eminence at the bar as he enjoys from the charms of his conversation in private society.

In his person, manners, and address, the Earl of Shelburne wanted no external quality requisite to captivate or conciliate mankind. Affable, polite, communicative, and courting popularity, he drew round him a number of followers or adherents. His personal courage was indisputable. Splendid and hospitable at his table, he equally delighted his guests by the charms of his conversation and society. In his magnificent library, one of the finest of its kind in England, he could appear as a philosopher and a man of letters. With such various endowments of mind, sustained by rank and fortune, he necessarily excited universal consideration, and seemed to be pointed out by nature for the first employments.<sup>3</sup> But the confidence which his moral character inspired did not equal the reputation of his abilities. His adversaries accused him of systematic duplicity and insincerity. They even asserted that unless all the rules of physiognomy were set

<sup>1</sup> John Jervis, born 19th January 1734, and entered the navy at the early age of nine years. He was created Earl St. Vincent in 1797, in consequence of his splendid victory over the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Jekyll was more celebrated for his *bon-mots* than for his legal knowledge. He was born in 1750, and was at this period at the height of his fame. He was a consistent Whig. In 1805 he was appointed Solicitor-General to the Prince of Wales. The Prince Regent went alone to Bedford Square to Lord Chancellor Eldon, who was laid up with the gout, in order to obtain the vacant office of Master in Chancery for Jekyll. On Eldon's refusing, the Prince threw himself down in his chair, and exclaimed, "How I pity Lady Eldon!" "Good heavens!" said Lord Eldon, "what is the matter?" "Oh, nothing," answered the Prince, "except that she will never see you again, for here I remain till you promise to make Jekyll a Master in Chancery."—ED.

<sup>3</sup> Fox is said to have complained of his caprice; at one time all that is here said of him, at another time proud, austere, and distant.—ED.



at defiance, his very countenance and features eloquently indicated falsehood. In order to fix upon him so injurious an imputation, they gave him the epithet of Malagrida, from the name of a Portuguese Jesuit well known in the modern history of that kingdom. And these insinuations, though not perhaps accompanied with proofs, were nevertheless, either from the credulity or from the malignity of mankind, widely circulated, as well as very generally believed throughout the nation.

[23<sup>d</sup>—31<sup>st</sup> *January* 1781.] If any crisis ever demanded a First Minister of energy, firmness, and resources of character, it was assuredly the portion of the present reign on which we are about to enter, including the last fourteen months of Lord North's Administration. There may since that time have been moments of greater alarm under Mr. Pitt, Mr. Addington, or Mr. Perceval, but none of such Ministerial and national depression. Even when Bonaparte seemed to bestride the Continent from west to east, while his flotilla menaced us with monthly invasion—when the southern coast was covered with Martello towers from Beachy Head to Romney Marsh, and the Corsican Emperor, having vanquished Europe, seemed only to reserve England, as Polypheme does Ulysses, for his last sacrifice; yet even then, though we felt apprehension, the spirit and the confidence of the country were fully commensurate to the impending or apparent danger. The sovereign was an object of affection and of universal respect. It was a combat of morals and of patriotism against the principle of rapine, disorganisation, and ferocious military despotism, while the Continental governments and people, however subjected they themselves might be, put up secret prayers for our escape and success. But in 1781 Lord North had

neither internal nor foreign auxiliaries. Whichever way he directed his view, it was met by calamity, or defeat, or accumulating difficulties. Under such circumstances it may rather excite surprise that he resisted so long, than that he should ultimately have sunk beneath the pressure. No sooner had Parliament reassembled after the adjournment, than the reclamations or complaints which had been repressed during the recess burst out with a vehemence proportioned to their preceding delay. While General Smith called the attention of the Minister and the House to the alarming condition of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, where the newly instituted Court of Judicature had commenced a sort of civil war against the Supreme Government, the Island of Barbadoes, desolated by the hurricane of which I have already made mention, through its agent, a member of the House, in terms calculated to awaken commiseration in every bosom, besought Administration to extend some immediate relief to their almost indescribable wants.

Great as were these misfortunes, and deeply affecting the British Empire at its two extremities, a more serious subject of contemplation, because it was one much nearer home, engrossed universal attention. I mean the manifesto presented by Lord North, at the same time that he delivered a message from his Majesty announcing the commencement of hostilities against Holland. Never, probably, in the history of modern nations, was any state paper drawn up with more temper, moderation, and even a spirit of conciliation. The King lamented in every line the painful necessity imposed on him to resent the infractions of treaty committed by his ancient allies, the Dutch. But the source of the evil lay in the depression of Great Britain, already surrounded by enemies, and apparently unequal to protracting the struggle.

In the course of a long debate that ensued upon the address proposed to be presented to the sovereign, which was opposed on factious rather than on solid grounds of argument, Lord North, in reply to Burke, observed that "our national difficulties were unquestionably great, but, he trusted, by no means insuperable." "I am neither disposed," added he, "to conceal their magnitude, nor afraid to encounter them; because I am fully convinced that the means possessed by this country, when vigorously exerted, constitute the only mode of obtaining a just and an honourable peace." These magnanimous sentiments, which might have become the first Mr. Pitt in 1758, or his son in 1805, both which were periods of universal dejection, received from Fox, from Townshend, from Lord John Cavendish, and from Dunning every injurious or contumelious epithet, accompanied by reproaches for having, as they falsely asserted, driven Holland into the arms of the House of Bourbon. The Minister did not, however, want defenders on that evening, among whom, though the most inconsiderable in every sense, I might name myself. Nor did the division deceive his hopes, as he carried the proposed address by a majority of seventy-nine. I was among the number of those members who went up with it to St. James's, where it met from his Majesty the most gracious reception.

[1st February 1781.] I wish it were in my power to convey an adequate idea of the debate that took place when Fox moved a censure on the Administration for having advised his Majesty to confer on Palliser the government of Greenwich Hospital. All the first orators who graced the Opposition benches came forward in succession. Palliser and Keppel faced each other, the former Admiral seated near the Minister, the latter opposite to

him, sustained by his numerous, zealous, and eloquent partisans. The events of the 27th of July 1778,<sup>1</sup> a day marked by so many painful recollections, were once more retraced, discussed, and agitated with all the violence of mutual animosity. Fox opened the subject in a masterly manner, mingling in his mode of managing it not less art than eloquence or argument. Nor did he spare in certain parts of his discourse the King himself, though in compliance with the forms of Parliament he abstained from expressly naming the sovereign. Keppel had been recently rejected as member for Windsor, which borough thought proper to return, as one of their representatives, Mr. Powney,<sup>2</sup> a gentleman of independent fortune in the vicinity. To this circumstance, as having been produced by royal interference, Fox alluded. "And what," exclaimed he exultingly, "is the consequence? The county of Surrey, which portion of England beheld with indignation the oppression practised in his person, who saw the enormous influence of the Crown opposed to virtue, popularity, and reputation, opened their arms to receive him, and invited him to become their representative. Thus oppression produced its opposite effect; and my honourable relation, expelled from a place which he had represented in successive Parliaments, is returned to this assembly for a great and opulent county."

<sup>1</sup> On which Keppel encountered the French fleet off Ushant, but did not bring any of them with him to England.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Pen Portlock Powney was named Ranger of Windsor Park, but the King had no great measure of regard for him, although his Majesty was said to have canvassed a silk-mercator in Windsor to vote for "little Powney," by saying, "The Queen wants a gown,—wants a gown;—No Keppel!—No Keppel!" The Admiral, at the close of the election, said of this report: "It *cannot* be true. It OUGHT not to be believed! It MUST not be believed." The Duke of Sussex was locked up in the nursery at Windsor for wearing the Keppel colours, and when the Prince of Wales and Prince Frederick heard of the return of Keppel for Surrey, they expressed to the Admiral himself their extreme satisfaction.—D.

Lord North, in his reply, did not omit to give the most pointed denial to the assertion that Keppel had been driven from Windsor by the means to which allusion was made, adding that "Fox well knew the fact not to be true, and only threw out the imputation merely with a view to inflame the passions of his audience." Disdaining, on an occasion so grave, to avail himself of his customary weapons, ridicule and pleasantry, the First Lord of the Treasury, in a speech replete with strong reasoning, combated Fox's propositions, and reminded him of the frenzy which had agitated London during three nights, when a lawless and unrestrained mob compelled the inhabitants to illuminate for a victory which had never been gained, finally attributing, not to conviction, but to intimidation the vote of thanks to Keppel carried in the last House of Commons under those circumstances. Yet on one point Lord North indulged for a few moments that vein of playful wit which so eminently characterised him. Fox having asserted roundly that "Palliser's resignation of his places and employments formed a tacit admission of his criminality," Lord North classically exclaimed—

"*Quam temere nosmet legem sancimus iniquam!*"

"Some men," continued he, "resign their places for the sake of the public quiet. Others resign from shrewd arithmetical calculations that it may be more judicious to give up a place of small value now, in order to get a better some time hence. Others again act thus from political foresight; they discover an approaching storm, they 'snuff it gathering in the sky;' they perceive that an Administration totters, and they quit the falling fabric, in expectation of coming into high office by joining the opposite party. For my part, I believe the Vice-Admiral



resigned from a most laudable motive,—in order to restore the public tranquillity, which had been overturned by the madness of the times.”

Commodore Johnstone,<sup>1</sup> a man with whom I was much acquainted, and who attained a considerable degree of importance during this portion of the reign of George III., rising for the first time since the meeting of the present Parliament, took no ordinary part in the debate. Nature had cast his person in a coarse but vigorous mould, and had endowed him with corresponding or analogous faculties of mind. Irascible, intemperate, violent, he was a warm and zealous friend, but an implacable enemy. He possessed a species of ardent, impetuous, half-savage eloquence, restrained by no delicacy of language, yet capable of powerfully affecting his hearers by the display of information, by his energetic appeals to their passions, and even by his gesticulations, which came in aid of his oratory. As a naval officer of rank and experience, when addressing the House on a naval question he might justly lay claim to attention. He had proved himself, nevertheless, more of a sagacious politician than an able commander, and looked rather to parliamentary talents than to maritime services for elevating him in life, as well as for enabling him to acquire the honours or emoluments of his profession. Johnstone, while he admitted that Keppel was individually a brave, gallant, and meritorious officer, inveighed in terms the most severe against the general dispositions which he had made previous to engaging the fleet of France on the memorable 27th of July. Johnstone described that action as the most unfortunate which Great Britain had ever witnessed, “in consequence of which the French

<sup>1</sup> Commodore Johnstone is the same man as Governor Johnstone. See *ante*, vol. i. p. 382.—ED.

became convinced by their own experience that on a summer day they could engage an English fleet superior in every point of view, and yet get safe back to their own harbours." He treated with indignant ridicule the expression used by Keppel in his official dispatch, that he allowed D'Orvilliers to retire unmolested, under a supposition that he "would fight it out fairly next morning," instead of renewing the engagement on the same evening; adding that he entertained no doubt the honourable Admiral himself, if he were to fight the battle over again, would conduct it in a very different manner. Then advert- ing to the disgraceful tumults, and still more disgraceful illuminations on occasion of the pretended advantage gained over France, "O God!" said he, raising his eyes and covering with both hands his face, "London illuminated during three successive nights on account of the national glory acquired on the 27th of July! no man of common sense could credit it." Towards the conclusion of his speech, after vindicating Lord Sandwich in his official character from the imputations of various kinds thrown out against his naval administration, Johnstone expressed his concern and surprise at seeing so respectable a name as that of Admiral Keppel subscribed to a list of factious resolutions adopted by a Surrey Committee declaring the American war to be an unjust enterprise.

Impelled by the violence of his temper, which, like that of Burke, was by no means always under the control of reason, Johnstone next arraigned the opinions delivered from the Opposition benches during the course of the late debate on the declaration of war against Holland, opinions which he denounced as dangerous to the national welfare. He even accused Fox, though not by name, yet by unavoidable implication, as well as his adherents

who sat near him, with the criminality of advocates employed by the enemies of England to traduce, to degrade, and to subvert her greatness. Apprehensive of the effect which such a denunciation of his friends might produce on the public mind, Townshend, starting up, called the Commodore to order. Rigby instantly interposed to justify the observations made as arising out of the discussion, consequently conformable to the rules of debate; but Johnstone, whose understanding had been allowed a few moments of pause, aware how delicate was the subject, wisely declined to add another word. The House in vain encouraged him to proceed by cries of "Go on! Go on!" He sat down, and Keppel availed himself of the interruption. In a speech of considerable length he endeavoured to throw the blame of the failure of the 27th of July on Palliser, though he was necessitated to admit the personal efforts to break the French line made by that gallant naval officer. He owned that he deprecated the mention of the unfortunate day itself, while he affected at the same time to rejoice in the present occasion of justifying himself to the House of Commons and to his country.

Palliser now rose, directing his discourse to Fox rather than to Keppel. After reproaching Fox with want of candour, if not of veracity, in the statement which he made of the motives that had produced the resignation of his own employments, Sir Hugh assured him that it did not proceed either from apprehension or from any sense of misconduct. "Fear," continued he, "is the tax which conscience pays to guilt. Let those experience it who calumniate the characters of others, and afterwards object to hear the injured party in his exculpation! I was indeed once afraid, I confess. I was afraid of a frantic, deluded, furious populace, who forced

their way into my house, destroyed my property, and would have torn me in pieces if the arrival of a detachment of the Guards sent to my relief had not critically rescued me from their ferocity. I was necessitated to abscond, and from the place of my concealment I wrote my letter of resignation. In so acting, I imitated the precedent set me by one of the most celebrated naval commanders known in modern history. I mean the famous Dutch Admiral, Van Tromp. He, under the operation of popular prejudice and outrage, laid down his commission in order to pacify the public; but he subsequently resumed it under more auspicious circumstances, and rendered the highest services to his native country." Having modestly, but distinctly stated the share that he took in the engagement of the 27th of July, where, by the universal confession of every officer present, he had manifested uncommon intrepidity, and had received in his ship, the "Formidable," the exclusive fire of the whole French line, he concluded, leaving on my mind, and I believe on that of every unprejudiced hearer, the strongest conviction of his merits, no less than of the persecution that he had endured.

Burke may be said to have terminated this very interesting discussion, rising as soon as Palliser sat down, no doubt with the design of obliterating the recent impression made on the House. If eloquence could have effaced that impression, he must have succeeded; for never were more brilliant, various, and captivating powers of intellect exhibited than by Burke on that evening. Against Palliser he directed the shafts of his argumentative severity, against Lord North the keener arrows of ridicule and irony, nor did he by any means omit Johnstone, who attracted his full proportion of both those weapons of attack. The finest specimen of ludi-

crous and metaphorical description ever perhaps exhibited even by Burke himself within the walls of the House of Commons he pointed against the First Minister. That nobleman found himself obliged to call in the assistance of Mansfield, the Solicitor-General, in order to enable him to shape his proposed amendments to Fox's motion for declaring "the appointment of Palliser to be Governor of Greenwich Hospital, a measure totally subversive of the discipline and derogatory to the honour of the navy." Some minutes having elapsed while the precise words proper to be adopted were under consideration, Burke observed that "the noble Lord had been employed in knotting and splicing the motion, and in fishing its mast," at the same time remarking (in allusion to his consultation with the Solicitor-General), that "he need not have fired a gun to leeward as a signal of distress, it being obvious that his mizzen topmasts were all shot away." These metaphors, drawn from the technical terms of the very service respecting which the House had been so long engaged in debate, operated with inconceivable effect on the muscles of the assembly, and on none more forcibly than on those of the First Minister, against whom they were specially directed. He found himself for once overwhelmed by the very artillery which he commonly employed against his opponents, and in the use of which he so much excelled. The motion was at length negatived, though only by a majority of sixty-five, the Opposition dividing 149, while Administration had 214 votes, and Palliser continued to retain the government of Greenwich Hospital down to the period of his decease in 1796.

[26th February 1781.] Among the circumstances which will render the session of 1781 peculiarly interesting to posterity must be accounted the ap-



pearance of Pitt and Sheridan on the floor of the House of Commons. They both commenced their brilliant parliamentary career within a few days of each other. Both spoke on the side of Opposition, and both were received with marked approbation by every part of their audience. I was present when each of them first rose. Pitt led the way on the second reading of Burke's bill for "the reform of the King's household," which, though rejected in the last session of the preceding Parliament, its author did not the less bring forward anew at this time. He reiterated, on moving for leave to bring in the bill, the same encomiums upon the salutary retrenchments made by Necker with which he had entertained the House in 1780; extolled the discernment of Louis XVI. in making choice of such a Minister for superintendent of the finances; and asserted that the selection would produce more substantial benefit, as well as more solid glory to his reign, than had resulted from all the heroic deeds of Henry IV. "We want," said he, "some such great and enlightened statesman, who will strike out new and untried paths, adapted to the pressure of the times. Here no measures are adopted except on a narrow fraudulent scale, producing temporary supplies by retails of misfortune. *Tædet harum formarum!* These are only delusive phantoms. Give me substance and reality; *corpus solidum, et succi plenum!* When the financial resources of the French monarchy were believed to be exhausted, and when every ordinary channel of revenue was known to be dried up, Mr. Necker opened a mine of national wealth; dug down into it, reached the fountain-head of productive receipt, and by demolishing the dams that impeded the current of wealth, he immediately brought into the Exchequer the value of nearly six hundred useless

places." Such were the eulogiums pronounced upon the banker of Copet, whose ill-combined and illusive plans, calculated only to acquire popularity at the expense of his unfortunate master, plunged France into irretrievable embarrassments, and led ultimately to the subversion of the monarchy! The measures, moreover, adopted by an arbitrary prince for maintaining a war in which (contrary to every maxim of wise policy no less than by the infraction of all treaties) he had engaged with us, did not appear, in the opinion of impartial men, to form a proper model for our imitation. After a debate of considerable length, the bill was rejected only by a majority of forty-three votes in a very full House, where 423 members were present. Great expectations having been formed of Pitt, an anxious impatience for his coming forward pervaded the assembly, which was strongly impressed with a belief of his hereditary talents and eloquence. He unquestionably commenced under most auspicious circumstances; his birth and his very name, by resuscitating as it were the first Earl of Chatham, whose memory awakened such animating recollections, preparing every ear to be attentive, and thus removing all the impediments that present themselves in the way of ordinary men when attempting to address Parliament. But sanguine as might be the opinions entertained of his ability, he far exceeded them; seeming to attain at his outset that object which other candidates for public fame or favour slowly and laboriously effect by length of time and regular gradations.

It was in reply to Lord Nugent that Pitt first broke silence from under the gallery on the Opposition side of the House. The same composure, self-possession, and imposing dignity of manner which afterwards so eminently characterised him when

seated on the Treasury Bench distinguished him in this first essay of his powers, though he then wanted three months to have completed his twenty-second year. The same nervous, correct, and polished diction, free from any inaccuracy of language or embarrassment of deportment, which, as First Minister, he subsequently displayed, were equally manifested by him on this occasion. Formed for a popular assembly, he seemed made to guide its deliberations from the first moment that he addressed the members composing it. The debate of that evening, which introduced so distinguished an individual to the knowledge of his countrymen as a candidate for office, stands so much apart from the ordinary discussions of Parliament, and the particulars of it will unquestionably excite so warm a curiosity, that I shall endeavour to retrace some of its features; and I can do it with the greater facility, as well as accuracy, having not only been in my place on that night as a member of the House, but having taken an active part in it. I spoke at considerable length *against* the bill, replied to Burke's encomiums on Necker, and treated the plans of that Genevese financier nearly in the same manner as I have since written respecting them. These observations I venture to make in order to show that in all I may state I am not composing from books, but relating such facts as remain impressed on my memory and have survived the lapse of six-and-thirty-years. I shall, therefore, proceed without heeding the malevolent comments that may be made on my vanity and egotism for the mention of myself as in any manner connected with Mr. Pitt's entrance on public life.

Lord Nugent, while he professed himself a friend to economy, strongly opposed Burke's bill as destroying the independence of the sovereign,

while it would injure the frame of the British constitution by subverting the nice equipoise on which depended its permanence and stability. He afterwards treated the projected reform in the royal household as not less visionary or impracticable than the "Commonwealth" of Plato in antiquity or than Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," adding, that however much he might desire to introduce all becoming reductions of expense about the King's court and person, he never would vote for setting him down to an ordinary, or render him a more dependent man than any of his subjects. Against these opinions or arguments Mr. Pitt directed all the force of his eloquence. The Ministers, he said, and they only, were culpable in not having come forward spontaneously to propose a diminution of the Civil List. If, however, instead of performing their duty to a burdened and impoverished country, they interposed to prevent the benignity of the monarch, to check the free exercise of his natural bounty, to stop the tide of royal sympathy, and to close up his paternal emotions, there could exist no good reason why because Administration neglected or abused its trust the representatives of the people should imitate so pernicious and criminal an example. It might be asserted that the proposed measure would place the Crown in a state of tutelage, but the guardianship of a British House of Commons could not surely be disgraceful to a constitutional prince. Were magnificence and retrenchment, he demanded, incompatible? or was £200,000 a year, which the bill proposed to take from useless state and to pour into the public purse, so inconsiderable a saving as to be unworthy of parliamentary attention? Towards the conclusion of his speech, which, I think, did not exceed in duration fifteen minutes, he enlarged on the nature

of the Civil List itself, which, he said, was originally granted not for the personal pleasures or gratifications of his Majesty, but for public purposes. Those objects, embracing the splendour of the throne, he detailed, terminating by an expression of the extreme reluctance with which, in the awful state of the Empire, convulsed and bleeding on every side, his faithful Commons, who had voted him the revenue that he enjoyed, now applied to him to part with a portion of it as a sacrifice to their necessities.

Such, as far as I am able to recall it, was the purport of Mr. Pitt's opening address to Parliament.<sup>1</sup> It impressed more from the judgment, the diction, and the solemnity that pervaded and characterised it, than from the brilliancy or superiority of the matter. While he ardently supported the proposed measure he rather soothed and flattered than wounded the feelings of the King, against whom it was, in a certain degree, directed. He seemed to possess himself as much as though he had pronounced the speech in his own closet; but there was no display of studied or classic images in any part of it; nothing gaudy, superfluous, or unnecessary. The statesman, not the student, or the advocate, or the candidate for popular applause, characterised it. Lord John Townshend<sup>2</sup> (then Mr. John Townshend), who spoke in an early stage of the debate before Mr. Pitt rose, manifested more talent and drew his allusions from more cultivated sources of information than were exhibited by Pitt, but he by no means made a similar impression on the audience. As if the evening of the 26th of February was destined for the opening display of parliamentary ability by men who have since occupied so high a

<sup>1</sup> Lord North said it was the best first speech he had ever heard.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Second son of Viscount Townshend.—ED.



place in the public consideration, the present Earl of Lauderdale,<sup>1</sup> then Viscount Maitland, commenced his very useful and distinguished career only about an hour later than Pitt. Like him, Lord Maitland, then a very young man, brought his powerful resources of mind to the aid of Opposition. In a speech full of animation, indignant at the fallen state to which Ministers, as he asserted, had reduced their sovereign and their country, he traced the whole calamity up to the prosecution of a war that he stigmatised with the epithets of mad and ruinous. Nor did he spare the House more than the Administration, declaring his conviction that the majority supported measures which only corruption could induce them to approve. He tempered, nevertheless, these ebullitions of patriotic rage by professions of the warmest attachment to the person, the virtues, and the glory of the reigning monarch, and unquestionably gave, in his first attempt to address Parliament, an earnest of those endowments which, during near forty years, have been exerted in various ways for the public benefit either in the House of Commons or in the House of Peers.

To return to Pitt. All men beheld in him at once a future Minister, and the members of the Opposition, overjoyed at such an accession of strength, vied with each other in their encomiums as well as in their predictions of his certain political elevation. Burke exclaimed that "he was not merely a chip of the old 'block,' but the old block itself."<sup>2</sup> Nor did Fox do less justice to the talents of this new competitor for power, popularity, and

<sup>1</sup> This nobleman, born in 1759, was throughout the most of his life an impetuous advocate of popular opinions. He was the friend of Brissot, the dupe of Bonaparte, and, finally, died the opponent of Lord Grey's Reform Government!—D.

<sup>2</sup> Not quite. The old block's head was beautiful, and blue eyes in it brilliant with intelligence.—P.

employment. Having carried him to Brookes's Club a few days afterwards, Pitt was elected a member of that society, which then comprehended almost all the men of rank and great talents who were engaged in parliamentary opposition to Ministers. It is a fact that Pitt remained during several years a member of Brookes's, but he rarely, if ever, appeared there after he came into office. So nice was his tact, so deep his penetration, and in so different a mould was he cast from Fox, that even on his first reception in St. James's Street, though it was of the most flattering description, he was not dazzled nor won by it. On the contrary, he held back, and never coalesced with that party beyond external appearances. Fox himself soon perceived the coldness of his new ally, for whom play had no attractions and who beheld a faro table without emotion, though neither he nor Burke were probably aware of the profound and regulated, but soaring, ambition which animated him to aspire, without passing through any intermediate stage, to occupy the first employments of the state. Still less could they foresee that he would form during the greater part of their future lives the principal and insurmountable bar to their own attainment or permanent enjoyment of office.

Mr. Pitt, when he thus rose for the first time, represented the borough of Appleby in Westmoreland, and was indebted for his seat in the House to Sir James Lowther, whose property and parliamentary influence, which, in the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland were immense, enabled him to bring seven or eight members into that assembly. Sir James was rewarded by Mr. Pitt for this and for other services with an English earldom little more than three years afterwards. But he eagerly embraced the first occasion which presented itself

to obtain a more independent seat in Parliament, and to emancipate himself from any dependence on, or personal connection with, the Lowther family. The matrimonial alliance of Sir James with Lord Bute, one of whose daughters he had married, the name of Lowther, which had been rendered unpopular, if not odious, by the memorable contest with the Duke of Portland in the beginning of the present reign, and even the character of Sir James Lowther himself, tyrannical, overbearing, violent, and frequently under no restraint of temper or of reason, all these combined motives impelled Mr. Pitt to seek elsewhere a more independent title to call himself one of the representatives of the people, particularly after his elevation to the head of the Treasury. He was, nevertheless, compelled to wait for such an occasion till the dissolution of Parliament in March 1784, during all which period he sat for Appleby, even when Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Shelburne's Administration and afterwards when First Lord of the Treasury. At length, in the spring of 1784, his Ministerial weight, or, as "Junius" denominates it, "the spirit of distributing prebends and bishoprics," rather than his individual qualities and interest, enabled him to turn out Lord John Townshend (then Mr. John Townshend) and to place himself at the head of the poll for the University of Cambridge, an election and a seat in every sense gratifying to his feelings.

It was not, indeed, to the personal friendship of Sir James Lowther that he originally owed his entrance into the House of Commons. He was indebted for that advantage, which conducted him with such rapidity to the highest offices of state, principally, if not solely, to the late Duke of Rutland,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles, the fourth Duke, who was for some time Lord-Lieutenant

a nobleman of nearly the same age as Mr. Pitt. The early intimacy which subsisted between them at the University of Cambridge was cemented by the political ties that had formerly united their fathers, the Marquis of Granby and the Earl of Chatham, during the reign of George II. As every circumstance connected with the public life and career of such a man as Pitt becomes interesting, I shall relate from my own personal knowledge some facts not undeserving of commemoration upon this subject.

Among the persons who were admitted to the familiarity of the late Duke of Rutland, and who had access to him at almost all hours about this time, was a man of the name of Kirkpatrick, then well known on the turf at Newmarket. Possessing a small property at Penrith, in the county of Cumberland, within a few miles of Lowther Hall, he was much protected by Sir James Lowther, with whom he maintained a constant and habitual intercourse. The Duke and Sir James both treated him as a sort of buffoon who diverted them by his eccentricities, and he was frequently employed between them on private errands or messages. During the autumn of the year 1780, the Duke dispatched Kirkpatrick from his house in Arlington Street to Sir James Lowther, who resided in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, with a verbal request that "Sir James would do him the favour, if possible, to reserve a seat among his boroughs for a friend of the Duke's, Mr. William Pitt, a younger son of the Earl of Chatham." Kirkpatrick has often related to me the particulars of his interview and conversation with Sir James Lowther, whom he found in the act of shaving himself. "Well, Kirk,"—for so he was always de-

of Ireland. He was born in 1754 and died in 1787. Pitt was a Cambridge friend of the Duke's.—ED.

nominated,—said Sir James, “what may be your business?” “I am come from Arlington Street,” answered he, “with a message to you from the Duke.” “What are his commands?” replied Sir James. “He requests that you will oblige him by reserving a seat for a friend of his, Mr. Pitt, Lord Chatham’s brother, a young gentleman of vast abilities, whom the Duke wishes to bring into Parliament.” “I wish he had sent sooner to me,” returned Lowther. “Is he very anxious about it, Kirk?” “Exceedingly so, you may be assured.” “Then go back to the Duke,” was his reply, “and tell him that I will see him in the course of this day, and we will talk the matter over together.” Kirkpatrick carried back the answer. Sir James Lowther and the Duke of Rutland having met, the eventual consequence of their interview was that Mr. Pitt came in for Appleby; not, however, at the general election which took place in September 1780. Mr. William Lowther, the present Earl of Lonsdale, having succeeded in making his election for Carlisle as well as for Appleby, vacated his seat for the latter place after the meeting of Parliament, and Mr. Pitt was then returned for that borough. This event did not happen before the beginning of 1781, towards the close of January, when he took the oaths and his seat. He remained silent about four weeks before he rose and pronounced his first speech.<sup>1</sup>

Having been brought up, as is universally known, to the profession of the law, he went the western circuit as a barrister in the spring of the year 1780. But he unquestionably meditated very early in life a shorter and more brilliant mode of attaining to personal and political power. He could not be ignorant of the prodigious parliamentary talents

<sup>1</sup> Pitt was M.P. for Appleby from 1781 to 1784.—ED.



bestowed on him by nature, which had been cultivated with the utmost care by his father. A son of the great Earl of Chatham, so gifted by Providence, however narrow might be his fortune, yet would probably experience no great difficulty in procuring entrance into the House of Commons; and never was any juncture more propitious for his surmounting all the ordinary impediments to high employment. In 1781, Lord North palpably and evidently verged towards his extinction as First Minister. With him, it was obvious, all his colleagues in the Cabinet must pass away, and a new order of things would arise. America having nearly effected her emancipation from British supremacy, peace, it was almost certain, would follow that event, after no long period of time. The King was in a very high degree unpopular, while Fox had become an object of general attachment throughout the country (in defiance of his excesses), principally by the steady opposition which he had given to the American war; but those circumstances rendered him odious to his Majesty, who disliked his political principles, and reprobated his personal irregularities. Lord Rockingham and the Duke of Portland, though mild, virtuous, and respectable individuals, were only great names and heads of a party. It was impossible for the sovereign, even if he had wished it, to call the Duke of Grafton back to office; Lord Bute himself would have been less obnoxious to the country. No individual in either House of Parliament, except Lord Shelburne, remained, therefore, who could rationally aspire to succeed Lord North, unless by violence and against the King's inclination.

Mr. Pitt's youth might indeed seem at first sight an insurmountable impediment to his being placed in a Cabinet office, without first passing through the

intermediate stages. But common rules and precedents did not apply to him, whose hereditary claims to national regard, as the living representative of that great Minister who had humbled the House of Bourbon, disposed all men to consider him with predilection. Mr. Fox derived no such moral inheritance from his father, whose memory, far from being embalmed in the veneration of the English people, laboured, on the contrary, under imputations of peculation the most generally diffused. There existed, therefore, no solid obstacle to Pitt's speedy attainment, even of the greatest Ministerial situations, in the course of a very short time. And when we contemplate the range of his mind, the very limited fortune that he possessed, the coldness of his constitution, the dominion which he exercised over his passions, the expansion of his intellect, the splendour of his eloquence, and the immeasurable ambition or thirst of power which impelled him, we may give him credit for having, almost as soon as he came into Parliament, foreseen, anticipated, and confidently calculated on, his soon reaching the object of his exertions.

[*March 1781*]. Sheridan, on the contrary, notwithstanding the extent and variety of his endowments, which many persons may perhaps consider to have been even superior to those of Pitt himself, did not instantly take possession of the House in the same commanding manner. The reason was obvious. Though Sheridan manifested, from the first time that he presented himself to public notice as a speaker, the greatest talents for debate, yet he found many impediments, prejudices, and obstacles to surmount in his progress. His theatrical connections as manager of Drury Lane exposed him to attacks which a man of less wit, suavity of disposition, and ascertained spirit could not have

parried. Many persons thought, perhaps very illiberally, that a member of the Legislature should not be the conductor of a public theatre. At this vulnerable part malevolence or satire directed its blows before Sheridan was scarcely seated in the House. I remember an instance of it which took place during the debate of the 26th of February, when Pitt first presented himself to public notice. Courtenay,<sup>1</sup> one of the two members for Tamworth, who was then secretary to the Master-General of the Ordnance (Lord Townshend), possessed a very uncommon and eccentric species of humour, original, classic, even Attic, allied to and sustained by learning, inexhaustible and often irresistible in its effect on the muscles, but always coarse, frequently licentious, or at least indecorous, and rarely under a becoming restraint. His wit seemed indeed more adapted to a tavern or to a convivial board than to the grave deliberations of such an assembly as the House of Commons. Scarcely will the fact obtain belief, yet it is not the less true that Courtenay ventured to cite in the course of one of his speeches some of the most exceptionable lines in Prior's "Paulo Purganti" without being called to order. Ridicule constituted his never-failing arm, which he wielded with inconceivable facility, though without grace or elegance.<sup>2</sup> Having directed this engine against Burke's bill for the reduction of the Civil List, and held up the measure to contempt or derision under many ingenious points of view, as being equally nugatory, fallacious, and unbecoming a great nation to adopt, Sheridan reprehended him for thus introducing a style of debate altogether unbecoming the gravity of a legislative body convened to deli-

<sup>1</sup> John Courtenay, appointed Surveyor-General of the Ordnance in 1783.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Walpole calls him "the new court wit." Old George Cavendish styled him "deputy-buffoon to Lord North."—D.

berate on great national objects or interests. No sooner had he sat down than Courtenay, who was not easily disconcerted, rising in his place, observed that "the honourable gentleman seemed to be inimical to mirth and to wit *in any house except his own.*" This allusion, which did not admit of being misunderstood, and which touched upon Sheridan's histrionic or dramatic occupations, would probably, in defiance of his characteristic equality of mind, have provoked some reply, perhaps a severe or acrimonious retort, if the Speaker, apprehensive of the consequence, had not interposed his authority and interdicted the further prosecution of such personalities. Pitt afterwards attempted, with even worse success than Courtenay, to renew a similar mode of annoyance, for it could deserve no other epithet. Sheridan, however, not only repelled but repulsed his antagonist, though then seated on the Treasury Bench in the plenitude of Ministerial power.

While we are contemplating the outset in Parliament of these two celebrated men, it would be unfair not to recollect that Pitt, when he rose for the first time, spoke in reply. Sheridan, though he had previously risen twice or thrice in the House, and pronounced a few words, may be said to have commenced his public career on the 5th of March, by introducing three motions respecting "the interference of an armed force in suppressing the riots of June 1780." He must naturally, therefore, have arranged his ideas with more order and precision than it was possible to do in answer to a preceding speech. In fact, he won his way by superior talent, good-humour, and argument, which enabled him to triumph over every difficulty. Pitt might be said to descend as from an eminence on the House. Sheridan laboured uphill with slow but uniform

pace, sustained altogether by his own prodigious abilities, admirable wit, and insuperable command of temper, all which were powerfully seconded by Fox's steady friendship. His own father, though a man of genius, could lend him no assistance. Old Sheridan was, on the contrary, in such contracted circumstances as to have been compelled for his support, some years after the period of which I am now speaking, to give lectures, at a very low price, on dramatic elocution or declamation at a public room in Gerrard Street, Soho.<sup>1</sup> Henderson, the celebrated actor, was, I believe, his coadjutor in this species of exhibition.

No individual in my time, Burke himself not excepted, owed less to fortune, or was more indebted to nature for his vast reputation and success, than Sheridan. He did not, however, succeed in the object of his speech, which evidently meant to throw a severe, though an indirect censure on the sovereign as well as on the Administration for issuing those orders which had rescued London from the last effects of violence and outrage. With great severity he inveighed against the miserable police of Westminster, as altogether inadequate to the protection of its inhabitants, and he attempted to criminate the Ministers for not having come down

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sheridan, author, actor, and lexicographer, born 1721, died 1788.—ED.

Quere.—He delivered lectures certainly, but previous to 1781.—P.

His orthographical dictionary of the English language appeared in 1788, the year in which he died. He was a Government pensioner to the amount of £200 per annum. Churchill said of his voice—

“His voice no touch of harmony admits;  
Irregularly deep and shrill by fits,  
The two extremes appear like man and wife  
Coupled together for the sake of strife.”—D.

I have seen him on the stage in former days acting Horatio in Rowe's “Fair Penitent” to Garrick's Lothario; but of his powers as a lecturer Mr. Murphy gave the most ludicrous account, taking him off with incomparable powers of mimicry—quite unequalled.—P.



to the House and demanded a bill of indemnity for their conduct in calling to their assistance the military force. Throughout his whole address to Parliament on this occasion he was temperate, measured, argumentative, and impressive, but, unlike his general style of declamation, he neither had recourse to wit, to ridicule, or to satire as auxiliaries. Lord North did justice to the ability, as Fox did, in animated language, to the energy and elegance of Sheridan's speech. It was seconded by Colonel Fitzpatrick, who treated the mobs of June 1780 as a contemptible assemblage of unarmed and undisciplined rabble, only rendered formidable by the pusillanimous or criminal inactivity of the civil magistrates. The riots themselves, which he had been personally called on to quell, he denominated a "guerre des pots de chambre," in which a soldier could only find subject of mortification; adding, that to suppose the military power capable of overturning the constitution at the order of the sovereign was a libel on the profession. The First Minister in his reply observed that while protecting the persons and securing the property of his Majesty's subjects, attacked by a lawless, fanatical, or infuriated populace, he felt no dread of a prosecution. Whenever any such legal attack should be made on him for having authorised the troops to act against the rioters, it would be time enough to apply to Parliament on the business. Meanwhile he disdained either to demand or to accept indemnity for an act which he was conscious merited the highest commendation. The House rejected by a majority of seventy-seven votes the only one of Sheridan's three motions that he ventured to submit to a division. It may indeed justly excite some astonishment that any body of men should attempt to call into question the rectitude and propriety of a measure

only applied at the last extremity in order to rescue the capital from inevitable conflagration and public credit from total subversion. But never were the powers of Government fallen into such debility as towards the close of the American war; nor ever did Opposition venture to treat Pitt, or even Addington, or Perceval, with the contumelious personality which Fox and Burke used toward Lord North on a variety of occasions.

That Minister, though supported by a Parliament newly elected, yet was by no means master of its deliberations. He retained, indeed, a majority which might be esteemed considerable; but it was nevertheless fluctuating, precarious, and destitute of confidence in their leader. The minority, on the contrary, who augmented every month in numbers and animation, considered the termination of the American war as the term of the existence of the Administration; and they already predicted, as well as anticipated with certainty, the ill success of Lord Cornwallis's expedition against the southern provinces. Notwithstanding, indeed, some faint gleams of hope and of success which appeared in the spring of 1781, few except the most sanguine continued to expect the reduction of America to obedience by the British arms. Emboldened by the disastrous state of foreign affairs, and availing themselves of the unpopularity of the Ministry, the Opposition attacked in the severest terms Lord North's financial measures. The loan which he had recently negotiated, having risen suddenly to a prodigious premium, became a subject of bitter invective, as profuse, improvident, and constituting a systematic engine of parliamentary corruption. And though it was maintained by a majority of more than fifty votes, yet the impression ultimately produced by Opposition, both in and out of the House, an-

nounced an approaching crisis, however it might still be suspended or protracted by a variety of events.

[7th—13th March 1781.] During more than sixteen months that I sat in Parliament under Lord North's Administration, I recollect indeed no attack so personally painful and invidious made on him as the inquiry instituted relative to the loan of twelve millions which he borrowed at this time. All the other charges or accusations brought forward regarded the Minister. The present discussion was levelled at the individual. Fox maintained, not only that the terms of the loan were in themselves culpably extravagant on the part of the First Lord of the Treasury, but he roundly asserted many times, while addressing the House, that some hundred thousand pounds arising from the profit on the sum borrowed were distributed in that assembly. It was by such corrupt means, he added, that a majority was obtained upon every question, and from such sources that the recent expenses incurred by gentlemen at the late general election were to be defrayed. George Byng, member for Middlesex, a man of very honourable character and upright intentions, but of an ardent temper, very limited talents, and devoted to the Rockingham party, reiterated Fox's allegations in still more pointed language. "I believe from my soul," exclaimed he, "that six hundred thousand pounds have been distributed among the members of this assembly—I mean to those who uniformly support all the Ministerial measures!" Another leading individual on the Opposition bench, Sir Philip Jennings Clerke, assured the House that he was credibly informed Mr. Atkinson, a contractor well known beyond Temple Bar, partner in the commercial house of Muir, had received for his own share no less than three mil-

lions, three hundred thousand pounds of the loan. Hussey,<sup>1</sup> member for Salisbury, who though a dull debater, destitute of all the graces of elocution, tedious, and labouring under impediments of enunciation, yet thoroughly understood all financial questions, and never attempted to speak upon any other subjects—Hussey, by a long, laboured calculation, endeavoured arithmetically to demonstrate that the principles on which the bargain had been concluded were radically vicious as well as ruinous to the public. Sir George Savile, whose high character and large property secured him always a favourable hearing, called on the House not to sanction or to ratify so censurable a measure of finance.

Burke, after repeating the vague assertions made by Fox and Byng of the sums swallowed up among members of Parliament, who, he said, were gorged with places, pensions, and pecuniary gratifications, proceeded to draw another eloquent comparison between Lord North and Necker. "The former Minister," continued he, "has, in fact, augmented the capital debt of the country at this time by twenty-one millions of stock, while Mr. Necker has only added about five millions sterling by his late loan to the public debt of France. The noble Lord lays on new taxes to pay the interest of his loan. Not so the French financier. He contrives by reductions and economy to find the interest without imposing new burdens on the people. Necker borrows on lives; our Minister on perpetuities. Louis XVI.'s superintendent of the finances has, moreover, ten millions sterling in reserve for the exigencies of the approaching year; but where are our resources for future years?" Then, abruptly interrupting the thread of his own comparison, "Oh, happy France!" exclaimed he, "blest in her Minister!

<sup>1</sup> William Hussey.—ED.

Unfortunate England in her financier! The difference between the two countries arises solely from the corruption of Parliament." Mixing, nevertheless, as he usually did, raillery and humour with severity, he convulsed the House and shook Lord North's sides with laughter by comparing the thin, lean member of Parliament, on his first coming into the House, to the *Vulpecula*, or weasel of Æsop, who afterwards becomes so large and sleek as to be unable to effect his retreat. Then, stroking his own stomach, he contrasted it with Lord North's

"Fair round belly, with good capon lined,"

to the inexpressible entertainment of his audience, though, perhaps it may be thought, at the expense of their senatorial character and dignity. Mr. Byng, who throughout this whole inquiry performed an active part, and, by his indefatigable exertions to discover the real *holders* of the new loan, rendered himself not only conspicuous but important, concluded a very impassioned and criminating speech by making three motions. The first, that a list of all the subscribers to the new loan should be laid before the House. The second, for a correct list of all the individuals who had offered to subscribe but were rejected. The last (of a nature probably without precedent in the journals of Parliament), demanded copies of all the letters, notes, and other applications which had been addressed not only to the First Lord of the Treasury, but to any of the Lords Commissioners of that Board, to the secretaries, or to any other person by whom applications for a part of the loan had been transmitted to Lord North. With these evidences before him, Mr. Byng undertook to prove the Minister's guilt. In order to enforce compliance with so extraordinary a demand, he joined menaces that the people of Eng-



land, worn out by oppression, would bear no more burdens, and that the day of retribution which impended would infallibly take place sooner than was expected.

The First Minister, thus assailed from so many quarters and by such powerful opponents, did not on that account abandon himself. Calm, collected, conscious of his own rectitude, though surrounded by difficulties that accumulated from day to day, he made a masterly defence of the loan that he had just negotiated. While he admitted and regretted that the terms on which it was concluded might have been more advantageous to the public, leaving still a moderate profit to the contractors, he denied that the slightest partiality had been used in apportioning the sums respectively allotted to each bidder. He disproved the pretended story of Atkinson's receiving so monstrous a portion of the loan, and justified the admission of members of Parliament who were men of property to become, like other opulent individuals, subscribers to it. In conclusion, he made no objection to producing the list of subscribers demanded by Opposition, but to the second and third motions he gave a decided negative. "The member for Middlesex," said he, "after accusing me of partiality, makes rather a singular requisition: 'Deliver up to me the keys of your scrutoire; allow me to empty all your drawers, to inspect your most secret papers, and to peruse every letter that I can find. When this is done, and I am become possessed of all the information that they furnish, then I will proceed to examine whether or not I can produce any charge against you.' So extraordinary a proposition, I cannot doubt, will never receive the sanction of this assembly." These arguments, however strong and convincing they may perhaps appear to us,

produced no impression on the minority of that day. From a variety of quarters Lord North was overwhelmed with reproaches, threats, and reclamations. Byng denied his right to withhold the keys of his bureau, which, as he asserted, belonged to the public, the First Lord of the Treasury being a great national accountant. Fox loaded him with charges of corrupting Parliament while he withheld the only effectual means of proving his culpability and demonstrating his guilt. On the members who supported so criminal a Minister, Charles was, if possible, even more severe. "They begin," said he, "by taking the money out of the pockets of the people in order to put it into their own, and they finish by making bad loans for the public to the end that they may arrange good terms for themselves."

When the list of subscribers to the loan was produced, though the greater number of the names of members of the House who were holders of scrip still remained in concealment, their respective shares being ostensibly vested in other hands, yet many appeared in the catalogue. Even two British peers, one of whom was a Lord of the Bedchamber and an Earl, were down for £10,000 each; but no individual possessing a seat in the House of Commons whose name was there registered ventured to justify it on his legs in a manly manner except Courtenay,<sup>1</sup> who stood on the list for the sum of £10,000. George Byng having asserted, in the course of his speech, that "those members of Parliament who avowedly appeared on the list were infinitely more honest and upright than the men who skulked in the dark," Courtenay took notice of this observation. "As I have the honour, Mr. Speaker," said he, "to come from a country where weak nerves and a false

<sup>1</sup> John Courtenay, M.P. for Tamworth.—ED.

modesty are not characteristic maladies, my name stands conspicuous on the roll. And I can assure the honourable gentleman that the only concern I feel on the occasion is on account of the small sum against which my name is placed." There were individual members of the Lower House, not bankers by profession, who stood separately on the list for £50,000, seven for £70,000 each, and one instance appeared of £100,000.

Mr. Thomas Townshend expended his patriotic rage on Atkinson, whom he termed a universal contractor, fit for every service, and who would probably soon be seated by the noble Lord's side on the Treasury bench, among his firmest coadjutors. This circumstance did, in fact, take place, under another Administration, about three years afterwards, in 1784, when Pitt was become First Minister and Mr. Townshend (raised to the peerage by the title of Lord Sidney) filled the post of Secretary of State. Atkinson was then beheld almost daily on the Treasury Bench. So little can politicians foresee the changes produced by time, ambition, and the mutability of human affairs! After a stormy debate, protracted to a late hour, Byng's second motion was only negatived by a slender majority of thirty-one votes. On so precarious a basis did Lord North's power repose even in the first session of a new Parliament! The attendance was not, however, very numerous upon either side, Opposition mustering only 106 on that night, while Government found 137 supporters.

[14th—26th March 1781.] The list of subscribers to the new loan having been laid on the table of the House, Opposition, emboldened by their last division, made another desperate attack on the Ministerial trenches, hoping that even if they could not carry them by storm, they might succeed in vilify-

ing and degrading the First Minister himself personally in the estimation of Parliament and of the country. It proved indeed one of the most humiliating and painful days to Lord North that took place during the course of his long Administration. Sir George Savile, selected for the occasion, though labouring under evident indisposition and just risen from a sick-bed, opened the discussion in the invidious character of an accuser. His speech concluded by a motion "to appoint a select committee for inquiring into the facts connected with the late loan, and to report on them to the House." But though the distinction of thus commencing the debate was delegated to Sir George, the task of proving his assertions, and embodying as well as identifying his accusations, rested with Byng, who performed on that evening the part of an inquisitor of state. Holding the list of subscribers in his hand, he undertook to demonstrate that the paper itself was altogether a piece of Ministerial deception, calculated under fictitious names to conceal the members of both Houses, who did not dare to avow the share respectively allotted to them in this most iniquitous loan. With considerable ability, prodigious labour, and minute investigation, he endeavoured to lay open to general view, and to expose to general condemnation the secret machinery by which Robinson and Brummell<sup>1</sup> moved the great state machine denominated Parliament, and the puppets, as he termed them, commonly called representatives. He even ventured to appeal across the House to Mr. Henry Drummond, one of the most eminent bankers of that period, for the accuracy of the names of clerks employed in his service, who ostensibly held subscriptions to the amount of

<sup>1</sup> William Brummell, father of Beau Brummell, was private secretary to Lord North, and holder of several offices under Government, 1770-82.—ED.

near £440,000 in the loan. Drummond, who sat behind the First Lord of the Treasury, nodded assent as Byng severally recapitulated them, while Lord North, compelled to remain a passive witness and spectator of this disclosure before a crowded House of Commons, did not exhibit the dignified aspect or attitude befitting his high station. I never saw him apparently less at his ease; not even in the session of 1782, after the intelligence of Lord Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, or during the last days that he remained in office.

Not that he wanted defenders of consummate ability, who undertook to justify the transaction, at the head of whom must be placed the Lord Advocate. Aware that the occasion demanded all his talents, and ever ready to throw himself into the front ranks when the emergency called for it, Dundas seemed to collect his powers of mind on that day. Divested of those fastidious scruples to which men of more susceptible organisation are liable, he boldly avowed or admitted the selection made by the First Minister, which required, he said, no apology whatever, either to the House or to the country. After pointing out the integrity and incorruptibility of his noble friend as a fact universally conceded, he demanded on what principle members of either House of Parliament were to be excluded from subscribing on the present occasion; or why, *ceteris paribus*, friends should not be preferred to enemies? The concealment of their names, he observed, proved only the weakness of their nerves, not the impropriety of the act itself. Referring to the established precedents of past periods of time, he maintained that such had been the invariable usage under all Administrations; and concluded a bold, able, unembarrassed harangue, delivered in a tone calculated to give it the fullest effect, by deprecating all inter-



ference of the House as equally unwise and pernicious in its operation. Fox rising as Dundas sat down, displayed on that evening the vast extent of his talents, while he dissected with admirable perspicuity the loan under discussion, which he endeavoured to demonstrate was at once profuse, corrupt, and ruinous to the nation. He denied the insinuation (as it might be termed, rather than the assertion) of the Lord Advocate, in maintaining that former Ministers had manifested a similar partiality, or had negotiated loans on similar principles ; making only one exception, namely, that of Lord Bute in 1762, which financial measure he loaded with the severest epithets. On Lord North he exhausted his invectives as "a Minister highly criminal for grossly deceiving and fraudulently imposing on Parliament, whose baseness in concealing the real terms on which he had just borrowed twelve millions could only be surpassed by his guilt in concluding them."

The First Minister repelled these accusations with temper, explained every part of the proceedings which had attended his negotiation with the contractors for the loan, denied that either profusion or corruption could be attributed to him, and finally threw himself on the candour, good sense, and honour of the House to maintain inviolate the bargain. Towards one o'clock in the morning a division took place. The attendance was full, above 370 members being present, of which number Opposition counted 163, while Government was supported by 209. It was, nevertheless, a triumph dearly won, because the minority carried with them public opinion, which was generally adverse to the terms of the loan. Yet we have witnessed under Mr. Pitt's Administration during the course of the revolutionary war in 1795, as well as in other years,

loans where the premium has risen to nine, and even to ten per cent., immediately after the conclusion of the bargain, without any imputations of improvidence or of corruption being thrown upon the First Minister on that account. But the misfortunes and the unpopularity of the American war had reached such a point in 1781 as to incapacitate Lord North from prosecuting it without having recourse to expedients, from the necessity of adopting which Mr. Pitt was exempted. Pitt carried the great majority of the nation with him when successively contending against Robespierre and Bonaparte. Lord North's only support lay in the Crown. No prince, indeed, of a less firm and tenacious character than George III. could have sustained him in office during the last four years that he occupied the post of First Lord of the Treasury, amidst accumulating difficulties, humiliations, and disasters, from 1778 down to 1782. His predecessor yielded to far inferior symptoms of public dissatisfaction and to far inferior national calamities, when, in 1757, he reluctantly called to his councils a man distasteful to him, but forced into power by the universal voice of the country. If Fox had stood as high in general estimation as the first Mr. Pitt, he would have been carried into the closet on the shoulders of the people; but his personal irregularities and excesses balanced his parliamentary talents and prolonged Lord North's Administration.

While the Opposition endeavoured to degrade, if they could not overturn, the First Minister by criminating his financial measures, two simultaneous efforts were made with a view to weaken his strength and to diminish his numbers within the walls of the House. Sir Philip Jennings Clerke,<sup>1</sup> a man of unquestionable integrity, but not endowed with superior

<sup>1</sup> Sir Philip Jennings Clerk, Bart., M.P. for Totnes.—ED.

parts, introduced a bill for the exclusion of contractors from sitting in Parliament, while on the same day Mr. Crewe, then representative for the county of Chester (since raised to the peerage by Fox in 1806<sup>1</sup>), moved the second reading of a bill to restrain revenue officers from voting at elections of members to serve in that House. Both motions were negatived, but not by similar majorities. The first failed of success only by twenty votes, the numbers being 100 and 120 respectively, after a debate of considerable length, but the attempt to deprive revenue officers of their elective franchise was rejected by forty-seven without giving rise to any long or animated discussion. Ministers divided 133 on the question; Mr. Crewe had only 86 votes. Sir Philip Clerke's blow was levelled at the *elected*; Mr. Crewe directed his aim at the *electors*. In the ensuing session, when the Marquis of Rockingham had attained to the head of the Treasury, the two experiments were renewed with very different results.

I cannot too often repeat, while dwelling on this period of our history, that no private virtues of the sovereign, however eminent, and no ability of Administration, however recognised, could stem the unpopularity of the American war. With the two exceptions of Johnson and of Gibbon, the former of whom defended in print<sup>2</sup> the measures of Government in the beginning of the contest, and the latter, after drawing up the manifesto issued against Spain in 1779, voted, as a member of the House of Commons, in support of Lord North throughout the

<sup>1</sup> John Crewe, born in 1742, sat for the county of Chester from 1768 to 1806, when he was created Baron Crewe of Crewe, in Cheshire. He married, in 1776, Frances Anne, daughter of Fulke Greville. He died 28th April 1829.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson's work was "Thoughts on the Late Transactions respecting the Falkland Islands. London, 1771."—ED.

whole progress of hostilities, all the eminent or shining talents of the country, led on by Burke, were marshalled in support of the colonies. The magic of poetry alone seemed wanting to complete the delusion, or at least the impression. The admired author of the "Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers," after describing in verses of admirable beauty the corruption of the House of Commons under Lord North's Administration, declares that it will augment in enormity and profligacy—

"Till, mocked and jaded with the puppet play,  
Old England's genius turns with scorn away;  
Ascends his sacred bark, the sails unfurled,  
And steers his state to the wide Western world.  
High on the helm majestic Freedom stands,  
In act of cold contempt she waves her hands;  
Take, slaves, the realms that I disown,  
Renounce your birthright, and destroy my throne!"

Who, on reading these lines, would not think them composed for James II. and his Lord Chancellor Jefferies rather than for George III. and Lord North! Just at this time the marriage of Lord Althorpe (the present Earl Spencer) with Miss Lavinia Bingham, took place,<sup>1</sup> an event which I only mention incidentally, as it gave birth to one of the most beautiful lyric productions in the English language. Mr. Jones, better known afterwards as Sir William Jones, emulating at once the fame of Milton and of Gray in "The Muse Recalled," reminded us of some of the most touching passages of "Lycidas" and of "The Bard." He too lent his powerful assistance to the cause of rebellion. Like Goldsmith, who ten years earlier erroneously assumed in his "Deserted Village," as the basis of his poem,

<sup>1</sup> George John Viscount Althorp, afterwards second Earl Spencer, married, 6th March 1781, Lavinia Bingham, daughter of Baron Lucan, afterwards Earl of Lucan.—ED.

that population and rural happiness were abandoning England, Jones carried his assumption in our disfavour to a still greater length. Juvenal, though he wrote under Domitian, only asserts that female modesty and justice withdrew from earth to heaven after the extinction of Saturn's reign—

“ Paulatim deinde ad superos Astræa recessit,  
Hac comite, atque duæ pariter fugere sorores.”

But Jones, after lamenting that “ Freedom and Concord repudiate the sons of Albion,” carries off all the virtues from this degenerate island—

“ Truth, Justice, Reason, Valour with them fly,  
To seek a purer soil, a more congenial sky.”

And to what country did they direct their flight? Impelled by the prejudice which then prevailed, and borne on the wings of poetic fiction as well as of party violence, he transports these virtues to the Chesapeake and the Delaware—

“ Beyond the vast Atlantic deep  
A dome by viewless genii shall be raised,  
The walls of adamant, compact and steep,  
The portals with sky-tinctured gems emblazed.

“ There on a lofty throne shall Virtue stand :  
To her the youth of Delaware shall kneel ;  
And when her smiles rain plenty o'er the land,  
Bow, tyrants, bow beneath th' avenging steel !”

Here, in a fine frenzy of inspiration, he seems to behold as in a vision the modern city of Washington, and the Congress assembled after successfully throwing off all subjection to Great Britain. George III. is pretty clearly designated in the last line apostrophising tyrants. It was not, however, civil liberty, but independence of the mother country—it was not freedom, but emancipation from the parent stock that America principally emulated to attain by arms. She



might have been admitted to participate in the privileges of our free constitution, but she must then have *paid her pecuniary debts to British subjects*,<sup>1</sup> all which became liquidated in the crucible of insurrection. Burke, within ten years after the conclusion of the American war, found out his error when he beheld the French Revolution spring from the ashes of Hancock and Adams. He then endeavoured, as he said, "to trim the boat at the other end." Mr. Fox never could discover anything wrong either in the one or in the other revolution.<sup>2</sup> We have lived to behold the American Government, within thirty years from the period of their emancipation, voluntarily become the accomplices and allies of the most sanguinary, ambitious, and obdurate despot who ever appeared among men. We have seen this virtuous people yoke themselves to his car when he was setting out for Moscow in 1812, in opposition to the united struggles of all Europe for deliverance, thus endeavouring, as far as their power extended, to cement by our destruction his detestable empire. Madison, unlike Thrasybulus or Brutus, only aspired to uphold and perpetuate the dominion of his Corsican master. It will demand ages to wipe out the stain of such national turpitude from the American annals. But under Lord North's Administration the insurgents beyond the Atlantic were generally seen through the most partial and favourable medium, while Philip II., in his attempt to extinguish all the rights of human nature among his subjects in the Nether-

<sup>1</sup> True.—P.

<sup>2</sup> About this time Fox wrote to the Marquis of Rockingham, "I am sanguine enough to think that with perseverance and activity we may in time make a strong Whig party in the country, and if we cannot, I am sure there is nothing to do but to give the thing fairly up, and to see *who can make his court best at St. James's*."—*Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham*, vol. ii. p. 435.—D.

lands, was hardly stigmatised with severer epithets than the Opposition applied to the King of Great Britain.

The consideration of East India affairs, which formed one of the most important objects of the session, engrossed universal attention. As early as February a select committee having been appointed, ostensibly for the exclusive purpose of reporting on the state and abuses of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Bengal, General Richard Smith was placed at their head as chairman. His local knowledge of India seemed to qualify him in some measure for the situation. He had acquired a large fortune while in that part of the world, which he was supposed to have squandered at play since his return. Though destitute of the advantages of education and of very obscure origin, he did not by any means want parts, and he displayed some talent in addressing the House. Burke constituted the real head of the committee, and directed all its operations, either in person or through his disciple Sir Gilbert Elliot. But as the members allowed themselves to become subservient to the purposes of party, and particularly to be made the instrument of Burke's personal enmities or resentments, they soon degenerated into an engine of private attack and of individual persecution.

The Opposition, seemingly exhausted by the ineffectual and reiterated efforts made in the Lower House of Parliament during the month of March with the hope of overturning the Administration, allowed the First Minister to enjoy a degree of comparative repose throughout the greater part of April. But intelligence of Hyder Ally's invasion of the Carnatic,<sup>1</sup> followed by the defeat of the British

<sup>1</sup> In 1780 Hyder Ali, in conjunction with the Mahrattas and the Nizam, invaded the Carnatic to overthrow the Nabob and expel the

forces under Fletcher and Baillie, which reached London at this time, spread universal consternation. In order fully to appreciate the extent of the calamity and its operation on the public mind, we must recollect the state of the British Empire at the period under our review. The fabric seemed to be everywhere collapsing by its own weight or yielding to external attack. In the western hemisphere, America might be considered as already lost. Many of the Windward and Leeward Islands were reduced to the obedience of France; and the remainder it was thought must speedily fall. The possession of Jamaica itself appeared insecure. At home, the public funds experienced a progressive depression,<sup>2</sup> while Ireland, taking up arms, demanded political and commercial freedom sword in hand. Cadiz and Brest had been crowded with our captured merchantmen, to whom the English navy no longer afforded its accustomed protection. Under these circumstances the eyes and hopes of all men were turned towards the East, as the only quarter from which we might expect relief. But there a combination of European and Asiatic enemies, aided by internal rebellion, and fomented by discord among the members of the supreme government, threatened the subversion of our power on the Ganges no less than on the coast of Coromandel. Hastings, quitting Calcutta, had repaired to Benares in order to arrest the progress of Cheyt Sing's revolt. At Madras, the government of Rumbold was become

English. He had above 100,000 men and 100 guns, and therewith the advice of the French commander, Lally. Fletcher and Baillie's small detachments were overwhelmed through the negligence of Munroe, the commander-in-chief, to render them assistance. Of four hundred heroes who survived to reluctantly surrender to Hyder, half were butchered, and the other half were compelled to endure horrors worse than death. The temporary triumph of Hyder was followed by the fall of Arcot.—D.

<sup>2</sup> The price of consols for the year averaged about £63.—ED.

odious for rapacity and despicable from its incapacity or pusillanimity. Nor must it be forgotten that we then neither possessed the Cape of Good Hope, nor Ceylon, nor Guzerat, nor the Island of Mauritius, nor Java, nor the Moluccas. Even the Carnatic belonged not to us, but to our confederate Mahomed Ally, the Nabob of Arcot. With the Mahratta Empire we were at war. The rich countries of Mysore and of Bidnoor, occupying a central portion of the peninsula of Hindostan, extending through several degrees of latitude along the Malabar coast, and intersecting all communication by land between the two Presidencies of Madras and of Bombay ; these territories, so calculated to annoy us, were then subjected to a martial, enterprising, and active prince, animated by determined hostility to the English, assisted by French engineers, and himself habituated to the European system of tactics. His cavalry, bursting in through the defiles of the mountains of the Ghauts, overran the fertile plains of the Carnatic and of Tanjore, bearing down all resistance. Madras itself, invested by the enemy, was scarcely preserved from falling into Hyder's possession ; and it must be confessed that the British dominions in Hindostan shook to their foundation.

[30th April 1781.] Such was the impression produced by this unexpected event, which seemed imperatively to call for measures of energy, that it gave rise to the appointment of a secret committee by ballot in the House of Commons, moved for by the First Minister himself. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, Mr. Dundas, being constituted their chairman, they were specially charged to inquire into the causes of the war existing in the Carnatic. Notwithstanding the severe animadversions levelled by the Opposition on the majority of the names

chosen, several of the members were men of equal ability and integrity, whose luminous, as well as laborious reports distinctly pointed out the origin and indicated the remedy for those abuses or acts of maladministration which had produced such complicated distress on the coast of Coromandel. Nor did even the committee of scrutineers appointed to examine the result of the ballot escape some acrimonious remarks on its composition. Lord North formed one of its members, and I was likewise among the number. Mr. Thomas Townshend observed, when speaking of it immediately after their report to the House, that "the noble Lord in the blue ribband was uncommonly vociferous in naming his own friends, and was, likewise, himself nominated a scrutineer, a circumstance very extraordinary, if not without parallel, the committee of scrutiny being, he believed, the first in the annals of Parliament that ever was honoured with a blue ribband upon it." Unquestionably, Ministers felt great anxiety relative to the individuals who might be elected members of the secret committee, and were not without strong apprehensions that the Opposition would succeed in forcing into it some of their own most able or zealous adherents. Jenkinson, who stood fourth on the list of persons chosen, was so impatient to learn the result of the scrutiny, that he wrote to me while we were engaged in the examination to request that I would transmit him the names as soon as they were ascertained and could be divulged. Dundas obtained as many votes as Jenkinson had, namely, 160; but Gregory<sup>1</sup> was placed out of all competition at the head of the committee, he uniting the suffrages of the Ministerial as well as of the Opposition sides of the House, and being elected by 249 votes. Gregory

<sup>1</sup> Robert Gregory.—ED.



deserved that mark of parliamentary preference, he being a very honourable, incorrupt, independent man; simple, or rather shy and repulsive, in his manners, unadorned by any accomplishments of mind, but laborious, attentive to business, and possessing very extensive local information on East India concerns. He was one of the two representatives for the city of Rochester and a member of the Court of Directors. Fox, in November 1783, named him a Commissioner for the Government of India in his famous bill, I believe. After the dissolution that took place in March 1784, Gregory never again obtained or accepted a seat in the House of Commons.

Though strongly attached to Fox and to the party acting with him, Gregory disdained to be considered as a devoted partisan. I well remember that about the very time under discussion, in April 1781, Burke having somewhat rashly pledged not only his own support to a measure under contemplation, but that of Gregory (whom he denominated "his worthy friend"), the latter, rising, with some warmth, desired him to limit his pledges to himself. "I stand," added he, "connected with no set of men, but will lend my support where I conceive it to be due, always delivering my opinion with freedom, being as independent in my seat and in my principles as any individual within these walls." Burke, indignant at a reproof so unexpected and so mortifying, made a sharp though a short reply, exclaiming, that "if the honourable member thought proper to renounce any connection with him, it gave him no concern." He expected and exacted implicit submission from all his political friends. Mr. Orde,<sup>1</sup> who, after filling many distinguished public

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Orde assumed the additional surname of Powlett, and was created Baron Bolton, 20th October 1797.

situations, has been elevated to the peerage, stood ninth upon the list. To him, as I have always understood, was attributed the *fifth* report from the Committee of Secrecy, one of the most able, well-digested, and important documents ever laid upon the table of the House of Commons. With the reserve of Gregory, of Mr. Richard Jackson, who was a friend of the Earl of Shelburne, and of Mr. Yorke, then member for the county of Cambridge, now Earl of Hardwicke, whom even the Opposition admitted to be an unexceptionable person, all the remaining individuals composing the committee were either men holding offices under Government, or personally connected with the Minister. Lord North, in the critical and perilous condition of the East India Company, unable to obtain from the proprietors or from the Court of Directors such advantageous pecuniary terms for the renewal of their charter as he thought the nation was authorised to demand, had recourse to his ordinary palliative, procrastination. He renewed the charter for a very limited period, only one year; and by that measure eventually originated the memorable bill of Fox towards the close of 1783, which produced such national convulsions, terminated by the complete destruction of the "Coalition Ministry."

[*8th May 1781.*] The attempts to drive Lord North from office, which, as I have observed, had been in some measure relaxed or suspended throughout the month of April, were renewed with augmented pertinacity in May. But it was no longer against his measures of finance that Opposition pointed their blows. Sir George Savile, recovered from his late indisposition, reappeared as the organ of the party, and endeavoured to induce the House to adopt anew the memorable resolution of the 6th of April 1780, when it was declared that "the influence of

the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." He no longer found, however, the same aptitude to receive those impressions of jealousy or apprehension which had operated on the members of the late House of Commons; and after a very long debate, the motion made by Sir George to refer the petition to a committee was rejected by a majority of seventy-seven votes. The attendance nearly amounted to 350; Government dividing 212, while the minority numbered 135. Neither Lord North, Lord George Germain, Dundas, nor Jenkinson spoke during that evening. On the other side, Burke remained silent; nor did either Pitt or Sheridan take any part in it. Yet a more important or interesting discussion I scarcely ever witnessed during the whole time that I remained in Parliament, nor one of which, if I were able, I should more anxiously wish to transmit some idea to future times. The dangerous doctrine of a right existing in the people to form associations, to appoint committees, and to nominate delegates for the protection of civil liberty against the encroachments or abuse of the royal power—a right evidently independent of Parliament, as well as subversive of it—was fully discussed on that occasion. Lord Maitland, who then rose, I believe, for the second time, maintained that the right not only existed in the legal sense, and was strictly conformable to the British constitution, but, under certain circumstances, might be highly expedient; adding, that to associations of men combined for a beneficial purpose we were indebted for Magna Charta, for the revolution that expelled James II., and for the introduction of the reigning House of Brunswick. General Burgoyne, after declaring that he had himself signed the petition presented on that day in the capacity of a delegate, and inveighing in language of uncom-

mon asperity against the corruption, or rather the prostitution, of Parliament at the feet of Ministers, reverted to his own individual sufferings in the line of his profession. These he detailed with great animation, asserting that "he was driven unjustly from a service in which he had grown old by the machinations of power." He then subjoined, "I am now from my time of life sufficiently disposed to inactivity. Yet should the exigencies of the people call me forth from my present obscurity, or if the necessities of the state should demand the assistance of my arm, I am ready either to act or to suffer in the public cause."

This declaration, which seemed more fitted to 1642 than to 1781, and which Hampden or Pym, when opposing themselves to the levy of ship-money by prerogative, might have more appropriately made, was if possible outdone by Fox. In a speech of unreasonable length, but of great ability, he justified the right inherent in himself and in every subject to act as delegates, no less than as members of that assembly. "I avow myself," said he, "a delegate, and if I had not acted in a delegated capacity, I should not have applied to this House for redress. But *out of deference to the opinion of some persons with whom I act*, and not from any doubt of its legality, I have not petitioned as a delegate." Then having panegyriced the constancy, incorruptibility, and perseverance of that patriotic band who stood forth in Parliament the champions of the British people, that impenetrable phalanx, who were neither to be terrified, misled, seduced, nor corrupted by Ministers, he added, "I cannot better express myself on this point than by adopting and repeating the words of my honourable friend (Burgoyne), namely, that as he had devoted his life and talents to the people, so I, whenever

they call on me, shall be ready to execute their commands, as far as my acquiescence is authorised by the laws. I mean, whenever any direct and palpable inroad is made on those invaluable blessings secured to us by our happy constitution." However guarded and qualified these expressions may appear, it is impossible not to consider them as revolutionary, and more suited to a tribune of the Roman republic, or to an agitator of the times of Cromwell, than to a member for Westminster, the subject of George III. Such indeed they seemed to many members of the House of Commons on the evening when they were used. Such I believe they were considered by Burke, who took no part in the debate, as he probably would have done, had he thoroughly approved the principles and object of the petition. Neither did Pitt rise to support Fox and Burgoyne, a circumstance much remarked at the time.

Ministers, though they did not themselves undertake their own defence, but trusted to the discernment, loyalty, and good sense of the House for rejecting the specious propositions of reform submitted to them, yet by no means wanted advocates to point out the insidious and dangerous spirit of discontent and insubordination concealed under the declarations of Fox and Burgoyne. Sir Horace Mann<sup>1</sup> protested his detestation of all associations and committees as illegal in themselves, and calculated only for purposes of intimidation. While he professed himself an enemy to court influence and a friend to economy, he reprobated the spirit of the petition, and exhorted the House to treat it with contempt. Courtenay,<sup>2</sup> employing, as he always did, the arms of ridicule, parodied the lines of Pope,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Horatio Mann, M.P. for Maidstone.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> John Courtenay, M.P. for Tamworth.—ED.



when speaking of his grotto, which he applied to the leaders of Opposition with admirable effect—

“Their wise divan the best companions grace,  
 Chiefs out of war, and members out of place,  
 Who fondly mingle in their hope-filled bowl  
 The feast of party and the flow of soul.  
 Even he whose lightning pierced rebellion’s lines  
 For reformation forms their great designs.”

The last couplet, which so pointedly alluded to Burgoyne’s American campaign contrasted with his present occupations as a delegate, was not less felt by the audience than Courtenay’s description of the Roman provocatives to patriotism, “*Domi, inopia, foris, æs alienum,*” attracted all eyes towards Fox. In language of the utmost simplicity, unaccompanied with any ornaments of style, but on that account more impressive, Sir William Dolben, one of the representatives for the University of Oxford, a man of sound and sober sense, expressed his disapprobation of, and his total dissent from, the petition before the House. Of the asserted increase of the influence of the Crown so as to endanger the future security of public freedom, he declared his disbelief. Above all, he reprobated the appointment of associations and delegates for the purpose of overawing and controlling the Legislature. He finished by observing that so long as the constitution existed, redress could only be obtained from Parliament, and protested that he would oppose every institution, however plausible it might appear in theory, which tended to set up or to constitute any power paramount to the laws and the British form of government.

So animated a declaration, made from a quarter of such respectability, proved of incalculable advantage to Ministers, who thus beheld themselves defended by weapons far more solid than eloquence.

It was, indeed, with a view to counteract the effect produced on the House by Sir William Dolben's<sup>1</sup> speech that Fox instantly rose and exerted his gigantic talents in order to efface the impression. The Solicitor-General, Mansfield, replied to him, and alluding to the profession jointly made by Fox and Burgoyne of their readiness to obey the call of the people whenever made, "This language," observed he, "either imports nothing or it is strong indeed. It cannot mean a mere perseverance in parliamentary opposition. If, therefore, it has any meaning, it must be that they are ready, without previously deciding on the motives or the justice of the call, to seek redress in some undefined manner not authorised by the constitution. Both those gentlemen are delegates, and both have signed the present petition as individuals. By such an anomalous mode of proceeding, while they affect to acknowledge the supremacy of this House, they in reality treat Parliament as a subordinate power in the state, while they avow their readiness to obey the summons of the people without reservation." Neither Fox nor Burgoyne made any reply nor offered any explanation relative to the import of their expressions, but Dunning, rising when the Solicitor-General sat down, in a speech of considerable length, which displayed all the acute legal sophistry of a most able practitioner at the bar, endeavoured to cover his friends and to justify their declarations. He assumed as an incontrovertible principle that associations might not only be legal, but laudable, the culpability or merit of such unions of individuals depending not on the act itself, and being altogether regulated by the intention. He exemplified the position with uncommon ingenuity, and placed it in

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Dolben, Bart., of Thingdon, co. Northampton, M.P. for the University of Oxford.—ED.

numerous as well as striking points of view, without, nevertheless, erasing the sentiment of condemnation which generally pervaded the minds of moderate and impartial men on a full consideration of the subject. The division sufficiently proved how little Fox could hope to overturn the Administration by the same arguments which had produced the memorable vote of the 6th of April 1780, and he therefore directed his attack on a more assailable quarter—I mean the capture and treatment of the island of St. Eustatia.

[14th May 1781.] That defenceless possession of the Dutch Commonwealth in the West Indies having fallen into our hands as a natural consequence of the war between the two states, Sir George Rodney and General Vaughan, the two commanders by sea and land, proceeded instantly to make a general and indiscriminate seizure of the property as well as of the stores there accumulated. In the execution of this act many individual cases of severe suffering necessarily happened, all which were presented to the House by Burke under a splendour of description and a blaze of eloquence which I have scarcely ever known exceeded even by him. He compared the conduct of our naval and military officers in thus confiscating private property to the most savage outrages of the ferocious leaders of the most barbarous ages; and, after laying before his audience a picture of oppression on the one hand contrasted with misery on the other, well calculated to awaken sympathy while it inspired indignation, he concluded by a motion tending to institute an immediate inquiry into the whole transaction. Lord George Germain, in whose department the responsibility lay, and from whose office had issued the orders or instructions under which Rodney and Vaughan had acted, while he justified their line of

conduct as not only dictated by wisdom and policy, but as sanctioned by all the laws of modern war and by the code of national jurisprudence universally adopted throughout Europe, yet strongly objected to a parliamentary inquiry in the first instance. Dundas, who always threw himself into the breach whenever the enemy attempted to storm, distinguished himself on that night by one of the most able speeches which ever fell from his lips. But the First Lord of the Treasury sat silent, a circumstance which gave rise to surmises that the measure had not his cordial approbation, or that unanimity did not thoroughly pervade the Cabinet.

Nevertheless, the division disappointed all the hopes of Opposition, Burke's motion being negatived by nearly two to one; only 86 supporting it, while Government had 160 votes. I have, notwithstanding, always considered the proceedings of Rodney and Vaughan at St. Eustatia, however necessitated they may have been by the peculiar circumstances accompanying the capture, as unfortunate in a national point of view. Neither the vote of approbation, in which I concurred on that night, nor my partiality for Lord George Germain and for Lord Rodney, both of whom were my intimate friends, prevent me from owning that the measure has, on the fullest consideration, neither my moral nor my political approval. It did not facilitate the subjection of America, as was hoped and predicted from the Treasury bench. It covered our arms with some degree of obloquy, as if we had abused the rights of conquest to purposes of rapine and private emolument. To the captors themselves the plunder of St. Eustatia produced no benefit, the vessels on which was shipped the produce of that emporium having been intercepted by a squadron of the enemy under the command of La Motte

Piquet on their passage to England, and carried into French ports. Nor did the evil terminate there, for I know that the actions and suits at law which were commenced in the Admiralty and other courts of this country, on the part of the individuals who sought reparation for the injuries and losses inflicted by Rodney's orders, embittered the evening of his life, and pressed heavily on his finances. Such were the results of that expedition, from which very different consequences were confidently anticipated.

[31st May 1781.] Notwithstanding the general admiration which Pitt's first speech had excited, and the great expectations formed of his parliamentary talents, yet he remained silent for more than three months before he rose a second time, exhibiting by this act of restraint and self-command the patience as well as the judgment with which he knew how to wait for a favourable occasion of presenting himself anew to public notice. Colonel Barré having attempted to induce the House to nominate Commissioners of Accounts from among their own members, instead of delegating so important a function to individuals chosen, as he asserted, by the First Minister, Lord North opposed it with his usual ability, and assigned many strong reasons for adhering to the persons already in employment. Pitt availed himself of this opportunity to confirm the impression that he had made, or rather to augment the reputation which he had previously acquired. With great animation, but with still greater dignity and energy, he endeavoured to demonstrate that the House, in permitting persons not taken from among themselves to perform the office of examining and reporting on the national expenditure, voluntarily surrendered their characteristic, most valuable right, that of watching over the public purse. The power of taking from the people, the odious power



of taxing, they reserved as an instrument for enabling the noble Lord in the blue ribband to prosecute his wild schemes of conquest or of corruption; but the beneficent power of relieving the distresses of the subject they abandoned to others. He treated with derision the idea of those Commissioners possessing more experience than the members of an assembly where every representative of the people should be capable of superintending as well as of examining how the treasure of the state was expended.

After depicting with warmth the embarrassed and degraded condition of the country, he adverted to the qualities, the arithmetical talents, and personal qualifications of the Commissioners. Sir Guy Carleton, he observed, however able a military officer, might be no accomptant; and of Mr. Pigot he remarked, that *though of a profession to which he himself could not be supposed inimical* (for Pitt was then a barrister), yet the law did not necessarily qualify gentlemen for a commission of that nature. Towards Lord North he expressed himself with great asperity, as a Minister who had repeatedly shifted his ground, who had violated his pledges given to Parliament, had purposely employed the Commissioners in objects of minor importance, instead of directing them to great national inquiries, and who only sought systematically to procrastinate, to deceive, or to mislead, as might best suit his purposes. He concluded by emphatically invoking and adjuring the House not to reject the motion of Colonel Barré, unless they were determined to bury their own freedom and independence in the same common grave with the power, the splendour, and the glory of the Empire. Such was nearly the purport of Pitt's second address to Parliament, made in support of a member who represented not the

Marquis of Rockingham, but the Earl of Shelburne in that assembly. It was pronounced before a thin attendance, scarcely above 140, and exceeded in duration his first speech by nearly double the time. Not a word was uttered from the Treasury bench in answer to it, nor was it supported either by Fox or Burke. A division taking place immediately after Pitt sat down, Government divided ninety-eight, while the minority only amounted to forty-two. So firm a hold of power did Lord North still retain towards the close of the sixth year since we had been engaged in hostilities with America!

[12th June 1781.] Towards the middle of June, Fox, strenuously supported by Pitt, made an ineffectual effort for compelling the Administration to abandon the further prosecution of the American war, and to conclude peace with the colonies. Neither the House nor the nation, though both were weary of the contest, could however be induced to relinquish it while Lord Cornwallis seemed to be advancing with his army through the central provinces towards the Chesapeake. Fox's motion was rejected by a majority of seventy-three. On that evening, nevertheless, it began to be palpable that the scaffolding on which rested Lord North's power, after more than six years of severe and almost unremitting attack, gave indications of an approaching fall. He in fact tacitly encouraged the assailants by withdrawing from the breach, if I may so express myself, at the moment of the storm; for though the attempt to compel Ministers to conclude peace with the American colonies must, if it had been successful, probably overturn his own Administration, yet he never rose nor opposed it by a single word. Lord George Germain, under those discouraging circumstances, made as able and as eloquent a defence as the nature of the case admitted; but he

had to struggle against insuperable and augmenting difficulties. The country gentlemen, wearied out by so many unsuccessful campaigns, exhibited symptoms of reluctance to continue their support. One or two made their recantation. Rigby and the Lord Advocate of Scotland, who both spoke in the course of the debate, though they resolutely opposed Fox's motion, yet avowed not only that they were disgusted at so expensive and protracted a contest, but implied their disbelief of its termination on any terms short of conceding independence to America. One noble individual only, then an Irish peer,<sup>1</sup> was found sufficiently enthusiastic to avow that he considered the struggle as a holy war; a declaration which he made from the Treasury bench. He was, indeed, himself, a member of the Board of Treasury. The avowal attracted, as might have been foreseen, the severest animadversions from the opposite benches. Townshend, with very considerable ingenuity, drew a comparison between the actual war and the Crusades undertaken in the ages of darkness, which expeditions bore, he said, the strongest similitude. Both originated in folly or madness or delusion, and both conducted to slaughter or to ruin. Fox, holding in his hand the gazette which contained Lord Cornwallis's account of his victory recently gained over the Americans in the province of North Carolina, endeavoured to deduce, even from the British general's letter, proofs of the impossibility of his subjugating the colonies. Burgoyne, in a speech prepared for the occasion, detailed his own disastrous campaign through its principal stages down to the surrender at Saratoga; accused Lord George Germain of having deceived him with hopes or promises of aid on the part of the loyalists which had never been realised; and con-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Westcote.—ED.

cluded by declaring that the loss of America might be regarded as inevitable.

But the feature of the debate which rendered it peculiarly prominent and interesting in the annals of Parliament was the third appearance of Mr. Pitt on the floor of the House, and the part taken by him in the discussion. It would seem that he had not intended to rise, nor meditated to speak on the question under consideration, if the allusions made to his father had not in some measure compelled him to break silence. Rigby, in the course of his speech, having asserted that the late Earl of Chatham, though he denied the right of Great Britain to tax the colonies for the purpose of raising a revenue, yet maintained the right of the parent country to make financial or commercial regulations, and to establish port duties or customs on every article sent to America, Pitt attempted to justify and to explain that line of opinion attributed to his noble relation. While he admitted that such sentiments had been expressed by the deceased Earl, he denied that his father had ever approved of the war commenced with America, which, on the contrary, he had condemned, reprobated, and opposed in every stage. After thus throwing a shield over the memory of his illustrious parent, and rescuing him from the imputation of having countenanced or supported coercive measures for the subjugation of the colonies beyond the Atlantic, he then diverged with equal vehemence and majesty of expression to the topic immediately before the assembly. Referring to the epithet of *holy*, which Lord Westcote had given to the contest, he declared that he considered it as unnatural, accursed, and unjust, its traces marked with persecution and devastation, depravity and turpitude constituting its essence, while its effects would be destructive in the extreme. The English language

seemed inadequate fully to express his feelings of indignation and abhorrence, while stigmatising the authors of so ruinous a system. As a specimen of parliamentary eloquence, it unquestionably excelled his two preceding speeches, leaving on his audience a deep impression, or rather conviction, that he must eventually, and probably at no remote distance of time, occupy a high situation in the councils of the Crown, as well as in the universal estimation of his countrymen.

Dundas, who rose as soon as Pitt sat down, seemed to be thoroughly penetrated with that truth, and by a sort of political second sight appeared to anticipate the period when this new candidate for office would occupy the place on the Treasury bench then filled by his noble friend in the blue ribband. With consummate ability, but with equal address, in the progress of his reply the Lord Advocate endeavoured to prove that the late Earl of Chatham had uniformly resisted every pretension of America to independence. "If, therefore," said he, "the honourable gentleman supports the present motion for compelling his Majesty's Ministers to conclude peace with the insurgent colonies, he differs diametrically from his noble relation, whose last breath was exhausted in execrating those servants of the Crown that would presume to despoil Parliament of its inalienable rights, and to rob the reigning family of their brightest patrimonial inheritance." I own that it has always appeared to me such were in 1778 the sentiments of the great Earl of Chatham, nor was I ever convinced, either by the explanations of his son or by those of Fox, that he contemplated the independence of America with other eyes than those of Lord North and Lord George Germain. He might, indeed, had he survived down to 1781, have modified, changed, or retracted his opinions in compliance with events;



but that he did so previous to his dying speech in the House of Peers, notwithstanding the testimony of the late Mr. Pitt, I never could comprehend. Posterity may perhaps be better able to decide the point than we can do in the present age.

The Lord Advocate admirably qualified whatever of unpalatable or distasteful to Pitt might be found in his assertions relative to the Earl of Chatham by the flattering predictions of his own future and certain elevation with which they were accompanied.

“He (Dundas) was unwilling and reluctant to state to the honourable gentleman’s face those truths which, were he absent, truth itself would compel him to utter ; but he nevertheless felicitated his country and his fellow-citizens on the auspicious union and splendid exhibition of abilities witnessed by the House on that evening. With the first-rate talents were blended high integrity, a noble and honest independence of mind, and the most persuasive eloquence.” Such were the encomiums lavished on Pitt by Dundas, who, though he professed, and no doubt felt at that time, the strongest political attachment to Lord North, yet obviously foresaw his decline, and as certainly beheld in prospect his destined successor, if not immediate, yet remote. In fact, the Lord Advocate of Scotland found himself, within the revolution of thirteen months from that day, seated as Treasurer of the Navy on the Treasury bench alongside of Pitt, become Chancellor of the Exchequer under the Earl of Shelburne’s Administration. So solid were Dundas’s speculations, so sound his judgment, and so speedily realised were his calculations of ambition! Fox concluded this eventful evening, of which I have most imperfectly attempted to state some salient points, by replying to all the preceding speakers. Rigby, who had asserted roundly that

every Administration since 1763 concurred in maintaining as a principle the unconditional dominion of this country over the American colonies, was admonished by Fox "to observe a more temperate language when he advanced such positive charges, followed by such severe conclusions, against so many of the highest and most respectable characters in Great Britain." He accompanied the reproof by a declaration that he "was not ignorant how powerfully the Paymaster of the Forces was supported *in* that House and *out of it*"—words pregnant with meaning, which alluded in a manner too intelligible for admitting of mistake to the secret support that Rigby was supposed to derive from the royal confidence and favour. On the Lord Advocate Fox was severe, yet liberal, and without the slightest mixture of gall, from which no individual in Parliament was more perfectly exempt, not even Lord North or Sheridan. Fox ridiculed Dundas's protestations of independence of the First Minister, his friend; recognised the learned Lord's abilities, nor disputed his integrity, but denied the accuracy of various statements that he had made in the course of his speech.

When Fox had occasion to notice Dundas's eulogiums on the Earl of Chatham, he seemed to pause and to weigh his expressions, for he felt that the ground was delicate and full of danger. "The learned Lord," said he, "has eloquently panegyricised the exalted virtues and talents of a deceased consummate statesman. My youth and other causes prevented me from being much known personally to that great man. No individual in the House can, however, reverence his memory more than myself. Nevertheless, I would lay in my claim for others who, though they might not coincide in opinion on every point of policy with that illustrious

nobleman, have yet rendered distinguished services to their country." In these words, dictated by filial piety and affection for his father's memory, he indirectly alluded to the political and party disputes which had existed between Lord Holland and the Earl of Chatham when both were commoners and members of that assembly—disputes which were destined to be revived with augmented asperity between their sons. Reverting, lastly, to Lord Westcote's assertion that he considered the contest with America as a holy war, Fox remarked, "To others the application of such an epithet to the actual contest may appear new, but to me it has no novelty. I was in Paris precisely at the time when the present war began, in 1776, and Dr. Franklin honoured me with his intimacy. I recollect that, conversing with him on the subject of the impending hostilities, he, while he predicted their ruinous consequences, compared their principle and their effects to those produced by the ancient Crusades. He foretold that we should expend our best blood and treasure in attempting an unattainable object, and that, like the holy war of the dark ages, while we carried desolation and slaughter over America, we should finally depopulate, enfeeble, and impoverish Great Britain."

Fox's conclusion might almost be considered as prophetic. "The only objection," observed he, "made to my motion is that it must lead to American independence. But I venture to assert that *within six months of the present day*, Ministers themselves will come forward to Parliament with some proposition of a similar nature. I know that such is their intention. I announce it to the House." Notwithstanding so eloquent and so powerful an appeal to the passions as well as to the understanding of his audience, the moment was not yet arrived when

the majority of the national representatives could consent to renounce all further hope of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience. Even the attendance on that night fell far beneath the vast and awful importance of the subject. Only ninety-nine persons divided with Fox: 172 supported Administration; 287 members were therefore absent. It seemed, however, to be more a question regarding the King and Lord George Germain than Lord North. There were not wanting individuals who believed that the First Minister would have felt little regret if Opposition had out-numbered him. His conduct might be thought to indicate great indifference to the result, and he probably participated Fox's apprehensions for the final issue of Lord Cornwallis's Virginian campaign.

[15th June 1781.] I have descended to more minute details respecting this debate than I should have done if it had not been the last which took place on American topics previous to the catastrophe and surrender of Yorktown. But the most interesting discussion of the whole session, and in many points of view one of the most interesting which I ever witnessed in the House of Commons, took place three days later, on the motion for amending, or in fact virtually repealing, "the Marriage Act." It stood altogether unconnected with Ministers or with party politics, though originated by Fox at a very advanced period of the year. The question seemed in itself to be no less philosophical and moral than a measure of state or an object of legislative policy. Never did Fox appear to me in a more elevated light than on that occasion, while pleading the cause of his fellow-subjects at large against the shackles and impediments opposed, as he asserted, by aristocracy, family pride, and wealth to the matrimonial union of two persons of dissimi-

lar rank and condition. His father, Lord Holland, for whom he nourished the warmest filial affection, had manifested similar sentiments. Fox assumed as a principle, while reasoning on the subject, that "passion, not reason, is best capable of promoting our felicity in wedlock." However untenable, and even revolting, such an assumption may appear, he maintained it by arguments well calculated to persuade if not to convince his hearers. I will candidly own that they made the deepest impression on my mind, and produced the fullest conviction when I heard them from his lips in 1781; but the lapse of six-and-thirty years has reconciled me to the Marriage Act. General Burgoyne, who supported the bill, and whose eloquence was usually tame, as well as destitute of entertainment, seemed to rise above himself and to be inspired by the subject. Both he and Fox expressed themselves with the utmost acrimony against Sir Dudley Ryder, who had warmly supported "the Marriage Act" when it was first introduced into the House of Commons. They accused him of avowing a systematic intention to divide the higher classes of society from the vulgar, and to prevent their intermixture by marriage, thus effectually separating persons of high rank and fortune from the mass of the population. Burgoyne, when alluding to Fox's splendid talents, observed that "if the spirit of the Marriage Act had operated previous to his birth, he would never have come into existence." Courtenay, in a speech abounding with humour and irony, though of the broadest description, and which in many passages trampled on decorum, sustained Fox's arguments. So did Lord Nugent in a somewhat similar strain of eloquence. On the other hand, Burke, with no less ability than Fox, and with equal powers of genius, appealed



to many of the strongest passions of the human mind while he opposed the measure brought forward by his friend. They completely diverged on this question in opposite directions, each displaying uncommon capacity, enthusiasm, and profound reasoning in their respective speeches. Sheridan likewise spoke against Fox's motion with great ingenuity, though not at considerable length; and it was one of the few occasions on which I have seen them take different sides, during the whole time that I remained a member of the House of Commons. Lord North, as might be expected, inclined to oppose every innovation on the Marriage Act; and there could have been little doubt, as far as the temper of the House manifested itself, that Fox's bill would have been rejected by a great majority, if the sense of the members present had been taken upon it. But no division was demanded, and Fox, abandoning it for the present, pledged himself, if ever he should come into power, to renew the motion from the Treasury bench.<sup>1</sup> This pledge he never, indeed, redeemed; but if we reflect for how short a time he continued in office when Secretary of State in 1782, as well as in 1783, together with the multiplicity of matter which then pressed upon him, we cannot wonder, though it is possible we may regret, his not having resumed the subject.

[16th—30th June 1781.] The session now drew

<sup>1</sup> Lord John Russell says, in his "Memoirs and Correspondence of Fox," that "June 15, Charles Fox carried the commitment of his bill for repealing the Marriage Act by ninety to twenty-seven." Five days later, Fox's library was sold under seizure. Among his books was Gibbon's first volume of the "Decline and Fall," a gift from the author. Fox had recorded on the flyleaf a saying of Gibbon's, that certain members of the Administration deserved to lose their heads, and that, nevertheless, he accepted office under that very Administration. This record raised the price of this odd volume to three guineas.—D.

towards a close, and Lord North prepared to withdraw his shattered parliamentary forces from the scene of action. Not, however, before George Byng (the "Muster Master-General" of Opposition, as he was denominated) had invoked the followers of that party to attend betimes during the ensuing winter, "in order to terminate the wicked and fruitless contest with America"—with so much certainty did they calculate on complete success whenever the campaign beyond the Atlantic should be concluded. Intelligence arriving about this time of the naval action fought in Praya Bay between Suffrein and Commodore Johnstone,<sup>1</sup> Fox made some severe, but, as they have always appeared to me, just observations on the conduct of the British commander. That he was surprised on the occasion cannot admit of dispute, and though he extricated himself without sustaining any loss of ships, yet he acquired no more honour than Keppel had gained in his memorable battle with D'Orvilliers. I knew Johnstone, and respected him as a man of talents and energy of mind, but I coincided fully with Fox in opinion that the Commodore was much more formidable in Parliament than on the ocean, and more dreaded by the First Minister of England than by Maurepas or Vergenes. Lord North might have said of Johnstone, though in a different sense, what Sir Robert Walpole, his Ministerial predecessor, observed, in 1740, of the general officers of that period, when the list was submitted

<sup>1</sup> See *ante* p. 68. Johnstone had fought many duels in his day, commencing, as a midshipman, by fighting his captain, and ending with Lord George Germain. In the action at Port Praya he showed less of the fire-eating propensity. With sixteen ships of war and ten armed East Indiamen De Suffren attacked him by surprise with five sail of the line. The latter was beaten off, but he carried away with him one of his disabled ships in the face of his enemy. "With or without a *t*," writes Walpole to Macer, "Johnstone is a detestable name. I would as soon be a Macgregor."—D.

to his inspection, "I know not what effect they may produce upon the enemy, but, before God, they make *me* tremble." Johnstone's oratory while opposing Government, not his naval skill or science, placed him in command of a squadron after he had come over to the side of Administration. He acquired some wealth, but gained little renown by the expedition, which proved more beneficial to himself than advantageous to his country. Lord North defended him, nevertheless, with animation against Fox's comments.

The Lord Advocate of Scotland, as chairman of the *secret* committee, having laid on the table of the House the two first reports made on the state of the Carnatic, strenuously recommended them to the diligent perusal of members during the approaching recess, "as they would constitute," he said, "the groundwork of future parliamentary proceedings." A few days later a short but sharp and most personal altercation took place, for I cannot call it by any other name, between Fox and some leading supporters of Administration. It was provoked by Fox, who, in the course of a speech pronounced in behalf of the Americans confined in the Mill Prison at Plymouth, avowed that "in his opinion their cause was the cause of freedom, of Whiggism, and of the constitution, to which he ardently wished success," adding, that "Administration, in prosecuting the contest with the colonies, only desired to satiate their revenge." Irritated at such imputations, Dundas answered, "that it afforded him no surprise to find the honourable member rejoicing at our enemy's success, a success to which he had contributed not a little by his language and line of action within those walls." But Mansfield, the Solicitor-General, with a manly indignation, rising, demanded of Fox "whether he meant to limit himself to mere wishes

and vows in favour of the Americans, or did he intend to draw his sword, to clothe himself in the rebel uniform, to enlist under Washington's command, to fight the battles of America, and to point his weapon against his countrymen's breasts?" Fox answered that he disdained to make any reply to calumnies founded in gross misrepresentation, and the conversation terminated. I have already remarked elsewhere that he almost always wore blue and buff.

[20th—30th July 1781.] Many circumstances contributed to sustain and to prolong the duration of Lord North's Administration, notwithstanding the misfortunes and disgraces which continued annually to mark its progress. The mutiny in the Pennsylvania line, which for a moment seemed to menace the American Congress with internal revolt during the spring of 1781; Lord Cornwallis's victory over Greene at Guilford, followed by Lord Rawdon's<sup>1</sup> advantage gained over the same general at Camden, two places situate in North and South Carolina; lastly, the expectations formed from the advance of the British forces into the province of Virginia—all these events held the minds of men in suspense till the prorogation of Parliament, on the 18th of July, allowed the Minister a temporary respite from the scene of his political exertion. The province of West Florida had, nevertheless, been conquered by Spain, while France reduced to its subjection the island of Tobago. Our only acquisition consisted in the seizure rather than the capture of the Dutch island of St. Eustatia, in the West Indies, an event which served to cover Rodney and Vaughan, the naval

<sup>1</sup> Francis Rawdon Hastings was created Baron Rawdon in 1783. He succeeded his father as Earl of Moira in 1793, claimed and was allowed the barony of Hastings in 1809, and was created Viscount Loudoun, Earl of Rawdon, and Marquis of Hastings in 1817. He died 28th November 1826.—ED.

and military commanders-in-chief, with obloquy on account of their severe treatment of the inhabitants. Even on the element of the sea every encounter which we had with the enemy, from its indecisive nature, rather tended to augment their courage as well as to stimulate their enterprise.

[*August 1781.*] The severest naval action which took place during the whole course of the American war was the battle fought at this time between Parker<sup>1</sup> and Zoutman, who commanded the English and Dutch squadrons in the North Sea off the Dogger Bank. But it bore no resemblance in its results to the glorious victory obtained in our time by Duncan at Camperdown, and might more aptly be compared with the sanguinary, though indecisive, conflicts for superiority which distinguished Charles II.'s reign, when the navies of Holland were led by Tromp and Ruyter, while those of England were conducted by James, Duke of York, by Prince Rupert, and by Montague, first Earl of Sandwich. On this occasion the King, departing from his ordinary habits, embarked on the Thames, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, who had recently accomplished his nineteenth year, and descended the river to the Nore, where he visited Admiral Parker on board his ship, the "Fortitude." The Duke of York, then commonly denominated Bishop of Osnaburgh, had been sent over by his father to Hanover, near eight months earlier, with a view not only to his accomplishment by visiting Germany, but to remove him from scenes here at home ill calculated to ameliorate his political or his moral character. One

<sup>1</sup> Hyde Parker, the elder. He became a baronet in 1782 by the death of his brother, the Rev. Sir Peter Parker. He was overmatched at the Dogger Bank, and yet we had ships of war lying idle in all the great ports nearest to the scene of action. There were 400 killed on each side. Parker perished at sea in 1782, on his way to the East Indies.—D.



of the defects attributed to his Majesty's natural formation of mind, strengthened by his secluded education during his grandfather's reign under the Princess-Dowager's and Lord Bute's tuition, was his supposed reluctance to become personally acquainted with his people. His enemies described him as a prince averse to all communication with his subjects except at a levée. Thus the "Heroic Epistle" exclaims—

"Our sons some slave of greatness may behold,  
Cast in the genuine Asiatic mould,  
Who of three realms shall condescend to know  
No more than he can spy from Windsor's brow."

Yet when the King, emancipating himself for the first time since his accession to the throne from these restraints, repaired to Portsmouth in June 1773, for the purpose of inspecting his fleet, with what severe raillery did not the same poem endeavour to expose him to derision? The lines are most contemptuous—

"There shall he see, as other folks have seen,  
That ships have anchors and that seas are green ;  
Shall count the tackling trim, the streamers fine,  
With Bradshaw prattle and with Sandwich dine ;  
And then row back, amidst the cannon's roar,  
As safe, as sage, as when he left the shore."

But it would be loss of time to deny that during the first twenty-three years of his reign, from the period when Lord Bute came into power down to 1783, George III. was a most unpopular prince. His subjects, however, have made him ample amends for so long withholding from him the testimonies of their affection by the general attachment and veneration which they have since manifested towards him down to the moment when he ceased to sway the sceptre.

[*September 1781.*] Admiral Darby, who continued to command the Channel Fleet, had successfully relieved Gibraltar during the course of the spring, when reduced to great extremity. But in the autumn our numerical inferiority compelled that commander to take refuge in Torbay, while the combined French and Spanish fleets, for the third time since the beginning of the war, occupied the entrance of the British Channel, and even meditated to attack us as we lay at anchor on our own coast. So low was the naval power of England reduced towards the conclusion of Lord North's Administration, amidst the exhaustion and calamities occasioned by the American war; but towards America itself all eyes were anxiously turned, where it became evident affairs rapidly tended to some great and decisive crisis. Lord Cornwallis, having advanced into the province of Virginia in June, finally established himself at Yorktown in August. No position could have been more judiciously chosen, and it might unquestionably have been maintained under every disadvantage against the united force of America and of France, if a chain of fortuitous accidents, rather than a series of able or well-combined measures, had not led to the unavoidable catastrophe which terminated the war. De Grasse, who commanded the French fleet, was not less favoured by fortune in finding the mouth of the Chesapeake unoccupied, on his arrival there from the West Indies, than he derived aid from the delays that prevented the English squadron under Graves anticipating his seizure of that important station. Graves and Clinton both successively failed only by the short interruption of a few days, the first in occupying the Chesapeake with a naval force, the last in arriving with an army, before Lord Cornwallis's surrender, and thereby rescuing him from the neces-

sity of capitulating to Washington. In so desperate a situation, precluded from all possibility of relief, Lord Cornwallis laid down his arms, and the American rebellion, after a contest of more than six years, finally became a revolution.

[*October 1781.*] It is at this period that we must place the highest point of elevation to which Louis XVI. attained during his reign, an elevation only to be paralleled in the French annals by recurring to the brilliant eras of Louis XIV. His own grandfather, Louis XV., never stood on such an eminence in the eyes of Europe, not even in the year 1748, previous to the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, though his troops, conducted by Marshal Saxe, after defeating the Allies in various general actions, had then overrun the Austrian Low Countries and nearly reduced Brabant. In October 1781, the King of France beheld America finally dissevered from Great Britain, by the union of his armies with those of the insurgents, while he received about the same period Lord Cornwallis's sword, surrendered to La Fayette. His forces were occupied in pursuing their career of victory throughout the West Indies, and in the East, Suffrein,<sup>1</sup> in his repeated naval engagements with Sir Edward Hughes, not only maintained the honour of his sovereign's flag, but had nearly succeeded more than once in obtaining a decided superiority over our squadron on the coast of Coromandel.<sup>2</sup> The Spanish branch of the House of Bourbon, acting in subservience to the views of the court of Versailles, after subjecting Minorca and West Florida, held Gibraltar besieged by sea and land, the reduction of which fortress, calculated to

<sup>1</sup> Pierre André de Suffren Saint Tropez, French admiral, born 1726, died 1788.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> These actions made us acquainted with the great advantages of the harbour of Trincomalee in Ceylon.—ED.

render for ever illustrious the reign of Charles III., was anticipated with sanguine impatience by the two crowns. Our commerce had not suffered less by French depredations than our colonies had been diminished by the arms of France. Holland, ranging her force under the same standard, made common cause with Louis against her ancient ally. It only remained for them to defeat the Channel Fleet of England in order to dictate the terms of peace; and so nearly did Guichen and Cordova, who commanded the combined navies of France and Spain, appear to be to achieving that last object, as to impress us with the utmost apprehension. Contemplating a scene of such royal and national prosperity, who could have imagined that this descendant of so many kings, that had reigned for eight hundred years over the French in male succession, would perish on a scaffold in his own capital scarcely more than eleven years afterwards, the victim of his inert pusillanimity or tame inaction in not firmly resisting the first ebullitions of popular violence!

As if to secure and perpetuate the Bourbon line, the Queen of France, who had been married more than ten years without giving an heir to the Crown, at length brought into the world a son. Catherine of Medicis, like Marie Antoinette of Austria, had remained childless for nearly the same period of time before she produced a successor. The young Dauphin's baptism was performed in this very month with extreme magnificence at Versailles. Happily for himself, he expired early in June 1789, only a few weeks before the fatal revolution which took place in July swept away the monarchy finally, to place Bonaparte on the throne of Henry IV. The Dauphin was in his ninth year when he finished his short career. I have

been assured by individuals who had access to know the fact, that at the age of seven years, when the charge of his person, according to the established usage of the old French court, was surrendered up by the governess, and he was then put under the care of men, the Dauphin being stripped in the presence of professional persons and having undergone an examination, was pronounced to be without defect in his bodily formation. But being made soon afterwards to sit with his feet in a wooden machine calculated to turn them out, it speedily affected the spinal marrow. Whether this assertion be accurate or not, it is certain that the vertebræ of the backbone becoming crooked, he fell into a state of languor accompanied by debility. I have seen him more than once, while in this condition during the summer preceding his decease, taking the air in a carriage in the gardens of St. Cloud. His emaciated appearance awakened concern, but he was said not to want intelligence, and the Queen, his mother, whose maternal feelings were acute, manifested the warmest affection for him while living, as well as deep sorrow for his loss. The Duke of Normandy, his younger brother, born under a still more inauspicious planet, succeeded to his title, and became after his father's execution the unfortunate Louis XVII.

[*November 1781.*] During the whole month of November, the concurring accounts which were transmitted to Government, enumerating Lord Cornwallis's embarrassments and the positions taken by the enemy, augmented the anxiety of the Cabinet. Lord George Germain in particular, conscious that on the prosperous or adverse termination of that expedition must depend the fate of the American contest, his own stay in office, as well as probably



the duration of the Ministry, felt, and even expressed to his friends, the strongest uneasiness on the subject. The meeting of Parliament meanwhile stood fixed for the 27th of November. On Sunday the 25th about noon, official intelligence of the surrender of the British forces at Yorktown arrived from Falmouth at Lord George Germain's house in Pall-Mall. Lord Walsingham, who, previous to his father Sir William de Grey's elevation to the peerage,<sup>1</sup> had been Under-Secretary of State in that department, and who was selected to second the address in the House of Peers on the subsequent Tuesday, happened to be there when the messenger brought the news. Without communicating it to any other person, Lord George, for the purpose of dispatch, immediately got with him into a hackney-coach and drove to Lord Stormont's residence in Portland Place. Having imparted to him the disastrous information, and taken him into the carriage, they instantly proceeded to the Chancellor's house in Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury,<sup>2</sup> whom they found at home, when, after a short consultation, they determined to lay it themselves in person before Lord North. He had not received any intimation of the event when they arrived at his door in Downing Street between one and two o'clock. The First Minister's firmness, and even his presence of mind, which had withstood the riots of June 1780, gave way for a short time under this awful disaster. I asked Lord George afterwards how he took the communication when made to him. "As he would have taken a ball in his breast,"

<sup>1</sup> Sir William de Grey was raised to the peerage, on his retirement from the Chief-Justiceship of the Common Pleas, 1780. He died in May 1781.—D.

<sup>2</sup> This must be a mistake. Lord Thurlow lived in Great Ormond Street, and in 1784 the Great Seal was stolen from his house there (No. 45).—ED.

replied Lord George. For he opened his arms, exclaiming wildly, as he paced up and down the apartment during a few minutes, "O God! it is all over!" Words which he repeated many times under emotions of the deepest consternation and distress.

When the first agitation of their minds had subsided, the four Ministers discussed the question whether or not it might be expedient to prorogue Parliament for a few days; but as scarcely an interval of forty-eight hours remained before the appointed time of assembling, and as many members of both Houses were already either arrived in London or on the road, that proposition was abandoned. It became, however, indispensable to alter and almost to model anew the King's speech, which had been already drawn up and completely prepared for delivery from the throne. This alteration was therefore made without delay, and at the same time Lord George Germain, as Secretary for the American department, sent off a dispatch to his Majesty, who was then at Kew, acquainting him with the melancholy termination of Lord Cornwallis's expedition. Some hours having elapsed before these different but necessary acts of business could take place, the Ministers separated, and Lord George Germain repaired to his office in Whitehall. There he found a confirmation of the intelligence, which arrived about two hours after the first communication, having been transmitted from Dover, to which place it was forwarded from Calais with the French account of the same event.

I dined on that day at Lord George's, and though the information which had reached London in the course of the morning from two different quarters was of a nature not to admit of long concealment, yet it had not been communicated either to me or

to any individual of the company (as it might have been through the channel of common report), when I got to Pall-Mall between five and six o'clock. Lord Walsingham, who likewise dined there, was the only guest that had become acquainted with the fact. The party, nine in number, sat down to table. Lord George appeared serious, though he manifested no discomposure. Before the dinner was finished, one of his servants delivered him a letter, brought back by the messenger who had been dispatched to the King. Lord George opened and perused it, then looking at Lord Walsingham, to whom he exclusively directed his observation, "The King writes," said he, "just as he always does, except that I observe he has omitted to mark the hour and the minute of his writing with his usual precision." This remark, though calculated to awaken some interest, excited no comment; and while the ladies, Lord George's three daughters, remained in the room we repressed our curiosity. But they had no sooner withdrawn, than Lord George having acquainted us that from Paris information had just arrived of the old Count de Maurepas, First Minister, lying at the point of death; "It would grieve me," said I, "to finish my career, however far advanced in years, were I First Minister of France, before I had witnessed the termination of this great contest between England and America." "He has survived to witness that event," replied Lord George, with some agitation. Utterly unsuspecting as I was of the fact which had happened beyond the Atlantic, I conceived him to allude to the indecisive naval action fought at the mouth of the Chesapeake early in the preceding month of September between Admiral Graves and Count de Grasse; an engagement which in its results might prove most injurious to Lord Cornwallis. Under

this impression, "My meaning," said I, "is that if I were the Count de Maurepas, I should wish to live long enough to behold the final issue of the war in Virginia." "He has survived to witness it completely," answered Lord George; "the army has surrendered, and you may peruse the particulars of the capitulation in that paper," taking at the same time one from his pocket, which he delivered into my hand not without visible emotion. By his permission I read it aloud, while the company listened in profound silence. We then discussed its contents as affecting the Ministry, the country, and the war. It must be confessed that they were calculated to diffuse a gloom over the most convivial society, and that they opened a wide field for political speculation.

After perusing the account of Lord Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, it was impossible not to feel a lively curiosity to know how the King had received the intelligence, as well as how he had expressed himself in his note to Lord George Germain on the first communication of so painful an event. He gratified our wish by reading it to us, observing, at the same time, that it did the highest honour to his Majesty's fortitude, firmness, and consistency of character. The words made an impression on my memory which the lapse of more than thirty years has not erased, and I shall here commemorate its tenor as serving to show how that prince felt and wrote under one of the most afflicting as well as humiliating occurrences of his reign. The billet ran nearly to this effect: "I have received with sentiments of the deepest concern the communication which Lord George Germain has made me of the unfortunate result of the operations in Virginia. I particularly lament it on account of the consequences connected with it and the difficulties

which it may produce in carrying on the public business or in repairing such a misfortune. But I trust that neither Lord George Germain nor any member of the Cabinet will suppose that it makes the smallest alteration in those principles of my conduct which have directed me in past time and which will always continue to animate me under every event in the prosecution of the present contest." Not a sentiment of despondency or of despair was to be found in the letter, the very handwriting of which indicated composure of mind. Whatever opinion we may entertain relative to the practicability of reducing America to obedience by force of arms at the end of 1781, we must admit that no sovereign could manifest more calmness, dignity, or self-command than George III. displayed in this reply.

[27th and 28th November 1781.] Severely as the general effect of the blow received in Virginia was felt throughout the capital and the nation, yet no immediate symptoms of Ministerial dissolution, or even of parliamentary defection, became visible in either House. All the animated invectives of Fox, aided by the contumelious irony of Burke, and sustained by the dignified reproaches of Pitt, then enlisted on the same side, made little apparent impression on their hearers, who, though they seemed stupified by the disastrous intelligence, yet manifested the firmest adherence to Administration. Never, probably, at any period of our history was more indignant language used by the Opposition, not even in 1741, previous to Sir Robert Walpole's resignation. In the ardour of his feelings at the recent calamity which had taken place beyond the Atlantic, Fox not only accused Ministers of being virtually in the pay of France, but menaced them with the vengeance of an undone people, who would



speedily compel them to expiate their crimes on the public scaffold. Dundas, who sat on the Treasury bench, not far from Lord North and Lord George Germain, having ventured to smile somewhat contemptuously at the word *scaffold*, Fox apostrophised him in angry terms, demanding if the learned Lord did not think that the time was yet ripe for punishment? Burke repeated the same denunciations. Speaking of the condition of the country, he declared it to be extinct. "The British nation," said he, "as an animal, is dead, but the vermin that feed on the carcase are still alive. A day of reckoning will however arrive. Whenever it comes, I shall be ready to impeach and signally to punish the authors of these calamities."

Though Fox, in conformity with the wishes of his friends, moved on that evening an amendment to the proposed address to the throne, yet he said that his own opinion decidedly went to send up no address whatever to the sovereign until the members of the Lower House could consult their constituents and receive their instructions. The idea was strongly enforced by Mr. Thomas Pitt, who not only recommended an immediate appeal to the constituent body of electors throughout the kingdom, but exhorted the assembly to withhold all supply till that measure was carried into execution. Colonel Barré joined in the recommendations for calling together their constituents and demanding their advice in a moment of such danger and public distress. So did Mr. Duncombe, one of the two members for the county of York.<sup>1</sup> But Burke, however violent and declamatory he might be on other points, never made the slightest allusion to revolutionary remedies or proposed any such experiments. Fox's appeal to the electors of Westminster, con-

<sup>1</sup> Henry Duncombe of Copgrove, co. York.—ED.

voked in Westminster Hall or in Palace Yard, might indeed have been made, at least without incurring ridicule. But how Mr. Thomas Pitt, who elected himself for Old Sarum, or Barré, whom Lord Shelburne returned for Calne, were to take the sense of *their* constituents it was not easy to explain. Such, however, were the propositions gravely made in the legislative assembly of Great Britain towards the close of the American war, amidst the universal dejection or despondency of that calamitous period. Rigby, and he only, of all the ministerial or royal supporters in Parliament, ventured to elevate his voice against the doctrines inculcated by Fox. "What! Mr. Speaker," demanded he, "is the general sense of the nation no longer to be collected within these walls? Such unconstitutional and illegal appeals to the people can lead only to disaster, tumult, and outrage. The representative body is alone competent to pronounce the public sentiment." Unintimidated by Sheridan, who attacked him for speaking with contempt of the constituent part of the community, Rigby maintained his position with great firmness.

Burke, with inconceivable warmth of colouring, depicted the folly and impracticability of taxing America by force, as he described it, "shearing the wolf." The metaphor was wonderfully appropriate, and scarcely admitted of denial. He was sustained, and I had almost said outdone, by Mr. Thomas Pitt,<sup>1</sup> who, in terms of gloomy despondency, not unaccompanied with great eloquence, seemed to regard the situation of the country as scarcely

<sup>1</sup> Son of Thomas Pitt, elder brother of William Pitt, the great Earl of Chatham. The Thomas Pitt of the text was created (1784) Baron Camelford, a title which became extinct when his clever and dissolute son was slain, in 1804, by Captain Best, in a duel behind Holland House, Kensington, upon a quarrel touching a woman more worthless, if possible, than themselves.—D.

admitting of a remedy under such a Parliament, such an Administration, and such a sovereign. "The Ministers," exclaimed Burke, "assert that we have a right to tax America. But have we the power to enforce the right? They cry with Shylock: America, give us our bond! The pound of flesh is ours, and we will have it next your heart! Oh, miserable and infatuated men! Oh, undone country!" He then burst into that most striking and picturesque simile of the wolf. "'Oh!' says a silly man, elated with his dominion over a few beasts of the forest, 'there is excellent wool to be found on a wolf's back, and I am resolved to shear him.' 'What! shear a wolf!' 'Yes.' 'But will he submit to the operation? Can you get at this wool?' 'Oh! I have neither considered nor will I consider whether it be practicable. It is my right. A wolf has wool. All animals having wool may be shorn, and therefore I will shear the wolf!'" I confess I thought this apologue, if I may so term it, one of the most impressive and convincing that I ever heard pronounced during the whole time that I remained in the House of Commons. Such it was felt to be on that evening throughout the Ministerial ranks.

Mr. Thomas Pitt, or, as he was commonly called, Tom Pitt, though a man of very superior attainments of mind, and possessing no ordinary powers of oratory, rose seldom to address Parliament. But whenever he spoke, his name and his consanguinity to the great Earl of Chatham, who was his uncle, procured him a most favourable audience. Despair animated while it deeply tinged his speech. Considering the country as already lost, he said, "It no longer was a matter of importance what set of state puppets worked the dismal scene. While the fatal system remained, and the deadly secret influence which had continued throughout the present reign

pervaded every measure and every department, it signified little what ostensible agents were placed at the head of affairs."

Lord North, in this moment of general depression, found resources in himself. He scornfully repelled the insinuations of Fox (who had called him the Prime Minister of France), as deserving only contempt; justified the principle of the war, which did not originate in a despotic wish to tyrannise America, but from the desire of maintaining the constitutional authority of Parliament over the colonies; deplored in common with the Opposition the misfortunes which had marked the progress of the contest; defied the threats of punishment, and finally adjured the House not to aggravate the present calamity by dejection or despair, but by united exertion to secure our national extrication. "The war with America, I admit," said he, "has been unfortunate, but not unjust. And should I hereafter, as I am menaced, mount the scaffold in consequence of the part that I have performed in its prosecution, I shall continue to maintain that it was founded in right and dictated by necessity." Lord George Germain was not silent on that night. He deplored the fate of Lord Cornwallis; avowed the active share that he had taken in endeavouring to subjugate the colonies; declared his readiness to quit the office which he filled whenever his resignation should be demanded, but added, "I will neither be browbeat nor clamoured out of it. Whenever my sovereign calls for my situation, I shall resign it into his hands."

The debate which arose on the subsequent evening, when the address to be presented to the throne was reported to the House, far exceeded in the importance of the matter elicited the first discussion. Pitt, who reserved himself for this second

agitation of the American question, rose early, and in a speech of extraordinary energy (throughout the course of which he contrived with great ability to blend professions of devoted attachment to the person of the King with the severest accusation of his Ministers), he fully confirmed the high opinion of his judgment and parliamentary talents already entertained throughout the country. But though Pitt spared the reigning prince, whom he depicted as under a delusion, he did not the less bitterly inveigh against the "baleful influence of the Crown," which he said had produced the contest with America. That ruinous war constituted "the pillar constructed on the ruins of our constitution," by which, as he asserted, the first Lord of the Treasury held his situation. He concluded by calling on Ministers to state without circumlocution or deception what were their intentions as to the further prosecution of the American war, and to give some general idea of the manner in which it was henceforward to be pursued. A sort of pause took place when he resumed his seat, while the eyes of all present were directed towards the Treasury bench, in the expectation that either the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Secretary for the Colonial Department would stand up and make some reply to these most pointed as well as interesting questions. But both sat silent, though from different motives. In so critical a moment, when the House seemed to demand an explanation on the point, the Lord Advocate of Scotland presented himself boldly to public notice. After denying in the most explicit terms that the address proposed either pledged the assembly to continue the war against the colonies, or could be so interpreted, he proceeded to put hypothetically a case, which might be said to withdraw in some measure the curtain of state from



before the Cabinet, and to expose the disunion existing among its members. "If," said Dundas, "any Minister accused of maladministration should set up as his excuse or his defence that he was overruled in the Cabinet, and compelled by the majority to act upon opinions contrary to his own private judgment, such an apology cannot be admitted in this House. A Minister who, in order to preserve his place, would submit to carry into execution measures that he condemned, must not only be unworthy of his situation, but would thereby betray his trust, and merit the execration of his countrymen."

This avowal, though qualified by assurances that it was altogether general, and had not the slightest allusion to, or the most indirect authority from, the First Lord of the Treasury, yet disclosed the secret already suspected or understood by the Opposition. Fox felicitated Pitt, whom he denominated *his honourable friend*, on having by the effect of his powerful oratory extracted from an individual so nearly connected with the Administration the declaration that the address did not pledge Parliament to continue the war against America. But Burke, in the progress of a speech less marked by those emanations of genius which generally illuminated all that he uttered than distinguished by its intemperate violence, endeavoured to prove that the proposed address did bind the House to prosecute offensive hostilities with France and America. He declared the address itself to be a compound of hypocrisy and of infamous, abandoned falsity. Nor did he fail to paint in the warmest colours of a distempered imagination the punishments which he asserted would be inflicted on the unhappy loyalists, deserted by us and left under Lord Cornwallis's capitulation to the mercy of the Congress. Their slaughtered remains, he said, would be ex-

posed on all the headlands. Notwithstanding these combined efforts, which were sustained by Keppel and by Townshend, the Minister divided on both evenings in a large majority; the address being carried by eighty-nine, in a full House where 347 members were present. Only 185 attended the report, of which number 131 supported Administration, while the minority did not exceed fifty-four.

Nevertheless, the contest with America might be considered as virtually arrested, though not ostensibly terminated. More than one member known to be ardently attached to the Crown as well as to the existing Government declared his disapprobation of any further attempt to carry on military operations beyond the Atlantic. Lord Nugent admitted that it would now be politic to acknowledge the independence of the colonies. Courtenay, though holding a place under the Master-General of the Ordnance, not only avowed that he never had considered the war against America as expedient, politic, or wise, but added, that he only voted for the address on the assurances given by persons in office that it did not pledge to the prosecution of hostilities for the purpose of subjugating America. Lord North himself, two days afterwards, explicitly stated, when addressing the House, that they were not bound by their two recent votes to carry on either the American or any other war; simply to provide for the necessary expenses of the Government. But though the continuance of offensive hostilities in America was thus unequivocally renounced by the First Minister, and virtually or silently acquiesced in by Lord George Germain, yet so far did both of them seem from professing a readiness to acknowledge the independence of the thirteen colonies, that they warmly maintained the wisdom and the necessity of still

prosecuting a defensive war in that portion of the globe. In the House of Peers a still greater proportionate majority supported Administration. When Fox, presuming on the operation of the recent misfortune in the Chesapeake, soon afterwards attempted to stop the progress of supplies, in which effort he was warmly supported by Mr. Thomas Pitt, the Opposition experienced a second defeat, only seventy-seven persons voting with them, while Lord North had 172. It seemed indeed by no means clear during the first fortnight after Parliament met whether any official change whatever would take place, or, if an alteration should be made in the Cabinet, to what extent it would be carried. The national forces, exhausted by so long a contest and now opposed in every quarter by a vast confederacy, were indeed evidently unequal to continue the effort for subjecting America, and it therefore became obvious that new measures must speedily supersede those which had been prosecuted during so many years. But the same First Minister might remain in power under a total or a partial change of system, and in that case all the labours of the minority would be frustrated in the moment of their expected completion. The King's firmness and tenacity were well understood by all parties. Lord North showed hitherto no disposition to resign, and Parliament had given no indications of having withdrawn their confidence from the Administration. Such appeared to be the aspect of public affairs in the first week of December.

[1st—10th December 1781.] Fox and Pitt seemed at this time to act in perfect political union, yet no man who attentively considered the different spirit which animated their speeches whenever the sovereign became indirectly the subject of their animadversion could fail to remark their widely dissimilar

line of conduct.<sup>1</sup> Fox, whether he was impelled by his consciousness that the King's moral repugnance to many parts of his private character and to the irregularities of his life imposed insurmountable obstacles to his ever attaining the royal favour, or whether, having already offended in his political capacity beyond the hope of pardon, he relied solely on his own talents, aided by party, to force his way into the Cabinet and to maintain himself in that situation; whichever of these motives principally actuated him, it is indisputable that in all his allusions to the King, although he might affect to shelter himself under the forms of parliamentary language, Fox always chose to consider him as animated by passions and sentiments incompatible with the benignity which constitutes the most enviable attribute of royalty. Fox<sup>2</sup> designated or characterised him, in fact, as under the dominion of resentment, unfeeling, implacable, and only satiated by the continuance of war against his former subjects. In a word, like James II. rather than William III., more as a tyrant and an oppressor than as the head of a free country, the guardian of a limited constitution.

On the first day of the session, when an address to the Crown was proposed, "Those," said Fox, "who are ignorant of the character of the prince whose speech we have just heard might be induced to consider him as an unfeeling despot, exulting in the horrid sacrifice of the liberty and the lives of

<sup>1</sup> Walpole wrote in June to General Conway: "If Charles Fox could feel, one would think that such a rival, with an unspotted character, would rouse him. What if a Pitt and Fox should again be rivals?"  
—D.

<sup>2</sup> In September Fox wrote to his friend Fitzpatrick: "The people of this country deserve no pity, and certainly the King still less. It is intolerable to think that it should be in the power of one blockhead to do so much mischief."—*Lord John Russell's "Fox,"* vol. i. p.267.  
—D.

his people. The speech itself, divested of the disguise of royal forms, can only mean, 'Our losses in America have been most calamitous. The blood of my subjects has flowed in copious streams throughout every part of that continent; the treasures of Great Britain have been wantonly lavished, while the load of taxes imposed on an overburdened country is become intolerable, yet will I continue to tax you to the last shilling. When, by Lord Cornwallis's surrender, all hopes of victory are for ever extinct and a further continuance of hostilities can only accelerate the ruin of the British Empire, I prohibit you from thinking of peace. My rage for conquest is unquenched and my revenge unsated; nor can anything except the total subjugation of my revolted American subjects allay my animosity.'" When we consider the severity and acrimony of these personal imputations, we cannot wonder that they excited corresponding sensations of resentment in the royal bosom. What accusations more wounding could we frame, what motives of action more atrocious could we suppose, and what language more abhorrent to our feelings could we have attributed to that conqueror whose ambition so long desolated France and Europe than are here supposed to animate George III.? It must be admitted even by his greatest admirers that Fox, however eminent were his talents, yet by the want of moderation and judgment sentenced himself during his whole life to perpetual exclusion from office, verifying Juvenal's remark upon the injuries attendant on eloquence when he says—

"Torrens dicendi copia multis,  
Et sua mortifera est facundia."

Pitt, on the contrary, even when he appeared to be most animated by sentiments of indignation against



the measures or the Ministers, yet repressed any intemperate expressions, and personally spared the sovereign. He pronounced indeed in the most unqualified terms his abhorrence of the further prosecution of the American war; and on one occasion I recollect his solemnly invoking the Divine vengeance on the heads of the Administration, who had reduced the Empire to such a state of ruin and degradation. But, with consummate ability, he separated the King from his weak or evil counsellors; admitted the purity of intention by which he was ever impelled; professed his ardent attachment to the person as well as to the family of the reigning monarch; and declared that it would be best manifested by exposing the delusion that had been practised on him. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, whose distinguishing political tact and keen discernment in all matters where his own interest or ambition were concerned enabled him to descry a Minister in embryo, appears early to have been impressed with a conviction of this characteristic difference between the two Opposition leaders. While he continued strenuously to support an Administration the certain approaching fall of which he nevertheless probably anticipated, he lavished the warmest encomiums from the Treasury bench on the hereditary talents, the brilliant oratory, and early indications of genius in Pitt, under whose protection, aided by his own parliamentary powers, he speedily contrived, after Lord North's resignation to reappear on the Ministerial theatre.

Notwithstanding the ostensible degree of harmony and concert which seemed to animate Ministers in the House of Commons during the first days of the session, yet before the middle of December it began to be apparent that some essential disunion of sentiment prevailed among the members of Ad-

ministration. Lord North, in fact, might continue, as many persons imagined, First Minister after the avowal of American independence; but Lord George Germain could not by any possibility remain in office a single day after such a recognition. At this breach the Opposition poured in, and were aided by some of the adherents of Government, who conceived that by separating the two Ministers and dismissing the latter, Lord North could yet be preserved at the head of his Majesty's councils. Sir James Lowther having introduced a motion on the 12th of December tending to declare that "all further attempts to reduce the Americans to obedience by force would be ineffectual and contrary to the true interests of the kingdom," after a long and very animated debate, the order of the day could only be carried by a majority of forty-one, in a crowded House where four hundred members were present. Some of the circumstances attending that discussion were in themselves so interesting as to lay peculiar claim to commemoration. Neither the personal character, the talents, nor the eloquence of the member for Cumberland, who originated the question, could powerfully recommend it to attention. But it was far otherwise with the individual who seconded the motion. Sir James Lowther's prodigious property, and that circumstance only, gave any weight to his exertions. Mr. Powis,<sup>1</sup> who represented the county of Northampton, combined very considerable parliamentary ability with a most independent and upright mind.

Never can I forget the effect produced by his citation from Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," as applicable to the calamitous position of Great Britain! With consummate judg-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Powys.—ED.

ment he selected some passages of the celebrated historian in question, extracted from the reigns of Honorius and of Valentinian III., which seemed almost prophetically to depicture or to describe the events of the hour under George III. The incapacity of the Government, the contempt into which it had fallen with foreign states, the rapid increase of taxation, the corruption of the senate, the expenditure of treasure, the loss of provinces, and the pertinacity of the sovereign in continuing in a hopeless contest with his revolted subjects—all these facts, so apposite in themselves, were quoted, or rather were read by Powis in his place, and constituted a part of his speech. Their operation was perfectly theatrical. A pin might have been heard to drop, such was the silence while he pronounced it ; and it seemed to spread a sort of dejection over the Ministerial side of the assembly. Gibbon himself, who unconsciously furnished these weapons against his friend the First Minister, and who was at the very time a member of the Board of Trade, was personally present in the House. He had ceased at the last general election to represent a Cornish borough, Liskeard, for which he was chosen in 1775, and now sat for Lymington. Lord North was so sensible of the injury resulting from Powis's appeal to the passions of the House, sustained by the artillery which he had borrowed from Gibbon, that he rose immediately in order to efface the impression. In the course of a laboured, able, and well-considered address, he endeavoured to demonstrate that the motion, if carried, would incapacitate and cripple the Administration, which, if precluded or prohibited from carrying on any military operation on the American continent, could not successfully combat our foreign enemies in that quarter of the

globe. But he at the same time declared his opinion that no further hostilities ought to be prosecuted for the reduction of the colonies by sending troops into the interior of the country. The weakness of Government, and the apprehensions entertained of the defection which might manifest itself among their adherents, were sufficiently displayed by Lord North in only moving the order of the day, instead of giving a direct negative to Sir James Lowther's proposition.

Burgoyne was not merely animated, but personal as well as pointed in his animadversions on Lord George Germain, and even by unavoidable implication on the sovereign himself, whom he clearly designated in terms too plain to admit of mistake. After examining as a soldier and a tactician the plan proposed by Ministers for retaining posts in America and prosecuting a species of defensive warfare, he subjoined, "These observations may be called military remarks, but let the House remember that they are addressed to a military Secretary of State. The country has not forgotten that he was a soldier; the country feels that he is a counsellor." Having expressed his apprehensions for the impending fate of Gibraltar, invested by the forces of France and Spain, he made a recantation of his error in ever approving or aiding the attempt to subjugate the colonies, adding, "I am now convinced, on a full consideration of the measures pursued by Ministers as time has developed their system, that the American war constitutes only a part of a general plan levelled against the constitution of Great Britain, and against the universal rights of mankind." Dundas having professed that Lord North's declaration relative to future hostilities beyond the Atlantic fully satisfied his mind, protested that had not the Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer thus unequivocally renounced all further attempt to reduce the colonies by offensive operations, he must have voted on the side of the Opposition. But Burke, with great powers of wit, treated the Lord Advocate's assurances as a subject of derision. "An American war," exclaimed Burke, "you must still have; but as Parliament has at length become dissatisfied with the manner in which it was carried on, we will change the plan, say Ministers. An American war you must still have. We will give you your diet differently dressed; but it shall nevertheless be the American war. Having squandered seventy millions in one way, we will now expend seventy millions more in another way." Fox as well as Barré exposed with equal force the fallacious or loose and unsatisfactory protestations of the First Minister. Lord George Germain at length rose, and the House, anxious to hear his sentiments, though the evening was then very far advanced, lent him an attentive ear. As this speech may be deemed the last that he pronounced in his own defence while Secretary for the Colonies, and as I listened to it with more than ordinary interest, I shall commemorate some passages.

Professing his coincidence of opinion with Lord North as to changing prospectively the mode of carrying on the war, a sentiment in which, he added, all the King's confidential servants were united, he nevertheless contended, that though circumstances justified and dictated such an alteration of system, he could not concur in evacuating New York, Charlestown, and the other invaluable possessions on the American coast still retained by Great Britain. "If," continued he, "the House should adopt the motion proposed, I will instantly retire, as I consider it to include a resolution of



altogether abandoning the American war; and let the consequence be what it may, I never will put my hand to any instrument conceding independence to the colonies. My opinion is, that the British Empire must be ruined, and that we never can continue to exist as a great or as a powerful nation after we have lost or renounced the sovereignty over America. By this opinion I will abide, because I am resolved to leave the people their country." George Byng having, somewhat indecorously, and certainly in a manner unauthorised by the forms of debate, said across the House, "You will not leave us any country!" Lord George, irritated, instantly with considerable emotion exclaimed, "If the honourable gentleman believes himself warranted in impeaching me, let him do it! But let him do it in the way warranted by the constitution. Let him not convoke the people without doors, and address *them* to change the Administration! It is the province of this House, with the dignity becoming its character, to adopt a constitutional measure. Let the House address the throne if they think proper. If Ministers have merited it, let them be dismissed, impeached, and brought to punishment. But do not from party violence injure the constitution and risk the subversion of the country." These were nearly his concluding words. Byng, far from excusing the interruption, justified it. "The noble Secretary," said he, "calls on me to impeach him. Let him only turn his eyes on those persons who surround him, and he will perceive the reason that he is not impeached. He will see a phalanx of hired supporters ready to protect him or any other Minister against the effects of the American war. Give us only an honest Parliament, and we should then see if security and impunity would result from impeachment." No notice was taken of these

severe imputations thrown upon the House, and the debate soon afterwards closed. But it became apparent how weak were the foundations on which Lord North's power rested, when the defection of so inconsiderable a number of individuals as twenty going over from the Ministerial ranks to the Opposition side would have laid him at the mercy of his enemies. And under the deplorable circumstances of the war, of the finances, and of the country, there existed little hope of a counter desertion back to the party of Government. Already the minority anticipated with a sort of certainty the approaching, if not the imminent, fall of Administration.

[14th December 1781.] Nor was the paucity of numbers the only symptom that announced a Ministerial crisis. Two days subsequent to the late division, when the Secretary at War laid before the Committee of Supply the estimates of the army, another discussion of the American question took place, more decisive, if possible, than any which had yet arisen. Rigby and Dundas, acting on this occasion in concert, called on Lord North to state in his place the difference of opinion which was presumed to exist in the Cabinet. Both of them at the same time avowed and admitted that no further hope could be entertained of subjecting America by arms. The First Lord of the Treasury, while he admitted the war with the colonies to constitute the heaviest calamity of his life, and expressed his warmest wishes for the attainment of peace, neither owned nor denied the charge brought forward by the Lord Advocate of Scotland and Rigby, though he attempted to evade it under some loose and general declarations. Wearied at length, and attacked no less by his friends than by his opponents, he adopted the singular expedient of

quitting the Treasury bench and withdrawing to one of the seats behind it, leaving Lord George Germain alone in that conspicuous situation, exposed to the attacks of the Opposition. So extraordinary a scene, which spoke with mute eloquence, and from its peculiarity attracted all eyes, left no room to doubt of the dissimilarity of opinion among Ministers on the great question respecting America.

I feel strongly impelled, if I were able, to attempt to lay before posterity the leading features of that most interesting debate, during the progress of which the disunion between the two Cabinet Ministers in the Lower House became for the first time so apparent as to necessitate Lord George Germain's speedy resignation. He rose at an early period of the evening, compelled by the assertions and accusations of Townshend, who maintained that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State held different or conflicting opinions relative to the system of warfare prospectively intended to be prosecuted beyond the Atlantic. Lord George having so recently stated, with his characteristic frankness of character, the ideas entertained by him on the point, and his determination never to recede from them, could add little to his preceding observations. He said that "the King's servants were unanimous on one point, namely, that it was inexpedient and would be injurious to the country to withdraw the forces from America." But Lord North, well aware that the only chance of protecting the King from being compelled to surrender at discretion was to slip himself out of the present ruinous contest, to allow the American Secretary to retire, and then, retaining his own place, with the royal and parliamentary support that he possessed, to endeavour to extricate the nation from its actual embarrassments,—Lord

North, impelled by these motives, held a more equivocal, oracular, and inexplicit language. Fox, sustained by General Conway, endeavoured to force from him a definite reply to their demands, and he underwent during some time a species of cross-examination; but such was his ability and address in eluding or evading the precise questions put to him, that little additional information could be extracted from his answers. The House remained, if I may so say, at fault. Pitt, with great judgment, selected this moment of painful uncertainty for his appearance on the scene. In terms of energy he pointed out the contradictions of the two Ministers with each other and of Lord North with himself. "Here, then," continued he, "we behold the union and harmony between the members of Administration. One asserts that the object of the contest is not to be abandoned, the other gives a more qualified interpretation to those words. The first maintains that the conquest of the colonies is still to be attempted; no, says the second, not to be prosecuted by force. Is it possible that men, thus ignorant of or unacquainted with each other's intentions, can act in concert or be unanimous?"

It was on this occasion that Pitt, observing Welbore Ellis engaged in whispering Lord North and Lord George Germain, apparently with a view of mediating between them or reconciling their discordant declarations, suddenly stopped short in his speech, then looking round upon the House, which was hushed in mute attention, he said, with a manner and in a tone still more impressive than the reproof, "I shall wait till the unanimity is better settled, and until the sage Nestor of the Treasury bench has brought to an agreement the Agamemnon and the Achilles of the American war." The observation, which, independent of its classic

beauty and its severity, arose out of an accident impossible to have been foreseen, could not, therefore, be premeditated. Its effect was electric, not only on the individuals to whom it was personally directed, but on the whole audience. The two Ministers and the Treasurer of the Navy in some confusion resumed their former attitudes. We cannot sufficiently appreciate or admire the perfect self-possession which, while addressing a crowded House of Commons, could dictate to a youth of little more than two-and-twenty so masterly an allusion. The conclusion of his speech breathed not a little of the spirit of his deceased father, while he seemed to launch the vengeance or the indignation of a suffering and exhausted nation on the heads of Ministers, invoking in the same moment the Divine protection on "a great and innocent family, who, though they have not participated in the culpability, may, and probably will be, doomed to undergo the consequences."

Rigby now unmasked his battery, meant unquestionably to accelerate Lord George Germain's resignation, and thereby enable the First Minister, released from the double burden of the American war and the American Secretary, to ride out the storm. The plan was ingenious, if not solid, and seemed to promise success. No individual in office had so great a stake to defend as Rigby. During thirteen years and a half he had occupied the Pay Office without an associate, and he could not contemplate unmixed with apprehension an event so injurious to his own interests as would prove the dissolution of Lord North's Administration. Yet if any opinion may be formed from the encomiums which he lavished on Pitt's resplendent hereditary talents and virtues, the Paymaster of the Forces might be thought to anticipate, as not distant, a



new order of things, where Pitt would probably occupy an elevated place. Rigby then animadverted with force on the discordant sentiments expressed by leading members of the Opposition relative to America, some of whom (Fox and Burke) loudly called for the concession of independence to the colonies, while others (particularly Dunning) declared that the Minister who should dare to propose such a measure would be guilty of high treason. While, however, he pointed out these contradictions of opinion among the minority, he coincided fully with Pitt that an evident obscurity pervaded the conduct of the two noble Lords in office, which appeared to indicate dissimilarity of ideas. And he added that the House, as well as the country, had a right to demand explanation. Still, he maintained, we were not ripe for withdrawing the troops from America. Nor could all Fox's blandishments induce him to suggest a motion by which, both sides of the House concurring in it as a parliamentary declaration, Ministers might be bound down in their future conduct towards the colonies. But the Lord Advocate of Scotland, who was seated on the Treasury bench between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the American Secretary, and who could not, any more than Rigby, look forward unmoved to his own fate, which must be involved in the fall of the First Minister, answered to Fox's invitation. Coming forward on this critical occasion with that manly openness of character which, if not natural to him, he knew so well how to assume when it suited his purpose, Dundas reiterated all the sentiments already expressed by his friend. "If," said he, "there is any one of his Majesty's Cabinet base enough to remain in office and to conduct measures that he disapproves or condemns, be he who he will, he is unfit for society."

The declaration, so pointed, though ostensibly directed against both the Ministers, was, in fact, intended only against one, Lord George Germain. If his intention could, indeed, have been doubtful, Lord North's act in removing from his accustomed place to another seat while his colleague remained at his post, would have sufficiently explained the mystery. This piece of dumb show, one of the most curious that I ever witnessed on that political stage, the House of Commons, lasted for more than three-quarters of an hour while the debate continued, or rather languished. But not one word was uttered in further explanation by either of the two Ministers. How far Rigby's and Dundas's conduct was concerted with, or in any manner previously known to Lord North, I cannot presume to assert. Nor did Lord George Germain, as I believe, ever attain any certainty on the point. Probably it arose from their own view of affairs, and was undertaken without communicating the intention to the First Minister, though designed to facilitate or effect his extrication. The division which took place on the army estimates was carried by a very considerable majority in favour of Government, the respective numbers being 166 and 84.

From that evening, on which I accompanied him to his residence in Pall-Mall, when he quitted the House of Commons, Lord George, with reason, considered his official capacity as virtually terminated, though he continued to exercise its indispensable functions till a successor should be appointed to the department. The two Houses having shortly afterwards adjourned for the Christmas recess, he came to a full explanation with Lord North. At that interview, after professing his readiness to remain in his situation as long as it could be beneficial to his Majesty's service while the inde-

pendence of America was not formally recognised, he at the same time earnestly besought Lord North to consider no object except the preservation of the Ministry and the interests of their common master. For that purpose he advised the First Minister to strengthen himself by a negotiation with some of his political enemies, and not to allow any personal considerations towards him (Lord George) to delay or to impede for an instant the arrangements judged to be proper for the general security, adding that he had no personal stipulations to make nor favours to ask, and that he would go down immediately to his seat at Drayton in Northamptonshire for two or three weeks, in order to allow time to select a successor for his post, after which he would return and deliver up the seal of his office, on the shortest notice, into his Majesty's hands. As the best proof of his sincerity in these opinions, he left London a very few days subsequent to the above conversation.

[20th December 1781.] It must be confessed that something unpropitious seemed to overhang the councils and to disconcert or overturn the best matured measures of Administration during the course of the American war, so long as Lord North, Lord Sandwich, and Lord George Germain presided at the head of affairs. This remark or admission may perhaps be considered as synonymous with pronouncing the condemnation of those Ministers. But, on the other hand, it was indisputably Lord Sandwich's fleet and admiral which gained the glorious naval victory over De Grasse only four months later, though Fox and his party received the benefit of the day. Just at the time of which I now speak, Admiral Kempenfeldt having been dispatched with a squadron of twelve sail of the line in order to intercept or engage a naval force

intended by France for the West Indies, fell in with the enemy. As they had, however, been unexpectedly reinforced, so as to increase their numbers to eighteen sail of the line, Kempenfeldt<sup>1</sup> could only capture some of the transports full of troops, which he sent into our ports. No sooner had this intelligence reached London, than Fox indignantly protested in the House of Commons that "nothing short of treachery could have produced an event so disgraceful and ignominious. Incapacity or ignorance could not alone satisfactorily explain it. An inquiry, if not an impeachment, must be instantly set on foot against such a First Lord of the Admiralty. How could they look their constituents in the face if they had the baseness not to address the throne for his removal?" Townshend asked "how gentlemen could think of going out of town to partake of Christmas pastimes at a moment when, in his opinion, the fate of the Empire would be irrevocably sealed in twelve, or perhaps in six months?" "Adjourn to the 22d of next month!" exclaimed George Byng, on a motion to that effect being made from the Treasury bench; "good God! Mr. Speaker, at a crisis like the present, all the wisdom of the country is required to extricate us. The First Lord of the Admiralty has ignorantly dispatched only twelve or thirteen ships of the line to meet an armament of nineteen. Is this a measure to be tolerated?" Keppel, who, as a professional man and a seaman, could not be ignorant that these accusations were exaggerated if not altogether unjust, held a much more temperate and measured language. He admitted that there did not appear to be any treachery, but he said there was palpable neglect and want of naval skill in the Board.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Richard Kempenfeldt, who perished in the "Royal George," which sunk off Spithead, 29th August 1782.—ED.

Lord North, not at all disconcerted by such a load of imputations, with great calmness and good humour assured the House, no less than Fox, that "the noble individual who presided over the Admiralty, far from wishing to avoid an inquiry, was most desirous to meet it." In a speech of considerable length, Lord Mulgrave<sup>1</sup> vindicated the measure of sending out Kempenfeldt, as in itself highly judicious, though unforeseen circumstances had operated to prevent its complete success. But Bamber Gascoyne,<sup>2</sup> irritated at the harsh epithets which Fox had applied so generally to the Board, at which he held a place, and not restrained by any delicacies where his own character was in some measure compromised, handled the Opposition leader more roughly. "The honourable member," said Gascoyne, "is pleased to assert that we have never yet sent out an equal naval force since the commencement of the war to meet the French. Has he forgotten the 27th of July? And when Admiral Darby was dispatched to the relief of Gibraltar, if his ships were so inferior to the enemy in number as is pretended, the honourable gentleman would do well to inquire among his friends in France why they did not give us the meeting. Hard words are easily used, and the Admiralty may be stigmatised from the other side of the House as negligent, ignorant, corrupt, and treacherous. With more reason, and at least as much truth, may they be denominated the friends of Mr. Laurens and the correspondents of Dr. Franklin." After a pro-

<sup>1</sup> Constantine John Phipps, second Lord Mulgrave, an Irish peer, captain, R.N., born 1744, died 1792. He was created Baron Mulgrave of Mulgrave, co. York, in the peerage of Great Britain, in 1790. On his death this peerage became extinct, and his brother Henry succeeded only to the Irish peerage. This brother was raised to the English peerage as Baron Mulgrave in 1794, and as Earl of Mulgrave in 1812.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> M.P. for Truro.—ED.



tracted conversation rather than a debate, accompanied on both sides with much acrimony, the First Minister was allowed to carry his proposed adjournment ; but not till George Byng, without a division, had moved and carried to call over the House on the 21st of January. Such were the humiliating circumstances that attended and ushered in the last scene of Lord North's expiring Administration.

[21st December 1781—21st January 1782.] After the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and the virtual resignation of Lord George Germain, it might naturally be supposed that the First Lord of the Treasury would lose no time in endeavouring to repair the breach, and to strengthen himself previous to the meeting of Parliament after the Christmas holidays. Necessity dictated measures of energy, and the respite which the recess allowed for private negotiation afforded him time for making every requisite stipulation. Nevertheless Lord North, though he did not either oppose or refuse, by no means however positively accepted even the resignation of the American Secretary. And when Lord George returned to London from Northamptonshire towards the middle of the ensuing month, to his no small astonishment he found his office still undisposed of, and his successor not more fixed than before he quitted the capital. He therefore waited patiently till the progress of events should propel the indecision or hasten the procrastination of the First Lord of the Treasury.

Perhaps no part of Lord North's Administration, and no feature of his conduct as First Minister during the twelve years that he continued in office, seems more extraordinary, it might be even said inexplicable, than this loss of time at so critical a juncture. He well knew the Opposition to be principally composed of two parties, called after the names of their

respective leaders, Lords Rockingham and Shelburne, which bodies of men, though they agreed in endeavouring to dispossess him of power, agreed in no other speculative or practical principle of policy. Scarcely were they withheld from mutual animosity by the near prospect of the prize. If, therefore, the point of American independence should be conceded by Ministers, there seemed to be no obvious impediment that could prevent Lord Shelburne from accepting a situation in the Government. It was even well known that he entertained and avowed very strong doubts on the propriety or wisdom of making such a concession to the colonies under any possible circumstances, doubts which were re-echoed by his adherents in the House of Commons, particularly by Dunning. He could not, therefore, it was presumed, be altogether unacceptable to the King. He was, besides, a man of great abilities, the professed disciple of the late Earl of Chatham, and possessed considerable parliamentary interest. Lord North held in his hand various means of conciliating and acquiring his support. Besides the post of Secretary of State, and a higher rank in the English peerage, to both which he might aspire, four garters were then lying on the King's table unbestowed, one of which Lord Shelburne actually seized on as his share of the plunder when he came into Ministry within three months from the time of which I speak. All these circumstances seemed, therefore, to point out that quarter as the obvious point of application.

I have had many opportunities of discussing this question with persons who were well informed in the secret springs and history of Lord North's Administration. But they differed in their solution of the difficulty. It has been confidently asserted that the King objected to disposing of one of the vacant

garters in favour of Lord Shelburne, and absolutely refused to consent to it when the proposition was made to his Majesty by the Minister. We must likewise recollect that George III., who at this time had scarcely reigned more than twenty-two years, was encouraged by his past experience to imagine that he might retain a Minister to whom he was attached in defiance of unpopularity. In fact, Lord North, from his first entrance on office, early in 1770, down to his final resignation, never had been popular. Nor can we well doubt that if he had felt as strong a desire to retain his Ministerial situation, and a mind as determined to abide the issue as his royal master manifested on both those points, he might have held out until the victory of the 12th of April would have raised the siege. Sanguine hopes were likewise entertained at St. James's, that even though all further attempts to subjugate America should be abandoned, yet that the same Administration might still continue to conduct the national affairs. Nor was it at all clear that such expectations were chimerical. The session of 1779 had sufficiently proved that even after being left in a minority on more than one great public question, a Minister who wished to remain in office possessed the means of doing it, almost in defiance of the House of Commons. If the independence of America was acknowledged, and that great impediment once removed, peace would probably follow at no long interval; and however unfortunate he had been in carrying on the war across the Atlantic, Lord North might still conclude an honourable pacification with our European enemies. In the House of Peers he possessed a decided majority, and in the Lower House of Parliament, which had been recently elected, when once Government became emancipated from the American war,

it was with reason conceived that the Opposition would again diminish in energy as well as in numbers. These reasons, however destitute of solidity they proved if we try them by the event, may, nevertheless, perhaps satisfactorily account for Lord North's seeming supineness in not endeavouring at so critical a moment to divide his opponents or to augment his own strength.

[21st—31st *January* 1782.] When Parliament met again for the dispatch of business, Lord George Germain therefore attended in his place in the House of Commons, but the tide of opposition, which had been so long principally directed against him as the American Secretary, took at first another direction. Lord Sandwich was in turn attacked by Fox for his asserted mismanagement of the Admiralty department; and the First Minister, unable to shelter him from investigation, consented to institute an inquiry. Fox said that "as the naval administration throughout the year 1781 contained or exhibited an epitome of all the blunders committed during the course of the war, he would, for the sake of dispatch, confine his accusations chiefly to that period." Lord North, while, with more of the spirit of concession than of Ministerial firmness, he gave way upon every point, yet not only denied the culpability imputed to the Earl of Sandwich, but desired the House to observe that "his noble friend as well as himself was ready and prepared to meet an inquiry of a much more comprehensive description." Pitt, joining on this occasion the general outcry raised against an obnoxious Minister, accused Lord North of attempting to evade inquiry by withholding evidence of his colleague's maladministration; but the chief blame which could justly attach to the First Lord of the Treasury was the too great facility that he manifested in furnishing documents, many of

which, when laid on the table of the House, though only in substance, were of a very delicate nature. The Solicitor-General, and he alone of all the Ministerial supporters, had the boldness to oppose the disclosure and production of such papers. Undismayed by the augmenting numbers of the Opposition or by the state of depression to which he beheld his friends reduced, Mansfield, with an energy of mind that extorted admiration, entered his protest against an inquiry which demanded such preparatory sacrifices. He declared his astonishment at, and disapprobation of, the communications made in compliance with clamour. "By permitting such an investigation," said he, "and by producing such materials, we destroy the British constitution and deprive ourselves of the benefits arising from an executive as distinct from a legislative Government. As well might we permit all the operations of the campaign to be discussed in this House as to produce upon the table, and thereby disclose to the enemy, the secret information procured by Ministers." But this single reclamation, unsupported, proved wholly ineffectual to stem the torrent, and, after considerable discussion, the 7th of the ensuing month was finally fixed on for going into the inquiry.

Among the most strenuous defenders of the First Lord of the Admiralty on this occasion was Lord Mulgrave,<sup>1</sup> a nobleman who occupied himself a place at that Board. His early expedition of discovery towards the North Pole had given him some naval celebrity; and as he was formed on rather a heavy colossal scale, the Opposition, to distinguish him from his younger brother, the Honourable Charles Phipps, who enjoyed likewise a seat in the House, denominated him "Ursa Major."

<sup>1</sup> Constantine John, Lord Mulgrave (see *ante*, p. 167). He made his famous Arctic voyage in the year 1773.—ED.



They likewise gave him the name of "Alphesibæus," I suppose from some fancied analogy between him and the awkward imitator of the dancing satyrs, commemorated by Virgil in the fifth Eclogue of his *Bucolics*. Lord Mulgrave<sup>1</sup> was distinguished by a singularity of physical conformation, possessing two distinct voices, the one strong and hoarse, the other shrill and querulous, of both which organs he occasionally availed himself. So extraordinary a circumstance probably gave rise to a story of his having fallen into a ditch in a dark night, and calling for aid in his shrill voice, a countryman coming up was about to have assisted him, but Lord Mulgrave addressing him in a hoarse tone, the peasant immediately exclaimed, "Oh, if there are two of you in the ditch, you may help each other out of it." In debate, if not animated, he was able, well informed, and pertinacious. Like Dundas, he contrived after Lord North's Administration went to pieces to attach himself to Pitt, who in 1784 made him joint Paymaster of the Forces, and six years later raised him to the British peerage.

Towards the last days of January, after long fluctuation, Lord North at length communicated to Lord George the King's consent to his resignation, so repeatedly offered, and the resolution taken to supply his loss by Mr. Welbore Ellis. It seemed difficult to have made a selection in consequence of which less strength would be acquired on the side of Administration, Mr. Ellis's talents being already

<sup>1</sup> He was a haughty spirited man, whom I should not suspect of any possible meanness for any possible advantage. Rough as a boatswain, proud as a strong feeling of aristocracy could make him, and fond of coarse merriment approaching to ill manners, he was in society a dangerous converser; one never knew what he would say next. "Why, holla, Burke!" (I heard him crying out on one occasion), "What! you are rioting in puns now Johnson is away?" Burke was indignant and ready with a reply. But Lord Mulgrave drowned all in storms of laughter.—P.

engaged in favour of Government by a very lucrative place, that of Treasurer of the Navy. His abilities, however eminent and solid they might be, aided by his long experience of parliamentary business, were nevertheless altogether unequal to contending in stormy times amidst universal depression with the vast energies then collected on the Opposition benches. He was, besides, far advanced in years, and though his faculties might have preserved all their vigour or freshness, he wanted fire and animation. His appointment gave satisfaction only to the enemies of the Minister, who exulted in a choice that proved the paucity, or rather nullity, of the sources from which he now attempted to derive support.

[*February 1782.*] Just at this period died Lord Falmouth,<sup>1</sup> at an advanced stage of life, a nobleman neither distinguished by his talents or his virtues, but whose family name is connected with naval recollections of the most gratifying kind. Lord Falmouth commanded the yeomen of the guard at the time of his death; but my sole motive for mentioning his decease is in order to commemorate an anecdote respecting him. I have been assured that towards the conclusion of George II.'s reign, when Mr. Pitt, afterwards created Earl of Chatham, occupied a principal place in the Cabinet, Lord Falmouth having waited on him at his levée, stated his wish to be recommended to his Majesty for the first vacant Garter. The Secretary of State expressing a degree of reluctance to lay the request before the King, and manifesting some disapprobation of the demand itself: "You will be pleased sir, to remember," said Lord Falmouth, "that I

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Boscawen, second Viscount Falmouth, a general officer in the army and captain of the yeomen of the guard, and brother of Edward Boscawen, the distinguished admiral. He was born in 1707, and died 4th February 1782.—ED.

bring in five votes, who go with Ministry in the House of Commons; and if my application is disregarded, you must take the consequence." "Your Lordship threatens me," replied the Minister with warmth; "you may therefore be assured that, so long as I hold a place in the councils of the Crown, you shall never receive the Order of the Garter." Then turning round he exclaimed, addressing himself to those near him—

"Optat ephippia bos piger."

Lord Falmouth comprehending nothing of the meaning of these words, but conceiving that the monosyllable *bos* must allude to his name, requested to be informed what the Minister meant by so calling him? "The observation," replied Mr. Pitt, "is not mine, but Horace's."<sup>1</sup> As little familiar with the name of the Roman poet as he was acquainted with his writings, Lord Falmouth apprehending that Horace Walpole had said something severe or disrespectful concerning him; under that second mistake, "If Horace Walpole," said he, "has taken any liberties with my name, I shall know how to resent it. His brother, Sir Robert, when he was alive and First Minister, never pre-

<sup>1</sup> I have heard my father relate the story somewhat differently, but in substance the same. *He* said some wag chalked the words on his (Lord Falmouth's) door, and that seeing them, he exclaimed he would give £100 to know who wrote them. The first friend he met said, "Give *me* the money: Horace wrote them." Then comes the next mistake: "Horace! a dog, after all his obligations to me," &c. A similar story to this was related to me in Italy. Cardinal Zanelli was pasquinaded at Rome for his ingratitude to the Dauphin of France, whose influence exerted in his favour had procured him the dignity of Eminenza. Zanelli's coat-armour was a vine; the statue exhibited these words:—"Plantavi vineam et fecit labruscas." The enraged Cardinal, little skilled in Scripture learning, actually promised a reward to whoever would tell who wrote it. Next day Pasquin claimed the reward for himself, having marked under the words—*40th chapter of Isaiah.*—P.

sumed so to treat me." Having thus expressed himself, he quitted Mr. Pitt, leaving the audience in astonishment at the effect of his double misapprehension.

Early in the month of February Lord George Germain, having resigned the seal of his office into the King's hand, received, in recompense of his services, the honour of the peerage. The particulars attending that elevation, which became immediately afterwards a subject of discussion in the Upper House, I received on the same day when they took place from Lord George's own mouth, and they are too curious, as well as characteristic, to be omitted in these Memoirs. The separation between the sovereign and the secretary was by no means unaccompanied with emotion on both sides, which became probably augmented by the dark cloud overhanging the throne, together with the painful circumstances that produced the necessity for Lord George's resignation. The King, who could not shut his eyes to these facts, doubtless foresaw the possibility, if not probability, of greater changes in the Administration as imminent, of which the removal of the American Secretary was only the forerunner and the presage. After regretting the unfortunate events that had dictated the measure, and thanking Lord George for his services, his Majesty added, "Is there anything that I can do to express my sense of them which would be agreeable to you?" "Sir, answered he, "if your Majesty is pleased to raise me to the dignity of the peerage, it will form at once the best reward to which I can aspire and the best proof of your approbation of my past exertions in your affairs." "By all means," said the King; "I think it very proper, and shall do it with pleasure. "Then, sir," replied Lord George, "if you agree to my first request, I hope

you will not think it unbecoming or unreasonable in me to ask another favour. It is to create me a Viscount, as should I be only raised to the dignity of a Baron, my own secretary, my lawyer, and my father's page will all three take rank of me." The King expressing a wish to know the names of the persons to whom he alluded, "The first," replied Lord George, "is Lord Walsingham, who, as your Majesty knows, was for some time Under-Secretary of State in my office when Mr. De Grey. The second is Lord Loughborough, who has been always my legal adviser. Lord Amherst is the third, who, when page to my father, the late Duke of Dorset, has often sat on the braces of the state-coach that conveyed him, as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, to the Parliament House at Dublin." The King smiled, adding, "What you say is very reasonable; it shall be so. And now let me know the title that you choose." "I have already, sir," answered Lord George, "in the possible anticipation of your Majesty's gracious dispositions towards me, spoken to the Duke of Dorset and obtained his permission, as the head of my family, to take the title of Sackville, having been compelled to renounce my own name in order to avail myself of the bequest of the estate of Drayton in Northamptonshire, made me by Lady Betty Germain in her will. I shall, therefore, in some degree recover it by this means." "I quite approve of that idea," replied his Majesty, "and if you will state to me your title, I will write it down myself before we part and send it directly to the Chancellor." The King immediately placed himself at a table, took the pen and ink lying upon it, and having committed the viscounty to paper, asked him what barony he chose. Lord George answered, "That of Bolebrook in Sussex, being one of the most ancient estates belonging to his family,



and contiguous to Buckhurst, the original peerage conferred by Queen Elizabeth on his ancestor, the first Earl of Dorset." When the King had copied it he rose up, and with the most condescending expressions of concern as well as of satisfaction, allowed Lord George to withdraw from the closet. As this is one of the few peerages which, in the course of half a century, George III. has been allowed to confer wholly independent of Ministerial intervention or recommendation, from the impulse of his own inclinations, its origin and creation attain an additional interest. Lord North had not the smallest share in the business.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner had the intention of calling up Lord George Germain to the House of Peers become publicly known, than the Marquis of Carmarthen<sup>2</sup> immediately brought forward the subject before that assembly. He endeavoured to show that it would be derogatory to their honour as a body to admit among them a person still labouring under the sentence of a court-martial; and though his motion was rejected by a great majority on the 7th of February, yet he renewed the attack as soon as Lord George had taken his seat on the 18th of the same month. Conceiving that Lord North must, as First Minister, have advised the measure, the Marquis attempted to involve him in the responsibility or culpability of giving such advice to the Crown. But Lord Sackville having exculpated the First Lord of the Treasury from any participation whatever in the transaction, gave the House clearly to understand

<sup>1</sup> Lord Sackville's son succeeded to the dukedom of Dorset in 1815.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Godolphin Osborne, born 1751. He sat in the House of Peers as Baron Osborne. He succeeded to the dukedom of Leeds in 1789, and died 31st January 1799. The founder of the family was Sir Edward Osborne, who served the office of Lord Mayor of London A.D. 1583.—ED.

that it flowed solely from the volition of the sovereign. His enemies themselves confessed that never was a more able, dignified, or manly appeal made within the walls of the House of Peers than Lord Sackville pronounced on that occasion. He observed, that even admitting in all its force the justice of the sentence passed by the court-martial, yet that tribunal had only declared him "guilty of disobeying Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick's orders, and therefore had adjudged him unfit to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever." But they neither had imposed, nor could they inflict upon him, any civil disability or incapacity. And the attempt of the King or of the Minister of that time to aggravate the nature or expressions of the sentence by any harsh additions and personal comments could not add to its force. If, after considering the sentence published in the case of the general officer who commanded on the expedition sent in 1806 against Buenos Ayres, we contemplate the tenor of the orders that accompanied it, and then compare them with those used in the instance of Lord George Sackville, we shall perceive the contrast presented by the conduct of the two sovereigns in the strongest point of view. Though General Whitelock was adjudged to be "cashiered and declared totally unfit and unworthy to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever," consequently, though the sentence implies a much deeper degree of error or culpability than was attributed to Lord George Sackville at Minden, as well as a fault far more clearly established and recognised, yet George III., unlike his predecessor, subjoins no injurious reflections, but simply enjoins the publication of it as a memorial and warning to other officers.

The Duke of Richmond, who took a very active

part in the second debate upon Lord Sackville's elevation to the peerage, endeavoured to prove, from the length of time which elapsed after his reception of Prince Ferdinand's orders to advance, that disinclination only on his part to obey them could have produced such a delay. As the Duke had been personally present at Minden, and as he declared that he held his watch within his hand during the whole time lost in obeying the Prince's orders, which he asserted amounted to an hour and a half, his speech might have been expected to make an impression on the House. But only twenty-eight peers could be found on either debate to support Lord Carmarthen's motion, though the number voting against it rose from seventy-five to ninety-three between the two divisions on the 7th and the 18th of February. It happened likewise, most unfortunately for the Duke of Richmond, that while he thus attempted to attack Lord Sackville's personal courage, his own lay under very general suspicion. He had brought forward, only a few days earlier, in the House of Peers, the case of an American Colonel Haynes, executed at Charlestown, under Lord Rawdon's authority, in the preceding year. The expressions or assertions which his Grace used when relating this transaction gave such offence to the nobleman against whom they were levelled, that he soon afterwards called the Duke to a severe account. But as he declined giving any individual satisfaction for an act done in his parliamentary capacity, Lord Rawdon compelled him to declare in his place that by his accusation "he had not intended any attack on Lord Rawdon's justice or humanity," a declaration apparently at variance with his preceding charge. Lord George Lennox, as I know, entertained a very different opinion of Lord Sackville's behaviour at

Minden, as well as of the sentence pronounced on his conduct, from the ideas expressed by the Duke, his brother. Not two years after the facts just related had taken place, I dined in a select company with Lord Sackville and Lord George Lennox,<sup>1</sup> at the house of a general officer in London. When we went up to the drawing-room after dinner, no entreaties could prevail on Lord George to walk first out of the apartment. "As the son of a Duke of earlier creation, I would do it," said he to Lord Sackville; but, as a general officer, nothing can induce me to precede your Lordship." Lord Sackville was restrained by the exhortations and advice of Lord Amherst from calling on the Marquis of Carmarthen to answer to him personally for his double attack. I had the honour to know him before, as well as after, he became Duke of Leeds. He was a nobleman highly accomplished, of the most pleasing manners, of very elegant deportment, of a lofty mind, and of considerable talents; but the part which he took on this occasion did not constitute the most commendable act of his political life. Posterity will form their opinion on it divested of prejudice. His contemporaries saw it merely through the optics of party, the most deceptive of all mediums. While only twenty-eight peers supported the motion on both occasions, nearly a hundred voted against it on the final debate. These aggregate numbers appear indeed small to us, but we must recollect the limited extent of the peerage compared with the present times. It was not Lord North, but Mr. Pitt who augmented the members of that House, if not with a profuse, yet unquestionably with an unsparing hand. In 1782 there existed only one

<sup>1</sup> Lord George Henry Lennox, M.P. for the county of Sussex, died in 1805.—ED.

hundred and eighty-seven English peers. We have now above three hundred. Perhaps, however, that augmentation, great as it is, bears only a relative proportion to the increase of national revenue, population, and territory, within the last thirty years.

[6th—20th February 1782.] While Lord Sackville was personally attacked in one House of Parliament, the Earl of Sandwich underwent no less severe an inquiry into his official conduct as First Lord of the Admiralty in the House of Commons. Fox, acting as his accuser, united the keenest sarcasms with the most able and laborious investigation of the naval administration. He was sustained in all his charges by Pitt, by Admiral Keppel, and by Lord Howe. Under this accumulation of talent and of eloquence the Minister laboured hard to protect his colleague, but the House manifested indications of reluctance to extend further support to Government. Animated by such obvious symptoms of the decline of Lord North's influence in that assembly, the Opposition renewed their efforts. And if they did not overthrow, they at least shook to its base the Ministry. After two debates, protracted to a late hour, in the first of which the members present fell little short of four hundred, a majority of only twenty-two appeared on the side of Administration. After the second debate on the 20th of February, where more than four hundred and fifty persons actually voted, a still smaller majority, consisting only of nineteen, negatived Fox's proposition attributing "gross mismanagement" to the nobleman at the head of the Admiralty. Two such divisions following close upon Lord Sackville's resignation afforded ample triumph to the minority, while they diffused proportionate apprehension among the adherents of Government.



I was present throughout both those debates, and voted on each evening with Ministers. Not that I either then thought, or am even now of opinion, that no degree of error, perhaps of blame, might justly be attributed to the Earl of Sandwich. Fox assumed, indeed, as a principle, that "it was not necessary to criminate a Minister in order to address the throne for his removal from office. If he was incapable, or unfortunate, or disliked, any one of those causes constituted sufficient reason for his dismissal." That Lord Sandwich was eminently unfortunate in the selection of naval commanders on foreign stations, with almost the single exceptions of Barrington and Rodney, cannot be denied. Nor was he more fortunate in saving our homeward and outward bound mercantile fleets, many of which fell into the enemy's hands. Neither did our squadrons intercept, combat, and vanquish the fleets of the House of Bourbon as they had done during the preceding war. All these facts must be conceded. It is equally true that he had incurred a great portion of national ill-will and had made inveterate enemies, particularly in the navy. He was become very generally unpopular in 1782. If, therefore, those two reasons are esteemed sufficient to call for his dismissal, no doubt Fox had reason on his side. But on the article of inability his attack was altogether unjust. Few men of high rank possessed and manifested more energy, industry, enlargement of mind, and variety of talent than that nobleman. He found, on coming to the head of the Admiralty, the magazines and storehouses of all the dockyards exhausted or empty. He replenished them. By the vigour of his exertions he had overcome the dangerous combinations formed by the workmen in the royal yards. He had repaired near one hundred and fifty ships of war during his naval adminis-

tration. But unanimity, concord, enthusiasm, he neither could preserve, nor create, nor revive, among the officers under his department. Probably this calamity originated more in the nature of the war than from the fault of Lord Sandwich; the obloquy and the punishment, however, fell upon him.

The two debates of the 7th and the 20th of February had each their peculiar features. In the first, Fox performed the principal part, as Lord Mulgrave did the second; one attacking, the other defending the nobleman whose administration lay under parliamentary inquiry. Keppel said little, but Lord Howe flung all his weight into the scale of Opposition. Pitt likewise added his powerful eloquence to that party. If ever I beheld Lord North in earnest, by which I mean, anxiously desirous to protect and to justify his colleague, it was on the evening in question. He doubtless felt, that having lost Lord George Germain, and only metamorphosed the Treasurer of the Navy into a Secretary of State, by which transmutation no accession of interest or of ability would be gained to Government, if Lord Sandwich should likewise be driven from his situation, his own continuance at the head of his Majesty's councils must become very precarious. While, however, he highly justified, and even extolled, the Earl of Sandwich's professional services, he admitted that many of the most popular naval commanders were unemployed and disgusted, but he denied that their disgust was by any means attributable to Ministers. Sheridan, availing himself with great ingenuity and promptitude of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's assertion, called on the admirals present by name, and invoked them to declare the reasons of their respective retirement from active service. Nor did he fail to represent Lord North's expression as insulting to

those officers. Lord Howe, nevertheless, declined to say one word in explanation of his own motives for withdrawing from employment, though the House waited during some moments in silent expectation of his gratifying their curiosity. But Pigot, either more irritated against the First Lord of the Admiralty, or more implicitly devoted to Fox, rose and explained the causes of his dissatisfaction. They were singular and obtained belief. He asserted that having made an offer of his services to Lord Sandwich, that nobleman in reply asked him for his interest at the India House, where several of his Lordship's friends were under prosecution for having arrested and confined Lord Pigot when Governor of Madras. "On my refusing," continued the Admiral, "to take part in favour of men who had caused my brother's death, Lord Sandwich with a sneer informed me that he would lay before his Majesty my readiness to serve him, but from that hour I have never received any answer."

I have heard it confidently asserted by persons who were conversant in the secret history of those times, that between the first and the second debate Lord Sandwich received a proposition, the object of which was to induce him to give in his immediate resignation, offering him as a recompense for this service done to the Crown and to Administration the Order of the Garter, together with a pension of £4000 a year for life. I have not the least doubt of the truth of this anecdote. Indeed Fox alluded to it in the course of the second discussion relative to the nobleman at the head of the Admiralty; but he affected to consider it as merely a report set on foot by Ministers in order to serve the purpose of the day, and to mislead the country gentlemen with promises or expectations never

intended to be realised. Lord Sandwich rejected the proposal, though coming from Lord North, and though the state of his private fortune was so limited or so embarrassed as by no means to place him above looking to official situation. Such a rejection seems to indicate that he entertained the most sanguine, though, as the event proved, the most fallacious expectations of the duration of Ministry, or that he grossly miscalculated his own interests. In less than six weeks afterwards, I saw his furniture carrying off from the Admiralty, of which official residence Keppel, just named his successor, was taking possession.

[*20th February 1782.*] Fox, who opened the second debate on Lord Sandwich, as he had done the first, elated, as it was natural he should be, at the division on the preceding question, began by observing that "under any other Administration than the present the number of persons who had voted with Opposition on a former night would have been regarded as a majority." "For," added he, "they certainly constituted the voice of the people; nor would any Minister except the noble Lord in the blue ribband presume to retain a man in employment against whom the popular sentiment had been so loudly pronounced." The motion, which attributed "great mismanagement to his Majesty's naval affairs in the year 1781," was seconded by Pitt; and I believe it forms the only instance on record where the one of those two illustrious individuals moved and the other seconded the same question during their long parliamentary career. In the progress of the debate, Pitt enforced with great warmth the proofs adduced of the inability or misconduct of the First Lord of the Admiralty. From every quarter Government was assailed. General Conway, Dunning, and Sheridan united on the same side the powers of reason,

wit, and argument ; while Admiral Keppel and Lord Howe attacked in detail by a statement of facts the official administration of Lord Sandwich, which they stigmatised as deficient in judgment, energy, and activity. Lord North remained silent, but Lord Mulgrave maintained with no inconsiderable ability the claims of his principal to national respect, approbation, and gratitude. Dundas, who never absented himself or shrunk from the call of political adherence, came forward manfully on the occasion. It was, however, from another individual that Administration received the most seasonable as well as efficacious aid. Sir William Dolben, whose double capacity as a country gentleman and as one of the representatives for the University of Oxford gave him a proportionate weight, though he admitted the alleged mismanagement to be sufficiently proved by the contents of the papers laid on the table, yet refused to support a motion for the dismissal of Lord Sandwich. Still less, he said, could he concur in a vote for bringing that nobleman to trial. In vain Mr. Thomas Pitt, with the wheedling and querulous eloquence which characterised him, endeavoured to demonstrate the inconsistency or contradiction of such a line of parliamentary action. Vainly he tried to show that no man who concurred in finding the culpability could hesitate to punish the offender. Sir William Dolben stopped short, declaring at the same time that he should not even support the present question, if it was intended or understood to be a preliminary to stronger and more personal steps. It became therefore evident that there was a point at which many individuals of independent minds and fortunes would make a stand, and withhold their support from Opposition.

[22d February 1782.] Every day from this time down to the hour when Lord North suddenly threw



up the administration of affairs was marked by the most violent exertions on both sides. Incredible efforts were made to procure attendance in Parliament. The Opposition, conscious that not a moment should be lost, allowed the Minister no respite. Having compelled the Colonial Secretary of State to give in his dismission, and impressed an indelible mark of parliamentary condemnation or censure on the First Lord of the Admiralty, they directed their next operations against Lord North himself, as the head of the state machine. Scarcely forty-eight hours after the last debate on Lord Sandwich, General Conway introduced a motion for addressing his Majesty "to renounce any further attempts to reduce America by force." Notwithstanding the eloquence of the new Secretary of State, who on this occasion displayed very considerable talents, it became impossible to induce the House to maintain the contest. Burke, in addition to all the arguments suggested by the nature of the subject and the exhausted condition of Great Britain, oppressed the recently appointed Minister under flashes of intolerable wit, supported by the keenest ridicule. Never on any occasion was he more happy in his allusions or more pointed in his irony. After felicitating Ellis on succeeding as heir to the noble Viscount, at whose feet he had been brought up, and whose political opinions he implicitly adopted, Burke compared him to a caterpillar, who having long remained in a torpid state within the silken folds of his lucrative employment as Treasurer of the Navy, now bursting his ligaments, fluttered forth the Secretary of the hour. Pursuing this comparison with inconceivable humour, he directed the whole force of his powerful mind in impelling his audience no longer to support a hopeless, ruinous, and unavailing conflict. I have always considered

this debate as one of the most interesting of any at which I ever was present. General Conway performed the principal, but by no means the most brilliant part in it. The Opposition, during the course of this great siege, which in 1782 had already lasted nearly as long as the war of Troy, selected their assailants for each progressive attack, as Homer does his heroes. The General, on whom fell the present effort, was not distinguished by the superiority, and still less by the fluency of his eloquence. Nevertheless he drew universal attention when, addressing himself to the new Secretary of State for America, he demanded what were the right honourable gentleman's intentions, or on what principles he meant henceforward to conduct the Transatlantic contest. Nor was that attention diminished when, expressing his apprehensions that in Ellis would survive all his predecessor's political sentiments, Conway exclaimed in the words of Horace to the Roman republic after the fury of the civil wars—

“O navis! referent in mare te novi  
Fluctus?”——

Lord John Cavendish was chosen to second the motion. It must be owned that Ellis's position demanded talents of no common order for enabling him to meet so severe and so formidable an inquisition. The Opposition rows, full in his view, were crowded with eager candidates for power animated by hope and impelled by ambition, while a deep cloud overhung the Treasury bench and spread its chilling influence over that part of the House. The new but aged Minister felt all the awkwardness, difficulties, and embarrassment of his situation. There was even some degree of ridicule attached to a man of seventy accepting such an employment under the desperate circumstances in which he had

taken it on Lord Sackville's resignation. In order to obviate these objections, Mr. Ellis, after acquitting himself with great circumspection, gravity, and ability in the course of a long speech, finished by observing that "he had come into the office which he held to employ the remains of vigour left him by age and infirmity for the benefit of the state." "I have now made," said he, "my confession of faith, and trust it may prove satisfactory to the House." Burke instantly fastened like a vulture on the Secretary's declaration. "A confession of faith," observed he, "more obscure, more absurd, more incomprehensible, was never framed or delivered for the delusion and calamity of mankind! Like confessions of faith of the same unintelligible description, it can only be supported by miracles. For what satisfaction has the young Secretary given to the House? Not one word have we been able to extract from him which the last American Minister has [not told us five years ago. The name may indeed be changed, and henceforward it may be denominated a French war carried on in the fields of America, but the fatal system remains unaltered." Then fixing his eyes upon Ellis, "I may assert," continued he, "that the late Colonial Secretary, though called up by patent to another House, still occupies in effigy his ancient seat. There we behold him with all the plans for reducing America thick upon him. He is the universal legatee of the noble Lord, who has bequeathed to him all his own projects, nay, his very language and ideas, his *ipsissima verba*. He still lives and speaks among us, only transformed into the appearance and form of the right honourable gentleman."

Jenkinson having risen soon afterwards with the intention of explaining to the House the precise description of the war prospectively intended to be

carried on beyond the Atlantic and thus satisfying the inquiries of Opposition, observed that "his idea embraced only a war of posts, to retain henceforward no regular army in the field, but while we kept possession of certain military positions, to attack the enemy whenever any favourable occasions should present themselves." As Burke had pounced upon the Secretary of State, so Fox started up to answer the Secretary at War. After congratulating the House and the country that two hundred and nineteen independent men had been found on the recent question respecting the nobleman at the head of the Admiralty, he observed that if the people would only consider the number of placemen and contractors who most unworthily occupied seats in that assembly, the late division must be esteemed an unequivocal majority against Administration. "I am, however, glad," exclaimed he, "to have at length ascertained from the speech of the gentleman that has just sat down who is that evil spirit which produces all our calamities. It is an individual higher than the noble Lord in the blue ribband, for that noble person is only his puppet and acts under his direction. The right honourable member has spoken out, and I will take the word of a principal. Those ostensible Ministers who occupy seats on the same bench near him are merely secondary and subordinate agents. That infernal spirit, which really governs and has so nearly overturned this country, a spirit which, though not so visible as Ministers, is far greater than them, has spoken through his mouth. We now perceive that the war beyond the Atlantic is to be prosecuted as violently as heretofore, but it is to be carried on with America, and not in America." Jenkinson rose once more, but solely for the purpose of disavowing that he was

animated by any spirit except his own, and the debate took a new turn.

When we reflect on the import of Fox's expressions, and consider how obviously, or rather unavoidably, they applied to the sovereign ; if we further call to our attention that Fox was at that very moment a candidate for high office, and became actually Secretary of State to the prince against whom he had levelled such imputations within six weeks after he used them in Parliament, we ought not to be surprised that his Majesty could not immediately obliterate them from his recollection. Even had they been ever so well founded, they were not the less contrary to every dictate of prudence. Pitt, however violent and personal he might be against Ministers, yet observed measures in his indignation. The different political fortune of the two individuals flowed principally from this opposite line of conduct. Fox, in the ardour of his pursuit, forgot that any moderation was necessary either towards the King or towards Lord North. He ought, nevertheless, to have foreseen how soon contingencies might compel him to coalesce with the Minister whom he now held up to national aversion. And he should have remembered that it is easier to force the barriers of state than to stand firm within them. He seemed never to recollect that the Marquis of Rockingham's first Administration lasted scarcely ten months. His second possession of power was fated to be of much shorter duration. So difficult is it, even under the British constitution, to govern without the consent or inclination of the monarch !

Lord North, who never wanted presence of mind or betrayed any defect of capacity, and who knew that however odious the American war had become, he was personally beloved throughout the country,



endeavoured to stimulate the Opposition to propose an address to the Crown for his removal, as being, he said, a measure more advantageous to the state than leaving him ostensibly possessed of power, while his hands would be fettered by resolutions of the House. But Fox and his adherents well knew that they could not carry any such proposition. They were only powerful upon one point. Fox endeavoured on his side to induce the Lord Advocate of Scotland to vote with them for the termination of the American war, charging him with inconsistency or with personal animosity towards the late American Secretary if he should now support the very measures when proposed by Mr. Ellis which he had reprobated from the lips of Lord George Germain. It must be owned that Dundas lay open to that imputation, as did Rigby, though they both justified themselves with ingenuity. The Paymaster of the Forces, while he avowed that no hope of reducing the colonies to obedience now remained, and professing at the same time his ardent desire of peace, yet refused to tie up the powers of the executive Government. Both the Pitts, William and Thomas, exerted their different oratorical efforts on that night, and might be considered as well entitled to—

“Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale.”

The former, dignified, impressive, collected, was always heard with a sort of veneration, as the living substitute of him who under two successive reigns had subjected our foreign enemies while he trampled Opposition under his feet. The latter, solemn and declamatory, if not theatrical; sometimes whining, yet often appealing with great effect to the passions or to the understanding of the House, scarcely drew less attention. Their joint co-opera-

tion unquestionably conduced to the success which crowned the party at the conclusion of the debate. On that night the American war may indeed be said to have virtually terminated; the question being carried on the part of the Government by only one vote, though near 390 members divided. Many of those who supported the Minister seemed not less rejoiced at the apparent conclusion of the war than the persons on the opposite side; and it has been supposed with reason that Lord North himself, whose disinclination to prosecute hostilities beyond the Atlantic was well known, did not really regret, though he was necessitated to oppose, the motion of General Conway. Far from manifesting any intention of laying down his office in consequence of it, he performed one of the most important functions of First Minister only three days afterwards by opening the Budget and proposing a loan. It is true that he postponed the task of stating the taxes to be imposed, but he did not the less declare his determination to continue at the head of his Majesty's councils; nor did those persons who were most in his confidence either question his sincerity or doubt his resolution.

[25th February 1782.] Retaining, as it was natural that he should do, a deep and acute recollection of the severe investigation (which Fox denominated chastisement) inflicted on him for the terms on which he had concluded the loan of the preceding year, Lord North adopted every precaution on the present occasion to protect himself from similar animadversion. Instead, therefore, of allowing individuals to make private offers, he preferred a close subscription with two different sets of men, each ignorant of the conditions proposed by the other. Notwithstanding this renunciation of all Ministerial influence in the distribution of any part of the

loan, he by no means succeeded in disarming his opponents or in silencing calumnious imputations. George Byng attacked the terms as in themselves bad, though he admitted them to be far less exceptionable than those of 1781. But Fox inveighed against "the mode adopted by the noble Lord of limiting loans to a few individuals, which he maintained to be merely a manœuvre of Government." "Under that dark cloak," exclaimed he, "are concealed all the douceurs given to members of this House, to placemen and contractors. Here we may perceive how the majorities were procured which have voted the prosecution of the American war, as well as the rejection of the motions relative to the navy." Justly indignant at such a charge, and conscious of the rectitude of his Ministerial conduct, Lord North rose to repel the accusation. "I solemnly and seriously protest," said he, "that so far from having negotiated the present loan with any view to influence, I have not directly or indirectly recommended one person for the smallest share or portion of it. Nor do I even know by whom the ostensible contractors for it are supported in making their payments. Two millions of it were indeed offered to me, to be filled up with whatever names I might select, but I peremptorily refused the proposal."

Still incredulous, or, more properly to speak, determined not to be convinced, Tommy Townshend affected to suppose that though the First Minister had not interfered personally in the distribution of the loan, yet the official persons who surrounded him were unable to make the same declaration. "Would the two Secretaries of the Treasury," he asked, "venture to assert that they had not recommended individuals to fill the lists of the ostensible contractors for the loan?" This question called up

Robinson, who protested upon his honour that he neither had recommended nor would mention any person to be placed on the list. Sir Grey Cooper reiterated the same assurances, adding that they could not, even had they been so inclined, disobey the positive injunctions of the First Lord of the Treasury. Burke pretended, notwithstanding such specific declarations on the part of men in office, to consider the bargain as calculated to conceal, while it promoted, Ministerial influence. It is, however, well known that never was any measure of finance conducted on principles more pure, disinterested, and wholly exempt from a view to sustain Administration. It was, indeed, so exempt from any imputation or reproach of that nature, by the total exclusion of Members of Parliament who had anticipated a share in it, as to have occasioned in consequence of the disappointment some mercantile catastrophes, and even some more melancholy domestic or personal scenes, over which I draw a veil. Lord North having stated the amount of the loan and the nature of the terms proposed, entreated of the House to excuse him if he did not enter on the enumeration of his intended taxes for a few days, "possessing," he said, "neither strength of body nor sufficient intellectual power and clearness of understanding to comply with the ordinary practice of laying before them on the same evening both the loan and the taxes." This indulgence was not denied him.

It became, indeed, apparent that though a majority of the House of Commons might be still disposed to support the Ministry, they were altogether weary of continuing that contest for the reduction of America which during near seven years had produced only an accumulation of expense, of disgrace, and of misfortune. But, on the other hand, the Opposi-

tion soon discovered that the compulsory termination of the American war and the resignation of Lord North constituted by no means, as they had flattered themselves, things synonymous or inseparable. When General Conway, encouraged by the event of his late motion, brought the subject again before the House, he indeed outnumbered the Minister on the division by nineteen, leaving him thus in a minority.

[27th February 1782.] On this occasion, Conway attempted to induce, or rather to oblige, Dundas and Rigby to vote with him, by reminding them of their late declarations respecting the American war. And he observed, that "if he might borrow an allusion from the sacred text, he should say that they, as well as many other members of the House, had received the gift of tongues. Cloven tongues had alighted upon them. Not, indeed, tongues of sincerity and truth, but double tongues, one for Parliament, the other for private society." This singular metaphor, drawn from such a source, excited no ordinary sensation. Lord North, who no doubt felt that his own sincerity might become questionable at St. James's if he did not strenuously oppose the motion, endeavoured by every pledge and assurance that he could give to prove that Ministry had renounced all intention of carrying on offensive war beyond the Atlantic. "If, however," he added, "no faith was lent to these protestations, and that the truth or integrity of Ministers was doubted, it became the House to address the Crown for their removal, and for the appointment of successors entitled to parliamentary confidence. Should this House," continued he, "withdraw from me the confidence which they have so long reposed in me, it will become my duty, without staying for an address to remove me, to wait on my sovereign, to present



him the seal of my office, and to say, 'Sir, I have served you long and zealously, but your Parliament will no longer confide in me. Suffer me, therefore, to resign into your Majesty's hands all my employments, in order that they may be bestowed on some other person, who, with better success, though not with more fidelity or zeal, will give satisfaction to the country.'" Then adverting to Conway's reproach of the "cloven tongues," he subjoined with more than common emphasis, "I do not wish for the support of any such double-tongued senators. I desire to stand this night solely on the merits of my cause. And I now call upon all my friends to put out of their view every consideration personal to myself. Let them vote according to the dictates of their unbiassed judgment. The removal of Ministers forms no punishment. His Majesty has a right to call to his councils or to exclude from them whomever he may please. I thank God, Mr. Speaker, that mere disgrace, in the Ministerial sense of the term, constitutes no crime. The constitution has conferred on the King the power of dismissing his confidential servants at his pleasure, but it has provided that the dismissal shall not entail any criminality, because in the eye of the law no individual can be pronounced criminal without a fair trial." Never probably in the records of Parliament was a more manly yet affecting appeal made by any Minister to the feelings and principles of his audience. When Lord North sat down the Attorney-General rose, and after pointing out the impediments that presented themselves to an immediate peace with the colonies, proposed a truce as at once more judicious, beneficial, and practicable. He added that he had already prepared a motion for leave to introduce a bill enabling the Ministers to treat on this ground. And with a view to expedi-

tion, in order that not a moment might be lost, he concluded by moving that "the present debate be adjourned for a fortnight."

Alarmed at the idea that in consequence of the Attorney-General's proposition the prey which they had so nearly hunted down might yet escape them, the leading members of Opposition fastened upon it with equal violence and ability. Pitt led the way, and endeavoured to demonstrate, as he had done in preceding debates, that no confidence could be reposed in the Ministerial promises. "Was there," he demanded, "one assurance which they had not falsified? Was there any plan of operations in which they coincided? No! Their whole system was incessant vacillation, in which the House could place no trust." With uncommon ingenuity and acumen, Dunning, who already beheld a coronet as Macbeth does a dagger marshalling his way, and who within five weeks afterwards actually kissed the King's hand on being raised to the peerage,—Dunning attacked the Minister's speech as the most unintelligible and incomprehensible farago ever pronounced within the walls of the House. He protested that he did not understand one syllable of it; that it was a mere specimen of human duplicity, calculated for purposes of state deception, unworthy of reply. His learned friend (Wallace's) truce he treated as a wretched stratagem of an expiring party, only designed to allure over to the Minister's side three or four undecided votes. With persuasive earnestness he entreated the assembly to support the motion proposed by Conway as the only temperate and conclusive measure for binding down the Administration. Fox added his weight to these arguments, and stigmatised the proposed truce, which he denominated a trick adopted for the purpose of protracting the existence of Ministry,

who hoped thereby to gain the respite of a few days.

The new Secretary of State took no active part in the discussion of that interesting evening, nor once opened his lips. He seemed, indeed, not to have recovered from the effect produced by Burke's insulting irony only a few days earlier, and contented himself with giving a silent support. Not so Dundas. The characteristic energy of his mind always propelled him forward, and having answered General Conway's imputation of speaking with a double tongue, which act of inconsistency he disclaimed either in or out of Parliament, he warmly supported the Attorney-General's proposal. But it was likewise sustained from another quarter. Sir William Dolben,<sup>1</sup> who had voted with Opposition on the 22d, rose for the purpose of declaring that he considered the proposed measure of a truce as the most proper to be adopted, and refused to proceed another step against the existing Administration. As his example might operate with great effect among the country gentlemen, who formed so large as well as so respectable and independent a portion of the assembly, Sir William was instantly assailed from a variety of quarters. Townshend besought him to examine his conscience before he gave so inconsistent a vote, while Powis<sup>2</sup> lamented the defection of an individual whose private character justly excited universal respect. "As a friend," said he, "I regret, but as a member of this House I reprobate, his line of conduct. Nor do I comprehend how, after such contradictory behaviour, he can look his constituents or his country in the face." Sir Fletcher Norton endeavoured to demonstrate that the former motion of Conway and the present

<sup>1</sup> M.P. for the University of Oxford.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Powys, M.P. for Northamptonshire.—ED.

were, in fact, the same, adding that no change in public affairs had taken place which could warrant or justify an alteration of sentiment in Dolben.

Sir William remaining inflexible, and having risen a second time in order to explain more accurately the principles which determined his resolution, Sheridan opened on him a battery of wit, calculated to expose him to universal ridicule. It is however probable that had Lord North survived the session and continued at the head of affairs, so important a service to the Administration, rendered at a crisis of general depression and dismay, would not have remained unrewarded. A peerage must probably have been conferred on the individual whose support was of inestimable value under the existing circumstances. The detestation, nevertheless, universally excited by the American war had reached such a point as to overbear every attempt to prolong its duration. Previous to the debate, the Sheriffs of the City of London had presented at the bar a petition from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council, imploring the House to interpose in such manner as they should conceive to be most effectual for terminating further hostilities against the colonies. Many of the most ancient adherents of the Minister began to waver. Sir Gilbert Elliott,<sup>1</sup> who had hitherto uniformly supported Administration, made his retractation and joined the Opposition. Soon after one o'clock in the morning, the cry of question became general; 234 persons voted with Conway; only 215 adhered to the Minister. No sooner was the result known and the triumph over Lord North ascertained from the chair, than the acclamations—for

<sup>1</sup> Sir Gilbert Elliot, fourth Baronet of Minto, M.P. for Roxburghshire, born 23d April 1751. Created Lord Minto in 1797, and Earl of Minto in 1813.—ED.

such they might be justly denominated—pierced the roof, and might have been heard in Westminster Hall. Two of the tellers on that eventful night still survive; I mean the Earl of Lauderdale and Mr. Baron Adam. The other two, Robinson and George Byng, are long since dead. Information of the event was instantly transmitted, notwithstanding the advanced hour, to his Majesty at the Queen's House. Conway, following up the blow, carried without any division, before the assembly adjourned, an address to the throne soliciting the sovereign to "stop the prosecution of any further hostilities against the revolted colonies for the purpose of reducing them to obedience by force." It was ordered to be presented by the whole House."

[1st—4th March 1782.] Under these critical and portentous circumstances, which seemed to announce still greater changes or convulsions as imminent, opened the month of March. The King, nevertheless, retained all his firmness, or more properly pertinacity, and though the reply that he made to the Commons when they arrived at St. James's was couched in gracious language, yet the terms of it might be esteemed vague and general, only stating that "he would adopt such measures as he should think<sup>1</sup> most conducive to restore harmony between Great Britain and her colonies," without specifically promising not to carry on any further operations of war for their reduction by force. A fact which made a still deeper impression upon the public mind, and which the Opposition considered as eloquently developing the royal feelings towards his American subjects, was the appearance of General Arnold at court<sup>2</sup> when the King received the address,

"As seem to *me*," with a strong emphasis on the pronoun.—D.  
Benedict Arnold, originally a chemist and general merchant. He determined to betray the American cause in revenge for a sentence



So obnoxious an individual, known to breathe an inveterate aversion towards his insurgent countrymen, standing close to his Majesty's chair on such an occasion and at his right hand, inspired alarm while it produced animadversion. Lord Surrey,<sup>1</sup> than whom no man, of whatever rank, inherited more of the rough spirit of the barons who forced John to sign the "Magna Charta," and who was never deterred by any delicacy or respect for the prejudices of a crowned head from uttering his opinions, however unpalatable they might prove,—this nobleman, who began already to perform a prominent part under Fox in the parliamentary drama, rising in his place a few days afterwards, reprobated in the warmest manner "the wanton and indecent insult," as he denominated it, offered by Ministers in the drawing-room to the representatives of the people. No notice, however, being taken of his complaint from any part of the House, it did not produce any further debate or proceeding.

[4th March 1782.] General Conway, now completely master of the deliberations of the House on the subject of America, and not conceiving the renunciation of all future hostilities against the colonies to have been expressed from the throne in words sufficiently affirmative, presented himself once more to public notice. While he proposed and carried another address to the sovereign thanking him for his gracious reply, with some inconsistency he moved immediately afterwards to declare "enemies to his Majesty and to their country all those who should advise or attempt to prosecute offensive war on the continent of North America." The First Lord of

of reprimand passed upon him by a court-martial. When Major André was taken prisoner, General Arnold managed to escape to the headquarters of the English commander.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> Charles, afterward eleventh Duke of Norfolk; born in 1746. He died in 1815.—D.

the Treasury, after exposing the contradiction of the mover's conduct in thus affecting to offer their acknowledgments to the King for his answer and in the same breath manifesting their doubts of his sincerity, observed that whatever might be his private opinions, he conceived it his indispensable duty to obey the orders of a majority of that assembly. "But," added he, "Parliament having expressed its commands, it is scarcely possible that any Minister can be found sufficiently bold, daring, and infamous to advise his sovereign to act in opposition to their wishes. I cannot, therefore, conceive that the present motion, which assumes and presupposes the existence of such a Minister, can ever be necessary." Nor did this objection constitute the sole ground on which Lord North combated the proposition, as he asserted that very considerable obscurity pervaded the orders themselves, which circumstance might incapacitate even the best-intentioned Cabinet from knowing with certainty whether they were adhering to or deviating from the pleasure of the House.

After a discussion of considerable length, in which Thomas and William Pitt both took part, as well as many other members, but without materially elucidating or explaining the points under investigation, Fox rose, and began by expressing his total dissatisfaction with the answer of the Crown. He observed that he was not present in the House when they voted an address of thanks to the King, as he understood, unanimously, though had he been there, he should certainly have coincided in that testimony of personal respect to the sovereign. The Ministers alone ought to be deemed criminal for advising their royal master to follow a plan of conduct opposed to the advice of his Commons. Then, directing his discourse personally to Lord

North in answer to the professions of deference which he had expressed for the orders of a majority of that assembly, Fox, with more asperity than was natural to him, inveighed against these illusory protestations, only adopted or forgotten just as the exigencies of his situation dictated. "The position of the First Lord of the Treasury," exclaimed he, "is truly embarrassing. The majority of this House has declared against him, yet still he retains his place. He stands in a predicament unprecedented since the Revolution. He remains in office when the Commons have condemned his system. Under circumstances so unconstitutional and humiliating he must necessarily address his sovereign when he enters the royal presence in language to the following effect: 'I come, sire, to advise you to adopt a measure totally opposite to my own opinion, but it is the opinion of a majority of the House of Commons.' Is, then, this country so reduced by calamities, so poor in spirit, or so indifferent to all events as to permit a Minister to conduct affairs in a moment big with danger like the present who dares not carry into execution his own plans? No man respects more than I do the free, incorrupt voice of the majority of this assembly, but when I contemplate the majority, composed of contractors procured by means the most corrupt, who have been declared ineligible to sit here, I do not respect such a majority."

"I thank God," continued Fox, "that the House of Commons has come to the resolutions which terminate the American war. Those resolutions have utterly destroyed and annihilated the principle, they have subverted the basis of the present system—corruption. It is not credible that any Minister, however daring or profligate he may be, can presume to retain his employment after the intelligence

which has just reached us of the capture of Minorca, where fifteen hundred troops have surrendered prisoners of war. The loss of that valuable possession in the year 1756 drove from their seats an Administration far more able and powerful than the present Cabinet. This day a report is current that St. Kitt's has been taken by the enemy, the most important island, with the single exception of Jamaica, which we still continue to retain in the West Indies. The only victory to which the people of this fallen country look with hope, or which they hear with exultation, is the triumph recently gained within these walls over his Majesty's Ministers, who are universally regarded as the enemies of their country. This triumph coming now has overcome corruption. Its reign is terminated. If the conquest had sooner taken place, perhaps some paltry, insignificant coalitions might have been contrived, which would have rendered less unpalatable the system itself. But now, however Ministers may hold out for a day, a week, a month, or even for a year, the foundation is subverted. It must collapse, and then effectual measures may be devised to prevent its future revival."

Such was nearly the substance of this memorable speech, unquestionably one of the most able, as well as persuasive, ever pronounced by Fox, and which produced a proportionate effect on the audience. Many parts of it were indeed unanswerable, and the new Secretary of State scarcely could reply to the concluding inquiries of Fox relative to the fate of St. Kitt's, which he, however, did in a few hesitating, spiritless sentences. Lord North remained silent, nor did the Lord Advocate advance to his assistance, and under so depressed a state of things the Speaker had already prepared to put the question, when Rigby rose. Never could he have

appeared more opportunely on the scene or at a moment when his exertions were more necessary to reinvigorate the Ministerial ranks. His very figure and aspect, unblushing, fearless, confident, as if formed to stem the torrent of Opposition even when most violent, powerfully aided the effect of his oratory. He commenced by observing, that though it was not his intention to divide the House, yet he should unquestionably give his negative to the motion in order that it might not pass unanimously. And he remarked on the singularity as well as inconsistency of disapproving his Majesty's answer and yet returning him thanks for it. This conduct, he said, sufficiently manifested that the charge so often made against Ministers of being divided among themselves might with more justice be applied to Opposition. "As to the motion," subjoined he, "declaring enemies to their country all such as should advise the King to continue war against the colonies, I consider it nugatory, because I cannot suppose that any member of Administration will dare to disobey the positive injunctions of this House. But probably it has been devised and adopted merely to calm tender consciences, thereby to conceal dissensions. Thus the vote of thanks and the present motion are intended to balance each other. I imagine one set of men may have consented to support the first under the condition that another description of gentlemen will agree to vote the second."

"Much has been said," continued Rigby, "about majorities which have voted against the noble Lord in the blue ribband. And how has he got the better of those resolutions? Why, by other majorities. It has always been the cry that the Ins were corrupt and the Outs were factious. But it forms no political phenomenon that a Minister



should retain his place after he has been left in a minority. All sides of this House have been occasionally wrong. Lord Rockingham's Administration, which repealed the Stamp Act, yet declared the right of Parliament to make laws for America. Even the honourable member who now represents Westminster voted for the Boston Port Bill.<sup>1</sup> If so little faith is to be reposed in the assurances of his Majesty's Ministers, better move at once to remove them from their employments." The blunt, not to say contemptuous levity, accompanied with personal observations of a disagreeable kind, which characterised Rigby's speech from its commencement to its close, gave a new colour to the debate, while it excited no ordinary commotion among the Opposition ranks. Fox, whose early parliamentary transgressions, when formerly seated near Lord North on the Treasury bench, frequently appeared to him like Brutus's evil genius, started up to explain his unfortunate vote on the Boston Port Bill. His excuse seemed, I believe, even to his friends, not the most satisfactory, as he could assign no better reason for it than that Lord North had pledged himself, if the tea which the Americans threw overboard was paid for by them, he would drop all further idea of taxation.

Rigby having, in the progress of his speech, said, rather unadvisedly, that "he was tired of the American war, though as Paymaster of the Forces he was by no means tired of receiving cash," which singular expression he however qualified by adding that "he could nevertheless speak his opinion honestly uninfluenced by his place," Pitt remarked with great severity on the words. He observed that "if the

<sup>1</sup> Boston seaport was shut by order of the English Parliament on account of the destruction of tea (upon which duties had been laid) by the citizens in November 1773.—ED.

right honourable gentleman was not tired of receiving, the nation was weary of paying cash to a person who profited more by the war than any four members of that assembly." Almost any other individual than Rigby would have been disconcerted by so invidious a comment, coming too from such a quarter. But he, far from shrinking back, or exhibiting the slightest mark of discomposure, stood up, and directing his looks as well as his reply to Pitt and Fox, who sat very near each other on the Opposition side of the House, almost under the gallery, "I will just venture to remark," said he, "that however lucrative my office may be, it has been held by the fathers of the two honourable members who spoke last, and I make little doubt that, whenever I may be compelled to quit it, those gentlemen themselves may have an eye to getting hold of it. I repeat, I am not at all tired of receiving money; but I am not to be told, because I receive the emoluments of my place, that I am therefore the author of my country's ruin." Neither Fox nor Pitt attempted any retort. The former, indeed, on all occasions treated Rigby with marked regard, and more than once expatiated on the Paymaster's ability, independence of mind, and political principles in terms approaching to panegyric. But Barré, after complaining that he had retained in his hands an enormous balance of public money, amounting to near £900,000, adverted with much acrimony to the aspersions thrown out against the Opposition as being only a rope of sand. Conscious how much they were divided in sentiment upon almost every point, he endeavoured to derive an inference from that very dissimilarity of opinion favourable to their principles. "A desire to prevent the ruin of their country, which the present Ministers," he said, "had nearly effected, formed the tie that

bound them indissolubly together." The debate now drew to a close, General Conway's motion passing without any division. Rigby had acted the most conspicuous part in the discussion, had gallantly exposed himself, and had covered the Minister's retreat, though the enemy kept possession of the field. These were services, at such a crisis, of no ordinary description, and could scarcely have been performed by any other member of the House. Indeed, had Lord North been animated by the same tenacious, firm, and buoyant spirit which the Paymaster of the Forces displayed, he would probably have surmounted the storm. Already Sir George Rodney had reached the West Indies, and was preparing to attack the fleet of France. But his Administration was destined to a speedy extinction.

[*5th March 1782.*] If the debate of which I have endeavoured faithfully, though imperfectly, to trace the outlines, unveiled so much of the concealed machinery and private feelings of both parties during the convulsions that preceded Lord North's political exit, the discussion, or rather the conversation of the following evening, disclosed matter not less interesting. The Attorney-General, having moved for leave to bring in a bill "to enable his Majesty to conclude a truce or peace with the revolted American colonies," Fox, aware that unless he could blunt this weapon, the Minister might cut his way by means of it through the Opposition squadrons which now nearly hemmed him in, rose instantly to force it out of the hands of Government. "The only treatment properly applicable to such a proposition, coming from such a quarter," he said, "would be to burst into laughter and instantly to quit the House. Ministers, after leaving us scarcely any possession except Jamaica and Gibraltar, after

refusing to suffer American agents to meet our plenipotentiaries, under the offered mediation of foreign powers, now pretend to desire peace. Let the Attorney-General only look to his right and to his left, he would there discover in the persons of the Ministers, his friends, the greatest impediments to a pacification. But before he sat down he had a proposal to make to Administration. I can inform them," added he, "as a matter of certainty, that there are persons now in Europe fully authorised to negotiate peace between us and the colonies. And though I believe those individuals will not treat with the present Ministers, yet I can put them in the way to make peace. Nay, more, should they dislike personally coming forward, I would undertake myself to negotiate it for them." Observing a smile on more than one countenance opposite to him, he added, that in making such a proposal he was not more inconsistent than the noble Lord acted, who, condemning the resolutions moved by General Conway, yet advised his sovereign to execute them. "Our affairs," continued Fox, "are so desperate, that Ministers must either quit their places or the country is lost. Let them enjoy then the emoluments which they hold so precious, provided I can only save the Empire. If peace can be procured, I am ready to serve them in any capacity, even that of a commis, or of a messenger." Conscious that this patriotic ebullition might subject him to some comments, and perhaps apprehensive that it bore the appearance of personal approximation to a Government, the members of which he had during many successive years held up to national condemnation or contempt, he subjoined, "I request it may be clearly understood, that in making the proposition, I mean not to enter into any connection with Ministers. From the instant when I so act, or

come to terms with one of them, I will rest satisfied to be deemed infamous. I cannot for a moment contemplate a coalition with men who, as Ministers, in every transaction, public or private, have proved themselves devoid of honour or honesty. In the hands of such men I would not intrust my own honour for a single minute."

This extraordinary declaration, one of the most imprudent and ill-advised which Fox ever made in the course of his long parliamentary life, was probably intended by him to impress a belief on his hearers and the public of the facility with which he and his party could obtain an honourable peace. Nor, if considered under that point of view, did it fail, like other political delusions practised in all ages, to produce a temporary effect. Wearied with the war, people of every description readily supposed that he could succeed in disposing the Americans to conciliation; and they assumed with the same credulity that Administration would either find or fabricate impediments to a consummation so generally and anxiously desired. Unquestionably, therefore, the expressions used by Fox operated favourably to the views and objects of Opposition. I will fairly own that I was myself in some degree duped by them, in common with others, who expected from Fox's entrance into office the return of peace, as if by a charm. The event, however, greatly deceived expectation. In whatever way Fox's speech affected Parliament and the nation, it drew from the Minister a reply full of dignity, independence of mind, and becoming resentment. Nor did he fail to mix in the dose some portion of that wit without a few grains of which ingredient Lord North rarely addressed the House. He began by denying in the most forcible terms the disinclination to peace charged against himself and his colleagues



in the Cabinet. Then advertng to the kind offer which Fox had just made of his services, coupled at the same time with his severe language relative to Administration, Lord North observed, "These are good and substantial reasons for not trusting his honour in my hands. Better reasons cannot be assigned, and as they are such, they shall serve me against the honourable member. I will never employ a person who publicly declares that he can repose no confidence in me. Thinking of him as I do, I am determined not to make him my negotiator. He seems in a great hurry to get possession of our places. I am, however, yet to learn that among those who are so impatient to succeed there exists any settled system of action. It will therefore be for the public benefit that I should remain in office, in order to prevent, as I have hitherto done, confusion in the state, and the introduction of unconstitutional principles. I am for that reason resolved not to quit my post until I shall receive my royal master's commands to leave it, or till the will of this House, expressed in the most unequivocal terms, shall point out the propriety of my withdrawing from employment. As to the emoluments of my situation, God knows, were they forty times greater than they are, they could form no adequate compensation for my anxiety and vexations, aggravated by the uncandid treatment that I frequently experience within these walls. It is not love of power or of greatness that retains me in my place. I speak in the presence of individuals who know how little I am attached to either; but I will not resign till I can do it with gratitude to my sovereign, as well as to the public."

Fox attempted partly to explain away the harsh epithets which he had applied to the Minister, and partly to hold up the speech just pronounced to ridicule or condemnation. But its impression

was indelible. Neither Wolsey, nor Strafford, nor Clarendon, ever made a finer appeal to their contemporaries nor to posterity. In reply to Fox's accusations, accompanied with a sneer at his asserting that he continued in place to prevent confusion, Lord North humorously observed, "I undoubtedly have prevented much confusion; and if I have not prevented more, it is only because there are others who possess greater abilities in creating confusion than I have to prevent it. But, so long as Parliament shall not think proper to remove me, either by a vote or by wholly withdrawing from me their confidence, I am determined to hold my situation." Who, after so precise, so public, and so reiterated a declaration, could have anticipated or expected that, within fifteen days, though the House had not withdrawn from him its confidence, Lord North would, standing in the same place, and in the midst of the same assembly, lay down his office? Fox made no further answer, and the Attorney-General's motion passed without any division, while the minds of all men were attracted towards the final termination of a scene so interesting to every individual, but the issue of which it was as yet impossible to foresee from the conduct or the protestations of the First Minister.

[6th March 1782.] With a view to the great object of keeping alive public clamour against Lord North, and, above all, of not allowing the irritability of Parliament to subside, when that nobleman, on the following day, requested the indulgence of the House for postponing the taxes on account of the multiplicity of business, Burke and Fox both declaimed with violence on the subject. The former, after enumerating the articles of necessity or of luxury on which taxation had already fallen within the last few years, and deploring the state of finan-

cial exhaustion into which we were plunged, concluded by making an ingenious and fanciful exposition of our national condition, viewed under a mercantile form. "On one side," said he, "we have debtor by loss one hundred millions of money; on the other, creditor by loss, one hundred thousand men, thirteen American provinces, an annual revenue of four millions five hundred thousand pounds, five West India islands, besides Florida and Minorca." This picture, addressed strongly to the imagination and the passions, highly coloured, was likewise erroneous or exaggerated. St. Christopher's, one of the islands which he included in his list of losses, founding his assertion on false intelligence industriously propagated, had not been captured by the enemy. New York, as well as Charlestown, two most important posts, were held by our forces, and might form objects of cession or negotiation. St. Lucia and Pondicherry—one the key of the West India chain of islands, the other valuable as being the capital of the French establishments on the Coromandel Coast—had both been subjected by our arms and remained in our possession. But these facts or considerations were wholly overlooked in a moment of national and Ministerial depression. Then diverging with his characteristic impetuosity to Lord North's declaration of the preceding evening, that "he would not resign till he could do it with gratitude to the sovereign and to the public," Burke exclaimed, "The noble Lord's gratitude! Oh, Mr. Speaker, it resembles that of another fallen angel like himself—

'The debt immense of endless gratitude,  
So burdensome, still paying, still to owe.'

Fox, on his part, attacked the Minister with no less animosity, and declared that all the acts of his

Administration were founded in systematic delusion, sheltered by obscurity and stamped with ignorance. He added that "as the parting proof of the noble Lord's gratitude, when Jamaica and Barbadoes, our only remaining settlements of value, were lost, it might be presumed he would think of retiring from office." No reply was made from the Treasury bench to such declamatory charges, calculated for sustaining and inflaming the general fermentation.

[*8th March 1782.*] Unable, nevertheless, to effect Lord North's removal or to provoke his voluntary resignation by any censures passed on the conduct of the American war or by any interdictions of its future prosecution, the Opposition became of necessity compelled to bring forward a personal question inculcating Administration. And it must be allowed that in conducting this measure they proceeded with judicious as well as with cautious steps. A retrograde movement or an unsuccessful attempt, they were well aware, would at once undo all that had hitherto been effected. Lord North, who was individually beloved in and out of the House, even by those who most disapproved or opposed many of his measures, was likewise steadily supported by the sovereign, while in the House of Lords no prospect of any defection or change had hitherto manifested itself. The session, moreover, advanced rapidly, and if Easter arrived, experience had proved that a full attendance could not be obtained after that period of the year except with the utmost difficulty. All these facts having been maturely considered in the meetings which took place among the Opposition leaders, they determined to try the temper of the House of Commons without delay. Lord John Cavendish, seconded by Powis, introduced various resolutions, finally imputing the misfortunes of the war to the "want of foresight and

ability" in Ministers. After a very long debate, in a crowded House, the Administration not venturing directly to negative the proposition, yet found themselves unable to carry the motion, though only for the order of the day, by a greater majority than ten.

Of Lord John's speech no trace remains on my mind, but Powis's<sup>1</sup> address to the House was calculated to produce the deepest impression. He was indeed a man of great parliamentary talents and of distinguished integrity, though by no means unaccompanied with deep ambition. From 1782 till 1797, during fifteen years, he seems, under successive Administrations, never for an instant to have lost sight of the peerage, to which he ultimately attained. After disclaiming all personal ill-will against Ministers, he adverted to Lord North's recent declaration that whenever Parliament should withdraw from him its confidence he would then retire. "That period," said Powis, "is arrived. Parliament has withdrawn its confidence from the noble Lord. The fetters which this House has imposed on him constitute the strongest proof of the fact. He has likewise asserted that he only continued in office with a view to prevent confusion. But who are the men likely to succeed him and what are the principles to which they stand pledged? Their first pledge is to check profusion and prodigality in the expenditure of public money. Their second engagement is to explore the dark recesses of the Civil List and to introduce retrenchment into that *sanctum sanctorum* of Government. Lastly, they have solemnly promised to adopt some plan for improving the national representation within these walls; not, indeed, visionary plans, but such as may tend to diminish, if not to eradicate, the causes of parliamentary venality. Such are the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Powys, M.P. for Northamptonshire, created Baron Lilford in 1794.—ED.



men from whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer pretends to apprehend confusion. Men among whom are to be found the descendants of the most illustrious families, possessed of the largest property, distinguished by the most splendid talents. Among them is the admired son of a statesman who carried the British name and arms to the summit of glory, and who only quitted his situation when he discovered that a baneful but secret influence prevented him, either with honour to himself or with advantage to the state, from carrying into execution those counsels which he was no longer permitted to direct. Yet from such men does the noble Lord anticipate confusion !”

After touching with the hand of a master these great political keys, while the House listened in silence, Powis drew in the same able manner the contrast presented by Ministers when compared with the principal individuals constituting Opposition. Commencing his delineation with the new Secretary of State, who sat opposite to him, “That gentleman,” observed he, “gives us no encouragement to hope that such measures will emanate from his department as can be beneficial to the country. He has presented us a sketch of his creed ; but I cannot denominate it a sincere profession of faith. At best, I regard it only as an act of occasional conformity. He has retracted no error. He has abjured no former principle, though he may have yielded somewhat to the feelings of the times. Once we remember him loud in declaiming on this side of the House ; but he is now sunk into Ministerial dependency. All the starch and the buckram of his composition is dissolved, and he seems reduced to a state of complete pliability. The noble Lord in the blue ribband is formed of the same ductile materials. Destitute of any system of action,

impelled by a secret concealed influence, he submits to adopt the principles of others. He now stands in a predicament altogether without example, having lost the confidence of Parliament. What stronger proof of it than those already exhibited does he demand?" Proceeding to delineate in the same caustic and contumelious or invidious colours the remaining members of the Cabinet, he concluded by a forcible appeal to the gentlemen of landed property, representatives of counties or of cities. "Would they," he asked, "continue to support an Administration which had ruined their country; while order, regularity, and success might justly be expected to arise from the exertions of the men who must succeed them in power?" The Secretary at War now rose; for the occasion fully called on him to come forward in so desperate a Ministerial emergency. Within the compass of a few periods, he compressed almost every fact or argument which could be adduced in justification of his colleagues. Never indeed did Jenkinson abuse the patience of his audience, or lose sight of the principal object for which he presented himself to notice, by flights of fancy or digressions of imagination. He admitted that the war had been unsuccessful, but he denied that its principle was unjust. "Great power," he observed, "necessarily produces envy. Our splendid successes during the last contest with the two branches of the House of Bourbon had raised us so high, that those powers have now eagerly seized the occasion to humble us. Hence, too, we are without allies. The monarchies of Austria and of France have each in turn suffered the same depression from similar causes. But are Ministers on that account criminal? Without attempting, therefore, to negative facts which are undeniable, I will move the order of the day."

At greater length, though with no less ability, Ellis addressed the House. In reply to Powis's charge of subservient pliability, the Secretary of State remarked that there existed no strong temptations to induce him to covet his new office. "When I accepted the seal," said he, "I was possessed of a lucrative employment to which no responsibility attached. I was undoubtedly in a warm comfortable bed, out of which I have been summoned to take an active part in the ship of state, assailed by storm and tempest. I find myself now in a place of responsibility, by no means unaccompanied with danger. When these circumstances are duly weighed, gentlemen will find little cause to accuse me of such excessive pliability." The occasion was too favourable for Burke to lose. Starting up as soon as the Secretary had finished, he attacked the new Minister with those shafts of classic wit, satire, and ridicule which he knew so well how to launch against his opponents. Shakespeare as well as Milton was ever ready at his call. "It was true," he allowed, "that the Treasurer of the Navy had quitted a warm bed, with his eyes hardly open, and ventured into a vessel leaky, foundering, and tossed by tempestuous winds."—"He has been most unwise so to do; and to him I may apply the words of Brutus, when he asks his wife—

'Wherefore rise ye now?  
It is not for your health, thus to commit  
Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.'

The Secretary of State declares that he has left a warm bed for a post of danger. In my firm belief, it has been left merely with the intention of introducing a Scotch warming-pan." The allusion to Dundas, which was too palpable to be mistaken, excited no little laughter; and received in the

course of the evening a most appropriate reply. Burke proceeding in his career of sarcasm, answered Ellis under the triple character of a lawyer, a physician, and a divine, in each of which capacities he asserted that the Secretary had addressed the House. Nor, when tired with oppressing him under tropes and metaphors, did Burke fail to adduce more solid arguments in support of the motion, derived from the expenses, the disgraces, and the calamities of so many Transatlantic campaigns. Far from being abandoned, however, on that night by the country gentlemen, various of them stepped forward to the support of a First Minister who had in fact committed no fault except attempting to subject an insurgent people placed at a remote distance from Great Britain. Sir John Delaval, Sir Harry Houghton, Lord Nugent, Sir Edward Dering, all professed that the support which they extended to Administration arose from their conviction that the Cabinet, however unfortunate, "wanted neither foresight nor ability."

Among the most able defenders of Ministry at this period might be justly accounted Mr. Adam, who then held the post of Treasurer of the Ordnance. His duel with Fox,<sup>1</sup> when added to his parliamentary eloquence and the vigour of his character, had already acquired him celebrity. From no individual in the House did Fox indeed experience so personal, and probably so painful, an attack in the course of the present debate as from Adam. Reminding Fox of his assertion, made on a former occasion while addressing the House, that "the man who on coming into office should forget or renounce his early political principles would be

<sup>1</sup> In 1779 Adam conceived his character attacked by some remarks of Fox. The latter conducted himself with great gallantry, and was slightly wounded. He said Adam would have killed him had he used any but Government powder.—D.

infamous ;" Adam implored Parliament to pause before they called into power a person professing tenets repugnant to or subversive of the British constitution. As the best proof of the justice of his allegations, he charged Fox with having more than once declared that "the sense of the people was to be collected without doors, from the people themselves, and not from the representatives." Nor was this the only sentiment calculated to produce confusion held and recommended by him. Two others, equally opposed to the wisdom of our ancestors, had been avowed from the same authority. He had professed himself "an advocate for annual Parliaments, and he had expressed his desire to alter the representation of the people." Burke, on his part, stood pledged to reduce the Civil List. And Adam then asked "what national concord or unanimity we could reasonably expect, if men professing such principles should seize on the Government at a moment when general harmony was universally admitted to be indispensable for our extrication and preservation?"

It is probable that Fox, like other demagogues who have made their way up to power in free states, by mounting on the shoulders of the people and professing opinions calculated to gain popular favour, would gladly, when he had attained his object, have turned his back upon the ladder which facilitated his ascent. Not that I believe he cherished any principles inimical to constitutional freedom ; but poverty and ambition combining in the same individual naturally produce asperity of language, and he had remained more than seven years excluded from office. Even now, though apparently near his prey, it might still elude his grasp. We must likewise recollect, that if ever there was a time in the modern history of this country when



reform seemed to be universally demanded, it was towards the close of the American war, when our humiliation, our losses, and our critical position, surrounded by enemies on every side, inflamed the minds of men against a Government which had produced so much calamity. Pressed therefore by Adam, Fox rose, and as Welbore Ellis had done on a former night, made his reluctant political profession of faith. He did it in that manly, open manner characteristic of his mind, which disdained reserve, and might rather be accused of inconsistency or imprudence than of duplicity or disguise—artifices foreign to his nature. “Two leading principles,” he said, “in which he differed from Ministers were the prosecution of the American war and the influence of the Crown. The general principle of reducing that influence he strenuously approved. The corruption of the House of Commons had become intolerable, and to all the resolutions for excluding contractors, members of the Board of Trade, and of the green cloth, he gave his cordial assent. If placemen and contractors were subducted from the late division respecting the American war, when Ministers had remained in a minority of nineteen, the majority against Administration would exceed a hundred on that question. To all the details,” continued Fox, “prepared for the reduction of influence I do not subscribe; but I maintain that this assembly ought to be made the representative of the nation. I likewise think that the duration of Parliament ought to be shortened, but I admit that it is a point on which honest men may differ. I am, however, of opinion that annual or triennial Parliaments would be calculated to preserve the privileges of the people from the encroachments of the royal prerogative, and therefore would form an amelioration of the constitution.”

Having thus answered Mr. Adam's queries, though without noticing specifically the idea of introducing an alteration into the representation of the people, he diverged to another point of a very interesting, because of a personal nature. "It has been asserted," said he, "that an Administration of proscription is to be formed. I deny positively the fact. I have only declared that I can form no connection with the present Cabinet, and that if I do, I shall be infamous. But it is the desire of those with whom I have the honour to act to collect all the ability, talents, and consideration of the country, and to employ this body of national strength for the deliverance of the Empire. I hope we may soon behold an Administration settled on a broad basis in which confidence may be justly reposed. It is, however, only by driving the present weak and wicked advisers of the Crown from about his Majesty's person that Great Britain can ever hope to recover from her actual disgraces and misfortunes." Such were nearly Fox's expressions on that memorable evening. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, who always knew when to interpose with the greatest effect in debate, and who waited to answer the Opposition leader, instantly rising, began nevertheless by directing his discourse in the first instance not to Fox, but to Burke. "The honourable member," observed Dundas, "whose classic redundancy of wit always charms this audience, has been pleased, when addressing the Secretary of State near me, to mention his quitting a snug, warm bed in order to make room for a Scotch warming-pan. Now I see no reason, when I look at the gentlemen opposite me, if their eager expectations of coming into power are fulfilled, why it should not be an Irish warming-pan which is to be introduced into that bed." A retort so apposite turned the laugh against Burke. In

fact, scarcely three weeks elapsed before Barré was made Treasurer of the Navy. Having professed his inability to comprehend how a broad-bottomed Administration, such as Fox pretended to desire, could ever be formed, which must proscribe half the ability of the Empire, the Lord Advocate called on him to explain more intelligibly his meaning. Then pushing the inquiries which Adam had commenced to a greater length, he demanded "if Fox should come into office, and should find himself left in a minority on any of his popular or patriotic questions, whether it was his intention in such case to avail himself of the right which he had frequently maintained? Did he mean to appeal from that House to the people? Would he resort to his other Parliament convened in Westminster Hall or in Palace Yard, and complain of the Parliament sitting within those walls? Would he tell the people that they were betrayed, and induce them to adopt resolutions calculated to operate as a control upon the House of Commons?" To these questions he demanded a reply.

Under so embarrassing a load of inquiries on subjects so delicate, Fox delivered his opinion with great ability, neither abandoning his former professions nor yet maintaining them in all their force. Relative to the Administration which might be formed, he declared that "they would proscribe no individuals of whatever principles except the five or six confidential advisers of the Crown who had produced the actual calamities of the country. They did not mean to proscribe the learned Lord himself, however strongly they might reprobate his constitutional principles. With regard to the people without doors, he conceived that they possessed a right to declare their opinion of men and things, in order to do which they might meet and consult together

provided they did it in a peaceable, orderly manner." "I will further add," continued he, "that whenever this House shall become lost to all sense of public duty, so sunk in corruption as to abandon the rights of the people and to become the passive instruments of the Crown, then it may be justifiable to revert to the original principles of the constitution, and to resume the direction of their own affairs, so that the popular weight may be preserved in the scale of government. The present Administration is the first since the Revolution which has dared to deny this right." Perhaps, in Fox's position, no words more judicious or less exceptionable, could easily have been found. Nevertheless, Sheridan, who manifested on many occasions a sounder judgment than his friend, and who beheld in full view the promised land of power from which the party had been so long excluded, apprehensive that Fox's expressions might appear rather those of a tribune than becoming a man who now aspired to consular offices and dignities, presented himself to the House. Directing his discourse pointedly to Dundas, he demanded of the learned Lord whether, because his honourable friend had maintained the right of an appeal, under certain circumstances, to the people, he could be suspected of ever exercising it when he should become a Minister? Did no obvious distinction exist between a private member of Parliament applying to his constituents, and a confidential servant of the sovereign, holding an office at his Majesty's pleasure, appealing to the people in that capacity against Parliament? "No!" added he; "were my honourable friend in the noble Lord's place, and should he ever forfeit the confidence of Parliament, he would neither fly to the people nor to the throne for support. He would not cling with the convulsive

grasp of despair to the helm which he could no longer conduct. He would follow the advice given by that learned Lord himself to a late Minister. He would instantly retire; not indeed, probably, to another assembly, but to a situation more honourable in the hearts of the people."

Lord North rose when Sheridan sat down, and replied with his accustomed ability, though, as I thought, not with all his usual animation; but the feature of the debate which attracted universal attention towards its close was the declaration made by Pitt. After holding up the First Minister to condemnation under various points of view, and observing that a change of Administration presented the only chance for national extrication; he subjoined, "It is not for me to say, nor for this House to dictate, who may be the persons chosen to fill the offices under a new Administration. All that I feel myself compelled to declare is, that I cannot expect to take any share in it; and even if the attainment of such an object were within my reach, I never will accept of a subordinate situation.' These words, which undoubtedly had been well weighed before they were pronounced, disclosed without disguise, not only the elevation of his views and the well-founded confidence that he reposed in his own talents, but likewise his perfect independence of the two leaders, whose followers were now preparing to storm the Cabinet side by side.

He served, indeed, in their camp as a volunteer and an auxiliary, though without looking up either to the Marquis of Rockingham or to the Earl of Shelburne for immediate advancement. Relying, with reason, solely on his personal abilities, aided by patience, judgment, and the nature of the times, he doubtless anticipated, at no remote period, his attainment of every object of well-regulated am-



bition. The division did not take place till a very late hour; and the majority in favour of Ministers was so small, that a desertion of only six individuals from the Government side to that of Opposition would have left the whole Cabinet at the mercy of their adversaries. Yet, as only 446 members voted on the question, even including the four tellers, and as consequently 111 were absent, many of whom might probably attend on a future evening, sanguine expectations were entertained by both parties. It might indeed have been supposed that a Government which rested on so precarious a basis was already virtually at an end. But Lord North gave the best indication, as it was considered, of his own intention to remain in office, by proposing only three days afterwards the new taxes which he meant to impose for the service of the year.<sup>1</sup> The contending parties therefore prepared for fresh struggles; and from every part of the kingdom, as well as from foreign courts, attendance was procured. The duration of the Ministry being now evidently at issue, and probably about to be decided in a very short time, not exceeding three weeks, it is difficult to convey an idea of the anxiety which agitated the court, the capital, and the country.

[15th March 1782.] On the last debate which preceded Lord North's resignation, Sir John Rous, then member for Suffolk, moved to declare that "the House had no further confidence in Ministers." The Opposition imagined that if this motion was carried, no Administration would venture to continue in office, or if they should be bold enough to defy the indignation of Parliament, the same majority would, it was presumed, next address the Crown for

<sup>1</sup> Included therein was a tax on soap, which aroused universal indignation among the middle and lower classes.—D.

their removal. There then remained only one step more to impeachment. But so equally balanced were the two sides, that though 467 members, including the tellers, voted on the division, scarcely any ground was lost or gained. Government still remained in a majority of nine, thus losing one since the preceding debate. Yet even that single vote being in favour of the Opposition, in so full a House seemed to indicate that they were progressive in the public esteem. In fact, twenty-one members voted on this more than on the preceding division. Among the interesting features of the debate must be accounted the appearance of Mr. George Onslow, commonly denominated Cocking George. He was one of the two representatives for the town of Guildford, and a man of much eccentricity, as well as irregularity of deportment. He seldom rose to speak; but his speeches, if they did not abound in wit, were marked by great freedom of language and opinion. Without circumlocution of any kind, he accused the Opposition leaders as the principal instruments in dissevering America from her allegiance to Great Britain. "General Washington's army," exclaimed he, "has been called by members of this House our army, and the cause of the rebels has been denominated the cause of freedom. Every support has been given the Americans, who have placed their confidence on the encouragement extended to them within these walls. Franklin and Laurens are here made the subject of daily panegyric, and the weak parts of our interior government have been exposed or pointed out to the rebels. It has even been reported, and I believe it is true, that information has been transmitted from hence to the court of Versailles." A loud cry arising from the Opposition benches, calling on him to name the individuals to whom he alluded, Onslow declined

compliance, adding that "he could not tell, or if he could he would not, but that he retained his conviction of its truth." He concluded by declaring his belief that the ill success of a war, in the principle of which almost the whole nation concurred at its commencement, might be with reason ascribed to those persons who had not scrupled uniformly to avow that they should deeply lament its being crowned with fortunate results. Lord North himself might be said to give some countenance to these assertions or accusations of Onslow ; for in the course of a long and masterly appeal to the House, some parts of which he pronounced with evident emotion, he observed that "far from feeling either the contrition or the repentance for the acts of his past Administration which gentlemen opposite asserted would become him, he experienced on the contrary the most perfect calm, arising from the consciousness of not having done any wrong." "If, indeed," continued he, "in any of my speeches in this House, or in any which I have made out of doors, or in any part of my conduct, I had held out hopes to the Americans that they possessed friends in this country professing to be their advocates, and who embraced every occasion to advance their interests in preference to those of their native country, then I confess I should think I had acted in a manner that called for deep contrition and sincere repentance, nay, even for humiliation, for self-abasement, and for shame." He could not more clearly designate, nor reprobate in stronger terms, the line of conduct adopted by the chiefs of Opposition throughout the whole progress of the American contest.

Reverting next to the conduct of that war, "I deny," said he, "that its commencement is in any degree to be attributed to his Majesty's present Ministers. The Stamp Act was repealed and the

Declaratory Act had passed before I was called to the Cabinet, though I voted for them both as a private member of Parliament. I came into office at a moment of crisis when others had deserted the helm, and I have exerted my best endeavours to serve my country." His allusion to the manner in which the Duke of Grafton abandoned the reins of Government was rendered more striking by the circumstance of that nobleman's accepting the Privy Seal under the new Administration only a few days afterwards. When Lord North, in the course of his speech, mentioned the misrepresentations which he was accused of using with a view to persuade Parliament to prosecute hostilities through so many unfortunate campaigns, and particularly with declaring that we had numerous friends in America, he displayed visible embarrassment. It became requisite, in order to exculpate himself, that he should inculcate his late colleague, Lord Sackville, nor did he hesitate so to do. "The declaration in question," observed he, "came not from me, but from another Minister. It fell not indeed within the range of my department to receive such official information. Not that I doubted it, for I am convinced that the Minister who made the assertion spoke from good authority. I believe we not only had, but that we still retain, numerous friends throughout the colonies. I confess, at the same time, that I never thought those friends sufficient in point of numbers, nor in any point of view whatever, either to justify our commencing or our continuing the war solely on their account." These significant expressions undraw in a considerable degree the veil from before the Cabinet, and, like Don Cleofas in the "*Diable Boiteux*," we are admitted behind the scenes. How far the First Minister acted with his accustomed prudence or elevation of mind in mak-

ing such an avowal in such a place, posterity will best decide. His position, still in office and intending, as he asserted, to remain at the head of his Majesty's councils unless driven out by a vote of the House of Commons, was in itself most painful and delicate. Probably he thought, by sacrificing in some measure a member of the Cabinet who was now no longer in office and who had reached the Upper House, he might conciliate his enemies. But in his accusation of the late American Secretary he virtually enveloped his sovereign in the same charge. Fox's opinion of it may be collected from his own comments when he replied to Lord North. "Up to this day," said he, "I always considered the noble Lord to have acted generously by his colleagues, as he uniformly professed to share in their guilt, whatever might be its extent. But on the present evening he throws the responsibility and the blame on another Minister for having deceived us by erroneous or exaggerated accounts respecting the number of our adherents beyond the Atlantic. The noble Lord has, however, himself deluded and deceived Parliament in a variety of instances."

The conclusion of the First Minister's speech was unusually pathetic as well as interesting. I sat near him, and his words were well calculated to remain engraven on the memory. It is indeed probable, whatever assurances he might give to the King or to his friends and adherents, that he nevertheless considered himself as near his political extinction. "My wish," exclaimed he, "is not only for peace, but for an Administration that may act with unanimity and effect towards the general safety. I will not form any obstacle to a coalition in which I shall have no share or place. There are indeed those who well know that for some years past I



have been ready and willing to make way for such an Administration, nor is it owing to any personal desire of mine that I have so long remained in my situation. I declare to God that no love of office or of emolument should detain me for a moment in place if I could with honour leave it, and if certain circumstances, which I cannot now explain, did not prevent my resignation. A time may come when I can better speak upon this point. I act in obedience to a sense of duty, and neither advice nor menaces can influence me to abandon it. Never will I subscribe to the idea that provided Ministers will only quit their places, punishment shall not follow. I neither desire to avoid censure nor punishment. My only demand is that the proofs of neglect or of guilt may be established against Ministers before censure is voted. If we deserve censure it ought to be followed by punishment." It is impossible not to suppose that "the circumstances" to which Lord North so pointedly alluded, but "which he could not explain," were the solicitations of his sovereign not to desert him as had been done by his Ministerial predecessors, Lord Bute and the Duke of Grafton. There were passages in this speech which reminded me of Wolsey's language to Cromwell when he says—

"I feel within me  
A peace above all earthly dignities,  
A still and quiet conscience."

"I am able now, methinks,  
Out of a fortitude of soul I feel,  
To endure more miseries, and greater far,  
Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer."

Indeed, so much did Lord North feel the degree of similitude between his own situation and the fall of Wolsey, that, adopting the expression of the Cardinal when one of his friends waited on him a few

days afterwards to offer his condolences, accompanied with some marks of surprise at his resignation, he answered, with the utmost good-humour and complacency, in Shakespeare's words—

“What, amazed  
At my misfortunes?—Can thy spirit wonder  
A great man should decline?”

So much did his constitutional suavity and amenity of character enable him to surmount every vicissitude of fortune, and so naturally did his improved and classic mind suggest to him the historic images analogous to his situation.

Fox, in his reply on that night, for he would allow no other person to answer the Minister, made some observations tinged with more severity than his placable nature usually dictated to him. Only four days earlier, having indulged in similar remarks upon Lord North when he laid before the House his proposed taxes for the year, Fox, either conscious that he had trespassed beyond the bounds of liberality, or impelled by his own generous character, offered the Chancellor of the Exchequer an ample and a voluntary apology. “I do assure the noble Lord,” said he, “that in all I have stated on the present occasion, or at any former time, I mean not to press upon him, to goad him, or to run him down. Still less is it my intention to say anything that should hurt his mind or give him uneasiness. Upon my honour, I nourish no such design, and though I neither ask pardon of the chairman nor of the committee for any expression that I may have used, yet I ask pardon of the noble Lord if I have offended him,—for I meant it not.” We cannot help admiring a man who united such a disposition with talents so pre-eminent. Pitt, however superior he was to Fox in judgment, and in various

other respects, wanted that frank, winning, and open spirit which conciliated so many friends, and retained them in defiance of adversity, poverty, or exclusion from power. In the course of the present debate, which may be considered as the last that took place previous to Lord North's surrender, various individuals rose to attack or to defend him. Sir William Dolben not only voted with him, but pronounced an affecting encomium on his integrity, honour, and domestic virtues, from which no individual had attempted to detract, and to which so many had borne testimony. Having expressed his anxious wishes that a coalition might yet be formed between the noble Lord and his principal opponents seated on the opposite benches, he added, "If, nevertheless, a change should take place, to the total exclusion of the present First Minister, either in consequence of a vote of this House or from his own spontaneous movement, I am persuaded that he will exhibit a phenomenon to this country; namely, a Minister out of office supporting the Government that expelled him, instead of opposing, thwarting, and embarrassing their measures." The Lord Advocate did not abandon his principal, but sustained him with eloquence and ability. "A union of parties," he admitted, "seemed to be not only the general wish, but coincided with his own individual opinion. It was, however, to be effected by the substantial connection of both sides, not by putting the Government exclusively into the hands of Opposition. The noble Lord in the blue ribband had declared his readiness to facilitate such a coalition, and that he would not stand in the way of its accomplishment."

Indignant at the idea of Lord North's attempting to capitulate, to protract, or to make any conditions before he laid down his employments, Pitt rose to

answer Dundas. His speech, though not long, breathed the most determined hostility, couched in language of no ordinary warmth. Reprobating the proposition itself as an insult to Parliament, not deserving an instant's attention, he said he thanked God that an end was likely to be put to the present Government, but he trusted the House would not contaminate its own purpose by allowing Ministers to manage the appointment of their successors. It neither was the province of that House to settle the men who were to succeed, nor to indicate the measures proper to be pursued. "I ask pardon," concluded he, "of this assembly, if I have delivered myself with too much warmth, but I cannot help feeling for my country under the distressful situation of being governed by Ministers who manifest neither sensibility nor shame, and who are as devoid of feeling as of every other quality of statesmen." To these bitter and humiliating reproaches no answer was attempted from the Treasury bench, though the new American Secretary spoke for a few minutes to an impatient audience loudly demanding the question. Its result, when notified, inspired the Opposition with new energy, in the same degree that it spread dejection over the Ministerial benches. Fox gave immediate intimation to his friends of a motion similar in its import for the following Wednesday, which notice he reiterated in the House on the subsequent day. Among the members who voted with Lord North on the last two divisions of the 8th and the 15th of March, I must not omit Gibbon, the celebrated historian. He had likewise supported Administration on General Conway's second motion for terminating the American war, when Government was left in a minority of nineteen. Gibbon then sat in Parliament as one of the members for Lymington, and attended con-







*Dr. Johnson*  
*From a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

stantly on great questions, but I believe he never attempted to address the House. Addison had not displayed any parliamentary talents, though he occupied the high office of Secretary of State for a short time. We know that Johnson was anxious to obtain a seat in the House of Commons, with a view of sustaining Lord North by his eloquence. We may, however, reasonably doubt whether, notwithstanding his gigantic abilities, he would have succeeded better on that theatre than his "Irene" did at Drury Lane. Oratory appears to have no connection with historical, poetical, or philological capacity.

Every artifice of party was used by the Opposition to encourage their friends and to terrify or hold out to popular odium the adherents of Administration. Lists were published and disseminated through the kingdom, containing the names of the members who voted on each question, those voting on the side of Government being printed in red letters, while the names of the minority appeared in black type. Unimportant or contemptible as this circumstance may appear, it produced, nevertheless, a powerful effect on weak or timid individuals, and bore some faint resemblance to the proceedings of the memorable Parliament which met in 1640 under Charles I. Lord North appeared likewise to entertain strong apprehensions respecting the consequences which might ultimately result to the King, if not to himself, from the struggle in which Ministers were engaged. It was generally believed that he had stated these fears to his Majesty with so much earnestness, and had so warmly depicted the painful situation in which the sovereign might be personally involved if his Cabinet should be taken by storm, as to have obtained the royal permission for negotiating, and even surrendering

on terms. His expressions in the last debate, which intimated his readiness or disposition to withdraw from office, and not to form any impediment if a coalition could be formed for carrying on the public service, seemed fully to justify the belief that he was authorised to make such propositions. They were, however, treated with affected ridicule or scorn by his opponents, both in and out of the House, as only calculated for purposes of delusion, in order to weaken or distract their efforts. Far from listening to any overtures of accommodation, they anticipated a certain triumph. Never were moments more precious or more critical. It being well known that the House of Commons would, according to regular usage, adjourn on the 28th of March for ten or eleven days till after the Easter holidays, which in that year happened to fall early, Lord North consequently might calculate almost the number of hours that he had to hold out against his assailants; for no sanguine expectation of successfully renewing their attack upon Ministry after the recess could be entertained by the Opposition. Every effort, therefore, it was evident, must necessarily be wound up within a week or two, and Government made the strongest demonstrations of abiding the issue.

[16th—19th March 1782.] In all the departments positive assurances were given that no compromise or resignation was intended by Ministers. Robinson made the same protestation to me at his house in St. James's Square,<sup>1</sup> the same which was afterwards occupied by Lord Castlereagh, and to which splendid residence Robinson had only recently removed from a small house in Parliament Street. Lord North himself, whatever fluctuations of mind he might internally undergo, personally reiterated those

<sup>1</sup> Now No. 16, corner of King Street.—ED.



declarations to his nearest political connections. On the 18th of March, Monday, he came down to the House of Commons, spoke in reply to Sir Edward Astley<sup>1</sup> on the subject of some tax bill then on its passage through Parliament, and displayed all his characteristic good-humour mingled with gaiety. No man on either side of the House doubted the firmness of the sovereign or suspected him of abandoning his Ministers from personal timidity. Each party, therefore, prepared to try their force, and both expressed themselves confident of success. I can assert, however, from the best authority, that if the contest had been maintained, it would, according to every probability, have terminated numerically in favour of Administration. Robinson, then Secretary of the Treasury, and who knew better than any man the composition of the House, has many times assured me that Government would have infallibly divided from fourteen to twenty majority on the day when Lord North resigned, Robinson having received the written assurances of attendance and support from many members who were absent on the last question. Even various of the country gentlemen, who had hitherto voted with Opposition, hesitated or refused to push the struggle to the utmost extremity. They had put an end to the American war, which they reprobated, and they wished for a change of men as well as of measures and of system; but they wished it with moderation, and were averse to using the last expedients which the British constitution admits lest the constitution or the state itself should suffer in the shock.

[20th March 1782.] On the other hand, I know from authentic channels of information that Lord North, during the last four months of his continu-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Astley, Bart., of Melton Constable, co. Norfolk, M.P. for Norfolk.—ED.

ance in office, repeatedly tendered his resignation to the King, which his Majesty as often declined, accompanying his refusal with the most gracious and encouraging expressions. On Tuesday the 19th of March, the First Minister, apprehensive of the event of the debate which was fixed for the ensuing day in the House of Commons, wrote to the King in the most decided terms resigning his employment, and his Majesty being down at Windsor, Lord North dispatched a messenger with the letter. When it arrived, the King was going out to hunt; having perused its contents, for which he was probably not unprepared, he calmly put it into his pocket, made no observation, and mounted his horse. But he had not proceeded more than a few paces when a page came running after him to say that Lord North's messenger had received orders to bring back a reply. "Tell him," said the King, "that I shall be in town to-morrow morning, and will then give Lord North an answer." Two noblemen, both of them my particular friends, were with him at the time, one of whom was the late Duke of Dorset; the other, Lord Hinchinbrook (afterwards Earl of Sandwich), related to me these particulars. Turning immediately to them, "Lord North," observed his Majesty, "has sent me in his resignation, but I shall not accept it." If, however, the King was apprised of Lord North's intention or determination to resign, it was by no means known in London; and on the morning of the very day, I believe that few individuals of either party entertained a doubt of the continuance of the struggle. Still less did any person conceive that the First Minister would spontaneously lay down his office without giving notice to his friends and contrary to his own recent professions. He went soon after one o'clock to the Treasury, from whence he was to



repair to St. James's, where the King, as usual, held a levée. Robinson told me that previous to his quitting the Treasury chambers they held a long conversation together, in the course of which he showed Lord North, on paper, the names of those members who had promised to support him on the ensuing question to the number of nine, ten, or eleven at least, not one of whom had been present in the preceding division. And he did not himself entertain the slightest suspicion of the First Minister's resignation, from whom he received the most satisfactory assurances of his intention in every case to abide the issue of the approaching debate. After standing together at the fire in the Board-room till Lord North's carriage drew up, they parted about ten minutes after two o'clock, the Minister driving straight to St. James's, while the Secretary, after dispatching a variety of official business, repaired soon after four to the House of Commons.

It is probable that the conversation which took place between the King and Lord North on that occasion was never minutely reported by either to any third person, but we may safely assume that his Majesty endeavoured to prevail on his Minister not to abandon him. Robinson professed himself ignorant of all the particulars, though he entertained no doubt that Lord North, whether from weariness and disgust, or apprehension of the consequences that might accrue to his sovereign, to himself, and to the country, had made up his mind as he drove to St. James's to state at once to the King the determination that he had irrevocably embraced of laying down immediately his power, a resolution which he had notified under his hand on the preceding day. It is certain that the interview between them was long, lasting above an hour and a half, without any witness present, at the end of which time the

Minister withdrew in order to attend the House of Commons. I have rarely witnessed so full an attendance at so early an hour as on that day; not less than four hundred members having taken their seats before four, both parties appearing impatient to proceed to business. The only delay arose from the absence of the First Minister, and he being every instant expected to arrive from St. James's, all eyes were directed towards the door each time that it opened. The members on both sides who, it was generally understood, would speak in the course of the ensuing debate, were well known, and as the ground of controversy had been so often gone over, as well as on account of many invalids who attended, and who were unable to remain long, it was thought that the question would be brought on before midnight.

At length Lord North, entering in a full-dressed suit, his ribband over his coat, proceeded up the House amidst an incessant cry of "Order" and "Places." As soon as he had reached the Treasury bench, he rose and attempted to address the chair, but Lord Surrey, who had given notice of a motion for that day, being consequently in possession of the right to speak first, and having likewise risen, a clamour began from all quarters of the most violent description. In the course of this scene of disorder, Pitt, Fox, and various other members spoke to the point of order or precedence, the Opposition loudly demanding that Lord North should not be permitted to address the House or to propose an adjournment till the Earl of Surrey had been heard. The confusion lasted during some minutes, with more or less violence, in defiance of every effort made by the Speaker to enforce silence, till, in consequence of the earnestness with which the Minister besought a hearing, and some expressions relative to the im-

portance of the communication that he had to make, which pervaded the tumult, Fox having moved that "the Earl of Surrey do now speak," Lord North availed himself of that proposition to obtain a priority. An instant silence succeeded to the late storm, and as he prepared to begin his discourse, it might have been truly asserted that

" his look  
Drew audience and attention still as night."

After justifying himself from the imputation of having occasioned the recent disorder, as public notice had been given in the House both of Lord Surrey's intended motion and of its purport, he stated that he had come down on that day in order to announce from authority his Majesty's determination to change his Ministers. He should himself form no obstacle to that consummation, and he therefore conceived it unnecessary to debate a question which had for its object a removal already produced. Having then returned his acknowledgments to the House for their long and steady support extended to him, he added, "A successor of greater abilities, of sounder judgment, and better qualified for his situation it is easy to find. One more zealous for the glory and interests of his country, or more anxious to advance them, animated by more loyalty to his sovereign, or more desirous to preserve the constitution whole and inviolate, may not be so easily found. The Crown has determined on choosing new Ministers, and I hope to God, whoever they may be, they will embrace such measures as may extricate us from our present difficulties, may render us happy at home and successful abroad. I know that I am responsible for my public conduct whenever my country calls on me to answer for it. I do assure this assembly that I shall not run away,

nor will I avoid any inquiry which they may think proper to institute respecting me." He concluded by moving that the House should adjourn, in order to allow his Majesty time to make new Ministerial arrangements. It is not easy to conceive the effect which this declaration produced in a popular assembly, scarcely an individual of which did not hear it with lively sentiments of exultation or of concern, both which emotions were heightened by surprise.

Fox having advised Lord Surrey not to withdraw, but to reserve his proposed motion for the ensuing Monday, in case the Minister's present declaration should not be fully and completely verified, observed that whoever might be the persons called to the counsels of the crown, he should hold them infamous if they abandoned their principles on obtaining possession of power. He added, that as the House had now proved their abhorrence of a Government of influence, the new Ministers must ever bear in mind that fact, and remember that to the House they owed their situations. Rigby, who probably was more prepared for Lord North's resignation than most other individuals present, after professing the highest respect for him, as a man and as a Minister, yet admitted that "after the division of the preceding Friday, he was not only justified in laying down his office, but that he had himself advised the First Lord of the Treasury to retire. A majority of nine, opposed to a minority of 227, which had grown out of the distresses of the country in consequence of the war, must overbear any Minister, let his abilities be ever so resplendent." "As for the new Administration," continued he, "I hope it will be formed on a broad, solid basis, and I sincerely wish they may prove equal to extricating the country. It has been asserted that some men can make peace better than others, and

that the Americans will more readily treat with gentlemen on one side of this House than with those who occupy the opposite benches. I shall be happy to find the prediction verified by the fact." These words were not forgotten when it was ascertained how inefficient and unsuccessful Fox's attempts to open negotiations with Holland and America subsequently proved.

Powis concurred with Fox in exhorting Lord Surrey to suspend his motion for a few days, "but," added he, "if by Monday next every atom of the present Administration—those Ministers who are behind the curtain as well as the ostensible men, the invisible as well as the visible agents, who have so long governed and precipitated to the verge of destruction this country—are not swept away, then I shall wish my noble friend to renew his motion." The Treasury bench observed a profound silence, neither Ellis, Dundas, nor Jenkinson pronouncing a single word throughout the course of the debate. But a species of dialogue or interlude was exclusively performed by Burke and General Conway, which lasted a considerable time, each complimenting the other on the situation which it was probable they would respectively fill in the new order of things under the Government about to be formed. Burke indeed disclaimed having any such views or expectations, while Conway contented himself with only declaring that "whether he should be a Minister or a private member of Parliament, he would always approve himself the determined enemy of corruption." Affecting to moderate the tumultuous joy of his friends at this sudden change of affairs, Burke implored them "to be calm, and to remember that the Ministers who were retiring did not quit office in consequence of any address to the throne carried on that day. They were



neither tired of occupying their situations nor was the sovereign weary of them, and therefore the great work just achieved would prove incomplete if the independent members who had effected it did not support the Ministers whom they themselves had raised to power."

Lord North did not, however, remain without testimonies to his public talents, integrity, and virtues, even on this day of his fall. Sir John Delaval expressed his high admiration of that nobleman's great as well as amiable qualities and his regret that such abilities would now be lost to his country. Courtenay, with great pertinacity and greater wit, addressed an audience which refused him a hearing, and though he assured them that he was neither of a disposition, or temper, or nation to be intimidated, yet his efforts could not surmount the impatient exultation of the Opposition benches. The tribute that he paid to the expiring Minister derived a peculiar zest, if I may so express myself, from the circumstance of Courtenay's having always lamented the American war as inexpedient, impolitic, and even unjust. Indeed, he animadverted with no little severity on the country gentlemen who had originally propelled or encouraged the attempt of Parliament to tax America; and on the members seated opposite, whose clamorous and indecorous testimonies of satisfaction overbore his voice, humorously comparing the latter gentlemen to Nell in the farce of "The Devil to Pay,"<sup>1</sup> when, to her astonishment, she wakes in Lady Loverule's bed. Lord Surrey, at length rising, acquiesced sullenly and reluctantly in the advice of his friends to postpone his motion, which act he however accompanied

<sup>1</sup> "The Devil to Pay; or, the Wives Metamorphosed," a comic opera by C. Coffey, partly founded on Jevon's "The Devil of a Wife." Mrs. Clive first came into notice in the character of Nell.—ED.

with a menace that if any part of the Administration should remain in office upon the following Monday, he would come forward with a motion of a very different nature and far more personal to Ministers. This declaration was received by his adherents with loud cheers. The House now unanimously agreed to adjourn to the subsequent Monday, the 25th of the month; and the members, actuated by very opposite emotions, dispersed in all directions to spread the intelligence through the capital. A more interesting scene had not been acted within the walls of the House of Commons since February 1741, when Sir Robert Walpole retired from power. Nor did the First Minister of George II. by any means display in the last moments of his political life the equanimity, suavity, and dignity manifested by his successor. Lord North ordered his coach to remain at the House of Commons in waiting on that evening. In consequence of so unexpected an event as his resignation and the House breaking up at such an early hour, the housekeeper's room became crowded to the greatest degree,<sup>1</sup> few persons having directed their carriages to be ready before midnight. In the midst of this confusion Lord North's carriage drove up to the door, and as he prepared to get into it he said, turning to those persons who were near him with that placid temper which never forsook him, "Good night, gentlemen; you see what it is to be in the secret."<sup>2</sup>

However extraordinary and unexpected Lord North's resignation appeared at the moment when it took place, and however certain I esteem it that he would have carried the question on the evening when he laid down his office by a larger majority

<sup>1</sup> The night, too, was stormy.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Lord North's words were, "I protest, gentlemen, this is the first time in my life I ever derived any personal advantage from being in the secret."—*Quarterly Review*, xiii. 212.—ED.

than had supported him on the preceding debate of the 15th, yet it must be admitted that he could assign, not only to himself, but to his sovereign and the country at large, many cogent if not unanswerable reasons for retiring from power. The nation, he well knew, was universally weary of a war the misfortunes that had attended which, though originating in the very nature of the contest, and perhaps justly imputable to many other causes or persons rather than to him, were attributed principally to his errors or mismanagement. He beheld himself now engaged in hostilities, direct or indirect, with half Europe in addition to America. Ireland, availing itself of our embarrassments, loudly demanded commercial and political emancipation. On every side the Empire appeared to be crumbling into ruin. Minorca, long invested, had already surrendered some weeks earlier after a defence protracted to the last extremity. Gibraltar was closely besieged. In the East Indies our difficulties, financial as well as military, threatened the total subversion of our wide extended authority in that quarter of the globe, where Hyder Ali, though expelled by Sir Eyre Coote<sup>1</sup> from the vicinity of Madras, still maintained himself in the centre of the Carnatic. If the First Minister looked to the West Indies, the prospect appeared still more big with alarm. St. Christopher's, attacked by the Marquis de Bouillé, might be hourly expected to surrender; and he had already recaptured St. Eustatia by corrupting the officer who commanded the garrison. Among all the chain of Carribbee Islands which had belonged to the crown of Great Britain at the commencement of the war, we retained only Antigua and Barbadoes. Such was our maritime inferiority, that Sir

<sup>1</sup> Sir Eyre Coote, commander-in-chief in India, born 1726, died 1783.—ED.

Samuel Hood, whose abilities had been scientifically exerted at the head of the fleet to defend St. Christopher's, found himself unable to hazard an engagement with De Grasse. Rodney had indeed sailed from England with a considerable reinforcement in the month of January to join the British admiral at Barbadoes ; but Lord North could not foresee, nor did the most sanguine adherents of Lord Sandwich venture to predict, the splendid victory which Rodney obtained over De Grasse scarcely more than three weeks after the resignation of the First Minister. That naval triumph, which, if it had taken place sooner, might have saved the Administration, only served to illustrate Lord Rockingham's short Ministry.

Far from anticipating any such event, the most alarming apprehensions were entertained relative to the safety of Jamaica itself. If the combined fleets of France and Spain in the West Indies, after the reduction of St. Christopher's, should effect a junction, as was apprehended, they would have exceeded fifty sail of the line, while Rodney's whole force scarcely amounted to more than thirty. And it was very doubtful whether such a junction could be prevented by any exertion of vigilance, courage, or skill. The loss of Jamaica would complete the measure of the national calamities, by involving our commerce and our finances in almost total ruin. Under such an accumulation of defeat and of disaster, the vengeance of the country might demand some victim, and the leaders of Opposition, though neither sanguinary nor vindictive in their disposition, might be compelled to yield to the torrent of popular indignation. Fox, as well as Burke and Barré, had in fact many times alluded to the axe and the block amongst the opprobrious epithets that they lavished on the Ministerial errors, and such menaces might

.

be realised in a moment of national depression or violence. The crown might be even unable to extend protection to its servants, and the scenes of the year 1641 might be renewed under the reign of George III. That this picture is not exaggerated the history of the period which I am writing sufficiently proves, and however exempt from personal pusillanimity or apprehension we may suppose Lord North to have been, it was impossible that he could avert his view from these considerations, or not allow them their due weight over his mind. Though it seems to be indisputable that his final resolution to resign was at last somewhat suddenly embraced, yet the motives which led to it had unquestionably long existed, and may fully explain as well as justify his conduct.

The termination of Lord North's Administration and the close of the American war form a great era in the reign of George III. Here, therefore, I shall finish the second part of these Memoirs.





## PART THE THIRD.

—o—

MARCH 1782.



ORD North's resignation, which had been preceded at only a short interval of time by that of Lord George Germain, and followed as it was by the dismissal of all the Ministerial adherents in every department, with the single exception of the Chancellor,<sup>1</sup> were in themselves events of the first national magnitude and importance. Their impression was augmented by the sudden and unexpected declaration of the First Lord of the Treasury in the House of Commons that "his Majesty's Ministers were no more" at a moment when the most vigorous resistance on their part was universally considered as certain. The younger portion of society scarcely remembered any other Minister than Lord North, and Lord Sandwich had presided nearly as long at the head of the Admiralty. To the King the former of these noblemen was

<sup>1</sup> Lord Thurlow was thrust upon Lord Rockingham, much to his chagrin, but the King would not allow another Chancellor to be mentioned.—ED.

endeared by almost every personal quality or circumstance which could render him acceptable in the closet as well as useful in his public capacity. More than twelve years of almost daily intercourse amidst scenes of perpetual disquietude and alarm had cemented, by the effect of habit, the other motives for royal predilection. It may indeed be reasonably doubted whether even Lord Bute's resignation affected the sovereign so deeply or so painfully as Lord North's retreat. Mr. Grenville's Administration was regarded by many persons as a continuation of the preceding Ministry under another name, whereas in 1782 the King could only anticipate a complete surrender. The individuals, the measures, the reductions contemplated, accompanied with the total renunciation of sovereignty over the revolted colonies—all were alike odious or disagreeable to the King. No man who attentively considers these facts will hesitate in believing that Lord North might probably have continued in power as long as Sir Robert Walpole had done if the American war had not intervened and overturned him. Its duration, expense, calamities and disgraces, became at length too overpowering to be surmounted by any human ability. However indisputable I may consider the parliamentary right of legislation over the American colonies to have been, yet the attempt to enforce that right by arms, or, as Burke denominated it, "the experiment of shearing the wolf," should unquestionably have been renounced after the capitulation of Saratoga. From the instant that France and Spain, listening to the impulse of a narrow, vindictive policy, and oblivious of all considerations except those of animosity towards Great Britain, undertook to sustain by armies and fleets the cause of insurrection, we ought to have abandoned the further prosecution of hostilities

beyond the Atlantic. Probably Lord North himself was not far removed from that opinion. We are at least in some measure warranted so to assume from the tenor of his expressions in the House of Commons when speaking on the subject the last time that he rose as First Minister previous to his resignation. He yielded, however, to the majority of the Cabinet, sustained by the wishes of the sovereign.

The votes of the 22d and 27th of February, followed by that of the 4th of March, had, it is true, incapacitated the First Minister for continuing war against America; but no reason existed to prevent him from negotiating as successfully for the attainment of peace as could be done by Lord Rockingham or Lord Shelburne. He had declared his perfect readiness to obey the orders of Parliament, though he disapproved, as a measure of policy, the resolutions proposed and carried by General Conway. Nay, he had directed the Attorney-General to bring in a bill for enabling his Majesty to conclude a peace or truce with the revolted colonies, which proposition was actually made and adopted in a committee of the whole House on the 5th of March, only fifteen days before his own resignation. Public opinion, however, seemed imperiously to demand a change of Ministers as well as of measures. Men long accustomed to ill-success fondly imagine that they must benefit by the substitution of new names. Neither the health nor the abilities of the Marquis of Rockingham seemed indeed equal to sustaining the fatigues or the duties of Government at a period of such national depression. Towards the Earl of Shelburne it is true that all eyes were directed as to a nobleman whose talents and information were peculiarly adapted to the critical emergency of public affairs. Nor can we doubt

that if a cordial union and co-operation could have been effected between them and their respective adherents, an Administration might have arisen calculated to rescue the sovereign and the country from their state of distress. Fox and Burke acknowledged the Marquis for their leader, while Dunning and Barré looked up to the Earl for protection. Of these four distinguished persons, Fox only could in any degree be regarded as a free agent. Burke, having lost his seat at the last general election as one of the representatives for the city of Bristol, owed to Lord Rockingham his present place in the House of Commons, being returned for Malton. Calne sent to Parliament both Dunning and Barré. Fox having not only succeeded in Westminster, but being the only member competent to perform the active duties of the situation while his colleague Sir George Rodney was absent in the West Indies, might be considered as standing on a great eminence. If to this circumstance we add his birth, his connections, the energies of his character, and his splendid talents of various kinds, he might doubtless have aspired to occupy in his own person the offices left vacant by Lord North. Mr. Pelham and George Grenville, who, under the late and present reign, had been placed at the head of the Treasury and of the Exchequer, were only younger brothers of noble families. But the state of destitution to which Fox had reduced himself and the mode by which he had effected it, operated to depress him below the level on which nature had placed him. Pitt, though, like Fox, he possessed little or no patrimonial fortune, yet became First Minister, while Fox, with abilities equally eminent, never aspired beyond a second place in the Government. The public voice, even under a sovereign of more relaxed morals than George III., would not, I am persuaded,

have willingly permitted him to be placed at the head of the finances. That place, it was evident, must be conferred on Lord Rockingham or on Lord Shelburne. Those persons who looked below the surface and who knew how little personal communication existed between the two noblemen in question, and how dissimilar were their opinions on many great measures of policy, and by what different adherents they were surrounded or impelled, argued most unfavourably relative to the concord and duration of a Ministry formed under their joint auspices.

The King, who upon every point of public importance was not less accurately informed than any of his subjects, finding himself abandoned by Lord North, as he had repeatedly been deserted at earlier periods of his reign by other Ministers, chose that evil which he esteemed to be the least in his situation. Well acquainted with the discordant materials of which the Opposition was composed, he sent to Lord Shelburne to signify a desire of conferring with him on the formation of a new Administration; and when that nobleman attended his Majesty for the purpose, the King proposed to him to accept the place of First Lord of the Treasury. But Lord Shelburne, however disposed he might be from inclination to comply with an offer so flattering to his ambition, felt too deeply conscious of his inability to maintain himself in power independent of the Rockingham party to venture on its acceptance. Having stated, therefore, the necessity under which he lay of declining so gratifying a distinction, at least for the present, he urged the overruling circumstances that left no immediate alternative to the crown except placing the Marquis of Rockingham at the head of the Ministry. Sensible that he must submit to the measure, however painful, the King therefore, on the subsequent day, desired Lord



Rockingham's attendance. At the audience which took place, his Majesty consented to the conditions on which the Marquis insisted before he would agree to accept office ;<sup>1</sup> only attempting to stipulate as a preliminary that two of his actual Ministers, namely, the Chancellor and Lord Stormont,<sup>2</sup> should be continued under the new Administration. He could not, however, obtain such terms, nor was it without some repugnance and after considerable difficulty that even Lord Thurlow was admitted to retain his situation. A decided negative was put on the other nobleman, whom it was determined by the Rockingham party, at all events, to exclude from any cabinet office. In the King's situation, as he could neither contest nor protract, a few days sufficed to terminate the negotiation ; but throughout every stage of it a marked preference was exhibited towards Lord Shelburne. When the House of Commons, pursuant to its adjournment, met again on the 25th of March, an adherent of that nobleman (not a friend of the Marquis, his competitor for power) was selected and authorised to communicate the state of affairs at St. James's. Dunning, who forty-eight hours afterwards kissed his Majesty's

<sup>1</sup> The following extract from "Anecdotes of the Life of Bishop Watson" (1818, vol. i. p. 144) contains a statement of the propositions of the new Prime Minister. "On the 25th of March 1782, a total change of Ministry took place. I happened then to be in London, and had the honour of dining with Lord Rockingham on that day. When we were alone after dinner, he gave me an account of the manner in which the change of Administration had been effected, and he read to me the several propositions to which he required the King's explicit consent before he would accept the office of First Lord of the Treasury. The propositions were of the utmost public importance, such as there being no veto put on the acknowledging the independence of America, the suffering the contractors' and custom-house officers' bill to pass, the reduction of the influence of the crown by the abolition of useless offices, the introduction of a system of general economy in every department of the state."—ED.

<sup>2</sup> David, seventh Viscount Stormont, K.T., born 9th October 1727, and succeeded his uncle, the great Earl of Mansfield, as second Earl. He died 1st September 1796.—ED.

hand on being created a peer,<sup>1</sup> informed the members, whom curiosity or anxiety had brought down in great numbers to Westminster, that arrangements for the formation of a new Administration, which he trusted would meet the wishes of the House and of the nation, were in considerable forwardness. In order to allow time for their complete accomplishment, he moved that another short adjournment should take place to Wednesday the 27th. The motion, after a few words from Lord Surrey,<sup>2</sup> expressive of a sort of gloomy satisfaction at the intelligence imparted by Dunning, was adopted.

The leaders of Opposition were nevertheless far from having surmounted all the impediments to their acquisition of office, and they soon discovered that the expulsion of Lord North, though it might open to them the door of the Cabinet, by no means secured the durability of their Administration.<sup>3</sup> From the first moment that the new competitors for power appeared at St. James's, inextinguishable jealousies arose, and mutual distrust manifested itself on every occasion. With difficulty could they be prevented from immediately proceeding to an open rupture, and the external appearances of political union which had been preserved during several years of parliamentary opposition, dissolved as soon as they came to divide the Ministerial objects of plunder, or to dispute for preference in the royal favour. The Marquis of Rockingham,

<sup>1</sup> Lord Ashburton. At this period he was fifty-one years of age. In their "salad days," he, Horne Tooke, and Kenyon had often dined together at a cookshop at 7½d. a head. His argument as counsel for Wilkes against general warrants made future fame and fortune secure. He died the year after his accession to the peerage.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Charles, afterwards eleventh Duke of Norfolk.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> "Charles Fox told Lord Shelburne that he perceived the Administration was to consist of two parts, one belonging to the King, the other to the public."—Lord J. Russell's "*Fox*," vol. i. p. 292.—D.

conscious that though he might ostensibly be placed at the head of the new Administration, yet the King regarded him and his adherents with sentiments of alienation, while he considered Lord Shelburne with regard and treated him with confidence, took umbrage at the distinction. In this situation of affairs, before the formation of the new Cabinet, an incident which displayed the superior interest that Lord Shelburne possessed at court nearly terminated at once the compact by which Lord North had been expelled, and consequently involved the whole embryo Ministry in total confusion.

[*27th March—7th April 1782.*] Scarcely could the Administration be said indeed with propriety as yet to have any real existence; for though Mr. Fox and Lord Shelburne had been named Secretaries of State,<sup>1</sup> and though Lord Camden had accepted the Presidency of the Council, while the Duke of Grafton was made Privy Seal, yet neither the new Boards of Treasury nor of Admiralty were constituted. Lord John Cavendish alone had been sworn in as the new Chancellor of the Exchequer; but the Marquis of Rockingham and Admiral Keppel, who were destined to preside at the two Boards, were not as yet regularly appointed. The post of Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, as well as that of Master-General of the Ordnance, both which had commonly or frequently been Cabinet offices, still remained vacant. No individual had been proposed for elevation to the peerage, when Lord Shelburne, availing himself of the facility which he enjoyed of access to the sovereign, induced his Majesty to confer the dignity of a baron on his friend and adherent Dun-

<sup>1</sup> Shelburne withheld matters of great importance from his colleague, and the discovery of this fact, when made by Fox, is supposed to have influenced him in his subsequent refusal to take office under Shelburne as Prime Minister.—D.

ning. The business itself, which neither the King nor Lord Shelburne communicated to the Marquis of Rockingham, was managed with such dexterity, as well as silence and dispatch, that the first intimation received of it, even by the persons about the court, arose from Dunning's kissing the King's hand at the levée on his creation. But no sooner had the intelligence become known than it produced the most violent fermentation and resentment among all the Rockingham party. Considering their chief as equally overreached and insulted by the proceeding, since it became evident that Lord Shelburne could effect for his followers objects of the highest importance, which proved to the public his superior and exclusive ascendancy at St. James's, they determined on exacting immediate reparation.

Under this impression several of the parliamentary leaders, among whom were Fox, Burke, and George Byng, having repaired to Lord Rockingham's house in Grosvenor Square, a sort of tumultuary consultation was there held on the occasion. They unanimously agreed that the First Lord of the Treasury would be at once dishonoured in the Cabinet and disgraced in the public estimation if the Secretary of State, so much his inferior in official rank, could thus, without his knowledge or participation, dispose of the highest dignities to his own adherents. It was maintained that the reparation ought to be no less public than the affront, and that, in order to wipe it away, some individual must be without delay raised to the peerage at Lord Rockingham's personal recommendation. This resolution being adopted, it was next debated whom to choose for the honour. The selection fell on Sir Fletcher Norton, late Speaker of the House of Commons, not indeed so much from inclination as from necessity, no other person appearing equally proper to

be created a peer at the same time with Dunning as Sir Fletcher, they being both lawyers of great eminence in their profession, members of the House of Commons, speaking as well as voting in decided opposition to the late Government, and rival candidates for power or office.

On the following day, Thursday the 28th of March, the new First Lord of the Treasury repaired therefore to St. James's. Having obtained an audience of the King, he represented the impossibility of his continuing at the head of the intended Administration after the elevation of Mr. Dunning to a peerage on Lord Shelburne's recommendation, unless his Majesty should be graciously pleased to confer the same mark of royal favour on one of his own friends. After some hesitation, the King, apprehensive of the consequences to himself and to the public tranquillity if Lord Rockingham and his followers should suddenly resign, as they menaced, and aware that Lord Shelburne could not support himself alone, signified his assent to the proposition, adding that the person named, Sir Fletcher Norton, might kiss his hand at the first levée. But the Marquis peremptorily insisted on that ceremony immediately taking place on the same day. In vain the King stated the singularity and impropriety of such an act, contrary to all the usages of established court etiquette, inasmuch as no individual ever was known to be presented at the Queen's drawing-room, by whatever title, till he had previously been received under that denomination at the levée. Lord Rockingham signified in reply, respectfully but tenaciously, that every form must give way on the present occasion; and he exacted compliance. Sir Fletcher being brought forward, actually kissed his Majesty's hand on his creation as a baron by the title of Lord Grantley the same day in the



drawing-room, to the no small astonishment of the oldest courtiers, and hardly less so of the newly created peer himself, who, having been apprised of this extraordinary elevation, attended for the purpose at St. James's on the previous notice of only a few hours. No instance of such a breach of established usage has occurred, either before or since, in the course of the present reign.

This subject of contest being thus regulated, and the Rockingham party triumphant, the new Administration was at length formed, though of very heterogeneous materials. Instead of nine individuals, who constituted Lord North's Cabinet, eleven were now admitted; <sup>1</sup> the third Secretaryship of State, namely, that for the Colonies, lately occupied by Lord Sackville, being extinguished. General Conway, <sup>2</sup> as the recompense of his late distinguished services in Parliament, was placed at the head of the army. The separation of the office of First Lord of the Treasury from that of Chancellor of the Exchequer made way for Lord John Cavendish's <sup>3</sup> entrance into the Cabinet, and the introduc-

<sup>1</sup> The number of members of the Government in the Cabinet constantly varies, as some offices are made of Cabinet rank in one Ministry which are not so in others. In 1815 the number was thirteen; in 1850 fifteen. In Lord Beaconsfield's Ministry the number was thirteen; the present number of Mr. Gladstone's is fourteen.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> The Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, second son of Francis, first Lord Conway, commanded the British forces in Germany under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in 1761, during the absence of the Marquis of Granby. He was Secretary for Ireland, Groom of the Bedchamber to George II. and George III., Secretary of State and leader of the House of Commons in 1765, Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance in 1770, Commander-in-Chief in 1782, and Field-Marshal in 1793. He was cousin of Horace Walpole, the dearest of his friends, and father of the Hon. Mrs. Damer. In 1764 George III. dismissed him from his office as Groom of the Bedchamber on account of his vote against the Ministry in the House of Commons on the question of general warrants.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> Lord John Cavendish was fourth and youngest son of William, third Duke of Devonshire. He died unmarried, 19th December 1796.—ED.

tion of the Master-General of the Ordnance, who had not been admitted under Lord North, brought in the Duke of Richmond; while, in order to oppose some little balance to the preponderating ascendancy of the Marquis's friends, Lord Ashburton (Dunning), contrary to general usage or precedent, was admitted to a seat in quality of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The transformation was doubtless great in every instance, but in that of Dunning peculiarly striking, who, from a barrister of obscure birth, though of transcendent talents, beheld himself metamorphosed in the space of a few hours into a peer, a member of the Cabinet, and the possessor for life of a lucrative as well as honourable legal dignity.

The other great objects of ambition or acquisition were shared with tolerable equality among the friends of the two principal leaders. The Earl of Carlisle was replaced as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland by the Duke of Portland. Rigby, who during near fourteen years had enjoyed the prodigious emoluments of the Pay Office without any colleague, relinquished that enviable and lucrative post to Burke, whose brother, Richard,<sup>1</sup> was likewise made one of the two Secretaries of the Treasury. Welbore Ellis, fallen in an instant from his double elevation of Secretary of State and Treasurer of the Navy, made way for Barré in the latter employment, thus verifying Dundas's prediction of the Irish warming-pan; while Jenkinson was succeeded as Secretary at War by Townshend.<sup>2</sup> Kenyon became Attorney-General.<sup>3</sup> We were colleagues for the borough of Hindon in that Parliament. He

<sup>1</sup> Dick Burke was called *Duck* Burke, from his waddling out of the "Alley" after some unlucky Stock Exchange speculations.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Townshend, afterwards Viscount Sydney (see vol. i. p. 264).—ED.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd Kenyon, afterwards Lord Kenyon. He assisted Thurlow, to whom he chiefly owed his rise to the Attorney-Generalship.—ED.

possessed a deep and recondite knowledge of the law, the result of severe application, and was supposed to be consulted by the Chancellor on all cases that arose of legal difficulty. It was indeed to Lord Thurlow's friendship, 'and the high opinion entertained by him of Kenyon's ability,'<sup>1</sup> that the latter was indebted, in an eminent degree, for being brought forward in political life. Though he loved wealth, he was not naturally an ambitious man. I know that he reluctantly consented to become a member of the House of Commons, and that he was more than indifferent to his continuance in that assembly. His inflexible love of justice rendered him superior to party attachments or to party sacrifices, and he was fabricated of such tough materials that you might break him, but could never bend him. Gascoigne, under Henry IV., or Sir Matthew Hale, under Cromwell, were not more intrepid and tenacious of right.

I cannot forget his expressions when the question was agitated in the House of Commons whether the public had or had not a title to demand interest on the balances of money remaining in the hands of public accountants. It took place—I mean the debate on the subject—in the month of June 1782, when Fox might be esteemed First Minister, though Lord Rockingham was at the head of the Treasury; and Fox's opinions were well known to be in favour of the accountants. For he always maintained that "when a balance of public money lay in the hands of a public functionary, all which the country or Parliament were entitled to expect from him was, that whenever the money should be demanded it should be forthcoming." These were nearly Fox's words, who never forgot that his father had been

<sup>1</sup> "I hope you don't call his chaos of cases law," once exclaimed Burke.—ED.

Paymaster of the Forces, that he had made a vast profit of those balances, and that his accounts remained unsettled for many years subsequent to his decease. But Kenyon, then Attorney-General, thought very differently on the point. "I never will preclude myself," said he, when addressing the House from the Treasury bench, "from a full right to discuss in a court of justice the question of whether the public may not call on their servants to account for and to refund the great emoluments made by means of public money. I speak not from ill-will to any man alive, but solely from a sense of duty in an office which I have undeservedly as well as unexpectedly been called to fill. I know not how long I may continue in it, but if I should be dismissed from my present situation, I shall return to much domestic happiness, which I enjoyed before I was called into public life. So long, however, as I may remain in it, I am determined to do my duty."

A man composed of such impenetrable stuff might look down on Ministers. When Mr. Eden<sup>1</sup> only ventured to suppose that in his line of conduct relative to Rigby and Ellis, who (as having been, the one Paymaster of the Forces, and the other Treasurer of the Navy) were both largely indebted to the public, Kenyon could be actuated by any personal feelings or motives, he instantly took fire. "I hope," said he, with great emotion, after justifying himself from the imputation, "the right honourable gentleman does not look into his own heart to find out the motives which actuate me on the present occasion." Lord North endeavoured to explain away Eden's expression, but the Attorney-General made no answer. Little conversant with the manners of polite life, Kenyon<sup>2</sup> retained, even when

<sup>1</sup> William Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland (see vol. i. p. 237).—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Kenyon was born in Flintshire in 1732. In 1775 Master Thomas

Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, to which high dignity he afterwards rose, all the original coarse homeliness of his early habits. Irascible in his temper, like his countrymen the Welsh, destitute of all refinement in dress or external deportment, parsimonious even in a degree approaching to avarice, he nevertheless more than balanced these defects of deportment and character by strict morality, probity, and integrity. As a member of the House of Commons, whenever he spoke, though he wanted grace and dignity, he could not be reproached with any deficiency in the essential qualities of perspicuity, energy, and command of language. General Burgoyne,<sup>1</sup> whose exchange had at length been effected against Laurens, the late President of the American Congress, being thus liberated from the military incapacities which his surrender at Saratoga had inflicted on him, was sent to replace Sir John Irwine in the post of Commander-in-Chief in Ireland.

The Duke of Bolton, as a compensation for the service which he had rendered in the session of 1781, by arraiging in the House of Peers the conduct of the First Lord of the Admiralty, was made governor of the Isle of Wight. During his elder brother's life, when only Lord Harry Powlett,<sup>2</sup> he

Lawrence, son of the landlord of the Bear Inn, Devizes, took his portrait. He defended Lord G. Gordon. His death took place in 1802. He loved Epictetus, and could dine on cold mutton. He was ever at heart a Tory.—D.

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne, an illegitimate son of Lord Bingley, M.P. for Preston. After his surrender at Saratoga to General Gates an epigrammatist wrote—

“Burgoyne, unconscious of impending fates,  
Could cut his way through woods, but not through *Gates*.”

He died 4th August 1792.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Harry Powlett was sixth and last Duke of Bolton. He died childless in 1794. Jane Mary, a natural daughter of his brother, the preceding Duke, was married in 1772 to Mr. Orde of Northumberland. On the death of the last Duke, she succeeded to all the Bolton estates.



had served in the royal navy, where, however, he acquired no laurels. He was commonly supposed to be the "Captain Whiffle" portrayed by Smollett in his "Roderick Random." Sheridan received the appointment of one of the Under-Secretaries of State in Fox's office, who having taken for himself the Foreign Department, left the Home Secretaryship to Lord Shelburne, a partition by no means grateful to the latter personage, whose extensive information on all subjects connected with Continental or foreign affairs qualified him eminently for that line of political employment. Mr. Orde became his Under-Secretary. Of all the ostensible candidates for public situation, whose birth and talents seemed to call him forward to the service of the state, and whose eloquence in Parliament had eminently conduced to the triumph obtained over the late Administration, Mr. Pitt alone remained without post or remuneration. Not that the new Ministers manifested either insensibility to his merits or indifference to securing such abilities in their immediate support. On the contrary, as the best proof of their consideration, they offered him the place of a Lord of the Treasury in the forma-

Mr. Orde assumed the name of Powlett, and in 1797 was created Baron Bolton. Lady Bolton died in 1814.—D.

"I don't know whether this Lord Harry Powlett, or an uncle of his wearing the same name, was the person of whom my mother used to relate a ludicrous anecdote. Some lady with whom she had been well acquainted, and to whom his Lordship was observed to pay uncommon attentions, requested him to procure for her a pair of small monkeys from East India—I forget the kind. Lord Harry, happy to oblige her, wrote immediately, depending on the best services of a distant friend whom he had essentially served. Writing a bad hand, however, and spelling what he wrote for with more haste than correctness, he charged the gentleman to send him over two monkeys; but the word being written *too*, and all the characters of one height, *tOO*, what was poor Harry's dismay when a letter came to hand with the news that he would receive fifty monkeys by such a ship, and fifty more by the next conveyance, making up the *hundred* by his Lordship's commands!"—P.

tion of the new Board. But in making him this proposition, they appeared to have ill appreciated his character, as well as to have forgotten his late declaration in the House, and least of all to have understood the extent as well as the depth of his ambition. Pitt steadily rejected every proposition or solicitation, preferring to remain for the present without office. Whether this refusal originated in his consciousness of possessing talents which from their pre-eminence enabled him at once to seize a Cabinet place, without passing like other men through any inferior gradations of political life, or whether it rather proceeded from that superior intelligence and discernment which even at so early a period of youth showed him that a Ministry imbued with such discordant principles and odious to the sovereign could not possibly prove of long duration, it may be difficult to determine with certainty. Probably both those sentiments concurred in regulating this judicious line of action.

Charles Turner, member for the city of York, and one of the most eccentric men who ever sat in Parliament, accepted a baronetcy from the Marquis of Rockingham. He was a man of large landed property, situated in Yorkshire on the southern bank of the Tees, near the edge of the bishopric of Durham. Lord Rockingham could not boast of a more enthusiastic or devoted adherent in either House; but Turner's attachment was not bestowed on his rank or power. The constitutional principles which that nobleman professed, and those only, constituted the objects of Turner's veneration. It was to commemorate, as he said, the era of a virtuous Minister and Administration attaining to power, and not from any impulse of personal vanity or desire of title, that he accepted a dignity which should date and derive from the auspicious period

of Lord Rockingham's nomination to the head of the Treasury. Sir Charles had many peculiarities of character, dress, language, and deportment, in all which he was truly original. He never wore any coat except one of a green colour with tallyho buttons,<sup>1</sup> for he was a decided sportsman. Yet the love of liberty and detestation of every encroachment on the comforts, pleasures, or enjoyments of his fellow-subjects, particularly in the lower classes of society, was so ardent in his bosom, that he declaimed against the game laws as the most oppressive and disgraceful to our national character. I remember in the month of February of this very year 1782, Mr. Coke, member for Norfolk, having proposed in the House a revisal of those laws with a view to prevent poaching, which motion was seconded by the other representative for the same county, Sir Edward Astley; Turner instantly rose, and in animated though unpolished language inveighed against the whole code, which he stigmatised without reservation. "It is most shameful," exclaimed he, "to find this House perpetually occupied in making laws to protect gentlemen. I wish we made a few for the benefit of the poor. Let the Legislature extend protection to them, and the gentry will have nothing to fear from their depredations. If I had been a poor man, I am convinced that I should have been a poacher in defiance of the laws. It is to the severity of those laws we owe the increase of poachers. I wish to see the game laws revised and stripped of more than half their severity. My wish, nevertheless, is by no means an interested one, for every shilling that I possess is in

<sup>1</sup> This was old-fashioned, for in the following year Walpole wrote to Mason of the Duke de Chartres (*Egalité*), "Lady Clermont made a great dinner and assembly for him on Thursday. He came dirty and in a frock with metal buttons enamelled in black with hounds and horses, a fashion I remember above forty years ago."—D.

land, and I am a sportsman as well as other gentlemen." There existed not in the kingdom a more determined enemy of the American war or of Lord North. Turner did not want good sense, nor was he destitute of education, but the simplicity, asperity, and untutored roughness of his ebullitions always produced laughter. "They call us a rope of sand," said he, meaning the Opposition. "I will tell the noble Lord in the blue ribband what he and his colleagues are. They are a rope of onions, for they stink in the nostrils of the whole country." He did not long survive his elevation to a baronetcy, dying in the subsequent year, 1783. Turner bore some resemblance to Fielding's Squire Western, but with far more benevolence, probity, philanthropy, and general humanity than is exhibited by Sophia's father.

[8th April 1782.] Never was a more total change of costume beheld than the House of Commons presented to the eye when that assembly met for the dispatch of business after the Easter recess.<sup>1</sup> The Treasury Bench, as well as the places behind it, had been during so many years occupied by Lord North and his friends, that it became difficult to recognise them again in their new seats dispersed over the Opposition benches, wrapped in greatcoats or habited in frocks and boots. Mr. Ellis himself, no longer Secretary of State, appeared there for the first time in his life in an undress. To contemplate the Ministers, their successors, emerged from their obscure lodgings, or coming down from Brookes's after having thrown off their blue and buff uniforms, now ornamented with the appendages of full dress, or returning from court decorated with swords, lace,

<sup>1</sup> Lord North remarked that the Opposition had accused him of falsehood, but that he had never been guilty of such mendacity as that in the "Gazette" at this time, that "the King had been *pleased* to appoint Lord Rockingham, Mr. Fox, &c."—D.

and hair powder,<sup>1</sup> excited still more astonishment. I confess that it appeared to me the most extraordinary transmutation I ever witnessed, and the members of the new Administration seemed themselves not to have recovered from their surprise at being thus suddenly transported across the floor of the House. Some degree of ridicule attached to this sudden metamorphosis, which afforded subject for conversation, no less than food for mirth. It happened that just at the time when the change of Administration took place, Lord Nugent's house in Great George Street having been broken open, was robbed of a variety of articles, among others of a number of pairs of laced ruffles. He caused the particulars of the effects stolen to be advertised in some of the daily newspapers, where they were minutely specified with great precision. Coming down to the House of Commons immediately after the recess, a gentleman who accidentally sat next to him asked his Lordship if he had yet made any discovery of the articles recently lost. "I can't say that I have," answered he, "but I shrewdly suspect that I have seen some of my laced ruffles on the hands of the gentlemen who now occupy the Treasury Bench." This reply, the effect of which was infinitely increased by the presence of Fox and Burke in their court dresses, obtained general circulation and occasioned no little laughter.

All eyes were during some minutes directed towards the part of the House where the new Ministers, occupied in taking the oaths on their re-election, engrossed universal attention. But no sooner had that ceremony been performed, than Colonel Luttrell<sup>2</sup> (now Earl of Carhampton), rising, solicited the

<sup>1</sup> Hair powder was then universally worn both by men and women, and the Opposition had never discarded the use of it.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Lawes Luttrell, the second Earl. He was colonel of the 6th Dragoon Guards. He died in 1821, in the 78th year of his age—D.



notice of the assembly to the affairs of Ireland, which from their critical position, he said, admitted of no delay. He called at the same time on Mr. Eden, Secretary for that kingdom, then in his place, to explain their nature, and the embarrassment in which they were involved. Eden instantly obeyed the summons, and in a speech of considerable length, well digested and by no means destitute of ability, laid open the alarming fermentation, approaching to emancipation from all dependence on the King and Parliament of Great Britain, by which every class of inhabitants was animated in the sister island. With one voice, he said, they declared their determination no longer to submit to any legislation except that of the sovereign and Parliament of Ireland; concluding by a motion for leave to bring in a bill to repeal so much of the Act of the sixth of George I. as asserted a right in the Government of this country to make laws for Ireland. "I do not wish," added he, "to precipitate matters, but not an instant is to be lost. I must set off for Dublin this night or to-morrow morning. The Irish Parliament meets in eight days from the present time, and Mr. Grattan will immediately propose a declaration of rights. I shall be happy, therefore, to carry over the pleasing intelligence that the Legislature of this country is ready to give every reasonable satisfaction to the Irish Parliament and people."

Eden's motion being eagerly seconded from various sides of the House, the new Secretary of State rose and addressed the assembly in language of great animation, accompanied with visible emotion. Having reprobated the line of conduct adopted by Eden as equally factious, injurious, and censurable, in thus unexpectedly introducing a proposition of such magnitude, whose operation might tear asunder the political ties that united the two kingdoms, Fox

threw himself and his colleagues in the new Cabinet on the candour of the House for protection. He protested that though scarcely inducted, yet they had already employed much of their time in consultation on the affairs of Ireland. Before many days, or perhaps hours would elapse, they hoped to bring forward a proposition calculated to restore harmony and concord between the two countries. Against the late Administration Fox declaimed with great asperity, as having by their criminal negligence and procrastination produced the actual calamity. On Eden himself the Secretary was most severe, for quitting his post and repairing to London, obviously with no other intention than that of involving the new Ministers in difficulties, before they could possibly be prepared to produce an adequate remedy. Fox terminated by moving the order of the day, though he exhorted Eden to withdraw his motion ; but he, far from manifesting a disposition to comply, repeated his intimation of leaving England without delay ; adding, that if the motion which he had just submitted to the House was not adopted, it might be too late to avoid a rupture between the two countries.

Irritated at such pertinacity on his part, which evidently originated in mischievous intentions towards the Administration, and might be productive of most injurious effects to the public, several members, either connected with Ministry or composing part of the Cabinet, successively interposed and endeavoured to enforce Fox's exhortation. Eden nevertheless treating these applications with silence or disregard, General Conway, after reiterating the request, and finding it received in a similar manner, appealed to the House against him as highly meriting a vote of censure for his conduct. So strong indeed was that impression, and such the sentiment

of condemnation excited, that while Conway spoke, a loud and universal cry of "Move! move! Tower! Tower!" echoed from every part of the assembly. I joined in it myself, almost involuntarily, as did numbers of other persons who were not at all attached to the new Ministers, but who felt, nevertheless, the censurable spirit of the motion thus suddenly brought forward from motives of personal enmity or hostility. Indeed, I am persuaded that if Conway had availed himself of the effervescence, not to say indignation, which pervaded both sides of the House, and had moved to send Eden to the Tower, it would have been adopted, unless that gentleman had prevented it by a prompt submission and apology.

The discussion still continuing without any approximation to the object sought, Mansfield, the late Solicitor-General, endeavoured to defend, if not to justify, Eden's proceeding, though he himself at length seemed inclined to capitulate on the stipulation of receiving from Fox a solemn assurance that the obnoxious Act of George I. should be repealed. This demand called up Sheridan, who, speaking for the first time in his life from the Treasury bench, inveighed with equal energy and acrimony against the extraordinary conduct of the Secretary for Ireland. That functionary, Sheridan said, deserting his duty, animated solely by private pique and resentment, had not only withheld from his Majesty's present Ministers all the information of which he must be in possession, but had attempted to exasperate the state of things by a proposition big with pernicious consequences to the two kingdoms. It was not, however, till Cornwall prepared to put the question from the chair, that Eden, finding the House generally adverse to him, receiving no support from Lord North, though that nobleman was present, evidently entangled in his own web, and

exposed to some censure for the line of action which he had adopted on this occasion, reluctantly consented to withdraw his motion. Far from having succeeded in embarrassing the new Ministers, he had afforded them an occasion of acquiring some degree of popularity, or at least parliamentary approbation, at their outset. Fox in particular, by the manly promptitude of his reply, by his declaration of the system which the Cabinet meant to follow, and the protestations of their fixed intention to execute all their promises of reform made before they entered on office, produced a most favourable impression on the public mind. With the external insignia of power and employment he seemed to have assumed in an instant the tone, the language, and the sentiments of a Minister of state,<sup>1</sup> though he could not, even if he had been so inclined, immediately abandon the doctrines or the engagements to which he had solemnly pledged himself during successive years of opposition. On the following day he brought down a message from the crown recommending the immediate consideration of the affairs of Ireland, with a view to such a final adjustment as might give mutual satisfaction to both countries. It was adopted without a dissentient voice or the slightest hesitation. In the progress of his speech on the occasion he again alluded with severity to the "palliatives which the late Administration," he said, "had used in treating the subjects of contest existing between Great Britain and her sister island, merely in order to obtain the unworthy advantage of a temporary suspension of the evil. His Majesty's present Ministers came, on the con-

<sup>1</sup> In his letters of this period Fox complains of the "wrangling," "jangling," and "jumbling" of the Cabinet; but, he writes to Fitzpatrick, "Provided we can stay in long enough to have given a good stout blow to the influence of the crown, I do not think it much signifies how soon we go out after."—D.

trary, with minds made up to meet the main question, to settle the distinct constitutions of the two countries, and to establish such a union or connection between them as might endure for successive ages." A loyal address was voted to the sovereign re-echoing his gracious message, and the Ministry appeared to commence their career at home under very favourable auspices, at least within the walls of the House of Commons.

Even the drawing-room at St. James's underwent considerable alteration in its appearance as well as the Houses of Parliament, in consequence of the political revolution which had driven the late Ministers from power. The Earl of Hertford,<sup>1</sup> one of the "ancient, most domestic ornaments" of the court, who had held the white wand of chamberlain during more than fifteen years, and whose presence in the circle seemed, from long habit, almost essential to its very existence, of course disappeared. The Duke of Manchester<sup>2</sup> succeeded him. Lord Effingham,<sup>3</sup> a nobleman of great eccentricity of deportment, whose name since the riots of June 1780 had scarcely been pronounced on the theatre of public life, became Treasurer of the Household in the place of Lord Salisbury. No individual dismissed in consequence of the change of Administration was more personally regretted by the King than Lord Bateman,<sup>4</sup> who had held

<sup>1</sup> Francis, the elder brother of General Conway. In 1793 he was promoted to the dignity of Marquis. He died the year following, aged seventy-five.—D.

<sup>2</sup> George, fourth Duke. He was born in 1737 and died in 1788. His motto, "Disponendo me non mutando me,"—"By disposing of me, not by changing me," was made applicable to his appointment of chamberlain.—D.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, third Earl of Effingham.—ED.

<sup>4</sup> John, second Viscount Bateman in the peerage of Ireland, M.P. for Woodstock. His mother was Anne, only daughter of Charles, Earl of Sunderland. He died without issue in 1802, when the title became extinct.—ED.



during many years the post of Master of the Buckhounds. I had the honour to know him with great intimacy and to pass much time in his society. The frankness and gaiety of his disposition rendered him peculiarly agreeable to the sovereign. Lord Bateman's descent on the maternal side was very illustrious, his mother having been grand-daughter to John, Duke of Marlborough, and sister to the second Duke of that name. By his paternal ancestors he inherited only civic honours, his grandfather, Sir James Bateman, being knighted when Lord Mayor of London, under George I.<sup>1</sup> At near seventy years of age, Lord Bateman preserved all the activity of youth, accompanied by an elasticity of mind and character which never forsook him. He might have been reinstated in the employment of Master of the Buckhounds under succeeding Administrations, but he preferred the enjoyment of personal liberty, and passed the last years of his life principally at his seat of Shobden, in the county of Hereford. His understanding was good, though he loved pleasure of every description more than business, and he possessed that mediocrity of talents which, never inspiring awe, forms the best recommendation to royal favour. Curiosity was so strongly excited to see the new Ministers, and to remark the demeanour of persons who during many years had rarely stood in the presence of the sovereign or frequented St. James's, that numerous individuals attended the levée and the drawing-room from no other motive. Those who had always speculated on the short duration of the present Administration, derived additional proofs in favour of their opinion, from the very looks and reciprocal deportment of the principal personages. Every attention shown by the

<sup>1</sup> In 1717.—ED.

King to Lord Shelburne excited the instant jealousy of the Rockingham party and hastened their final separation. Time alone, indeed, was necessary for making the political arrangements indispensable, before the former nobleman could venture to throw off his subjection to his colleagues, and to set up for himself as First Minister.

[9th — 25th April 1782.] Previous to Lord North's resignation, Fox had more than once insinuated in the House of Commons that if he were Minister, he possessed the means of making a separate treaty with the Dutch, and of detaching them from France. His friends did not even scruple to assert that "he had a peace with Holland in his pocket;" expressions which, being uttered in a period of misfortune and despondency, could not fail of producing a forcible impression on the sanguine as well as on the credulous part of society. One of his first attempts as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs became, in fact, directed to the attainment of so salutary and important an object. In order to effect it, he thought proper to address a letter to Mons. Simolin, the Russian Minister then residing at the Court of London, making through him the offer of an immediate suspension of hostilities between Great Britain and Holland, as a step preparatory to negotiation. This proposal was afterwards warmly reiterated and seconded by the ambassadors of Catherine II. at the Hague. But instead of the nation deriving any benefit from Fox's hasty overture, it was received by the States General with coldness and treated with contempt; they wisely preferring to negotiate in concert with France and Spain, whenever a plan should be set on foot for general pacification. Baffled in this experiment, the Cabinet next made propositions at the Court of Versailles, with a view to produce ac-

commodation. They even sent Mr. Thomas Grenville,<sup>1</sup> Earl Temple's brother, to Paris for the purpose ; while Admiral Digby and Sir Guy Carleton were dispatched to America with instructions to offer an immediate acknowledgment of the independence of the thirteen colonies. The Congress, however, as if animated by the same spirit with the Dutch, refused to receive any messenger, or even to grant a passport to the person deputed by the British Commissioners for commencing a negotiation.

So conscious was the Secretary of State that some degree of ridicule attached to the failure of his attempt to open a treaty with Holland, as to induce him to anticipate public opinion by mentioning it in the House of Commons. He judiciously prepared his audience for the disclosure by first loading Lord North's Administration with the severest epithets, as solely culpable from their negligence or incapacity. "Wretched and fallen as the country had been depicted," he said, "by himself and his friends before they came into power, yet its real condition infinitely exceeded even their own apprehensions. His former suspicions were poor and feeble in comparison with the fact. Our navy was so reduced and impotent, that he thought an inquiry ought to be set on foot in order that the country might see the extent of the calamity." Unfortunately for the Secretary, Sir George Rodney, commanding the fleet sent out and equipped by Lord Sandwich, had already gained the glorious victory of the 12th of April, though the intelligence did not reach London before the middle of the

<sup>1</sup> The Right Hon. Thomas Grenville, born 31st December 1755, succeeded his brother, the second Earl Temple, as M.P. for the county of Buckingham. He was First Lord of the Admiralty in 1806. He died in 1846, and bequeathed to the nation his magnificent library, which is now one of the chief glories of the British Museum.—ED.

month of May. Fox alluding next to his recent experiment for making peace with the Dutch said, that "owing to the incapable measures and mismanagement of the late Ministers, the greatest impediments were thrown in the way of a treaty with Holland. If the present confidential servants of his Majesty had only been called to his councils some weeks earlier, it would have been effected." He concluded by repeating his accusations of Lord North, accompanied with the observation that though no man was less vindictive than himself, yet self-preservation would render it necessary to lay before Parliament the deplorable state of the nation. He probably imagined that in the prostrate position of the late Minister's friends and supporters these imputations would pass without contradiction or even observation. But the Lord Advocate of Scotland,<sup>1</sup> impelled by the manly nature of his disposition, and not at all overborne by the Secretary's bold assertions, instantly rose to answer him. After exhorting the Minister rather to promote concord and unanimity within those walls than to awaken dissension and ill-humour, "If," continued he, "our navy is really in the bad condition described by the Secretary of State, or has been so grossly mismanaged as he pretends, the best way of proving his assertion will be to produce a better navy. And if it was such a very easy operation, as he asserted, to make peace both with Holland and America, why does he not accomplish it, now that he and his colleagues have the conduct of the business exclusively in their own hands? Or if they are compelled to admit that impediments stand in the way, candour might induce them to suppose that their predecessors found similar obstacles, which prevented their attainment of the

<sup>1</sup> Henry Dundas.—ED.

object." Fox made no reply to this animadversion of Dundas. However triumphantly he conducted matters in Parliament, where he experienced scarcely any obstacle to his pleasure, it seemed impossible for him to begin his foreign diplomatic labours more unsuccessfully, after having held out to the country, either personally or through the medium of his adherents, such delusive expectations.

He found it much easier to induce the House of Commons to listen to his propositions than to persuade or to conciliate any of the belligerent powers. No opposition whatsoever was experienced from Lord North, who, though at the head of a routed party, yet remained the nominal chief of a numerous body of individuals. He attended very regularly in his place, and might, if he had been so disposed, have greatly impeded, if not wholly prevented, many of the measures of the new Government. But far from throwing any obstacles in their way, he allowed them without molestation to complete their projects of reform in every direction. The King having sent a message to the House on the subject, Burke opened the system of domestic retrenchment by bringing in anew his famous bill for the reduction of the Civil List, so often proposed, and so often rejected or eluded in preceding sessions. Powis seconded the motion. The expressions adopted by both, when speaking of the part which the King performed in it, were not calculated to render the measure itself more palatable to him. Secret influence was designated clearly as the latent evil which had so long separated the sovereign from his people. Burke congratulated the House and the country that "the auspicious moment had at length arrived when his Majesty, liberated from the secret and pernicious counsel which interposed between him and his subjects, now addressed them in



the pure and rich benevolence of his own heart." Words which in reality implied more censure than commendation, since he had already reigned above twenty years without feeling or exerting this benevolent impulse. Powis spoke out in still stronger language. After describing the act itself of contracting his royal state, in order to diminish the burthens of his people, as entitled to the warmest effusions of gratitude, he added, that "the message now sent from the crown, proved the sovereign to be at length delivered from that baneful and concealed adviser which had lurked unseen, and had intercepted his gracious inclinations." Fox made no allusion to secret influence, but he expressed his hopes that gentlemen would be unanimous in fulfilling his Majesty's generous intentions, as it could be no longer objected that the House of Commons ought not to interfere with the Civil List; "the King coming forward to his people with unparalleled grace, and desiring to participate in their sufferings." In fact, not one word was uttered from any part of the House, though a smile might have been observed on certain faces, and an address to the throne was unanimously voted.

When, however, the bill itself came to be discussed in the committee some weeks afterwards, and the proposed reduction minutely detailed by Burke, his plan had undergone a great alteration. Instead of two hundred thousand pounds a year, which sum, by a species of political arithmetic, formed on data of his own assumption, he had calculated in 1779 would annihilate Ministerial influence in the House of Commons commensurate to fifty members or votes in Parliament, he now proposed only about a third part of that annual sum for the scope of his retrenchment. Many regulations which had appeared to be indispensable while he

was in opposition were abandoned when he spoke from the Treasury bench, more undoubtedly from compulsion than from inclination. Some abuses owed their prospective toleration to the personal respect that he said he felt for the individuals who presided over the office or department. Others were perpetuated from deference to prejudice or popular predilection. All the regulations relative to the principality of Wales, which had formed a prominent feature of his former bill, were now, he said, given up, or at least postponed, not because he by any means believed that they would, if adopted, fail to be productive of great national utility, but because they were disagreeable to the Welsh. He added, however, that he hoped a time would arrive more propitious to their introduction. The Ordnance might be safely trusted to the Duke of Richmond's vigilant frugality. Vyner,<sup>1</sup> member for Lincoln, observed on this clause, that "as the Duke of Richmond was not immortal, he would vote for the enactment of such regulations in his department as might render it impossible for any successor at the head of the Ordnance to abuse his power and to plunder the public." Barré afterwards reiterated in his place the same opinions as were professed by Vyner. Lord Ashburton, or rather Lord Shelburne, extended his protection to the Duchy of Lancaster. The Mint was left untouched; and even two of the white wands, the Treasurer and Cofferer of the Household, as contributing to the splendour of the court, obtained grace. Yet, thus mutilated and hardly recognisable, both Burke and Powis, when returning thanks to the King for his message relative to this subject, melted into tears at the prospect of their approaching triumph over court profusion and Ministerial corruption.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Vyner.—ED.

Two bills, one for the prevention of contractors sitting in Parliament, the other for excluding officers of the excise and customs from voting at elections, were likewise passed with little difficulty or delay through the Lower House, where the Administration carried all before them. Sir Philip Jennings Clerke brought in the former; Mr. Crewe, now Lord Crewe,<sup>1</sup> the latter. Except from Lord Nugent and Mr. Vyner, as well as, I believe, from Bamber Gascoyne, scarcely any material opposition was experienced. Lord Nugent, besides speaking against both the bills in every stage of their progress, divided the House on them, but he could only carry about fourteen votes with him, while Ministers had more than eighty. Gascoyne said that the bill for depriving revenue officers of their right of voting violated Magna Charta, which secured to every subject his rights and franchises. Vyner represented that sixty thousand individuals would be disfranchised by its operation. The Secretary at War having remarked that nothing could be more desirable for these persons themselves than to be thus incapacitated from voting, Mr. Anne Poulett<sup>2</sup> observed, not without some wit, that the assertion reminded him of the anecdote of Don Carlos and the executioner. When the unfortunate son of Philip II. said he expressed an unwillingness to submit to the stroke of the axe, the officer of justice besought his Highness to remain quiet and suffer his head to be taken off, as it was designed for his own benefit. The Honourable Mr. Poulett, son of the first Earl Poulett (who occupied the high office of First Lord of the Treasury for a short period of time under Queen Anne), was above seventy years of age in 1782 when I knew him. He had been

<sup>1</sup> The barony of Crewe was created in 1806.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Poulett, M.P. for Bridgewater.—ED.

named after that princess, who was his godmother. Like Welbore Ellis, he always came to the House in a full dress suit, and regularly took his place on the Government side opposite to Rigby. He was a steady supporter of the crown, but very rarely rose to speak, being naturally of a grave and taciturn disposition. His known loyalty and unshaken attachment to every Administration which he believed to be approved by the King subjected him to the lash of the "Rolliad." After enumerating several other members distinguished by similar principles of action, the author of the poem adds—

" And Nancy Poulett, as the morning fair,  
Bright as the sun, but common as the air,  
Inconstant nymph, who still with open arms  
To every Minister devotes her charms."

Mr. Crewe was accompanied by nearly a hundred members when he carried up his bill to the bar of the Lords, but in their passage through that House both bills (Sir Philip Clerke's, no less than the other) experienced from the Chancellor, as well as from Lords Mansfield and Loughborough, the most decided opposition. These pillars of the law, far from yielding to the temper of the times, endeavoured, though ineffectually, to stem its force. Thurlow, in particular, even while holding in his hand the Great Seal of England and while in his own person a member of the Cabinet, yet expressed, with that gloomy indignation which characterised his style of speaking, the disapprobation that he felt at such inroads on the majesty of the crown as well as on the franchise of the subject. Unawed by the appearance of Fox and Burke, who, in order to impress him with respect as well as to display the interest that they took in the success of these measures, usually appeared in the House of Peers on the

steps of the throne while the bills were agitating, Lord Thurlow animadverted on them with the utmost severity, and divided in the minority on all the most obnoxious clauses. But the stream which ran with too much violence successfully to oppose its current, soon secured for each of the bills the concurrence of the sovereign.

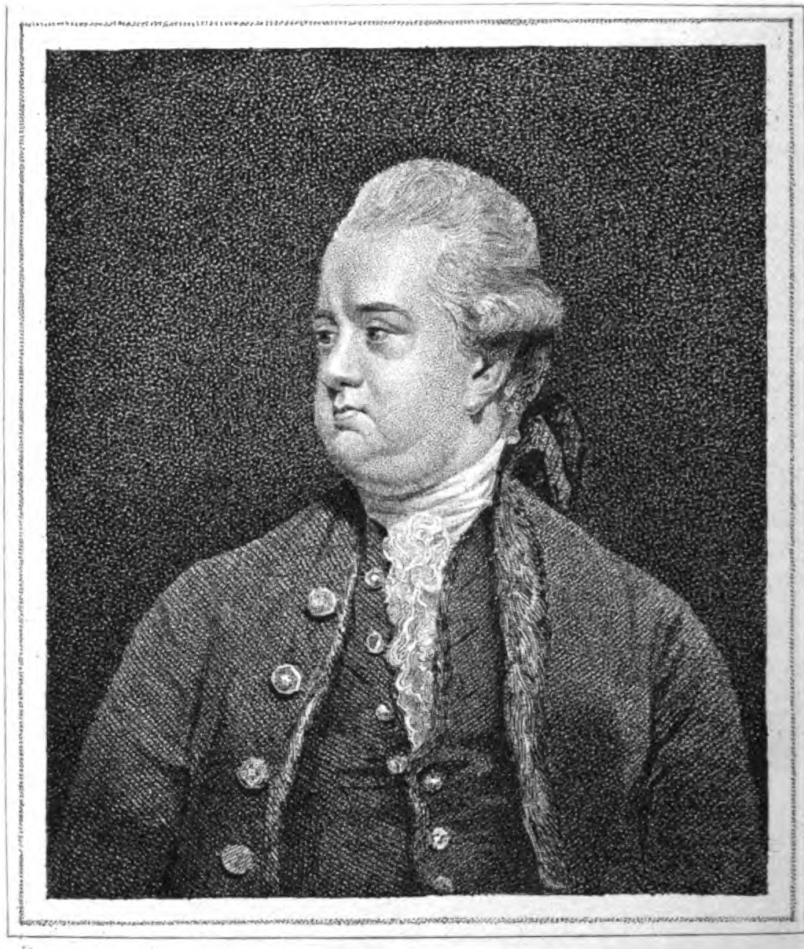
It cannot be disputed by the greatest enemies of reform that various of the offices or nominal employments suppressed by Burke's bill were become obsolete, destitute of any real function, and void of apparent utility. Nor will it be denied that the annual aggregate sum which the measure saved to the country, though now reduced from £200,000 to about £72,000 a year, yet still formed a considerable object of national economy. But, on the other hand, the extinction of so many places deprived the crown of that species of majesty produced by the operation of time and "the hoar of ages;" advantages which no man knew better how to appreciate and to venerate, as well as to celebrate and sustain, than Burke himself. We beheld him, scarcely ten years afterwards, stand forward the determined champion of monarchical institutions, and the zealous opposer of almost every kind of innovation. We may likewise remark, that the Board of Trade and the office of Third Secretary of State, both which institutions his bill abolished, have been since revived, from a conviction of their respective necessity or benefit. Even the "great wardrobe," the "treasurer of the chamber," the "jewel office," the "clerks of the board of green cloth," and some other appointments, which may appear at first sight to be most exceptionable or unnecessary, yet, as carrying us back in imagination to the reigns of the Tudors by whom they were instituted, diffused over the throne itself a Gothic



grandeur, calculated to protect and to perpetuate the sanctity of the monarchical office. These adventitious aids will not be despised by those who deeply consider the nature of man, and of all human institutions.

Other consequences of an injurious description, not foreseen at the time, or from which the author of the bill chose to avert his view, have flowed from the measure. In Burke's eagerness to diminish the supposed overgrown influence of the crown, arising from the distribution of offices among the members of the House of Commons, a greater injury has been probably sustained by the British constitution. The Minister, deprived of the means of procuring parliamentary attendance and support by conferring places on his adherents, has in many instances been compelled to substitute a far higher remuneration, namely, peerages. A review of Pitt's Administration will form the strongest illustration of this remark. I know indeed, from the best authority, that Burke himself lived to adopt the opinion, and, like other reformers or innovators, found reason to lament the effects of his own bill. Being at Bath in a declining state of health, not long before his decease, I believe in 1797, the conversation turned on the great augmentation made by Pitt to the numbers of the House of Lords during the preceding thirteen years. "I fear," said Burke, "that I am partly accountable for such a disproportionate increase of honours, by having deprived the crown and the Minister of so many other sources of recompense or reward, which were extinguished by my bill of reform." Pitt, when he came into power early in 1784, had in fact little left him to bestow in proportion to the crowd of claimants except dignities, and he was not parsimonious in their distribution. The two bills excluding contractors from sitting in the





*Edward Gibbon.*

*From the Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

House of Commons and depriving revenue officers of the right of voting at elections for members of Parliament, though liable respectively to some objections, and though both were strongly reprobated at the time by the greatest legal characters in the House of Peers, yet appear to have obtained, and still to retain, the general approbation of the country.

Many persons of high rank reluctantly disappeared from about the King's person and court in consequence of Burke's bill. The Earl of Darlington<sup>1</sup> quitted the jewel office, and Lord Pelham<sup>2</sup> the great wardrobe; the first of which offices owed its institution to Elizabeth, while the latter remounted to the times of the Plantagenets. The Earl of Essex<sup>3</sup> laid down the stag-hounds, as did Lord Denbigh<sup>4</sup> the harriers; while the disasters of Saratoga and of Yorktown were thus felt by rebound through every avenue of St. James's. Gibbon, who had sat at the Board of Trade since 1779, being dismissed from his official attendance in Whitehall, found himself more at leisure to continue that great historical work, which he ultimately completed on the banks of the lake of Geneva, and which will perpetuate his name to distant ages.<sup>5</sup> George Selwyn lost a lucrative appointment under the Board of Works; and though possessed of an

<sup>1</sup> Henry, second Earl of Darlington. The Earldom dates from 1754. At his death in 1792, he was sixty-six years of age.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Pelham, who in 1768, being then in his fortieth year, succeeded his cousin the Duke of Newcastle in the barony of Pelham. He was created Earl of Chichester in 1801, and he died in 1805.—D.

<sup>3</sup> William Anne Holles, who being born in 1732, cannot have been one of the many godsons of Queen Anne who were baptized by her name. Lord Essex was the fourth Earl of the Capel branch, and died in 1799.—D.

<sup>4</sup> Basil Fielding, the sixth Earl, born in 1719. He died in 1800.—D.

<sup>5</sup> It is a singular fact that Walpole called Gibbon's work a "compilation," and had hardly patience to read the first volumes.—D.

affluent fortune, together with a borough, yet as he loved money, no man who suffered in consequence of the reduction of the Civil List retained a deeper resentment towards the party who had abridged his enjoyments and diminished his income. I knew him with some degree of intimacy, having sat as his colleague in Parliament during more than six years for Ludgershall, from 1784 to 1790. He resided in Cleveland Row, in the house rendered memorable by the quarrel which took place between Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Townshend, under the reign of George I., when the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State seized each other by the throat; a scene which Gay is supposed to have portrayed in the "Beggars' Opera," under the characters of Peachum and Lockitt. Selwyn was a member of the House of Commons during the greater part of his life; and down to the year 1780 he constantly represented Gloucester, near which city he had a seat at Matson. The unpopularity consequent on the American war, throughout the whole progress of which contest he supported Government, occasioned his being rejected by his old constituents at the general election which took place in that year. He told me that during the memorable siege of Gloucester, undertaken by Charles I. in 1643, Charles, Prince of Wales, and James, Duke of York, who both in turn ascended the throne, but who were then boys, remained at Matson. And he added, that James II. after he came to the crown used to mention the circumstance to his grandfather when he went to court, observing, "My brother and I were generally shut up in a chamber on the second floor at Matson during the day, where you will find that we have left the marks of our confinement inscribed with our knives on the ledges of all the windows."



Selwyn possessed infinite wit. He had indeed succeeded to Philip, Earl of Chesterfield's reputation for *bon-mots*; most of which that then attained to any celebrity were either made by or attributed to him. Their effect, when falling from his lips, became greatly augmented by the listless and drowsy manner in which he uttered them, for he always seemed half asleep; yet the promptitude of his replies was surprising. The late Duke of Queensberry, who lived in the most intimate friendship with him, told me that Selwyn was present at a public dinner with the Mayor and Corporation of Gloucester in the year 1757 when the intelligence arrived of our expedition having failed before Rochfort.<sup>1</sup> The Mayor turning to Selwyn, "You, sir," said he, "who are in the Ministerial secrets, can no doubt inform us of the cause of this misfortune." Selwyn, though utterly ignorant on the subject, yet unable to resist the occasion of amusing himself at the inquirer's expense, "I will tell you in confidence the reason, Mr. Mayor," answered he; "the fact is, that the scaling ladders prepared for the occasion were found on trial to be too short." This solution, which suggested itself to him at the moment, was considered by the Mayor to be perfectly explanatory of the failure, and as such he communicated it to all his friends; not being aware, though Selwyn perfectly well knew, that Rochfort lies on the river Charente, some leagues from the sea-shore, and that

<sup>1</sup> This was the great expedition got up to efface the memory of the Duke of Cumberland's disasters, and to cripple our then menacing enemy, France. Sir John Mordaunt commanded in chief, Hawke being at the head of the fleet. There was "blundering" before starting, on the way, and most of all on the spot. The expedition returned without a regiment having been landed. The public indignation was uncontrollable, but Sir John was brought before a court of inquiry, and, to the astonishment of a nation who had seen Byng shot so recently for no crime, he was acquitted; but the honour of G.C.B. was not conferred on him for sacrificing the lives of our soldiers.—D.

our troops had never even effected a landing on the French coast.

But it was not merely as a man of wit that I delighted in his society. He was likewise thoroughly versed in our history, and master of many curious anecdotes relative to the Houses of Stuart and of Brunswick. As he had an aversion to all long debates in Parliament, during which he frequently fell asleep, and as he never failed to vote with Lord North, we used to withdraw sometimes to one of the committee rooms up stairs for the purpose of conversation. Talking to him of the death and execution of Charles I., he assured me that the Duchess of Portsmouth always asserted, as having been communicated to her by Charles II., that his father was not beheaded either by Colonel Pride or Colonel Joyce, though one of the two is commonly considered to have performed that act. The Duchess maintained that the man's name was Gregory Brandon.<sup>1</sup> He wore a black crape stretched over his face, and had no sooner taken off the King's head than he was put into a boat at Whitehall Stairs, together with the block, the black cloth that covered it, the axe, and every article stained with the blood. Being conveyed to the Tower, all the implements used in the decapitation were immediately reduced to ashes. A purse containing a hundred broad pieces of gold was delivered to him, after which recompense he received his dismissal. Brandon survived the transaction many years, but divulged it a short time before he expired. This account, as coming from the Duchess of Portsmouth, challenges great respect.

From his own father, who had acted a conspicuous

<sup>1</sup> Here is probably a mistake as to the Christian name. Gregory Brandon was the common executioner, and beheaded Lord Strafford. He was succeeded by his son, Richard Brandon, who is believed to have beheaded Charles I.—ED.

part during Sir Robert Walpole's Administration, Selwyn knew many of the secret springs of affairs under George I. and II. He told me that the former of those kings, when he came over here from Hanover in 1714, understanding very imperfectly the English language, found himself so weary while assisting at the service in the Chapel Royal, that he frequently entered into conversation in French or German with the persons behind him. Charles II., who could not plead the same excuse for his inattention, was accustomed, as we know from Burnet, to fall fast asleep; and Harry Bennet, afterwards created Earl of Arlington, usually awoke his Majesty towards the conclusion of the sermon. Among the few individuals who had retained under the new reign the places that they held or occupied about Queen Anne was Dr. Younger, Dean of Salisbury.<sup>1</sup> Anticipating the change of sovereigns, he had applied with such success to render himself master of the German language, that he was continued in the office of Clerk of the Closet, which, of course, gave him great access to the King, behind whose chair he usually stood at chapel. With Younger his Majesty often talked during the service, a circumstance which, as being very indecorous, gave much offence. Lord Townshend, then one of the Secretaries of State, animated by a sense of loyal affection towards his sovereign, ventured to acquaint him that his deportment at chapel offered cause of regret, mingled with animadversion to many of his most attached subjects, beseeching him at the same time particularly to abstain from conversing with Dr. Younger. Far from resenting the freedom, his Majesty promised amendment, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Younger was presented to the Deanery in 1705. He was also a Canon residentiary of St. Paul's, and died in Amen Corner, 27th February 1727-28.—ED.

Lord Townshend strongly enjoined the Clerk of the Closet to observe in future the most decorous behaviour on his part. Finding, however, that they resumed or continued the same practice, Lord Townshend sent Younger a positive order, as Secretary of State, directing him, without presuming to present himself again in the royal presence, to repair immediately to his Deanery. Dr. Younger, conceiving the injunction to proceed from the King, obeyed the mandate without remonstrance or delay, and the Secretary, waiting on his Majesty, informed him that the Dean had received a kick from a horse which fractured his skull, of which accident he was dead. George I. expressed deep concern at his loss, nor ever entertained the most remote idea of the deception practised on him. Several years afterwards, before which time Lord Townshend had quitted his employment, the King reviewing some regiments encamped on Salisbury Plain, the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter of that city had the honour to be presented to him, and to kiss his hand. But when Younger approached for the purpose, his Majesty, overcome with amazement at beholding again a man whom he had long considered as no more, could not altogether restrain his emotions. As soon, however, as circumstances permitted, he sent for the Dean into his presence, and a mutual explanation took place. Conscious of the rectitude and propriety of the motives which had actuated Lord Townshend in his conduct, he neither expressed any sentiment of anger or of resentment, but contented himself with promising Younger to confer on him a mitre as soon as an occasion should present itself; an assurance which he would have probably realised if the Dean had not shortly afterwards been carried off by death.

Selwyn's nervous irritability, and anxious curi-

osity to observe the effect of dissolution on men, exposed him to much ridicule not unaccompanied with censure. He was accused of attending all executions, and sometimes, in order to elude notice, disguised in a female dress. I have been assured that in 1756 he went over to Paris expressly for the purpose of witnessing the last moments of Damien, who expired under the most acute torture for having attempted the life of Louis XV. Being among the crowd, and attempting to approach too near the scaffold, he was at first repulsed by one of the executioners, but having informed the person that he had made the journey from London, solely with a view to be present at the punishment and death of Damien, the man immediately caused the people to make way, exclaiming at the same time, "Faites place pour Monsieur. C'est un anglois et un amateur." The Baron Grimm in his "Correspondence" asserts that the fact took place, not with respect to Selwyn, but to the celebrated Condamine.<sup>1</sup> Pitt, in order to recompense Selwyn for the place of "Paymaster of the Works," of which he was deprived by Burke's bill, made him in 1784 "Surveyor-General of the Crown Lands," which office he retained till his decease in 1790.

[26th—30th April 1782.] Hitherto, though Fox might occasionally indulge in animadversions of severity on the late Administration, yet no direct attack upon any of the members of that Cabinet had been made by the new Ministers or by their friends. But Sawbridge, acting independently of men in office, brought forward to the notice of the House at this time as a matter of revision or censure a

<sup>1</sup> The execution of Damians took place on March 28, 1757. He was executed with the same tortures that were inflicted upon Ravailiac. When he mounted the scaffold he said, "Le jour sera dur, mais il finira." Dr. Warner took upon himself to deny Selwyn's alleged fondness for executions, but there can be no doubt of the fact.—ED.



pension of £1000 a year, granted during the last days of Lord North's continuance in power, to Robinson, one of the Secretaries of the Treasury. Sawbridge commented on the grant with all the republican bitterness of his character. Lord North defended, and Robinson explained the circumstances attending the transaction, while the Secretary of State availed himself of the subject and the occasion to inveigh against the late First Lord of the Treasury, unconscious how soon he should be compelled or induced from ambitious motives to form the closest connections of policy, and even of friendship, with that nobleman. After declaiming with no ordinary asperity against his abuse of the office that he recently held, in order to provide for his adherents and dependants, after he had declared in his place within those walls that his Majesty's Ministers were no more, Fox exclaimed, "The noble Lord talks of the services of his Secretary. Would to God that the honourable gentleman had been idle! Nor is the observation confined to him. It extends to men of higher rank. I wish to heaven they had employed themselves in services less injurious to their country! I beg of the House to understand that the pension in question, as well as another of £500 a year given to Sir Grey Cooper, and a third pension which has not been mentioned, were the work of the late Ministers, not of the noble and honourable persons now called to his Majesty's councils." Lord North having observed that the third pension alluded to by Fox, which was one of £3000 a year recently granted to himself, had invariably been bestowed by the crown on all his predecessors in the same employment, added, that he had refused it when offered him some years earlier. But the Secretary replied, "Men who have ruined their country are not entitled to the rewards

of meritorious service! Nor will the public brook that the noble Lord shall receive a remuneration equal to the great and popular Earl of Chatham."

Sawbridge, whose pertinacity of character inclined him to prosecute with unremitting ardour whatever matter he undertook, resumed the business three days afterwards, concluding with a motion that "the pension of £1000 a year granted to John Robinson, Esq., was unmerited by public service, and a lavish, improvident expenditure of the public money." In the course of his speech on the occasion, Sawbridge stated that "the noble Lord at the head of the Treasury, from his habitual indolence, intrusted to the Secretary the whole management of that department. To him the negotiation of loans was committed, of which lucrative transactions he reserved to himself a share, as well as of other contracts. To him likewise was confided the management of that House, in which delicate line of service he had displayed eminent dexterity. For these meritorious performances, he had obtained from the crown, besides the pension in question, grants of lands and houses, together with the reversion of an office of considerable magnitude," every particular of which the mover detailed to the assembly. Lord North was not present, but Robinson without discomposure answered all the allegations, denied some of the facts and admitted others, leaving the House to act on the occasion as they might judge proper. Fox remained silent, but Thomas Pitt, rising as soon as Robinson concluded, besought the assembly not to forget its own dignity and the great national objects demanding their attention by occupying themselves in such pitiful discussions. He therefore moved the order of the day. The Secretary of State instantly availed himself of this proposition, which he said met his approbation;

though he paid many compliments to Sawbridge, and accompanied them with the heaviest imputations on the late Ministers. William Pitt, supporting his relation, recommended unanimity as presenting the only hope of national extrication, and the order of the day was carried without any division, though not before Lord Surrey<sup>1</sup> had moved for an account of all pensions granted from the 15th of February down to that time, the 30th of April. No opposition being made to it, the business terminated.

[1st—6th May 1782.] Wilkes, who during more than thirteen successive years in various Parliaments had vainly endeavoured to expunge from the "Journals" of the House of Commons the memorable resolutions relative to the Middlesex election,<sup>2</sup> after being so often foiled at length attained his object. The division which took place upon this question, when 115 members voted with him and only 47 against him, was attended with the singular circumstance of Lord North and Fox dividing together in the minority. The new Secretary of State, whose original political line of conduct while supporting the Administration which he had recently expelled, and of which he once formed a part, made it sometimes difficult for him to maintain the appearance of consistency, affected to speak and to vote from the Treasury bench against Wilkes's motion. He was, indeed, well aware of the charge that would be made against him, and alluded to it in his speech, which formed a tissue of contradictions. After observing that it was for the benefit of the English people to give the power of expulsion to the House of Commons, he nevertheless added that when the public voice had been loudly pro-

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards eleventh Duke of Norfolk.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> The resolutions rendered Wilkes incapable of sitting. Walpole describes Fox's speech on this occasion as "a manly and fair defence of himself."—D.

nounced against it (as he admitted was the case), he would not wish to preserve the privilege in order to make use of it for the injury of the people. "Besides," subjoined he, "when the power to enforce the privilege is lost, it becomes no longer an object to retain such a privilege. The people have associated and have compelled Parliament to listen to their voice." Dundas likewise opposed Wilkes's motion, but he did not the less reprobate Fox's doctrine as dangerous and subversive of all government. "Associations," he maintained, "would lead to every excess, for if ten individuals might legally associate, so might ten thousand. From such meetings, of which Lord George Gordon had exhibited a specimen, only confusion, tyranny, and despotism could arise." The Secretary of State made no reply, but having unfortunately given his Ministerial sanction in early life to various measures calculated for affixing parliamentary disapprobation on the celebrated member who originated the motion, Fox, therefore, probably thought that a regard to his own character compelled him, however contradictory to his late line of declamation and of action when haranguing his constituents in Palace Yard, to abide by and to attempt a justification of his conduct relative to the election for Middlesex. No public man in my time, not even Dundas, ever appeared to me to consider so little apology requisite for the contradictions and derelictions of his political principles, or seemed so completely to regard the House of Commons as an assembly fit for becoming the willing agents and instruments of every delusion, however gross or palpable, as Fox. The difficulties of the undertaking never deterred or intimidated him, and his splendid talents, which could lend to sophistry the colours of truth, emboldened him by turns to attack and defend, accord-

ing to the situation in which he stood, almost every position and tenet either of monarchical authority or of constitutional freedom.

While the House of Commons was thus occupied in measures of reform or engaged in retracting their past parliamentary errors, the new Ministers, as if they anticipated their speedy dismissal, employed the precious moments of their precarious power in distributing among themselves without loss of time the honours of the crown. Four garters which had been found on the King's table unappropriated at the time of Lord North's resignation they naturally considered as lawful plunder. One only of the number fell to the share of the sovereign, which he was allowed, though not without some difficulty, to confer on his third son, Prince William Henry, afterwards Duke of Clarence. The remaining three were reserved for themselves, with a due regard to their respective consequence, party, and pretensions. Lord Rockingham having long since received the order from the hands of George II., the Duke of Devonshire, as head of the Whigs, was invested with one blue ribband and the Duke of Richmond honoured with another. Lord Shelburne took for himself, as was to be expected, the fourth garter. The Prince of Wales, then in early youth, who was present at the ceremony of the investiture, observed, with considerable discrimination of character, that never did three men receive the order in so dissimilar and characteristic a manner. "The Duke of Devonshire," said he, "advanced up to the sovereign with his phlegmatic, cold, awkward air, like a clown. Lord Shelburne came forward bowing on every side, smiling and fawning<sup>1</sup> like a cour-

<sup>1</sup> This was his character. He told Thurlow he was amazed at the genius he found in the King. The Chancellor, who, he hoped, would have repeated the flattering observation, laughed in his face.—D.



tier. The Duke of Richmond presented himself, easy, unembarrassed, and with dignity, as a gentleman."

The Earl of Ashburnham,<sup>1</sup> who had been during more than six years Groom of the Stole, laid claim to one of the garters under a promise which he asserted to have received from the King, and of which he endeavoured to enforce the performance. His royal master, though he did not deny the engagement, pleaded his inability to fulfil it under the actual circumstances of his situation, which left him no longer any option in distributing the decorations in question. This excuse did not, however, satisfy Lord Ashburnham, who addressed to the King a letter of reproach on the occasion, couched in language which was thought too severe from a subject to his sovereign. His resentment at the involuntary infraction of the royal word impelled him to resign his office, which, as being in the King's immediate family and near his person, has always been considered exempt from Ministerial interference. Lord Weymouth, who succeeded him, had acted a much more important part in earlier periods of his Majesty's reign, when he filled during a very considerable time the post of Secretary of State, and even held the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland for a few months, though he never crossed over to Dublin. He was a man of very eminent talents, but accompanied with great singularities of character. Of a disposition highly convivial, his conversation entertained and delighted. In order, however, to profit by his society, it became necessary to follow him to White's, to sit down to supper, to drink deep of claret, and to remain at table till a very late hour of the night, or rather of the morning. "Junius,"

<sup>1</sup> John, second Earl of Ashburnham, born 30th October 1724, died in 1812. His son George, third Earl, succeeded in obtaining a garter.—ED.

alluding to this well-known circumstance when addressing the Duke of Grafton in June 1771, says, referring to Lord Weymouth, "Yet he must have bread, my Lord, or rather he must have wine. If you deny him the cup there will be no keeping him within the pale of the Ministry."

Earl Gower, the Lord Chancellor, and Rigby were through life his three most intimate friends and companions. His application to business by no means kept pace with his abilities, nor was he ever a popular Minister. Indeed, if we except the first Mr. Pitt, Henry Bilson Legge, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer during about five months after his Majesty's accession to the throne, and perhaps we may add to a certain degree the Marquis of Rockingham, all three of whom were devolved on him by his grandfather, or forced upon him by the nation, George III. cannot be said to have had any Minister in any department previous to Lord North's resignation who enjoyed popularity. We must except from the remark Lord Camden during the short time that he held the Great Seal as Chancellor. Lord Weymouth attracted a considerable portion of the indignation which characterises Junius's opening letter, written in January 1769, for having officially signed the order which authorised the military to fire on the populace assembled in St. George's Fields. "Recovered from the errors of his youth, from the distraction of play, and the bewitching smiles of Burgundy," says that writer, "behold him exerting the whole strength of his clear, unclouded faculties in the service of the crown." He had preceded Lord Ashburnham as Groom of the Stole in 1775, from which office he became Secretary of State for the Home Department, an employment that he held about four years, being succeeded in 1779 by the Earl of Hillsborough. Ten years

afterwards, Pitt created Lord Weymouth a Marquis.<sup>1</sup>

Though the Administration of which Lord North so long constituted the head had ceased to exist, yet many of the parliamentary institutions that he had originated still continued in activity. Among the principal might be esteemed the Secret Committee for inquiring into the state of the East India Company's affairs. Dundas, their chairman, brought forward, almost as soon as the House of Commons met after the change of Ministers, various reports, calculated to show the causes, not only of the calamities sustained in the Carnatic, but of the improper expenditure of blood and treasure in other parts of Hindostan. On these reports he founded a number of resolutions, which were finally adopted by the House. Sir Thomas Rumbold, late Governor of Madras,<sup>2</sup> and two of his colleagues, members of the Council at Fort St. George, became the first objects of public accusation. The second blow fell on Sir Elijah Impey,<sup>3</sup> who, in his quality of Chief Justice of Bengal, was supposed, or asserted, in more than one instance, to have lent his legal aid and support to the Supreme Government from self-interested motives, and for unjust as well as pernicious purposes. Hastings himself, then Governor-General of Bengal, and Hornby, Governor of Bombay, became implicated or involved in these criminations. Dundas, when mentioning the former in the course of his opening speech to the House, admitted that Mr. Hastings had on many occasions proved himself a meritorious servant of the East India Com-

<sup>1</sup> Of Bath.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Rumbold is said to have been originally a waiter at White's club-house. He was elected Member of Parliament for Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, on 14th April 1781.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> Impey passed sentence of death on Nundcomar, August 1775. He was recalled July 1782, and impeached in 1788. Died 1st February 1812.—ED.

pany, but added that he was not authorised to fancy himself an Alexander or an Aurungzebe, preferring frantic military expeditions before the improvement of commerce and the cultivation of the arts of peace. He then called on the new Ministers to aid and support him, or, if his propositions for the amelioration of our affairs in India clashed with any of their plans, he offered to resign the whole business into their hands.

Fox, in reply, assured him of the warmest support from Administration. Our situation in the East, as depicted by the learned Lord, held up, he said, a mirror reflecting the state of our affairs in the West. Then alluding to Lord North, he subjoined, "The effects of the pernicious system which, thank God, is at length destroyed, are felt at this hour throughout every portion of the empire!" Burke, in still stronger language, inveighed against the system of corruption which, he asserted, had pervaded all the channels of the state under the late Ministry. Measures adapted to the nature of the imputed offences or misconduct of each of the above-mentioned persons were adopted. Rumbold possessed a seat in the House, as one of the representatives for Shaftesbury. Having arrived from India early in 1781,<sup>1</sup> under circumstances that rendered him highly unpopular, he was restrained from either leaving the kingdom or from alienating his property by Act of Parliament, and severer measures were meditated or commenced against him. He contrived, nevertheless, after bringing his eldest son<sup>2</sup> into the House soon afterwards, to

<sup>1</sup> In the return of members of Parliament for the Parliament of 1780 it is stated, under the head of Shaftesbury borough, "Return amended by order of the House dated 2d April 1781, by erasing the name of Sir Thomas Rumbold, Bart., and substituting that of Hans Winthrop Mortimer, Esq."—ED.

<sup>2</sup> William Richard Rumbold was elected for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis 30th April 1781.—ED.

protract the proceedings and ultimately to elude all punishment. An address was voted by a great majority, and presented to his Majesty, requesting him to recall Sir Elijah Impey from his judicial situation in India. Finally, resolutions of a nature tending to hold out both Hastings and Hornby in their public capacity as men who had committed acts of the most culpable or unjustifiable kind were agreed to in the House. But the advanced period of the session and the unsettled state of domestic affairs in a Cabinet divided by animosity prevented or postponed the further prosecution of these interesting concerns to the subsequent year.

On the other side the Atlantic, misfortune still accompanied the English arms. St. Christopher's, after a long and gallant defence, surrendered; the islands of Nevis and Montserrat were lost. Even the valuable settlements of Demerara and Essequibo, situate on the continent of South America, which we had taken in the preceding year from the Dutch, were recaptured by France. Rodney, indeed, having arrived out, joined Sir Samuel Hood at Barbadoes, but he found himself unable to intercept or to prevent the arrival of a convoy from Brest, which brought to the French admiral, De Grasse, supplies the most essential for his projected hostile operations. At home, general despondency or apathy pervaded the country. Every allegation which had been brought forward against the late First Lord of the Admiralty while in office was renewed with augmented violence now that he had retired to private life, and these clamours were supported or encouraged by the new Ministers. Fox, speaking on the subject of retrenchment upon the 6th of May, when Burke's bill for diminishing the royal household was under consideration, launched out into his accustomed condemnation of



the preceding Ministry. "An inquiry into the actual state of the finances," he observed, "was already commenced. He anxiously wished that another inquiry should be instituted to disclose the condition of the navy, which had been found deplorable beyond conception." "As to the nature of our foreign alliances," added he, "no inquiry is necessary. Should a committee be appointed to sit upon that subject, their report must be concise: we have none." Sir George Rodney's victory constituted the best reply to the charges made against Lord Sandwich.<sup>1</sup> The American war and the calamities which it produced, not any want of exertion, foresight, or talent in the late Cabinet, had alienated from us the Continental powers, and rendered ineffectual every endeavour to form connections of policy or friendship with the European states. Rodney himself was enveloped in the accusations levelled against the Board of Admiralty which had sent him out, and disasters more severe than any that we had yet experienced were predicted or anticipated as about to happen in that quarter of the globe where he commanded. Never was the nation less in expectation of the great victory that impended in the West Indies than a week, or even a day before the intelligence arrived. It required the utmost exertions of the new Admiralty to prevent the Dutch squadron, which quitted the Texel at this time, from effecting a junction with the combined fleets of France and Spain, commanded by Guichen. Lord Howe,<sup>2</sup> now restored to the British

<sup>1</sup> This victory embarrassed a Ministry who declared that we had no fleet fit to compete with an enemy. At the moment that Rodney was defeating De Grasse, the Rockingham Cabinet had superseded him by sending out Admiral Pigot, and the Westminster electors were resolved never to vote for him again.—D.

<sup>2</sup> The celebrated Admiral Howe, fourth Viscount Howe in the peerage of Ireland, was created a Peer of Great Britain by the title of Viscount Howe, 29th April 1782, and advanced to the Earldom of

navy, and, like Keppel,<sup>1</sup> created an English Viscount, effected a service so distinguished, which unquestionably entitled him to the gratitude of his country.

[7th May 1782.] If Pitt, whether from the dictates of profound ambition or from the calculations of ordinary prudence, had thought proper to refuse any place or situation under the new Ministry, he did not on that account withdraw his individual exertions as a member of Parliament or retire in any degree from public view and admiration. On the contrary, he came eminently forward at this time as a candidate for national approbation in the delicate as well as arduous character of a political reformer. The spirit of the times, which operated greatly in his favour, removed many of those obstacles that might have impeded him if he had made the attempt under the former Administration. While Burke carried retrenchment into the palace as well as to the table of the sovereign, Pitt aspired to renovate or to reorganise the national representation. In the progress of a speech, conceived with consummate ability and delivered from the Treasury bench, he endeavoured to show the vices of the actual state of popular election and to point out the most efficacious or salutary remedies. The abuses alleged by him to exist, which were indeed indisputable, seemed at first sight loudly to demand redress. But, on the other hand, theory and practice might be found greatly at variance; and even the reformers themselves, it was well known, differed widely in their ideas or opinions on the point. The Duke of Richmond, who carried his principles to a Utopian and visionary length, would have extended

Howe 19th August 1788. He was created a Knight of the Garter in 1797, and died 5th August 1799.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Keppel was created Viscount Keppel 22d April 1782. He died 2d October 1786.—ED.

the right of voting almost to the whole population of Great Britain. Fox supported on this occasion both with his eloquence and his vote the plan proposed by Pitt; but Burke, less democratic in his ideas of government, refused to lend his powerful aid to a cause which he disapproved. The Secretary at War (Townshend), who looked forward to the possession of a borough at the decease of George Selwyn, his uncle, equally absented himself, as did others of the Ministerial followers. Lord North, though he attended the discussion and disapproved all innovation, yet, to the surprise of his friends, took no active part in the debate. Dundas, however, supplied his place, and made an animated appeal against the projected reform, as did Thomas Pitt at great length with much ability. Indeed, I thought his speech as eloquent, as persuasive, and more solid in its deductions than that of his relative who brought forward the question.

Conscious as Thomas Pitt was that he represented only a nominal borough, since it was a notorious fact that he elected himself together with his father-in-law, Pinckney Wilkinson, as members for Old Sarum,<sup>1</sup> he felt the subject demand extraordinary delicacy. Nor did he make a single false step from the commencement to the close of his speech. On the contrary, he endeavoured, with great address, to demonstrate from his own conduct through successive Parliaments—for he had sat, I believe, in five—that a man returned to the House of Commons by a single tenement might be as independent, as high-minded, and as incorrupt, as he who took his seat for a county or for the City of London. While he paid the greatest compliments

<sup>1</sup> In 1784 two new members were elected for Old Sarum—the Hon. John Charles Villiers, in place of Thomas Pitt, who was created Lord Camelford, and George Harding, K.C., Solicitor-General, in place of Pinckney Wilkinson, deceased.

to the mover of the proposition, he denied the principles and the facts on which were founded every one of the conclusions. Equality of representation, Thomas Pitt observed, never was nor could have been the basis on which our ancestors meant to erect the liberties of England, they having allowed the little county of Rutland to send as many members to that assembly as Yorkshire or Devon. To one proposition for reforming the representation, and to one only, which had been recommended by the great Earl of Chatham, he expressed his assent, namely, the addition of a knight of the shire or member for every county throughout England. Sawbridge seconded and Sheridan supported Pitt's motion; but Sir Charles Turner, by his originality and blunt simplicity of diction as well as of sentiment, attracted more attention than either the one or the other on that evening. He said, "In his opinion the House of Commons might be justly considered as a parcel of thieves, who having stolen an estate, were apprehensive of allowing any person to see the title-deeds from the fear of again losing it by such an inspection. That they were not the representatives of the people was clear, for they had carried on the cursed American war though opposed by the voice of the whole nation." "I believe, indeed," added he, "the present Ministers are more honest than their predecessors, but I want the constitution to be so established that no administration, however bad, may be able to convert it to the injury of the people." Powis strongly opposed the motion, as did Rigby, who not only treated all innovations as dangerous theoretical experiments, but denied that a reform in the national representation was demanded by the people. Associations, he said, formed exclusively of individuals who met for the express purpose, proceeded to elect delegates, and

these latter published resolutions in the newspapers, which were falsely assumed to speak the public opinion. Sir Horace Mann moved the order of the day.

The measure itself, however interesting in its nature, yet not being a party question, by no means attracted the attention which had been produced by the motions that preceded the dissolution of the late Administration. Scarcely more than three hundred members voted upon it, while near five hundred had been present in more than one of the divisions of the month of March. Pitt's proposition "to appoint a committee for inquiring into the state of the national representation," though it could only be considered as a preliminary step, yet was negatived by a majority of twenty. I made one of that small majority, and it is a vote of which I not only never have repented, but of which I more and more approve on full consideration, for I have always regarded the rejection of Pitt's attempt in 1782 to alter the national representation as one of the narrowest escapes which the British constitution has had of subversion in our time. Eleven individuals passing over from one side to the other might have opened wide the door of innovation, and, once opened, what power could shut it? The moment, too, was peculiarly favourable to propositions of reform and amelioration, when the nation, bent down and disgusted by the calamities of the American war, lent a ready ear to every project that held out the prospect of a better order of things. When the same subject was agitated anew in the following session the danger was over. Peace had been restored, and though Mr. Pitt not only brought it again forward, but was joined by two of his most formidable opponents—I mean Thomas Pitt and Dundas—yet the House rejected it by a great



majority. So complete a change had taken place in public opinion between the two periods! It was indeed difficult not to reflect, while listening to the arguments of Pitt, who eloquently depicted the corruption of the rotten boroughs, among which several, he said, "were to be considered as within the control of the Carnatic and under the immediate influence of the Nabob of Arcot;" that he was himself sitting at that very time for Appleby by the influence, or, in other words, by the nomination of an English nabob, Sir James Lowther. To the corrupted state of the representation, therefore, it was owing that he had himself obtained a place in the House of Commons.

It was equally impossible not to be conscious that if the regulation which enacts that every member of that assembly shall be *bona fide* possessed of £300 per annum freehold estate had been severely and literally enforced, neither Fox, nor Pitt, nor Sheridan, nor many other eminent individuals, could ever have sat in Parliament. Probably, indeed, on the day that Mr. Pitt made his motion, he scarcely possessed any property, certainly no landed property; and as to Fox, though actually Secretary of State, he was known to be plunged in debts contracted by play,<sup>1</sup> which left him without fortune, or almost means of support. But they did not less constitute the two most distinguished persons of the age in which they lived, the ornaments of their country in different lines. Fox always maintained without reserve, in private conversation as well as in Parliament, that to enforce rigidly the rule relative to the qualifications of members would be at once to exclude talents from obtaining entrance into the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Holland states in Lord J. Russell's *Memoirs of Fox*, vol. i. p. 320, that "he never touched a card," meaning while he was a Minister. Walpole says "he gave himself up to the duties of his office."—D.

House. So little, indeed, may speculation and fact agree, that if the list of representatives for the county of York, of Devon, or of Lincoln, ever since the reign of Elizabeth down to the present year (1818), were to be compared with those who have been sent to Parliament during the same period of time from the vilest Cornish borough, we shall find that in every quality justly recommending to a seat in the Legislature, namely, high birth, extensive property, distinguished talents, or public principle and virtue, the superiority will be found, in many instances, perhaps in most, to incline on the side of the persons elected for the boroughs. Such an estimate might be difficult to make, and must be always in some measure open to dispute; but it serves to prove that various principles in legislation, as well as various abuses, do not produce the effects which might naturally be expected to result from them in theory.

[*8th—16th May 1782.*] Two great public measures were successively brought forward about this time by the new Administration, of both which the Secretary of State formed the official organ for their communication to the House of Commons. Both appeared to me highly deserving of approbation, as dictated by a vigorous policy, or by a spirit of wise conciliation. The first was a plan for arming the people, or more properly an invitation to them to arm themselves, contained in a circular letter addressed by the Minister for the Home Department to the magistrates of the principal cities throughout the kingdom. If we contemplate the critical position of Great Britain in May 1782, previous to our receiving the intelligence of Rodney's victory, surrounded by enemies who had remained during successive years almost masters of the English Channel, while the whole East Coast, from

Leith down to Yarmouth, lay exposed to an attack or to an invasion from the Dutch, who had recently treated with contempt Fox's overtures for a separate treaty; if we weigh these circumstances, we cannot with justice refuse our full tribute of praise to an act of such judicious energy. Mr. Daniel Parker Coke, nevertheless, animated as he always was by public-spirited and honest, though in this instance mistaken, views of national benefit or safety, brought the consideration of Lord Shelburne's letter before the House. Mindful of Lord George Gordon's outrages, when a furious but happily an unarmed mob surrounded and menaced both the assemblies of Parliament, he called upon the King's Ministers to explain and to justify a proceeding unauthorised previously by either branch of the Legislature. Thus questioned, or rather inculpated, Fox rose, and in a speech of great ability, worthy an enlightened as well as a liberal statesman, assigned the most convincing reasons for the adoption of the measure. Nor did he omit, according to his usual practice, to derive new arguments in its justification, drawn from the asserted incapacity, neglect, or culpable want of exertion in the late Ministers, whom he accused of keeping the country ignorant of their danger, and not daring themselves to look it in the face. He received, nevertheless, on this occasion, both from Dundas and from Rigby, the strongest assurances of support, accompanied with the warmest eulogiums on the conduct of the Cabinet. Mr. Coke himself, though sustained in his arguments by Mansfield, the late Solicitor-General, admitted the validity of the reasons which the Secretary of State assigned, and only demanded that the measure should receive the sanction of Parliament previous to its general adoption. No act of the Marquis of Rockingham's Government seems entitled to more

unqualified commendation than the plan for thus rendering the people the agents of their own protection against foreign force. It has been found in later times, when improved and extended, our best security against internal insurrection, as well as against the formidable armaments of revolutionary France.

[17th May 1782.] The second measure to which I allude regarded Ireland, and was dictated by an overwhelming necessity, if not by enlarged and generous views of policy. That island, completely in possession of independence and defended by her own volunteers, exacted with arms in her hands a renunciation of all parliamentary or legislative supremacy on the part of Great Britain, together with a similar abandonment of the appellate jurisdiction exercised here in the courts of law. In return for these concessions, she offered her loyal submission to the King of Ireland, the common sovereign of both kingdoms. Fox, after demonstrating, with great force of reason, that we had no alternative left us than acquiescence, subjoined, "If, therefore, I shall this day be compelled to move any proposition humiliating to Englishmen, the fault is not mine. It is the fault of those Ministers who left the volunteers of Ireland in a condition to make the demands contained in the addresses laid upon your table, not, indeed, by leaving arms in their hands, but by leaving them their injuries and their oppressions." "Of the volunteers themselves I must speak respectfully, for they have acted with temper and moderation, nor have they committed a single act which does not excite my veneration and respect. Whatever blame may be attributed throughout this whole business, I impute not a particle of it to Ireland. I lay it all at the door of the late Administration." He then moved to repeal the Act of

1719, which declared the dependence of Ireland on the crown of Great Britain, observing that it would constitute a pledge to the inhabitants of the sister island of our sincerity and determination to conduct ourselves openly throughout every stage of the transaction.

Mr. Thomas Pitt, who had performed a very prominent part in all the debates of the Lower House during the whole course of the last and of the present session, seconded the motion, but not without previously entering his protest against some of the principles and doctrines laid down by Fox on that day,—doctrines or opinions which, it must be owned, coming from a Minister of the crown seated on the Treasury bench, having the management of the House of Commons, and in some measure directing the Cabinet itself, sounded very extraordinary to loyal ears, and savoured more, as I thought, of Algernon Sydney or of Hampden than of a Secretary of State under a monarchy. Not a word was uttered throughout the whole discussion by any member of Lord North's Administration, either in their own exculpation or expressive of their sentiments relative to the propositions about to be adopted. I must except Mr. Eden from this remark, who was present in his place, and gave his assent or approbation, qualified, nevertheless, by certain reservations, to Fox's proposal. The motions passed without a dissentient voice, though not without a feeling of universal humiliation. Ireland, imitating America, had in fact emancipated herself from all subjection to British laws, but she still remained obedient to the monarchy. Perhaps this day may be esteemed the point of our lowest depression as a nation, during the calamitous period of time which elapsed between the commencement of the American war in 1775 and the peace of



1783. Only a few hours afterwards arrived the tidings of Rodney's victory, an event which electrified the whole population of Great Britain, proportionately depressed our European enemies, and being followed by their repulse before Gibraltar at the interval of scarcely four months, produced our extrication.

Pitt having failed in his attempt to alter the representation of the House of Commons, Sawbridge endeavoured in some measure to attain the same object by shortening the duration of Parliaments; but his motion was happily rejected, 149 voting against it, while only sixty-one members supported the proposition. The debate, nevertheless, was not only animated, but gave rise to some circumstances of great singularity. Rigby opposed it, as from him might have been expected, treating the idea itself with contempt or ridicule, and utterly denying that it was either the sense or the wish of the people at large. He concluded by adverting to a meeting of the electors of Westminster, which had been recently held in Westminster Hall, observing sarcastically, that "the best sense of the assembly there convened could not probably be collected upon this occasion, on account of Mr. Fox's absence from it." The Secretary of State immediately rose, and, with the manly disdain of all little prudential arts or half measures which always characterised him whether in or out of office, replied that his only reason for not taking the chair when that numerous and respectable body of individuals met was because he knew their intention of addressing his Majesty on the late change of Ministers. Being himself a member of the new Cabinet, he conceived it indecorous to preside on such an occasion. "The gentleman," continued he, "who has just sat down asks how we are to collect the sense of the people?"

Why, let him turn his eyes towards Ireland, and see how it has been collected there. The Parliament of that country spoke one language, and the nation spoke another. In consequence the people armed, but it is the fatality of this country never to open its eyes till general ruin menaces, and every man is preparing to take up a musket." We must admit that these expressions, even if we allow their truth and admire their energy, would have been more suitable to the leader of Opposition than to a man filling one of the highest offices of state. Such unquestionably was the impression made by them at St. James's, and I believe I might add in St. Giles's. It was evident that Fox, even while holding the seal of his department, looked more to the approbation and support of the people for retaining his situation than to the favour of the sovereign. We may even suspect that he already foresaw or anticipated the events which took place only a few weeks afterwards on Lord Rockingham's decease. Nor can we wonder that George III. should entertain strong prejudices against a man who seemed never to forget that he owed his power solely to the predilection of the people, and who only hoped to preserve it by their active interference. Fox, when speaking in the House of Commons, would have done wisely to recollect that another illustrious statesman, as well as profound writer, who, like himself, passed almost his whole life in opposition to the Government of his day, I mean the Cardinal De Retz, has observed, "*Qu'il vaut mieux faire des sottises, que d'en dire ;*" words dictated by a perfect knowledge of human nature and of man.

Pitt sustained Sawbridge's motion with far more decision, more energy, and with a much stronger conviction of its utility to the cause of constitu-

tional freedom than was manifested by the Secretary of State. The latter lent only a very limited approbation to it, adding, that "as he was convinced the people wished it, and would have it, he should vote for it, though he doubted whether it would be productive of the beneficial effects expected to result from the proposition." I am indeed persuaded that if Fox had been once confirmed in office and acceptable to the sovereign, he would have steadily repressed all democratic innovations, as, on the other hand, had Pitt passed his whole life on the Opposition bench, poor and excluded from power, I believe he would have endeavoured to throw his weight into the scale of the popular representation. So much does situation as well as sentiment operate on the tenor of our conduct through life! It always appeared to me that Pitt had received from nature a greater mixture of republican spirit than animated his rival, but royal favour and employment softened its asperity, while his superior judgment and command over himself enabled him to conceal those emotions which Fox imprudently disclosed. Sir Charles Turner set the House in a roar, though at his own expense, by his answer to Rigby's observations on the meeting held in Westminster Hall. "I will make free to tell the right honourable gentleman," said he, "that more good sense was uttered in that assembly, and to a much honester audience, than I ever witnessed within these walls. The people who attend there do not come for hire and to get places. They meet for the purpose of asserting their rights, and to defend their wives and children." Powis, whose love of liberty was always under the control of moderation, well-regulated ambition, good sense and loyalty, opposed Sawbridge's experiment on the British constitution as neither desired by the nation in general, nor, if con-

ceded, likely to operate for the public felicity and advantage. In a speech of considerable length, full of matter decorated with all the charms of elocution, Burke brought his powerful assistance to the same side, demonstrating how injurious to the people themselves, to the public tranquillity, and to the greatness of the state, the abbreviation of Parliaments would be found in practice. He always held and maintained similar principles, nor was Fox, I believe, at all chagrined at the result of the debate and of the division.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly two months had elapsed since Lord North's resignation, during which period of time, though he attended frequently in his place, yet, except when personally attacked, as he had been a few weeks before, on the subject of his own and of Robinson's pension, he had scarcely given any marks of political or parliamentary existence. Still less had he thrown any impediments in the way of the new Ministers. Even Fox's reproaches or accusations did not seem to rouse him, though they might painfully affect his feelings. This line of action was probably wise and judicious, as it allowed time for the operation of events, domestic as well as foreign, while he might avail himself of the errors of the new Ministers, or of their divisions. The fate of Jamaica in the West, of our territories in the East, and of Gibraltar in the South, were all problematical. Under so deep a cloud, oppressed by the loss of America, and unpopular, he could not immediately emerge. Like Lord North, Jenkinson equally withdrew from public observation, rather affecting to take his seat unnoticed, in obscure parts of the House, than to appear conspicuous on the Opposition bench, though he more than once rose to speak on points unconnected with party, as they

<sup>1</sup> The Fox Memoirs and Correspondence indicate otherwise.—D.

presented themselves for discussion, and he never spoke without throwing light on the subject under examination. Among all the eminent supporters of the late Ministry, Dundas and Rigby alone held together, spoke, voted, and acted under a sort of concert, sometimes supporting the new Administration, but without abandoning their former opinions or principles. This union, nevertheless, terminated with Lord Rockingham's tenure of power, Dundas then attaching himself to the Earl of Shelburne and Pitt, while Rigby, pressed by Government for the payment of his large balances due to the public, finally joined the coalition of Lord North and Fox.

In 1782 Rigby might however be considered as a declining, if not a setting luminary, whereas the Lord Advocate of Scotland was a rising political constellation. Nor could any comparison be made between their respective abilities. The late Paymaster of the Forces, who had risen under the patronage of John, Duke of Bedford,<sup>1</sup> by whose friendship he was principally elevated to the lucrative post that he had so long exclusively occupied, derived his principal support from the powerful party of that deceased nobleman, better known during the first years of the present reign by the denomination of "the Bloomsbury gang."<sup>2</sup> His own talents, which had received very little improvement from education or cultivation, though admirably calculated in

<sup>1</sup> The Minister whom Chesterfield satirically called "our English Atlas," and whose "jollity, boyishness, and vanity" were censured by Pelham, who said that when the Duke rode once a week from "Woburn to London and back, he thought he had done a world of business."—D.

<sup>2</sup> The whole of the north side of Bloomsbury Square was originally occupied by Southampton House, the town-house of the Dukes of Bedford, erected in the reign of Charles II. for Wriothoesley, Earl of Southampton. The house, furniture, and pictures, including Thornhill's copies of the cartoons now in the Royal Academy, were sold by auction by Christie in 1800. The mansion was taken down soon afterwards.—ED.



many points of view for a popular assembly, yet derived much of their effect from the dictatorial manner of their professor. He spoke, too, from an eminence, while holding the Pay Office, where the festivity of his table attracted many supporters. But when dislodged from that fortress, where he had sustained himself so long, and removed to a house of very moderate dimensions in St. James's Place, his abilities sank nearer to their just level. He might indeed have then said to George III. as the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, did to Queen Elizabeth when she observed that his house was too small for him, "It is your Majesty who has made me too great for my house." Dundas, on the other hand, though no longer seated on the Treasury bench by Lord North, and thrown into the shade in consequence of the change of Administration, contained in himself all the materials of which an able Minister might be composed. True, indeed, he wanted the classic elegance of Pitt and Fox, of Burke and Sheridan, but in masculine eloquence, decision of character, firmness, resources of mind, suavity of manners, application, and all the qualities of a statesman, he manifested no deficiency.

[18th May 1782.] Such was the general aspect of the House of Commons when the capital and the country were thrown into a delirium of joy on receiving the intelligence of Rodney's victory over De Grasse, gained upon the preceding 12th of April.<sup>1</sup> Accustomed of late years as we have been to obtain naval advantages over the French, and to anticipate the destruction of every fleet that effected its escape from the ports of France as soon as we could come up with them, it is difficult to appreciate or to imagine its effect on the public mind. We

<sup>1</sup> Long known as "the glorious 12th of April."—ED.

had been habituated during so long a time under Keppel, Byron, Hardy, Parker, Graves, Geary, Darby, and their successors, to indecisive or unfortunate engagements productive of no beneficial results, that the nation began to despair of recovering its former ascendancy on the ocean. In fact, ever since the termination of the war with Louis XV. in 1763, the British flag had scarcely been anywhere triumphant, while the navies of the House of Bourbon throughout the progress of the American contest annually insulted us in the Channel, intercepted our mercantile convoys, blocked our harbours, and threatened our coasts. Under these circumstances the excess of the public exultation was prodigiously augmented by the dejection that pervaded all ranks during the former part of the month of May, and by the utter apparent improbability attending such an event.

When I reflect on the emotions to which it gave rise in London, I cannot compare them with any occurrence of the same kind that we have since witnessed in this country. The victory of Lord Howe, gained on the 1st of June 1794, glorious and salutary as it was to Great Britain, yet seemed to be more a triumph over Jacobinism and anarchy than over the French nation or navy. It was Robespierre and his regicide accomplices, not Louis XVI., whom we there vanquished. Lord St. Vincent and Lord Duncan unquestionably merited each the highest eulogiums ; but they destroyed at Cape St. Vincent and at Camperdown the fleets of Spain and of Holland, not those of France, and no Englishman is insensible to the distinction. The sublime victory of Trafalgar itself was clouded by the death of Nelson, which checked and tempered the general joy. If I were to mention any naval action the news of which seemed to diffuse sentiments

nearly resembling those felt in May 1782, I should incline to name that of Aboukir; but in the battle of the Nile, where the destruction of the enemy was much more complete, though we destroyed and blew up the French admiral's ship, we did not either capture her or her commander. There was combined in Rodney's victory, as Lord Loughborough at the time remarked in the House of Peers, all "the pomp, and pride, and circumstance of war." It commenced with the rising sun and terminated with that setting luminary. The elements were hushed, only a light air prevailing, and the contending fleets were very nearly matched. Jamaica, the prize contended for by the two nations, was preserved by the result, while all the promised conquests of France and Spain, so near their apparent realisation, disappeared, no more to be revived even in idea. It constituted a sort of compensation to Great Britain for so many years of disgrace, for so great an expenditure of blood and treasure, and even for the loss of America itself. The country, exhausted and humiliated, seemed to revive in its own estimation and to resume once more its dignity among nations. France, amidst all her past success, declined proportionably in the opinion of Europe, and has never since arrogated the same rank as a naval power. It formed, in fact, the last triumph of England on the element of the water over the House of Bourbon before that great family itself, after reigning eight hundred years over the French, sunk under the torrent of revolution and anarchy.

Lord Cranston,<sup>1</sup> one of the captains of the "Formidable," Sir George Rodney's ship, who brought over the news to this country, having, in consequence of that commander's special injunctions, waited on

<sup>1</sup> James, eighth Baron Cranstoun in the peerage of Scotland. He died in 1790.—ED.

Lord Sackville, though then no longer in office as American Secretary, in order to communicate to him the particulars of the action, I had an opportunity of hearing Lord Cranston's account of the engagement. He was sent, after the "Ville de Paris" struck, to take possession of her, as well as to receive De Grasse's sword, and he described the scene which the French admiral's ship presented on his ascending her side as altogether terrible. Between the foremast and mainmast at every step he took he said that he was over his buckles in blood, the carnage having been prodigious; but as numbers of cattle and sheep were stowed between decks, they had suffered not less than the crew and troops from the effects of the cannon. On the quarter-deck, which remained still covered with dead and wounded, only De Grasse himself remained standing, together with two or three other persons. The French admiral had received a contusion in the loins from a splinter, but was otherwise unhurt, a circumstance the more remarkable, he having been throughout the whole action during so many hours exposed to a destructive fire, which swept away almost all his officers and repeatedly cleared the quarter-deck. He was a tall, robust, and martial figure, presenting in that moment an object of respect, no less than of concern and sympathy.<sup>1</sup> Lord Cranston said that De Grasse could not recover from his astonishment, the expression of which he often reiterated, at seeing in the course of so short a time his vessel taken, his fleet defeated, and himself a prisoner. He was allowed to pass the night on board his own ship, with every testi-

<sup>1</sup> De Grasse was guillotined at Paris in 1794. Lord Duncan and Admiral De Winter were both very tall men, and both were untouched in their action at Camperdown, 1797. The former was six feet three inches in height.—ED.

mony of attention and regard manifested towards him on the part of the British commander.

An opinion which became very generally prevalent at the time and obtained much belief has made a deep impression on the public mind, namely, that this victory, signal as it must ever be esteemed, might nevertheless have been rendered far more complete if it had been immediately improved by pursuing without delay the flying enemy. The friends of Sir Samuel Hood strongly maintained that position; and, partial as I am to the memory of Lord Rodney, I confess that there always appeared to me to have been some foundation for the assertion. He was himself well aware of the charge, and I have heard him defend the line of conduct which he adopted subsequent to the victory by very plausible, if not by solid and unanswerable, reasons. He observed that it was altogether unwarrantable, and might have been attended with the most ruinous consequences, to have detached twelve or more ships of the line under Sir Samuel Hood<sup>1</sup> in pursuit of twenty-five at least of the French, which number remained together, as was believed, after the action, and still constituted a most formidable force. If any check had been experienced by us in consequence of such eagerness or precipitation, it was obvious that the fruits of the victory itself might even have been lost. Bougainville and Vaudreuil, who commanded under De Grasse, enjoyed a higher reputation for naval skill than the commander-in-chief, and might have repaired the defeat. How far these facts or assertions may carry conviction to every mind I cannot venture to determine.

<sup>1</sup> Son of a Somersetshire clergyman, and born in 1724. He lived to the age of ninety-two. He became Baron Hood (Irish peerage) in 1792 and a Viscount in the English peerage in 1796. Nelson's "Sir Samuel Hood" was a Dorsetshire man, was born in 1760 and died in 1815, a year before his namesake.—D.



Fox, when moving the thanks of the House of Commons to Sir George Rodney, which act he performed in his place as Secretary of State only a few days afterwards, mentioned with expressions of great delight the unanimity which pervaded the victorious fleet. "It was," he said, "with peculiar satisfaction he could assure the House that every letter received from the West Indies breathed the most perfect harmony. No other dispute or competition existed among the officers except who should be most forward in advancing the public cause." But Lord Rodney, after his return to England, made no scruple of declaring the contrary in mixed company, where I was myself present. He even wrote to his friends in this country at the time, in his private letters, more than one of which I have seen, that so violent was the spirit of party and faction in his own fleet, as almost to supersede and extinguish the affection felt towards their sovereign and every patriotic sentiment in the bosoms of many individuals serving under him. To such a height had it attained, that he asserted there were among them officers of high rank and of unquestionable courage, who nevertheless bore so inveterate an animosity to the Administration then existing, particularly to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich, as almost to wish for a defeat if it would produce the dismissal of Ministers. Similar assertions were made by members of the House of Commons in their speeches. However incredible the fact itself may appear, and however lamentable it must be considered if it was well founded, yet it is not easy to conceive the antipathies, political and personal, that had grown up in the English navy during the American war. They formed one of the characteristic features of

the times, and operated to the inconceivable injury of the British name and nation.

The commencement of Rodney's public letter, addressed to Stephens, then Secretary of the Admiralty, on this glorious occasion, excited a smile among the critics and grammarians, as he stated that "It had pleased God, *out* of His divine providence,<sup>1</sup> to grant to his Majesty's arms a most complete victory over the fleet of his enemy," whereas it seemed rather to have been an act performed *in* His divine providence. This error of a naval commander, unaccustomed to composition, and whose profession was not the pen but the sword, did not, however, attract the same comments as an official dispatch which we have since perused, sent from one of his Majesty's ambassadors, the Earl of Elgin, who, addressing the Secretary of State from *Constantinople*, appeared, by some act of oblivious inadvertence, to consider himself in *Asia*. Rodney's enemies, of whom he had a great number, asserted that after the victory was gained, he gave way to a sort of intoxication of mind on finding himself master of the French admiral's person and ship. I remember they said that he seated himself in an arm-chair, placed on the quarter-deck of the "Formidable," as the moon rose, in order to indulge his sight with the view of the "Ville de Paris," which lay near him in a disabled state, and whose sides far overtopped those of his own vessel.<sup>2</sup> And they added that he burst into expressions or exclamations of extravagant self-praise and complacency, mingled with some reproaches on the want of Ministerial gratitude which he had experienced for his past

<sup>1</sup> The grammarians on this occasion must have been strangely hypercritical. The expression is strictly idiomatic, meaning out of the fulness of God's providence.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney had the gout, and was obliged to sit at times during the action.—ED.

services. Even admitting all these facts to be true in their utmost extent, they only prove the infirmity of human nature, and similar instances of weakness occur in the history of the most illustrious commanders. Rodney, like the celebrated Marshal Villars, who rescued France at Denain, talked perpetually of himself, and was the hero of his own story. But posterity will not forget the debt of gratitude due to his services, nor cease to consider him as one of the greatest men whom the English navy produced in the course of the eighteenth century. He unquestionably displayed self-possession combined with science on the 12th of April, directed in person every manœuvre, and preserved during twelve hours that the action lasted the utmost presence of mind. Lord Cranston said that he never quitted the quarter-deck for a minute, nor took any refreshment except the support he derived from a lemon which he held constantly in his hand, and applied frequently to his lips.

If Rodney did not spare his animadversions on the spirit of political enmity and faction which pervaded the British navy, his opponent, the Count De Grasse, made still louder accusations, and sent home stronger charges to the Court of Versailles against the jealousies or rivalries which actuated the officers serving under him on that memorable day. Unquestionably towards the close of the action they abandoned their commander to his fate and sought their safety in flight, but the unforeseen manœuvre by which Rodney had intersected the French line at the commencement of the engagement threw the whole fleet into inextricable confusion,<sup>1</sup> and it is

<sup>1</sup> "On this occasion Rodney is said to have taught them the method of breaking the line, by which I have heard it asserted that Lord Nelson won all his victories by sea, and Buonaparte by land; but, which is a still stranger thing, Lord Glenbervie told me (and I believe

very doubtful whether, by prolonging or even by renewing the contest, Bougainville and Vaudreuil would have in any measure retrieved the misfortune. De Grasse, it is admitted on all hands, displayed the most unconquerable firmness. He nevertheless merited censure, at a moment when he saw before him in prospect so vast an object as the conquest and reduction of Jamaica, not to have suffered one or two ships of the French line to fall into our hands, rather than sacrifice, as he did, the whole plan of the campaign to their preservation. I know such to have been the general opinion entertained throughout France, where De Grasse laboured under popular odium to so great a degree, that while after the peace of 1783 Suffrein always received on entering the theatres at Paris the warmest testimonies of admiration from every part of the house, De Grasse did not venture to present himself at the public spectacles from the apprehension of insult. Even the court manifested similar sentiments, and though decorated with the order of the "St. Esprit," he could not obtain permission to walk in the annual "procession du cordon bleu" at Versailles during several years subsequent to his defeat.

The effect of so splendid a service rendered to him), that Epaminondas won the battles of Leuctra and Mantinea by the same manœuvre 2178 years ago."—P.

A note on the invention of this manœuvre has already been given in the first volume, at page 225, and the following extract is of importance in connection with that note.

"My friend Sir Charles Douglas, captain of the fleet, confessed to me that he himself had been adverse to the experiment, and in discussing it with the admiral had stated his objections. To these he got no other answer but that 'his counsel was not called for; he required obedience only; he did not want advice.' . . . This anecdote, correctly as I relate it, I had from that gallant officer, untimely lost to his country, whose candour scorned to rob his admiral of one leaf of his laurels, and who disclaiming all share in the manœuvre, nay, confessing he had objected to it, did in the most pointed and decided terms again and again repeat his honourable attestations of the courage and conduct of his commanding officer on that memorable day."—(*Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 1807, vol. i. pp. 409-411.)—ED.

his country, at a moment of such general dejection, and the popularity which it justly produced, in some measure disarmed the meditated attacks of Rodney's opponents. Burke, who had heaped the severest accusations upon him for his conduct towards the inhabitants of St. Eustatius, and who was preparing to bring forward a motion in the House of Commons criminating him for his acts while in possession of the island, immediately abandoned the intention. With one of those classic allusions which were familiar to his elegant mind, he observed that "the great national benefit performed by the English admiral obliterated his errors, and, like the laurel crown decreed by the Roman Senate to Julius Cæsar, covered as well as concealed his baldness." Even the rancour expressed by the new Ministers and their friends towards Lord Sandwich seemed to be blunted if not mollified by this undeniable proof of his meritorious exertions in sending out a fleet to the West Indies capable of vanquishing the French naval force. It was justly said that Alexander had conquered with the troops of Philip. No further mention of impeachment or prosecution was made against the late First Lord of the Admiralty. The Cabinet, nevertheless, evincing in every part of their conduct the reluctance with which they remunerated Rodney's merits, had already superseded him by naming Admiral Pigot to the command of the fleet in the West Indies. But as he had not<sup>d</sup> quitted England before intelligence arrived of the victory gained over De Grasse, it was evidently the wish of the country, loudly expressed, that Rodney should not be recalled at a moment when he had raised the naval character of Great Britain, humbled France, and saved Jamaica. The new Administration, however, far from paying any regard to this ex-



pression of the public opinion, and apprehensive of some motion being made on the subject in one or other of the two Houses of Parliament, instantly sent off Pigot in a quick-sailing frigate from Plymouth, with orders to replace the victorious commander.

Severe comments were passed out of doors upon the appointment made under such circumstances, especially as Pigot had been already constituted a member of the new Board of Admiralty. Even the House of Commons, though since Lord North's resignation the majority seemed completely subservient to Fox, yet manifested some symptoms of disapprobation. It was, besides, commonly asserted, that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs owed Pigot several thousand pounds for losses incurred at play; and though such a report might have originated in error or malevolence, yet it was difficult to disprove, as Fox's notorious passion for the gaming-table had subjected him to similar engagements and embarrassments.<sup>1</sup> Lord Keppel, when questioned in the House of Peers respecting the fact of Pigot's appointment, felt so conscious of the indefensibility of the measure that he did not dare to own it, but he contrived to evade the inquiry by stating the want of evidence before them to prove the nomination. It was impossible more clearly to avow how much he was ashamed of such a transaction. The Opposition during Lord North's Administration, in their anxiety to decry the Earl of Sandwich, then First Lord of the

<sup>1</sup> The first attempts of Gillray at caricature were made on this occasion. In one, Rodney is seen presenting his noble captive to the King, while the attending Ministry look amazed, and Fox remarks, "This fellow fights too well for us, and I have obligations to Pigot, for he has lost £17,000 at my faro bank." In another, the King, running towards Rodney with the reward of a Baron's coronet, exclaims, "I will now make a Lord of you, and you shall have the happiness of never being heard of again."—ED.

Admiralty, asserted that Sir Edward Hughes was bound to divide with him a certain proportion of whatever prize-money he might acquire, as a remuneration for being appointed to the naval command in the East Indies. "Junius" treats the Duke of Grafton, when First Minister, in various letters with indignation for having given a pension of £500 a year to Sir John Moore, whom he designates as a "broken gambler;" nor does he hesitate to add that the pension was "probably an acquittance on the part of the Duke of favours upon the turf." But how infinitely less culpable were Lord Sandwich or the Duke of Grafton, had the allegations been ever so clearly proved, than was Fox, if we assume the truth of the fact imputed to him, in acquitting his debt to Pigot by sending him out to the West Indies!

Rodney's victory, if it had taken place two months earlier, would probably have operated to retard or altogether to prevent Lord North's resignation. Nor did any man doubt that the admiral himself would have received more distinguishing marks of Ministerial gratitude as well as of royal bounty if Lord North had continued at the head of affairs than were conferred on him by that nobleman's successors. Lord Howe and Admiral Keppel had just been raised by their party to the dignity of English Viscounts, without the performance of any naval service whatever on the part of the latter officer. Many persons thought that an Earldom would not have constituted a reward too eminent for so important a victory. We have seen that high rank of the peerage conferred since on Sir John Jervis for the battle gained over the Spaniards off Cape St. Vincent's, a victory, as was universally admitted, principally due to Sir Horatio Nelson. Lord Duncan, Lord Hood, and Lord Bridport have all been

created English Viscounts. It was not without evident reluctance that a Barony and a pension of £2000 per annum were rather extorted from than spontaneously conferred by the Ministry on Rodney, accompanied with his immediate supersession in the command. On the other hand, it must be admitted that previous to the time of which I am now writing the most distinguished naval services rarely conducted to the peerage. Anson, it is true, from a concurrence of fortunate rather than meritorious circumstances was raised to it, but neither Saunders, nor Boscawen, nor Pocock attained to that honour. Even Hawke, far from being called up to the House of Peers after he had destroyed the fleet of France in 1759 at the mouth of the Loire, was only made a Baron by Lord North near seventeen years afterwards, and then in company with several other individuals who were elevated to the same dignity. It is for posterity to judge how far these circumstances may form some excuse for the apparent want of liberality towards a man who had rendered so critical as well as so distinguished a service to his country.

[22d May 1782.] No sooner had the House of Commons assembled after the adjournment of a few days which followed Sawbridge's motion, than the Secretary of State rising, moved the thanks of the House to Sir George Rodney for his late glorious victory, of which event he spoke in the warmest terms of grateful admiration, though conscious that the triumphant commander who had achieved it was already superseded by him in order to make way for Pigot. Such acts of Ministerial or political inconsistency never indeed appeared to cost Fox any effort, as he covered them under the blaze of sophistry, eloquence, and talent. On this occasion, he must, nevertheless, have felt how contradictory

was his conduct in praising, rewarding, and recalling the same man at one and the same time. Lord North, who ever since the 20th day of March seemed to have remained in a sort of stupor, now coming forward, spontaneously joined in the tribute due to Rodney for a victory which, he said, was not only the greatest gained in the course of the present war, but perhaps the most complete of any recorded in the naval annals of England. Unquestionably the late First Minister derived a pride and a confidence from the same event, which involved the new Cabinet in proportionate embarrassment. After dwelling for a few minutes on the brilliant service just rendered, Lord North concluded by remarking that it would be proper to extend the thanks of the House to the flag-officers of the fleet, who had merited so well of their country. To this proposition Fox instantly assented, with many acknowledgments to the noble mover for the suggestion, and for the first time since Lord North's resignation some expressions of courtesy and respect fell from the lips of the Secretary of State, addressed to a person whom he had hitherto only loaded with accusations. So much had the unexpected intelligence just arrived already mollified the asperity of the new Administration towards their predecessors! Mr. Rolle, then member for the county of Devon, and since raised to the peerage,<sup>1</sup> having asked if it was true that Sir George Rodney was about to be superseded in his command, Fox replied that he was already recalled and another officer sent out to succeed him. Such an act, even if Rodney had not performed so recent and so splendid a service, could scarcely be justified either on public or on private grounds, but taking place instantly after a victory so eminent, it excited general condemnation.

<sup>1</sup> The Barony of Rolle was created in 1796.—ED.

Impressed with that sentiment, Rolle rose a second time, and stated his determination to move an address to his Majesty, that he would be pleased not to remove the Admiral from his present situation. Had such a motion been actually submitted to the House, it is by no means improbable the new Ministry might have been left in a minority; but Dundas extricated Fox from a dilemma to which even his pre-eminent ability might have proved inadequate without assistance. The Lord Advocate observed that such a proceeding would intrench on the prerogative of the crown, and at the same time violate the rules by which Parliament was accustomed to regulate its conduct, as the responsibility of Ministers must be removed from their own shoulders to those of the House of Commons. "No individual," he added, "could entertain higher feelings of gratitude towards the gallant commander in question than he did, but a paramount regard to the constitution impelled him to oppose the proposition." Rolle then, dropping his first intention, declared that he would nevertheless move an address to the King to bestow some mark of royal favour on the Admiral. Here, however, he was once more stopped by Dundas, who said that a motion of such a nature would be in fact dictating to the sovereign, in whom alone was constitutionally vested the power of conferring rewards or graces, adding that it was to be presumed the servants of the crown would offer such advice to their prince on the present occasion as it was worthy of him to pursue. Fox became now as profuse in his expressions of acknowledgment to the Lord Advocate as he had previously been to Lord North. In Dundas's doctrine he said he fully concurred, and, with the decision of tone and character natural to him, he protested that no man or men, short of the majority of the House,



should ever induce or compel him to explain on what grounds one officer was recalled or another appointed. It was a royal prerogative, which he would not allow to be either abridged or controlled. "For," concluded he, "though I am an enemy to the influence of the crown, I will always support its just prerogative."

Whether the motives by which Dundas was actuated in thus extending such opportune support to Administration were the only springs of his conduct, or whether any less obvious reasons prompted him to stand forward and to extend a sort of shield over them, must be left to conjecture. Certainly the service rendered was one of no ordinary description. But Governor Johnstone, though he did not attempt to controvert the Lord Advocate's assertions, yet, after expressing his sense of the glorious achievement just performed in the West Indies, added, "I could have desired that the thanks of this House should have been moved from some other quarter, not from the Ministers who have just disgraced Sir George Rodney by recalling him." "The Secretary of State tells us that unanimity reigns throughout the fleet. And is that a reason for superseding the gallant commander, and tearing him from the men whom he has so often conducted to victory? Under such circumstances, the very thanks of this assembly become an insult, when accompanied by his supersession." Almost any other Minister than Fox would have been embarrassed under such a charge, nor was even he altogether without evident discomposure. As, however, he never abandoned a friend or a measure because the one was in distress or the other unpopular, as he always trusted to his own powers of mind for extrication, and the determination to send out Pigot having been taken, he undertook to defend

it. His speech, nevertheless, formed a mass of contradictory matter. He began by denying in the strongest terms that recall and disgrace had in them any species of alliance. If he had entertained any prejudices against the gallant Admiral for his conduct at St. Eustatius, he said the recent victory had obliterated them. On Johnstone he pressed with great severity for preventing the unanimity of the House; but the Governor, whose tenacity in maintaining whatever proposition he embraced equalled that of the Secretary, rose to reply. The discussion might even have assumed a new form, if Cornwall, the Speaker, interposing from the chair, had not for the third time in the same day come to the aid of Administration by calling Johnstone to order. No further impediment being presented, the thanks were voted and the House adjourned, Fox having exhibited a strong proof of his Ministerial ascendancy over the assembly, though undoubtedly in contradiction to the opinion of a great majority of the members present on the occasion.

[23<sup>d</sup>—30<sup>th</sup> May 1782.] The public dissatisfaction, nevertheless, being loudly and generally expressed in every corner of London on the recall of Sir George Rodney, Rolle brought forward the subject a second time to Parliamentary notice. He observed that to supersede an admiral in the moment of victory was in itself an impolitic measure, but to send out as his successor a man who during near twenty years had not once been at sea, and who had never performed in the whole course of his professional life any distinguished naval service, constituted a most unwise and censurable act. Rosewarne,<sup>1</sup> member for Truro, remarked that the present Ministers were now committing against the general sense of the country the very act which they so violently reprobated in their predecessors,

<sup>1</sup> Henry Rosewarne.—ED.

namely, driving from the navy the most able and distinguished officers. "The Earl of Sandwich," added he, "has been denominated by the Secretary of State in former debates a Minister of the King of France. He has approved himself a bad Minister to his employer since he has confessedly sent out to the West Indies one of the best appointed fleets which ever quitted the ports of England." I spoke myself on the same side in that debate, and ventured to assert that the only similar case occurring in our annals presented itself under Queen Anne, when the great Duke of Marlborough in the midst of his triumphs was recalled in order to make way for the Duke of Ormond. Nor did I hesitate to declare my conviction that the victory just gained, though perhaps less complete than the defeat of Conflans<sup>1</sup> by Admiral Hawke in 1759, yet, under the circumstances of the moment, might justly be accounted superior in its effects to that or to any achievement in our naval records. Upon what principle, then, could Admirals Howe and Keppel have been created Viscounts, while only the dignity of a Baron was conferred on the man who had performed so transcendent a service? Lord North, though he said he wished to decline giving any opinion on the recent supersession and the new appointment, characterised it nevertheless as a hasty measure. "If," continued he, "a similar act had been committed under the late Administration, I should have been attacked without mercy from every quarter. Yet, though I do not approve the nomination of Admiral Pigot, I value the unanimity of the fleet so highly, that I should be reluctant to send out any resolution which might convey a censure upon his appointment. Unanimity, both at home and abroad, is indispensable, and though I

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Hubert de Brienne, Comte de Conflans, Marshal of France, born about 1690, died 1777.

was made a personal sacrifice to obtaining it, I shall rejoice if the present Ministers experience it in its utmost extent."

These sentiments, however elevated or patriotic they may seem, were by no means received on the part of the Secretary of State either with gratitude or even with satisfaction. On the contrary, after questioning the sincerity of Lord North in his expressions of cordiality and his pretended wishes to preserve unanimity among the officers and seamen of the fleet, he observed that unless the motion which criminated Ministers for recalling Sir George Rodney was followed by another for their removal, the first would be nugatory. "Did the noble Lord," he demanded, "mean to go that length? And if such was his intention, why did he not speak out?" Of Pigot the Secretary expressed himself in language of great encomium, as being every way qualified to succeed Rodney. "The crime that he had committed in the eyes of the late Ministers lay in his name being found in a certain paper, together with those of various other admirals, deprecating the trial of Keppel." Relative to Lord Rodney, he appeared to labour under no small embarrassment and to involve himself in much contradiction. The victory just gained Fox admitted to be brilliant, but his conduct at St. Eustatius had produced prejudices against him. "I am ready," added he, "to balance his victory against his demerits and to bury in oblivion all inquiry respecting his past conduct, unless the intemperate zeal of the Admiral's friends shall provoke me to adopt another line of conduct." He concluded by rather insinuating than asserting that if a Baron was not considered a rank of the peerage sufficiently elevated for Rodney's services, no objection would be made to conferring on him a higher title.

If the Secretary expected by the style and tone of his reply to intimidate or to silence his adversaries on that day, the event did not justify his assumption. Lord North, after animadverting with his accustomed wit on various parts of the preceding speech, denied the assertions made respecting Pigot. The late Admiralty, he observed, had offered him a command which he thought proper to decline; but as Rodney had constantly refused to sign the paper in question, might not his recall arise from that very circumstance? "Had his Majesty's Ministers, of whom I formed a member," continued he, "recalled a great and illustrious officer in the moment of victory, we should have been assailed with motion after motion in this House." Severe as Lord North might seem in these remarks, Johnstone far exceeded him. There existed indeed between the Governor and the Secretary of State a degree of personal ill-will approaching to enmity, the latter always affecting to regard Johnstone as an apostate or a deserter, he having some years earlier left the ranks of Opposition and joined the Administration, by whom he had been employed, first as a negotiator, and subsequently in the line of his profession. Johnstone, in retaliation, treated Fox as factious and as sacrificing every consideration to party or to private views of ambition. Starting up as soon as Lord North had finished, "Now," exclaimed he, "I am perfectly satisfied with the supersession of my noble friend. The Right Honourable Secretary holds him up as a delinquent. If he be such, unquestionably he ought to be recalled. I now rejoice as much as I was previously shocked at this treatment, for now an opportunity will be afforded him to clear his character from the aspersions of his enemies. Charges brought against him by Jews and traitors, charges which he will refute with ease, and of which



fact I can speak with certainty, having perused many parts of my noble friend's defence." "The Secretary of State proposes to compromise the charge and to bury it in an Earldom, but I scorn such a proposal, and in my friend's name I protest against honours which are to be purchased by such a compromise. Honours and titles can never sit easy on a delinquent."

After thus exhaling his resentment, he then entered on the particulars of the action fought on the 12th of April, as well as on other parts of Lord Rodney's naval services; but as Lord North, though he highly disapproved the recall of that illustrious commander, did not desire to push matters to a question, no division took place. Ministers remained masters of the field, not, however, without suffering in public opinion, which censured them in the strongest terms. An attempt made by Sir Francis Basset<sup>1</sup> (now Lord De Dunstanville) only a few days afterwards to procure for Lord Rodney a provision of four thousand pounds a year from the crown underwent the same fate as Mr. Rolle's motion; Fox parried it in a similar manner. A barony, with half the annual sum proposed by Basset, was ultimately conferred on him. He returned home, and Pigot assumed the command of the victorious fleet; but I believe in the course of six or seven months that he retained it he never captured any vessel of the enemy except a Spanish polacre,<sup>2</sup> nor

<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis Basset, Bart., M.P. for Penryn. He lived at Twickenham in 1791, and his "island" is mentioned by Walpole in a letter to the Misses Berry (Letters, ix. 346). He was created Baron De Dunstanville in 1796.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> "A ship or brig of the Mediterranean. The masts are commonly formed of one spar from truck to keel, so that they have neither tops nor crosstrees, neither have they any foot-ropes to their upper yards, because the men stand upon the topsail-yards to loose and furl the top-gallant sails, and upon the lower yards to loose, reef, and furl the top-gallant sails, and upon the lower yards to loose, reef, or furl the

performed any other eminent service. All the deserved popularity which Fox—for he only was regarded as directing the cabinet—had obtained by the measures embraced relative to arming the people and for conciliating Ireland was more than counterbalanced by the selection of Pigot to replace Rodney. If the Marquis of Rockingham approved so hasty an act, he must be esteemed a weak or an ill-advised Minister. If he reflectively allowed the Secretary of State to sacrifice the public interest to his own personal predilections or objects, he was a highly culpable Minister. I am not sufficiently informed on the point to venture on hazarding any opinion. Posterity, better instructed, may perhaps decide upon it. Fox unquestionably lost the fairest occasion which fortune could have presented him for acquiring general applause and admiration by continuing Rodney in the command after intelligence had arrived of the glorious result of the 12th of April.

[*June 1782.*] While the victory obtained over De Grasse produced so vast and beneficial an alteration in the affairs of Great Britain beyond the Atlantic, time seemed rapidly maturing another important change, or rather convulsion, in the domestic concerns of the kingdom. From the first formation of the new Cabinet its jarring materials indicated, in the opinions of all discerning men, their speedy disunion and separation. Fox, conscious of the alienation in which the King held him, morally as well as politically, possessed too much penetration not to foresee and to predict an approaching change of Administration. He was not without difficulty restrained from precipitating it by his open disapprobation of the intended or imputed measures of some

topsails, all the yards being lowered sufficiently for that purpose."—Smyth's "*Sailor's Word-Book*," 1867.—ED.

of his colleagues. The stern inflexibility of Lord Thurlow likewise, who as Chancellor thwarted and opposed in the House of Peers many of his measures, greatly irritated him. Already Fox began to alter his language when speaking of that nobleman, on whom, while a member of the late Cabinet, he had lavished so many encomiums at the expense of his colleagues in the Administration. Nor did the preference shown towards Lord Shelburne on all occasions by his Majesty tend less to accelerate a rupture. In this situation of things the decline of the Marquis of Rockingham's health, though not of an alarming nature, yet by incapacitating him to take as active a part in public affairs as he had previously done, removed the only remaining serious impediment to his removal, while it facilitated the accomplishment of those objects which prudence and precaution alone had hitherto compelled the sovereign to delay till the arrival of a favourable opportunity.

[1st—20th June 1782.] Hitherto during the course of nearly two sessions Fox and Pitt had almost invariably coincided upon every point submitted to parliamentary discussion, but the term of their apparent political union now approached. Lord Mahon, who by his first marriage stood in the near relation of a brother-in-law to Mr. Pitt, was then one of the representatives for Wycombe. His ardent, zealous, and impetuous mind, tinged with deep shades of republicanism and eccentricity, which extended even to his dress and manners, was equally marked by a bold originality of character, very enlightened views of the public welfare or amelioration, inflexible pertinacity, and a steady uprightness of intention. This nobleman, who was at that time about twenty-nine years of age, having introduced a bill into the House for the prevention

of expense and bribery at elections, Powis strongly opposed it. Pitt replied to him, denying that the regulations proposed would constitute any innovation on the British constitution, which, on the contrary, they were calculated to renovate and restore. Mr. Secretary Fox took the contrary side, and in a speech of great ability, after many flattering compliments to his honourable friend, maintained nevertheless that the principles of the bill had not been fairly stated by him. "On all questions or points which had for their object to effect an equal representation," he said, "Mr. Pitt might rely on his firmest concurrence and support. There they never could disagree, but on the present subject their opinions differed, and he had stated with much deference the reasons of his dissent." Pitt did not meet these expressions of friendly respect with all the cordiality or suavity that might have been expected. He was indeed lavish of his encomiums on the splendid display of eloquence made by the Secretary of State, which, he observed, impressed him with deeper admiration, because instead of overturning the arguments which he had himself used, it on the contrary supported them. The House dividing, Lord Mahon's bill was carried by a majority of only one; and being again resumed three days afterwards, the discussion was renewed between Pitt and Fox, not indeed with any asperity or personality, but with much pertinacity. Sheridan joined in the debate, taking part against one of the most important clauses, which being rejected by sixty-six votes opposed to twenty-six, Lord Mahon immediately declared that he would proceed no further in the measure. It would not, indeed, of itself have excited much attention if it had not elicited the first sparks of disagreement between two persons who attracted so great a share of national consideration.

[22<sup>d</sup>—30<sup>th</sup> June 1782.] One of the last important or interesting discussions which took place in the House of Commons previous to the Marquis of Rockingham's decease owed its existence to the Attorney-General. That intrepid and upright lawyer, acting without any concert whatever, uncertain of support from any quarter, but impelled by his deep sense of public justice and of private rectitude, brought forward to parliamentary notice the question relative to the balances of money remaining in the hands of public accountants. The inquiry being levelled principally, though not solely, against Rigby, who, as late as the month of May 1781, held no less a balance in his possession than eleven hundred thousand pounds, he, apprehensive of some prompt or efficacious resolution being adopted which might subject him to difficulties of a pecuniary nature, procured by personal applications a very numerous attendance. I have rarely witnessed so many members present in their places at so advanced a period of the session. To this circumstance Kenyon alluded when he rose to make his propositions, observing that it gave him pleasure to see so full a House on such an occasion. With grave severity of voice and manner he declared that only a strong sense of duty actuated him in his line of conduct. "Party views," added he, "I have none, nor have I consulted any individual whatever on the nature and propriety of the motions that I am about to make. Nay, I am ignorant whether any member of the House will second them, but my determination to propose them remains unalterable." It must be confessed that such an Attorney-General does not arise frequently, nor could a man of so independent a mind be acceptable to any except Ministers of the most elevated and incorrupt description. Having stated that his object was to compel the payment of



the balances due to the public, who, he said, had a right to the issues and profits of their own money, he added that if he should be defeated in that House, the courts of law would still remain open to him, where he might bring the question to a legal decision. He concluded by moving various resolutions, one of which declared that "Rigby and Welbore Ellis were both accountable for the interest received by them of the balances that respectively remained in their hands from the day of their quitting their late offices."

No sooner had Kenyon finished than Fox presented himself to notice, and after acknowledging that his learned friend had not consulted him on the business just opened, he contested with much warmth and equal ingenuity the Attorney-General's proposition. It might, he admitted, be law, but it did not appear to him to be common sense,—an assertion which he endeavoured to elucidate as well as to prove by pointing out the essential difference between a guardian who is bound to place the money of his ward in a state to yield interest and a public accountant, who is only held responsible for the capital advanced to him for public purposes. I must confess that this doctrine appeared to me to be sound, and by no means inconsistent with the immutable principles of justice; but from the lips of the Secretary of State it came with a bad grace, his father, Lord Holland, standing in the same position as Rigby, being accused by the public voice, though perhaps unjustly, as a great defaulter, and his executors never having, down to that day, been able to obtain his quietus from the Exchequer. Yet Lord Holland had quitted the Pay Office more than seventeen years when Kenyon agitated the question then before the House, during all which time the

public derived no benefit from the balances remaining due from that nobleman's estate.

Governor Johnstone, who never lost any opportunity of attacking Fox, though he disapproved of Kenyon's motion, yet contrived to wound the Secretary in a tender part. "Why," he demanded, "should the executors of Lord Holland be allowed many years for paying in his balances, if Rigby and Ellis were to be compelled to make a similar payment within the short space of two months? As to myself," continued he, "my reason for attending in my place to-day was not with a design of supporting any particular cause, but merely from curiosity, in order to observe what part the right honourable Secretary would take on a question where he is himself so personally concerned." Nevertheless, Lord North coinciding perfectly with Fox in the doctrines he had laid down and pronouncing them to be orthodox; Wallace, the late Attorney-General, declaring that in his opinion the public had no right whatever to demand any interest on the money lying in the hands of great national accountants, an opinion which he sustained by strong reasoning; Powis agreeing in the justice as well as the solidity of Fox's observations, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting the same arguments, under these circumstances Kenyon consented to withdraw the obnoxious resolution. Having, however, substituted in its place a motion for leave to bring in a bill to enable the Exchequer to receive the balances due from Rigby and Ellis, he was again opposed, and on a division left in a minority of eleven. The Secretary of State as well as the other members of Administration supported and voted with Kenyon, though probably Fox was by no means displeased at the result of the day.

No rational doubt can exist that even if death

had not carried off the Marquis of Rockingham, yet a change in the Administration would equally have taken place nearly at the same time and in the same manner as it was afterwards effected. The necessity of making such arrangements as might it was hoped secure its duration, and enable Lord Shelburne to surmount the opposition to be expected in Parliament, had solely prevented him hitherto from accepting the place of First Lord of the Treasury. But as the session drew towards its close, that difficulty gradually ceased, while the period which must of course elapse between the prorogation and the subsequent meeting would afford in all probability, if well improved, various means of strengthening the new Ministry. Lord Shelburne had already made advances to, and had sounded Mr. Pitt. His talents, eloquence, and popularity, sustained by his illustrious name, rendered him, notwithstanding his youth, capable of being successfully opposed to Fox in the House of Commons. His ambition, which had impelled him to disdain and to reject a secondary place under the existing Administration, pointed out to Lord Shelburne the obvious bait by which he might be induced to lend his powerful support, namely, a Cabinet office. The decorum and regularity of his private life, altogether untinged with the vices of Fox's character, gave him a vast superiority in the estimation of all those who considered correct moral deportment as indispensable to a man placed in public situation. In the contemplation of these circumstances and with these intentions, it is well known that the King had fully determined to displace such members of the Cabinet as constituted the Rockingham party, and to transfer the management of the Treasury to the Earl of Shelburne. The lapse of a few days would perhaps have disclosed

and produced this important event, when the decease of the First Minister spared his Majesty the necessity of dismissing him from his post.

[1st July 1782.] Lord Rockingham, though hardly fifty-two years of age, already sunk under an infirm and debilitated constitution. A decay to which was added a slow fever, or, as it was denominated, influenza, a species of epidemic distemper by which London was visited at that season,<sup>1</sup> had for some time undermined his strength, without appearing to menace his immediate dissolution. He was in his place in the House of Peers for the last time on the 3d of June, where he both spoke and voted in support of Mr. Crewe's bill for depriving revenue officers of their vote in elections. But when he rose to address the House, he declared that he felt himself so severely indisposed as to be almost incapable of uttering a word. He even made use of a singular expression, for he added, "The disorder universally prevalent afflicts me so violently, that at times I am not completely in possession of myself." His speech, nevertheless, displayed no defect of mind. Soon after the King's birthday, having quitted Grosvenor Square, he retired to Roehampton, where his recovery was confidently expected by his friends, and even predicted by his medical attendants. Indeed, neither Fox nor Burke seem to have been prepared for his decease, though the former, with the manly but imprudent decision that marked his political character, instantly determined either to keep possession of the Treasury by proxy or to resign his office. Burke, though he personally detested Lord Shelburne, yet would, I believe, have gladly retained

<sup>1</sup> This disease had long been known to physicians, but after the occurrence of a widespread epidemic it was given the name which it had already obtained in Italy, from the belief that it was due to the influence of the stars.—ED.

his situation under a new First Minister of the King's election, but he could not separate himself from Fox. On that day they held a long conversation, which I witnessed, evidently of the most interesting and serious description, in the Court of Requests,<sup>1</sup> where they continued walking backwards and forwards long after the Speaker had taken the chair. At length they both repaired to the House, where the Marquis's death being announced, warm eulogiums were conferred on his memory from various quarters. Frederic Montagu,<sup>2</sup> himself a man of distinguished probity, when mentioning Lord Rockingham said, "Such was my opinion of his integrity of heart and firmness of mind in resisting every act that ought to be resisted, as to make his concurrence or approbation sufficient to sanctify in my judgment almost any measure." "He was," observed Fox, "an honour to his country and an ornament to human nature. Others, I admit, may have possessed more brilliant talents, but I know of none who more truly loved his country, or who displayed in a more eminent degree that extraordinary combination of firmness of mind and softness of manners by which he was peculiarly characterised." "Well may I be excused," exclaimed Burke, "for mingling my tears with those of all ranks and descriptions of men for the inestimable loss which we have sustained by the death of this most excellent and virtuous character! He is gone to

<sup>1</sup> The old Court of Requests, presided over by the Lord Privy Seal, was abolished by 16 and 17 Car. I. cap. 10. The old House of Lords sat in a room formed out of this court; a portion of the north end of the court was formed into a lobby, by which the Commons passed to the Upper House.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Montagu was M.P. for Higham Ferrers. Horace Walpole writing to Mason on April 17, 1780, expresses the opinion that Montagu would succeed Sir Fletcher Norton as Speaker (*Letters*, ix. 354). He was appointed a Lord of the Treasury in 1782 and 1783.—ED.



appear before that tribunal where we must all render an account of our actions, and I believe no soul ever went with a greater and better founded certainty of approbation." These encomiums may have been merited as paid to his noble worth and steady rectitude of intention, but we must remember by whom and when they were uttered. Fox, Burke, and Montagu all relapsed into a comparative political obscurity by his death. History will speak of him with more moderation. An amiable and a respectable individual rather than a superior man, nature had not designed him to be the First Minister of a great country. Junius well characterises his formation of mind when he speaks of "the mild but determined integrity of Lord Rockingham." Yet was there, as that writer elsewhere observes, a degree of "debility" in his virtue, but the moderation of his character tempered the ardour of Fox and imposed limits on Burke's enthusiasm.

The state of his frame and health, which, even in his youth, had never been robust, and both which were believed to have suffered severely in consequence of some imprudent gallantries while pursuing his travels in the South of Italy at an early period of his life, incapacitated him for close or continued application during the short period of his administration.<sup>1</sup> The Princess of Franca Villa was commonly supposed to have bestowed on him the same fatal present which the "Belle Ferronnière" conferred on Francis I., King of France, and which, as we learn from Burnet, the Countess of Southesk was said to have entailed on James, Duke of York,

<sup>1</sup> In Italy it was supposed to have been the "succession powder" mingled with chocolate whilst in the cake, not in the liquid, we drink. *Acqua toffana* and succession powder (*pulvere per successione*) were administered, as I have heard, with certain although ill-understood effects. Lord Rockingham desired to be opened after his death, and was so.—P.

afterwards James II. That princess was still living when I visited Naples in the year 1779, and Sir William Hamilton assured me that she always expressed the utmost concern for the unintentional misfortune which the Marquis's attachment for her had produced, as well as for its supposed results. Leaving no issue, the greater part of his vast landed property, as well as his borough interests, descended to his nephew, Earl Fitzwilliam.<sup>1</sup> In Lord Rockingham's person, too, became extinct the title and dignity of a British Marquis, he being the sole individual in the kingdom who then possessed that high rank, to which Mr. Pitt has since elevated, during his administration, eleven individuals, besides creating nine Irish Marquises, where there did not previously exist one peer of that order. Such has been the prodigious increase of peerages during the present reign! Unquestionably Mr. Pitt, in thus augmenting the numbers of the House of Lords, was not animated by the same intention as the Romans attributed to the first of the Cæsars, when he increased the Senate to nine hundred, or, as Suetonius expresses it, "Senatum supplevit." But it will be, nevertheless, for our descendants to decide how far he has practically produced a similar effect on the constitution of Great Britain, with the pernicious consequence which flowed from the augmentation of the Roman Senate by Cæsar.

[*2d—8th July 1782.*] However deeply sensible Fox might be to Lord Rockingham's death, and whatever steps he probably contemplated as the natural results of such a blow, he was not so preci-

<sup>1</sup> The grateful nephew erected a mausoleum in Wentworth Park to his uncle. Beneath the dome is the statue of Lord Rockingham, and around it are the busts of eight friends or colleagues:—Fox, Burke, Keppel, Portland, Savile, Montagu, Lee, and Cavendish. A very long and turgid inscription by Burke ends with the words—"Remember, resemble, persevere!"—D.

pitate as to give in his immediate resignation. He remained a member of the Cabinet during several days after it took place, and on the 2d of the month he spoke (for the last time indeed) as Secretary of State from the Treasury Bench. A bill for the regulation of appointments in the West Indies and America being then in its progress through the House, it was opposed by Sir George Savile on a principle of jealous apprehension that we might attempt again to legislate for the Colonies, thereby reasserting a supremacy over them. Lord Shelburne having introduced the bill into the Upper House, who was well known to be very averse to the declaration of American independence, that circumstance excited still greater alarm. The Attorney-General, with the warmth characteristic of all he said or did, endeavoured to allay Sir George's fears. "The wisdom, probity, disinterestedness, and honourable intentions of that noble person," Kenyon observed, "stood so firmly established in the public opinion, that he trusted no man would venture to reject the motives which had animated him in bringing forward such a measure." But Sir George Savile remaining inflexible, Fox rose and expressed his astonishment at the incredulity manifested on the subject. "So long as the present Ministers enjoyed their sovereign's confidence, no idea," he asserted, "could ever exist of coercing America, or of renewing the system so strongly reprobated by that House. He could not speak peremptorily for every member of the Cabinet, but he protested that he would not himself remain one minute in Administration after he should discover an intention of bringing back the Colonies to obedience either by force or by negotiation."

Fox even proceeded to prove that, however reluctant the nobleman in question might have been

in times past to the acknowledgment of American independence, yet a wholesome and salutary revolution had taken place in his principles from the operation of events and of an overpowering necessity. To these assurances and expostulations, which were reiterated by General Conway, Sir George Savile at length gave way; but the event proved either that Fox was mistaken, or that Lord Shelburne exhibited a reluctance to concede American independence, which he afterwards renounced when Fox had quitted the Cabinet. Instead of throwing up his place in Administration on a bare suspicion or belief of Lord Shelburne's intentions, he ought (as Pitt told him a few days afterwards) to have summoned a Cabinet Council, and there to have ascertained the fact before he proceeded to extremities. But passion, indignation, and disappointed ambition mastering his cooler reason, impelled him, regardless of the consequences to himself and to his friends, to retire rather than submit to the new First Lord of the Treasury. Pitt, more calm and wise, took Fox's vacant seat, though not his office, in the Cabinet, an event which the Secretary of State ought to have foreseen as more than possible, though probably he was not prepared for it.

If Fox had submitted to retain his office under Lord Shelburne, after the decease of the Marquis of Rockingham, it is not to be questioned that the King, whatever personal objections or dislike he might have felt towards him, must and would, from prudential motives, have allowed him to continue in the Cabinet. Nor can it admit of a doubt that Fox, by consenting to hold his own situation, would have induced Lord John Cavendish, over whom he always exercised an unbounded ascendant, to follow his example. Burke, who manifested the greatest reluctance to quit the Pay Office, required rather to

be impelled in making that sacrifice than appeared to feel any spontaneous disposition towards resigning so lucrative an appointment, of which he had scarcely tasted the first-fruits. Fox's private circumstances were, moreover, so desperate, as to dictate some attention to them, and many of his friends stood in a similar predicament. He did not affect to conceal his own want of pecuniary resources, even when addressing the House of Commons. Speaking of the motives that impelled him to resign, and of their imperious nature, which left him no alternative except quitting office, he added, "Moved by these considerations, though in point of fortune my condition is not by any means enviable, I have relinquished the pomp, the patronage, and the emoluments of employment. I confess candidly that I have not quitted my place without a pang. I am not such a Stoic as to prefer being neglected rather than courted; to prefer poverty to riches, inconvenience before comfort, or obscurity before power and splendour." It was difficult to designate more eloquently his situation. These expressions fell from him on the 9th of July, in the progress of the interesting discussion that took place relative to Barré's pension. Burke, with less dignity, deplored on the same day, in the same assembly, his ejection from the Pay Office, and his inability to despise the favours of fortune. "I have," said he, "a family, and my means are small. I like my office; the house, the situation, and all its appendages cannot be otherwise than pleasing to my taste. All these things I cannot relinquish without regret, for the welfare of my family is most dear to me. Who can conceive that I would lightly sacrifice these objects and £4000 a year? I have long been surfeited with opposition, and those who know me well will not denominate me factious." These



lamentations remind us of Pomfret's poem on Adam's expulsion from Paradise, beginning—

“ And must I go, and must I be no more  
The tenant of this happy ground?”

Burke's condition was in every point of view rendered more critical in consequence of Lord Rockingham's decease. That nobleman, by his last testamentary dispositions, cancelled all the money due to him by Burke, amounting to a considerable sum; but, as I have been assured, did not bequeath him any additional legacy or pecuniary mark of regard. It was added, that Burke by no means expressed himself satisfied with the Marquis's conduct towards him in this respect. Certainly some of his expressions relative to Lord Rockingham, in his speech to which I have already alluded, were very singular, and might be regarded as equivocal. “Among the encomiums due to that noble person,” said he, “this was one, that he left his best and dearest friends with the simple reward of his own invaluable intimacy. This peculiar test of their sincerity he demanded while alive, and it was a tax which he imposed on their regard for his memory when he was no more.” Do not these words obscurely designate the fact that he received no augmentation to his fortune by Lord Rockingham's will? Embarrassed, nevertheless, as were both his and Fox's private affairs, the resentment of the latter at seeing the helm of state transferred to Lord Shelburne, when added to his knowledge of the secret machinations which had preceded it, extinguished or superseded every other sentiment in his bosom. He peremptorily demanded either that the Duke of Portland should be immediately recalled from Ireland, in order to be placed at the head of the Treasury, as the representative of the deceased

Marquis, and the acknowledged chief of the Whig party, or he tendered to his Majesty his own instant resignation. His offer was accepted, and that of Lord John Cavendish, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, accompanied it at the same time.

When, after the lapse of five-and-thirty years, we calmly examine the motives by which Fox was actuated in thus throwing up his office, we must admit that he consulted more his passions than his judgment, since he lay under no necessity of sacrificing either his country or his principles to the preservation of his employment. Lord Shelburne's pretended insincerity or duplicity could not operate to produce the public ruin, except by the measures that, in his capacity of First Minister, he might bring forward,<sup>1</sup> and whatever repugnance he might individually feel to grant the American colonies unconditional independence, yet the majority of the Cabinet, after Fox's and Lord John Cavendish's secession, compelled him ultimately to adopt that principle. By retaining his place under the new First Lord of the Treasury, Fox would therefore have secured his adherence to the late Marquis's plans, or, on his departure from them, Fox would have carried Parliament and the country with him, by instantly refusing longer to co-operate with a Minister who evaded or declined recognising the sovereignty of the thirteen States. Nor could Lord Keppel and the Duke of Richmond have then separated themselves from him. If, instead of the violent step that he took, he had acted with temper,

<sup>1</sup> Lord Shelburne was extremely desirous to form an alliance with Russia. In July he writes to Sir James Harris, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg: "I am highly flattered that my name is not forgot by the Empress. I hope my principles are remembered also, as they have uniformly led me to everything respectful to the Court of Russia." The Court of Russia was, at this time, full of fine sentiment and low mendacity, part of "the policy of Catherine."—D.

he would have advanced the public interests, while he consolidated his own tenure of office. The King and Lord Shelburne, however much they might have desired to dismiss him, could not have ventured on it without a pretence. Pitt might probably have become Secretary of State for the Home Department, and a very strong Government must have arisen, from which Lord North as well as his adherents would have been altogether excluded. But in order to have produced this benefit to the state, it was necessary for Fox to begin by obtaining a triumph over himself. He preferred more dictatorial measures, which in the course of a few months compelled him either to behold his enemy confirmed in power after making peace, while he himself and his followers remained on the Opposition bench, or, regardless of consequences, to form a junction with Lord North, and storm the Cabinet a second time. Such were the injurious results that flowed from his intemperate precipitation.

Fox, in taking this decisive step, probably flattered himself that it would have operated to a wider extent than actually happened. Though he could not rationally hope that either Lord Camden or the Duke of Grafton would resign, and though he ought not to have supposed that General Conway would lay down his office, since not one of these Ministers depended on the late Marquis of Rockingham, yet he certainly calculated that his uncle, the Duke of Richmond, as well as Lord Keppel, would imitate his example. In this expectation he was, however, disappointed. They both expressed, indeed, in the Upper House of Parliament, their great regret at his secession; but they declined following him out of the Cabinet, and stated the motives for their determination. It remained during some time doubtful whether Mr. Pitt would have

been appointed one of the Secretaries of State or placed in the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. The latter employment was finally conferred on him. Mr. Thomas Townshend succeeded Lord Shelburne in the Home Department, leaving the post of Secretary at War to Sir George Yonge. The Foreign Office, vacated by Fox, was last filled up, and given to Lord Grantham. However inferior in energy and brilliancy of intellect as well as in eloquence to his predecessor, he possessed solid though not eminent parts, together with a knowledge of foreign affairs and of Europe, having resided several years with great reputation as Ambassador at the Court of Madrid.<sup>1</sup>

Two of the Lords of the Treasury followed Fox out of office. One, Lord Althorpe, has since filled with honour to himself and advantage to the public, as Earl Spencer,<sup>2</sup> a high Cabinet office under Pitt's Administration. Frederic Montagu, the other, a man equally respectable for probity and for talents, subsequently raised to the dignity of a Privy Councillor, was a devoted adherent of the Cavendish and Rockingham interest. Mr. Richard Jackson and Mr. Edward James Eliot succeeded to these Ministerial vacancies. The former gentleman, one of Lord Shelburne's intimate friends, bred to the bar, had obtained from the universality of his information on all topics, as I have already had occasion to remark, the appellation of "Omniscient Jackson." Mr. Eliot afterwards married Lady Harriet Pitt, sister of the new

<sup>1</sup> "I have been so little used, and, I am afraid to say, so little earnest, in public transactions, that my situation is as new to me as the Eastern languages. . . . Indeed, I know I was thought, when I wrote from Spain, to be dry."—Lord Grantham to Sir James Harris, *Malmesbury Correspondence*, vi. 435.—D.

<sup>2</sup> He was First Lord of the Admiralty during the mutiny of the Nore and at the battle of Aboukir. He was the founder of the grand Spencer Library.—ED.

Chancellor of the Exchequer; and his father early in 1784 was created a peer,<sup>1</sup> while the First Minister had still to contend against a majority in the House of Commons. The remaining member of the Treasury Board, James Grenville,<sup>2</sup> whom we have likewise seen elevated by Pitt to the British peerage at a later period of his Administration, did not think proper to imitate the example of his colleagues. Mr. Orde, who became one of the two Secretaries of the Treasury, like Mr. Grenville, terminated his career as a commoner on the very same day, fifteen years afterwards, by removal to the Upper House of Parliament.

The peerage formed, indeed, the Euthanasia, the natural translation of all Pitt's favourite adherents, friends, and relations, either by consanguinity or by alliance. It must be admitted that Orde<sup>3</sup> possessed a double pretension to it from his services and his matrimonial connection. While a member of the House of Commons, he had distinguished himself by drawing up more than one of the most able reports of the "secret committee" appointed to inquire into the causes of the war in the Carnatic, of which committee he formed a leading member. Dundas, the chairman, when addressing the House on the 9th of April 1782, after paying him the highest compliments for his assiduity and exertions in that capacity, added, "Such, indeed, are the talents which Mr. Orde has exhibited in the business of investigation, that no Minister who means to act honestly can overlook him or omit to employ his distinguished abilities in the public service." Great, however, as was the testimony of the Lord

<sup>1</sup> Baron Eliot, who survived his eldest son. His successor, John, a younger son, was created Earl of St. Germans in 1815.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Cousin of Lord Grenville. He was created Baron Glastonbury in 1797.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Orde was created Baron Bolton in 1797.—ED.



Advocate to his merits, which I am not inclined to dispute, yet his best claim to the peerage consisted in having married the natural daughter of Charles, Duke of Bolton, in virtue of which union, and from the failure of male issue in the person of the succeeding Duke, Mr. Orde became eventually possessed of some of the finest estates of that illustrious family. The title itself, diminished to a Barony, was revived in him together with the name of Powlett. Lord North remained an inactive, though not an unconcerned or a silent, spectator of this new convulsion in the councils of the crown which had so soon expelled from the Cabinet one of the two parties by whom he was himself driven from power. Of all those individuals who had supported his Administration or occupied any eminent situation under it, only two quitted him in order to be received into Lord Shelburne's confidence and Ministry. The Lord Advocate, Dundas, after eight years of adherence, now abandoned altogether his ancient political leader, and, imitating the precedent exhibited by Pitt, took office by accepting the Treasurership of the Navy.<sup>1</sup> From this period those two eminent statesmen continued during the remainder of their lives inseparable in good as well as in adverse fortune. Lord Mulgrave followed Dundas's example. The Duke of Portland, who, as a man devoted to the Rockingham interest, and now, placed ostensibly at its head, adopted of course Fox's line of conduct, was succeeded in the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland by Earl Temple, a nobleman of very considerable talents and indefatigable application to business,

<sup>1</sup> At this period there was exhibited a portrait of Dundas in a Highland garb with the motto, "Wha wants me?" He was at this time very unpopular, owing very much, probably, to the remains of the prejudices raised against the Scotch during Lord Bute's Administration and Wilkes's sarcastic and bitter observations, to say nothing of Churchill's satire.—ED.

though, we must admit, inferior in energy of mind and character to either of his brothers.<sup>1</sup>

[*9th July 1782.*] The interruption which so important a change in the Government occasioned in the ordinary business of the House of Commons prevented any discussion from arising in that assembly during some days relative to the causes and motives of Fox's resignation. But an occasion soon presented itself which enabled him to state all his grievances, to unfold some portion of the mystery that pervaded his conduct, and to bring forward the heaviest charges against the new First Lord of the Treasury. A pension of three thousand two hundred pounds a year having been granted to Colonel Barré by the Administration of which Lord Rockingham constituted the head, and another very considerable pension being given at the same time to Lord Ashburton, the two principal friends of Lord Shelburne in both Houses of Parliament, these grants, the consideration of which was unexpectedly brought forward, became severely arraigned. It seemed, indeed, impossible not to feel a degree of astonishment at contemplating such profuse donations of the public money made by Ministers who condemned Lord North's want of economy, who were with difficulty induced to give a pension of two thousand pounds a year to Lord Rodney for having defeated the French fleet and saved Jamaica, who themselves had recently reduced the household of the sovereign, and who loudly asserted their personal disinterestedness. Daniel Parker Coke, a man who, like Kenyon, only took the advice of his own upright and intelligent mind in

<sup>1</sup> George, second Earl Temple, and afterwards first Marquis of Buckingham, was son of the Prime Minister, George Grenville, and nephew of Richard, first Earl Temple. His two brothers were Thomas Grenville and William Wyndham Grenville, afterwards Lord Grenville.—ED.

all cases of public or parliamentary duty, coming down to the House without concert of any kind, moved for an address to request of his Majesty to declare which of his Ministers had dared to recommend the grant of the pension in question to Barré. The three Lords of the Treasury present having all admitted that it was the Marquis of Rockingham's act, and Frederic Montagu, one of the number, not only justifying it as a remuneration merited by Barré for his long services in that assembly, but adding that all he regretted was his not having signed a warrant for a similar sum to another distinguished servant of the public, namely, Burke, Barré himself then rose. In a speech well conceived and delivered from the Treasury bench he detailed his military sufferings and honorary as well as pecuniary renunciations. The post of Adjutant-General and the government of Stirling Castle, both of which offices had been conferred on him by the crown as a reward for his services under the immortal Wolfe in Canada—posts of which officers were only deprived for military offences—he had sacrificed. "I was," said he, "an enemy to general warrants. I voted against them in this House, and for this political transgression I was dismissed the very next day from my military employments. I should now have been an old Lieutenant-General. Had I been less a friend to the liberties of the people, my income would have exceeded the pension conferred on me. If, after such sacrifices, I do not merit this provision, let it be curtailed or annihilated."

I confess that though I felt no predilection towards Barré, whose manners, like his figure, had in them something approaching to ferocious, yet these circumstances produced on my mind a sentiment of conviction or approbation. But Bamber Gascoyne,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bamber Gascoyne was M.P. for Truro.—ED.

who yielded to few men in strong common-sense, which he expressed with force and freedom whenever he mixed in debate, attacked both the grant and the Administration with great vivacity. While he candidly admitted the deserts of the person on whom this mark of royal and public bounty had been conferred, he loudly inveighed against such profusion on the part of men who, while out of office, had condemned the late Ministers for making similar remunerations, and who, since they had been themselves in power, though only a few weeks, had practised all the faults they had previously reprehended. "The people," exclaimed he, "will soon know how to form a just estimate of them. They declare that their predecessors have left the Exchequer empty and the finances exhausted. Yet they heap new burthens upon us. They accused the last Cabinet of want of unanimity. But what is the state of the present Cabinet? Is there any union of opinion there? Yet his Majesty's late servants have not made the slightest attempt to impede their measures or negotiations. This discord is the more culpable and dangerous at the present moment, when the combined navies, superior to our own fleet under Lord Howe's command, are perhaps upon our coasts. A Lord of the Treasury expresses his concern at not having signed a warrant for a pension to another honourable member, whose talents and merits I own to be most eminent. Why, Mr. Speaker, I have served the public for twenty years and I have got no pension! If such large pecuniary compensations are to be given to every individual of conspicuous desert, where is the financier who can provide funds adequate to the demand?"

Under accusations so severe as well as just, the late Secretary of State could not remain silent,

even had he been so inclined. Having resigned his office four days previous to the discussion then agitating, he had relapsed into a private member of Parliament, and as such had resumed his ancient seat on the Opposition side of the House, as well as his former costume. Lord John Cavendish and Burke were likewise seated near him, as they had always been previous to the change of Administration. So soon did Fox find himself restored to his former position in that assembly. Below him sat Lord North, and this approximation, the first that took place between them, led the way to a closer connection in the course of a short space of time. No man could contemplate the late Premier, now reduced like Fox to a simple individual, the one of whom four months earlier occupied the first place in the Cabinet, while the other had only just resigned the seals of his department, without making some reflections on the mutability of human greatness. It might have afforded a salutary lesson to ambition, if any lessons or examples could serve as checks on that passion. Fox rising, and directing his discourse not less to Bamber Gascoyne than to Coke, admitted that the deceased Marquis, his friend, had concurred in recommending the pensions conferred on Lord Ashburton and on Barré, but he entreated the House to observe, that while Lord Shelburne's adherents received such distinguishing marks of the bounty of the crown, the followers of Lord Rockingham, many of whom could plead equal merit and equal want, remained without provision of any kind.

After thus in some measure removing the odium attached to the act from that party of which he formed a member, he indirectly accused the new First Minister of the most unworthy duplicity, of the complete abandonment of every political prin-



ciple on which he professed to have come into office, and of an intention to protect as well as to shelter East Indian delinquents. Having next enumerated the great points on which Lord Shelburne and he had differed in the Cabinet, among which he particularly specified the question of conceding independence to America, he concluded by heaping upon that nobleman imputations more severe and humiliating, if possible, than the charges with which during many years he had profusely loaded Lord North. In the warmth of his indignation he even ventured to predict the probability that, with a view to maintain possession of the power so acquired, Lord Shelburne would not scruple to apply for support to the very men whom the House and the nation had recently driven from their official situations. He unfortunately did not then foresee that within seven months from the time when he was speaking he should himself, in order to re-enter the Cabinet, form a junction with the expelled Minister whom he had so long held up to national resentment, and towards whom he still professed the utmost alienation. Such were the inconsistencies and contradictions into which Fox's ambition betrayed him, and from which all the splendour of his talents could not extricate his public character, without eventually incurring accusations nearly as heavy as those which he heaped on his political opponents.

I find it difficult to convey to posterity any adequate idea of this extraordinary debate, or rather discussion, which, during the greater part of the time it lasted, exhibited not the slightest reference nor made the smallest allusion to the ostensible subject before the House, Barré's pension. In defiance of order, it was maintained for three or four hours in the shape of a conversation or dialogue, carried on between

Fox and General Conway exclusively, the Speaker and the members present, who were very numerous (especially if we consider the advanced season of the year), acquiescing in a total departure from the question under examination, from motives of curiosity. Never, perhaps, were political disclosures more delicate and interesting made within those walls. Fox, in violation of the secrecy which his late situation seemed to impose upon him, anxious to justify his own violent and precipitate conduct by accusing Lord Shelburne of a dereliction of principles embraced by the whole Cabinet, raised the veil from before the political sanctuary, and laid it in some measure open to general inspection. There were certain parts of his justification, I own, that carried conviction or approbation with them, but he by no means succeeded in persuading the majority of his hearers that he had acted wisely, temperately, or from necessity in hastily throwing up his office. We may safely pronounce that disappointment, not patriotism, animated him to that improvident step, though he might really believe that Lord Shelburne did not mean to concede independence to America.

In reply to Mr. Gascoyne's accusation that the new Administration was not less divided than their predecessors, Fox observed that he had blamed Lord North for having remained in place after he found himself at the head of distracted councils. "As soon as I discovered," said he, "that I stood in a similar situation, I could not remain a member of the Cabinet without committing an act of treachery to my country, when measures dangerous, if not fatal, were meditated."—"I declare that I have only resigned because I believe a new system is about to be adopted, or rather the ancient system revived. I feel it indispensable to come forward to ring the alarum bell, and to warn the country

that the old system is to be pursued, probably with the former men, or indeed with any men that can be found for the purpose. The principles of the late Ministry are now in the Cabinet, and the next thing that I expect is to see the late Ministers themselves replaced in office."—"All that is great and good in the kingdom has approved my retreat. My noble friend (Lord John Cavendish) has likewise given in his resignation, and the public will infer that when such a character has quitted the Cabinet, no man of character ought to remain in it."—"I now retire with a few select friends to a stronghold where I confidently expect all my old companions to join me, some sooner and some later in the day."—"On the demise of the Marquis of Rockingham, all men's eyes were directed to the Duke of Portland. But instead of that noble person, the Earl of Shelburne has been selected." Then, having inveighed against the new First Lord of the Treasury, as the reverse of his predecessor, as a nobleman who neither regarded promises nor engagements, nor systems, nor principles, provided that by abandoning or violating them he could acquire and retain power; "I doubt not," added he, "that, in order to secure himself in office, he will have recourse to every means that corruption can procure. And I expect that he will shortly be joined by those very men whom the House has recently precipitated from their seats." Yet, after having thus repeatedly denounced the late Ministers, and warned the country of the impending danger from their being again taken into power, by one of those contradictions common to Fox, he concluded with declaring, that "as to any apprehensions of letting in the old Administration, he entertained none, because the House of Commons would not suffer it, the people would not suf-

fer it, indeed, no man would be bold enough to attempt such a measure."

The members of the new Administration diverged on this occasion in widely different lines. General Conway, with the "undetermined discretion" imputed to him by "Junius," contented himself by endeavouring to justify his own line of conduct and that of the Cabinet Ministers who had declined to imitate the example of Fox, which he did rather with caution and delicacy than with any asperity or acrimony. With solemn protestations he declared that he had not been able to discover the slightest intention on the part of the new First Minister to abandon the principles upon which the Administration was originally constituted. Those principles he recapitulated one by one, the first and most essential of which, forming the basis of all their measures or deliberations, was the concession of unconditional independence to America as the leading step to peace. Whenever he should find any ground for suspicion that the Earl of Shelburne designed to adopt another system, he protested that he would not remain for a day or for an hour in the Cabinet. He lamented the recent division and secession in his Majesty's councils as well as the loss of ability sustained by Fox's resignation. Yet he saw no reason to apprehend that the successor of the noble Marquis deceased would fail to pursue the true interests of his country. Throughout every part of Conway's speech a desire was strongly marked to avoid coming to extremities with Fox; but Pitt, now seated on the Treasury bench and on the point of accepting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, observing none of these personal managements, boldly accused the late Secretary of State with sacrificing his country to his ambition, his interest, or his enmities; charged him as being

at variance not with principles or measures, but with men, and claimed the support of the House no longer than he should maintain that system on which the late Administration had been driven from power.

“The Right Honourable Secretary assures us,” said he, “that it was with the sole view of preventing dissensions in the Cabinet he retired from office. I believe him, because he solemnly declares it; otherwise I should have attributed his resignation to a baulk in struggling for power. If, however, he so much disliked Lord Shelburne’s political principles or opinions, why did he ever consent to act with that nobleman as a colleague? And if he only suspected Lord Shelburne of feeling averse to the measures which he thought necessary to be adopted, it was his duty to have called a Cabinet Council, and there to have ascertained the fact before he took the hasty resolution of throwing up his employment. I can assure him that I entertain no suspicions. If I did, no man would be more averse to supporting the present Ministry than myself. I am a determined enemy to the late ruinous system, and if I should act in any capacity under the Administration of the present day, whenever I see things going on wrong, I will first endeavour to set them right. Should I fail in the attempt, then, and not before, I will resign.” Perhaps in no transaction of their whole political lives was the distinction between Fox and Pitt more strikingly exhibited than in the resignation of the former and the acceptance of office by the latter in July 1782. The judgment, patience, and self-command of Pitt enabled him, at three-and-twenty, to mount over Fox’s shoulders, to enter the Cabinet, and in less than eighteen months to fill Lord Shelburne’s vacant place, which he held for seventeen years; while his



antagonist, though he twice forced his way into the councils of the sovereign, knew not how to maintain himself in that elevation.

Lord John Cavendish, though he had recently filled so high an office in Administration, and though he had resigned like Fox, yet took little part in the debate relative to Barré's pension. He, however, confirmed the late Secretary's declaration to a certain degree respecting Lord Shelburne's intentions as to America, but he appeared to act only on belief, not on proof. Indeed, he always seemed to be either propelled or restrained at pleasure by Fox, who held Lord John constantly before him as a political screen. Burke, however, made ample amends for the defect of communication on the part of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, in defiance of the impatience manifested by the House, inveighed with equal violence and indecorum against the new First Lord of the Treasury, whom he depicted as unworthy of the national confidence. "I invoke heaven and earth," exclaimed he, "to witness that I fully believe the present Ministry will prove infinitely worse than that of the noble Lord who has been so lately reprobated and driven from employment." After treating Conway with great severity of animadversion for trusting to Lord Shelburne's assurances or professions, and comparing the General to Little Red Riding-Hood in *Æsop*,<sup>1</sup> who mistook a wolf for her grandmother, Burke demanded "whether, if he had lived in the time of Cicero, he would have taken Catiline<sup>2</sup> for his colleague in the

<sup>1</sup> This is a strange ascription of the nursery tale of Little Red Riding-Hood to the fables of *Æsop*.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly after this Fox was popularly styled Catiline. Sayer published a caricature in 1785 under the title of "Cicero in Catilinam," which represents Fox in the character of Catiline seated on the Opposition benches quailing beneath the eloquent invective of his rival, Pitt, as Cicero.—ED.

office of consul after he had heard his guilt clearly demonstrated by that illustrious orator? Would he become a copartner with Borgia in his political schemes after reading of his nefarious principles in Machiavel?" "If the Earl of Shelburne," added he, "be not a Catiline or a Borgia in morals, it must be solely ascribed to the superiority of his understanding."

These invectives, which only proved the extent of Burke's enmity and of his regret at quitting the Pay Office, made little impression on his hearers. Lee,<sup>1</sup> who had filled the situation of Solicitor-General under the late Administration, but who had quitted his employment at the same time with the other adherents of the deceased Marquis—a man of strong intellectual parts, though of very coarse manners, and who never hesitated to clothe his ideas in the coarsest language—may be said to have terminated this curious and interesting conversation. His indecorous abuse of the new First Minister, though couched in a more homely garb and not illustrated by any classical or historical allusions, exceeded in violence even the declamation of Burke. Lee levelled his reflections and accusations not against the ability or talents of the Earl, but against his principles of political and moral action. He fully admitted that nobleman's external accomplishments, specious address, and comprehensive information. Mr. Coke having withdrawn his motion on Barré's pension, the House broke up; but from that evening the country and Parliament beheld for the first time two individuals who might hitherto be said to have fought under the same standard openly opposed to each other, and who were destined never more during their lives, under any change of circum-

<sup>1</sup> John Lee, M.P. for Clitheroe, Attorney-General in November 1783.—ED.

stances, to act in political union. In fact, from this period, though Lord North remained ostensibly at the head of one great party, and though Lord Shelburne, who occupied the place of First Minister, was nominally the chief of another, yet they ceased to be considered as the principal personages in the state. Pitt and Fox, attracting far more attention, were regarded by the nation at large, no less than by Parliament, as rival candidates for the future government of the country.

[10th and 11th July 1782.] Lord Shelburne, when speaking in the House of Peers on the subject of the pension granted to Barré, endeavoured to shift the origin, and consequently the odium, of having conferred it on Lord Rockingham. In this attempt he proved, however, eminently unfortunate, as his assertions on the subject produced the most unqualified contradiction from the connections or adherents of the deceased Marquis. Burke and Fox both denied it in the strongest terms, calling at the same time on Lord John Cavendish to confirm their declarations on the point. His testimony, which was very vague, added little force to their previous protestations, but it was natural to suppose that the proposition must have originated with Lord Shelburne, the patron, friend, and protector of Barré. Yet that nobleman, when addressing the Upper House, not only asserted that the deceased Marquis first proposed the idea, but added that he had in his possession a letter from Lord Rockingham on the subject completely proving his assertion. In a long, able, and laboured address, he endeavoured likewise to impress his audience with a conviction that Fox, in his secession from the Cabinet, could have had no other motive except disappointed ambition and rivalry. Fox, however, not only treated the insinuation with indignant contempt, accom-

panied by a positive denial in the House of Commons ; on the subsequent day he likewise, by the mouth of the Earl of Derby in the other House, where Lord Shelburne was present, declared it "to be contrary to fact, and a direct deviation from the truth." Not satisfied with so public a contradiction, Lord Derby called on the other members of Administration who were in their places to state their personal information and to give evidence on the point. Thus compelled, the Duke of Richmond and Lord Keppel rose, and admitted that the late Secretary of State had differed in sentiment from Lord Shelburne on subjects of great importance previous to Lord Rockingham's decease. They likewise added, that in consequence of finding himself in a minority on the matter then agitated in the Cabinet, Fox had declared his intention to resign his office.

After so clear and distinct a testimony, it became impossible to doubt or to deny the fact, especially as neither Lord Camden nor Lord Ashburton, who were both in the House at the time, disputed the authenticity of the two noble witnesses. However painful or humiliating these contradictions must have been, which impeached Lord Shelburne's personal veracity equally as a man and as a Minister, he nevertheless submitted to them without making any further effort to justify himself in the opinion of the public, and the circumstances that attended the prorogation of Parliament seemed to indicate his impatience under the deliberations of that assembly, as well as his apprehensions of the impression made on many individuals by Fox's accusations. Lord Shelburne's courage, which was unquestionable, had been proved in the duel that he fought with Colonel Fullerton.<sup>1</sup> It became, therefore, im-

<sup>1</sup> In 1780 Fullerton was member for Plympton. He complained

possible to suppose that he would have tamely endured such imputations on his private character if he had possessed the means of effectually repelling or disproving them. Even on the subject of granting American independence, there appeared so much ambiguity, if not tergiversation and contradiction, in all his parliamentary speeches, as greatly tended to persuade mankind that Fox's allegations respecting Lord Shelburne's disinclination to concede the point must have had a foundation in truth. The very principle on which he avowed, when addressing the House of Peers, that he retained his place in the councils of the crown, seemed scarcely compatible with strict regard to political rectitude. For he declared in the plainest language, that he was not only adverse in his own judgment to acknowledging the independence of the thirteen colonies, but that whenever such a recognition should be extorted from this country, "the sun of British glory would have set." Yet in the same moment he admitted, that as the majority of the Rockingham Cabinet were of an opposite opinion, he should acquiesce in the measure, which measure, though destructive, as he conceived, to Great Britain, he was now ready, in his new capacity of First Lord of the Treasury, if Parliament approved it, to carry into execution.

No political imputation which his enemies affixed on Lord North had operated with more force in his disfavour on the minds of the public than the assertion that he prosecuted the American war in

that Lord Shelburne, "with all the aristocratic insolence that marked his character," had dared to say that the Colonel and his regiment were ready to act against the liberties of England. They fought in Hyde Park, and Lord Shelburne was hit in the groin. A committee of Common Council, "anxious for the preservation of the valuable life of so true a friend of the people as the Earl of Shelburne," formally inquired after his Lordship's safety.—D.



opposition to his own convictions, from a love of place, or from unworthy subservience to the royal will. But to a similar charge the new First Minister appeared in some measure voluntarily to subject himself. He might however plead, as he did in fact assert when addressing the House of Peers, that "however dreadful the impending disaster would prove, as he believed, to his country; however much he deprecated and deplored it, and whatever efforts he had made to prevent it, yet that an overpowering and insurmountable necessity compelled him to become the agent for carrying into effect so destructive a measure." He even succeeded, as we know, in surmounting the King's repugnance to the final separation of America from the British Empire. Fox, therefore, if he had not been impelled by animosity to Lord Shelburne, and by a determination not to remain in the Cabinet unless the Duke of Portland was placed at the head of Administration, might have continued in office without abandoning any principle. He preferred a more violent alternative. His friends, as well as the daily newspapers attached to his party, joined in accusing the Minister of having undermined Lord Rockingham in the royal esteem by the most unworthy arts, in order to get possession of his office, while political caricatures exhibited in the shops of the metropolis represented Lord Shelburne habited as Guy Faux, so notorious for the part that was assigned him in the "Gunpowder Plot," a dark lantern in his hand, advancing under cover of the night to blow up the Treasury.

Such were the sinister circumstances under which commenced that nobleman's Administration. Even down to the last moment that the House of Commons remained sitting, Burke, among the querulous lamentations that he uttered on being so suddenly

ejected from his office of Paymaster of the Forces—a misfortune which seemed deeply to affect him—mingled the loudest exclamations against the falsity and defect of principle in the First Minister. His philippic was cut short in the middle by the arrival of Sir Francis Molineux, as Usher of the Black Rod, sent to summon the attendance of the members at the bar of the House of Lords, where the King, already seated on the throne, was ready to prorogue the Parliament. A singular fact, arising out of the late parliamentary reforms, accompanied this ceremony. Among the retrenchments of the royal household which Burke's bill had made, was included, as has been already observed, the suppression of the Jewel Office, which department had been under Mr. William Egerton's control, a relation of the Duke of Bridgewater, and a member of the House of Commons. The bill having so recently passed into a law, no new official regulation had as yet been adopted for the removal or transportation of the paraphernalia of the crown. On the occasion of his Majesty going to Westminster in order to prorogue the two Houses, it became indispensable to convey thither the crown and sceptre, together with various other articles of state. The Jewel Office being suppressed, in which department these dispositions previously lay, application was made both to the Lord Steward and to the Lord Chamberlain, praying that orders might be issued to the keeper of the jewels in the Tower for bringing them to Westminster on the day of the prorogation. But those great officers of state, not conceiving themselves to possess a power of interference, directions were at length dispatched for the purpose from the Home Secretary of State's office. After some consultation held relative to the safest mode of conveying the royal ornaments, none of

the King's carriages being sent to receive them, application was next made to the magistrates at Bow Street, who detached four or five stout agents of the police for their protection. Two hackney-coaches being provided, in which the various articles were placed, with a view to render the transportation of them more private, the procession set out circuitously from the Tower by the New Road, entering London again at Portland Street, and so proceeded down to Westminster. The blinds were kept up the whole way, and after the prorogation they returned by the same road, without experiencing any accident. But it is unquestionable that eight or ten desperate fellows, had they been apprised of the circumstance, might have easily overpowered the persons employed, and have carried off the jewels. The memorable enterprise of Colonel Blood<sup>1</sup> under Charles II., who got hold of the crown and sceptre, though he ultimately failed in retaining possession of them, was in fact a far more hazardous undertaking, as in order to execute it he lay under the necessity of entering the Tower, whereas, in the present instance, the attempt might have been made in the street or in the New Road. Any accident of the kind, had it taken place, would necessarily have thrown some degree of ridicule, as well as of blame, on a system of economy productive of such consequences in its outset.

Among the interesting features of the session of Parliament before us, which, on account of a degree of mystery or ambiguity accompanying them, greatly exercised national curiosity, may be reckoned the proceedings commenced against Sir Thomas Rumbold. I say commenced, because they never were prosecuted to any consummation. This gentleman

<sup>1</sup> An attempt to steal the crown was made by a woman in 1815. She was tried, and proved to be insane.—ED.

returned, as has been already mentioned, from Madras early in 1781, under imputations the most injurious to his fame. He was accused of having, while Governor of that important settlement, not only amassed by every unbecoming means an immense fortune, but of first provoking a war with Hyder Ally, by acts of imprudent aggression, and then of abandoning the country intrusted to his care with pusillanimous or interested precipitation. These charges, which were solemnly brought against him by Mr. Dundas, Lord Advocate of Scotland, as chairman of the secret committee appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the causes of the war in the Carnatic, produced a deep impression on the public mind. We have already seen the steps which were immediately adopted by the Legislature to tie up and impound Sir Thomas's person as well as his fortune; but, in addition to these precautions, a bill for inflicting on him pains and penalties, as a man who had been guilty of high crimes and misdemeanours, was introduced by Dundas himself.

Such a measure, which excited general approbation, appeared to be worthy the national justice exerted in punishing a great public culprit. The line of ambitious policy pursued by Hastings, when Governor-General of Bengal, might possibly have led to many misfortunes, and might perhaps merit condemnation; but his motives were admitted, even by his enemies, to have been splendid and elevated, however pernicious, as was asserted, in their operation and consequences. The administration of Rumbold, on the contrary, seemed only directed to sordid and selfish purposes. Every party, it was therefore hoped, would concur in carrying through such a bill; and though Dundas, after the termination of Lord North's Ministry, no longer acted in an official situation, yet in his

capacity of chairman of the secret committee, he spoke from a great eminence, and might expect universal support. Least of all, it was supposed, could the Rockingham party, who had just come into power, who professed to call to a severe account all such as had plundered or injured the country, and who loudly demanded an inquiry into East India delinquencies, attempt to throw obstacles in the path of justice. Under these circumstances, all men expected, and most men hoped, that the bill in question would have speedily found its way through the House of Commons, and have finally passed into a law. The fact, nevertheless, turned out completely otherwise. Meanwhile the session advanced; a full attendance, as Dundas asserted and complained, could not be procured; the House was frequently counted out; and whether from the operation of that cause, or from any other reason more concealed, no rapid progress was made in the business. Sir Thomas Rumbold's person and property remained, it is true, sequestered or restrained, but beyond that temporary interposition no permanent punishment was inflicted on him.

Men who had anticipated much more vigorous and speedy as well as decisive proceedings, and who beheld the supposed criminal thus elude or escape, as it were, the grasp of national pursuit, reasoned and commented on the fact. Malignity or credulity invented reasons for whatever appeared inexplicable throughout the transaction. Secret springs were asserted to have been touched which had arrested or paralysed the exertions of the prosecutor. Time, place, and circumstances were even particularised, all which, though perhaps untrue or imaginary, seemed, nevertheless, not only in themselves possible, but so well fabricated and so minutely detailed as to appear highly probable. I



shall, however, relate only such facts as are unquestionably authentic.

Rumbold, though a man of low extraction and of a mean education, did not by any means want activity, judgment, or talents. I knew him well. In his person he was well made and handsome,<sup>1</sup> but his features, though regular and manly, contained nothing in them prepossessing. His successful exertions while Governor of Madras in reducing Pondicherry had elevated him to the dignity of a Baronet. On his arrival in England, aware of the storm that impended over him, he immediately contrived to get into Parliament; and he soon afterwards brought his eldest son into the House of Commons, by which means he came into daily collision and communication with those who might either injure or could defend him. That he was not idle is certain, and he attempted in his place as a member of the House to justify himself from the charges exhibited against him with some ability. In addition, however, to these personal efforts, he soon found means to conciliate a friend who was supposed to have laboured efficaciously towards his extrication.

That friend, Rigby, the late Paymaster of the Forces, having enjoyed during a great number of years one of the most profitable places under the crown without any colleague, had acquired a large fortune. But his luxurious and expensive manner of living in town, his magnificent seat at Mistle Hall in Essex, where he maintained a splendid establishment, when added to his purchases of landed property, had exhausted even means so vast, and left him, as it were, necessitous in the midst of

<sup>1</sup> So he was; and what is much more surprising, he had the air and look of a man of quality. Very strange, surely, in a black-shoe boy, for such he was at starting.—P.

wealth. In this situation of his affairs the termination of Lord North's Administration not only deprived him of his employment, but in consequence of the system of reform adopted by the new Ministers, and in particular from the regulations introduced by Burke, his successor in the Pay Office, which compelled him to pay into the Exchequer the immense balances of public money remaining in his hands, Rigby became involved in great pecuniary embarrassments. These balances having been vested by him in mortgages or in other securities, and the public funds suffering then under great depression, it could not be, in fact, an easy matter to find the means of answering promptly the demands made upon him by Government for repayment.

Rumbold had brought with him from the East, as Verres did from Sicily, very ample resources, which he well knew how to use in time of need for his own protection; and Rigby's situation, which was generally understood, might render a loan of money peculiarly convenient. That gentleman having no children, his sister's son was destined to inherit his name and property. Rumbold had a daughter whose age and accomplishments qualified her to be united to him in marriage. The alliance being agreed on, it was supposed that by the secret articles the East India Governor advanced to his friend such a sum as greatly facilitated those payments of the public money which he was necessitated to furnish without delay. After entering into so close a connection, cemented by such binding ties, it might be esteemed natural, and even venial, that Rigby should lend his reciprocal aid to Sir Thomas Rumbold. Though no longer Paymaster of the Forces, Rigby still possessed great capacities of being useful, and he was not supposed

to lie under the dominion of any fastidious scruples. Above all, his intimate friendship with Dundas, who conducted the parliamentary prosecution instituted against Rumbold, might enable Rigby to find means and opportunities of diminishing those prejudices or softening those impressions that operated most injuriously against the accused person. No proof has been indeed ever produced that improper means were used to effect this object, nor do I believe that any such were employed; but the public being in possession of certain facts, and observing that the proceedings so vigorously begun in Parliament against Rumbold seemed unaccountably to languish, and eventually to expire towards the close of the session of 1783, though they were nominally renewed when the House met in the subsequent month of December, inferred, perhaps very unjustly, that there must exist some latent cause which had blunted the edge of the weapon. Rumbold, it is certain, was finally extricated; but whether the ostensible reasons assigned for deferring the bill of pains and penalties formed the only circumstances that conduced to his escape, or whether more efficacious and cogent arguments of any kind were used, must always remain matter of conjecture and assertion, like many other obscure points of biographical history.

[15<sup>th</sup>—31<sup>st</sup> July 1782.] The session being now terminated, Lord Shelburne might be regarded as secure in the possession of his newly acquired power, at least for several months. During that interval, means, it was naturally imagined, could easily be discovered of cementing and confirming the Ministry. Negotiations for peace were already begun with America, which, if they proved successful, it was probable must eventually lead to a treaty with our European enemies. The talents of the

First Lord of the Treasury were considered as eminently adapted to diplomatic discussions, in the conduct of which his enlarged knowledge of the foreign interests of Great Britain and his minute acquaintance with the Continental courts enabled him, it was said, to act at once with vigour and perspicuity. If he had lost the abilities of Fox and Burke in the House of Commons, he had, on the other hand, secured and attached to him two men no less able in different ways—Pitt and Dundas. He, moreover, possessed the confidence of the sovereign, who, as all men supposed, would from necessity, if not from inclination, support a Minister preferred by himself to his present office. Lord North might even, it was hoped, feel a far stronger disposition to join the actual Administration when Parliament should meet again than to unite with the Rockingham party, his inveterate enemies. Under this aspect of public affairs, though Lord Shelburne neither stood as high in the national opinion for severe integrity and probity as his deceased predecessor, the Marquis of Rockingham, had done, nor could command that parliamentary strength which Lord North still in some measure influenced or led, yet many persons considered his tenure of office by no means precarious, and augured well of its duration.

Burke's invectives against the First Minister, which continued to the last instant that the forms of Parliament permitted, were nevertheless suspended while the prorogation put an end to the business of the House of Commons. However violent he might be in his place as a member of the Legislature, Burke never carried his complaints to the people. But Fox, who acted no less as a demagogue than as the representative of Westminster, and who always seemed to take the Gracchi for his

model, anxious to appeal from his late dismissal by the King to the popular suffrage, convoked his constituents in order to lay before them the reasons for his resignation. They met almost immediately after the session closed in Westminster Hall, where he reiterated all the heads of accusation against Lord Shelburne which he had already detailed a few days before in the House of Commons, but the general impression, even among that audience, which heard him with partiality, seemed nevertheless to be, that personal ambition and rivalry more than real principle or patriotism had regulated his conduct. The specious pretence under which the meeting was assembled, namely, that of petitioning the crown for a more equal representation of the people, produced, however, as might have been expected, a unanimous assent. He then dismissed them till the ensuing winter.<sup>1</sup>

[*August 1782.*] Sir Samuel Hood, whom the victorious admiral in the West Indies detached a few days after the defeat of De Grasse with several vessels in pursuit of the flying enemy, having come up with some of them, captured two more French line-of-battle ships, as well as two frigates, off the east end of the island of St. Domingo. Though these eminent naval advantages secured Jamaica from invasion or attack, yet, far from regaining any of our insular possessions in that quarter of the globe, on the contrary, such was our state of exhaustion, that Spain fitted out an expedition against the Bahama Islands, which she easily reduced to her obedience. But the attention of the capital and the nation became more powerfully as well as

<sup>1</sup> Of two personages, Lord North and Ellis, Walpole thus writes in August: "Lord North, finding Bushy Park too solitary since his sun was set, is gone on a progress into the Tory regions of Oxford and Staffordshire, and Mr. Ellis has moulted his French horns with the seals" (*Letters*, viii. 262).—D.



painfully attracted by the catastrophe of the "Royal George,"<sup>1</sup> which took place about the same time, than by the loss of any Transatlantic settlements. This ship, the pride and ornament of the British navy, to the disgrace of a nation considered as superior to every other people in nautical skill, disappeared in an instant, as is well known, at Spithead, carrying with her an English admiral, and, as it was computed, nearly a thousand persons of both sexes. I was well acquainted with Kempenfeldt,<sup>2</sup> one of the most able as well as scientific officers in the British naval service. It is impossible, even at this distance of time, to reflect on such an event, which resulted from the injudicious or careless manner of laying down the "Royal George," without amazement as well as horror. The gloom and consternation diffused by the intelligence over the metropolis are hardly to be conceived, and the incredibility of the fact increased the sense of the disaster. No parallel circumstance is to be found in our naval annals, probably not in those of any other European nation. In a superstitious age it would no doubt have been considered as ominous of the greatest national or royal misfortunes. That tempests, fire, or rocks and quicksands, should swallow up and destroy the proudest works of human art, is natural, often unavoidable. When Sir Cloudesley Shovel, under the reign of Queen Anne, perished, together with his ship and all his crew, wrecked on

<sup>1</sup> When Lord Howe's fleet returned to Portsmouth, it was found that the "Royal George," 108 guns, required cleaning, and for this purpose the ship was "heeled over." On the 29th August the workmen proceeded to work, and heeling it over too much, the water entered the portholes. The ship filled and went down with all on board. Cowper in his poem speaks of 800 men, but there were in fact 1100 persons on board, and 900 of these perished.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> He was the son of a Swedish officer, the "Captain Sentry" of the "Spectator," and was born in London. He was an able, brave, pious, and cheerful-hearted commander.—D.

the Scilly Islands, or when the "Victory"<sup>1</sup> under George II. foundered in the Race of Alderney, with Admiral Balchen and 1100 persons on board, such calamities were in the order of things, however much to be deplored. But in the present instance, only an utter disregard of common prudential precautions could have produced so unprecedented an event. Her very name, and her superiority in size as well as in strength to every other ship in the service, she carrying a hundred guns, added to the bitterness of the reflections which her loss occasioned throughout the kingdom. Those who recollect that the "Queen Charlotte," a man-of-war of the first rate, carrying 110 guns, with an admiral's flag, was consumed by somewhat similar negligence, together with near 700 of her crew, on the 17th of March 1800, near the port of Leghorn,<sup>2</sup> may find ample reason for speculation on the singularity of two such disastrous events having taken place within eighteen years of each other under the same reign.

[*September 1782.*] The melancholy impression made by the catastrophe just related became, if possible, still more strongly excited immediately afterwards by other naval misfortunes equally afflicting in their nature. If the fact of the "Royal George" going down at her anchors, when no danger was even apprehended, stands without precedent in our maritime records, the fatality which seemed to pursue the ships of the line that had been captured by Rodney on the 12th of April, as well as most of our own

<sup>1</sup> The "Victory" man-of-war, of 100 guns, was lost in a violent tempest on 8th October 1744. The Admiral, Sir John Balchen, and 1000 men perished.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> This was Lord Keith's flag-ship. A lighted match was kept on deck for firing signals, and the match lay in the vicinity of a quantity of hay. Ignition naturally ensued. Only about 150 men escaped, so rapid was the fire, and so imperfect the means of escape.—D.

men of war accompanying the French prizes on their return from the West Indies, can scarcely be equalled in modern history. The chain of shipwrecks and adverse events that attended Commodore Anson's expedition round Cape Horn under the late reign, which so greatly reduced the numbers of his squadron; even the disasters so pathetically related in the same work that ruined the fleet of the Spanish Admiral Pizarro, nearly in the same latitudes and at the same time,—those calamities, however extraordinary and tragical they appear, yet sink on a comparison with the destruction experienced by our devoted ships in 1782 when crossing the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> Captain Inglefield has commemorated the fate of the "Centaur," as well as his own astonishing escape, when she foundered with her officers and crew. That affecting narrative may serve as too faithful a picture of the misfortunes experienced by the other vessels. The "Ramillies," a name proverbially unfortunate in the English navy, was set on fire when it became impossible any longer either to navigate or to preserve her. One of the French ships of the line, the "Hector," seemed to be reserved for more severe trials of every kind, in the course of which all that human fortitude, combined with skill and courage, could effect was performed by our officers and seamen. They were almost miraculously saved, though the "Hector" herself perished.

Over the closing scene of the "Ville de Paris," as well as over the fate of the "Glorieux," is drawn an impenetrable curtain. It is certain that the last-named vessel, a French seventy-four gun ship, com-

<sup>1</sup> The fleet left Jamaica on the 22d July 1782, and part was bound for New York. In September they met with continued hurricanes, and of the seven ships of the line which formed the squadron, the "Canada" and the "Le Caton" only escaped. The "Ramillies," the "Ville de Paris," the "Centaur," "Le Glorieux," and the "Hector," were all lost, besides many merchant ships.—ED.

manded by the Honourable Captain Cadogan, disappeared during the middle watch on the night of the 17th or 18th of September, after firing many signals of distress. Her lights had been visible till that time, but when day appeared no vestiges of her were discovered, and she doubtless foundered during the storm. Nor was De Grasse's ship, originally purchased with so vast an effusion of blood, and herself the pride of the French navy, ever destined to reach an English port. The hasty repairs given her at Jamaica could only be slight or partial, and it was confidently asserted that, in the gale of wind which proved so fatal, her guns breaking loose, tore open her side and accelerated, if they did not cause, her final destruction. Tidings of her were long expected, and the nation continued to nourish hopes during many months of her reappearance. About this time, while her fate still remained problematical, a man was brought to the Admiralty and there examined, who had been taken up at sea nearly senseless and extenuated, tied to or floating on a hen-coop. He asserted, and his testimony appeared to be entitled to credit, that he served on board the "Ville de Paris" as a common sailor at the moment when she foundered. But few or no particulars relative to the event itself could be extracted from this survivor, who, as I was assured by a flag-officer that questioned him, possessed neither faculties nor memory to recount almost any circumstance except the fact of her loss. Admiral Graves, who commanded the fleet, was censured by the popular voice for having stood some degrees more to the northward in returning home across the Atlantic at that season than he needed to have done, or than he was warranted in doing by Lord Rodney's orders. But this accusation may possibly have been more severe than just, though I think I have heard Lord Rodney

himself state the circumstance, and express his conviction of the injurious consequences that resulted from navigating in too high a latitude during a time of equinoctial gales.

Happily the gloom which these melancholy events diffused was speedily relieved and dissipated by transactions of the most exhilarating nature. Minorca, it is true, had surrendered early in the summer, but Gibraltar, which fortress still resisted every attack, attracted, no less from the prodigious means employed for its reduction by the enemy than from the energy and activity exerted in its defence, the attention of all Europe. The two most memorable sieges which are recorded in modern history, namely, that of Antwerp, undertaken by Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, under Philip II., in the sixteenth century, and that of Ostend, begun by the Spanish general Spinola only a few years later, however illustrious they have each been rendered from the long-protracted resistance made by the besieged, were both finally crowned with success. Gibraltar, on the contrary, repelled the assailants in the most brilliant manner. All the means that European art, expense, and force could collect or combine by land as well as by sea were accumulated under its walls, while the two branches of the House of Bourbon, unconscious of the lamentable destiny preparing for themselves in the womb of time, seemed to vie in their efforts to accelerate its fall. Charles III., who then reigned in Spain, already anticipated the completion of an event which, as he justly conceived, would render his name and reign immortal in the Spanish annals. Under the same fallacious expectation Louis XVI. dispatched his youngest brother, Count d'Artois, to assist at its surrender; while the Barbary powers, though by no means indifferent or uninterested spectators of this great contest, and



though they are said to have put up prayers in all their mosques for our success, yet quietly expected the result without making the smallest effort in our favour.

If Lord Rodney acquired so much personal glory by his victory over De Grasse, General Elliott<sup>1</sup> did not establish a less brilliant reputation by his repulse and defeat of the Spanish floating batteries on the 13th of September of the same year. The American war, which at Saratoga and at Yorktown displayed spectacles so humiliating to the British arms, terminated with the most splendid triumphs over our European enemies; and this portion of the reign of George III. (like the second Punic war in antiquity) exhibits, between 1777 and 1782, the greatest reverses of adverse and of prosperous fortune. While we lost so vast an empire beyond the Atlantic, we humbled with one hand the French naval force in the West Indies, annihilating with the other the combined efforts of France and Spain, which were centred for the subjugation of a distant garrison, apparently left to its own capacities of defence, and cut off from the obvious means of relief. But even after the destruction of the Spanish vessels and batteries, it seemed still impossible to throw into Gibraltar timely supplies of ammunition competent to recruit the expenditure that had taken place during the siege. Provisions, fuel, clothing, as well as many other essential or indispensable articles, could only be sent out from England. Near fifty French and Spanish ships of the line, which occupied the Bay of Gibraltar, appeared to set at defiance all approach. Notwithstanding these apparently insuperable obstacles, the attempt succeeded, in opposition to every impediment.

<sup>1</sup> George Augustus Elliott was created Lord Heathfield in 1787 on account of his memorable defence of Gibraltar.—ED.

[*October 1782.*] So low had sunk the numerical naval force of Great Britain at this period as compared with the strength of the enemy, that the utmost exertions of the Admiralty under the new Administration could only equip and send to sea thirty-four sail of the line, which fleet did not quit Spithead till nearly the day on which General Elliott had already repulsed and burnt the floating batteries under the walls of the besieged fortress. Yet never was the real superiority of our navy in skill and science more evidently demonstrated than in successfully throwing succours into a place invested by sea and land without committing any event to hazard or affording to adversaries so numerous the slightest advantage.<sup>1</sup> Lord Howe,<sup>2</sup> who conducted and commanded the whole enterprise, manifested such a combination of tactics and of ability in his manœuvres as place his name deservedly high in the annals of his country. If the reputation that he attained on this occasion seems less brilliant than the fame acquired by Rodney in vanquishing De Grasse, it was not on that account less permanent or solid. Without engaging, he defied the combined fleets; offered battle, but did not seek it; effected every object of the expedition by relieving Gibraltar, and then retreated, followed indeed by the enemy, but not attacked. They made, it is true, a show of fighting, but never ventured to come to close action. And with such contempt did Lord Howe treat the cannonade commenced by the van, composed of French ships under La Motte Piquet, that having ordered all his men on board the "Victory" to lie down flat on the deck in order that

<sup>1</sup> "Comment va la siége de Gibraltar?" "Mieux, elle se lève," was the epigrammatical turn given in Paris to this event.—D.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Howe was known in the navy as "Black Dick," and he was said to be as brave as a rock and as silent.—ED.

their lives might not be needlessly exposed, he disdained to return a single shot against such cautious or timid opponents.

Pigot, who had succeeded to Rodney in the West Indies through the favour of Fox, in defiance of public opinion, by no means emulated his predecessor's example of activity and enterprise. Though placed at the head of six-and-forty sail of the line, sustained by the reputation of a great victory, he neither effected nor attempted any object during more than six months that he held the command. Such inactivity seemed to reproach the Ministry who had sent him thither, and excited severe animadversions on Fox. In the East Indies, and there only, where Sir Edward Hughes was opposed to Suffrein, France still maintained the contest on the water. That active and intrepid officer last named, the most able of any employed by Louis XVI. during the whole progress of the war, made repeated, though ineffectual efforts for compelling the English squadron to abandon the Coast of Coromandel.

[*November 1782.*] While Lord Howe thus placed in security the most brilliant foreign possession belonging to the British crown in Europe, negotiations of a pacific nature were carrying on at Paris, both with America and with the other coalesced powers. The provisional articles concluded with the insurgent colonies, which were first signed, did not indeed demand either any considerable length of time or superior diplomatic talents in order to conduct them to a prosperous termination, where almost every possible concession was made on the part of England merely to obtain from America a cessation of hostilities. Not only their independence was recognised in the most explicit terms—territory, rivers, lakes, commerce, islands, ports and fortified places, Indian allies, loyalists—all were given up to the

Congress. In fixing the boundaries between Canada and the United States, ideal limits, ignorantly adopted on our part, were laid down amidst unknown tracts. Franklin, who, as one of the four American commissioners appointed to manage the treaty, affixed his name to the instrument of provisional pacification, enjoyed, at the advanced period of fourscore years, the satisfaction of witnessing the complete emancipation of his countrymen from Great Britain, to effect which he had so eminently contributed by his talents and exertions. Few subjects, born and educated like him in the inferior classes of society, have in any age of the earth, without drawing the sword in person, obtained so gratifying a triumph over their legitimate sovereign, or have aided to produce a greater political revolution on the face of the globe.

[*December 1782.*] A First Minister who possessed so slender a portion of popularity or of influence over the two Houses of Parliament as Lord Shelburne could command, would, it was supposed, have employed the long interval subsequent to the prorogation in strengthening by every exertion his tenure of power. Unless he either regained the heads of the Rockingham party or conciliated Lord North, which last measure seemed to be more natural, it was obvious that he might, at any moment, be crushed by the union of those leaders. On the opening of the session, it soon, however, became evident that no such Ministerial approximation had taken place, and that the Administration relied for support upon its own proper strength or ability. But, on the other hand, Lord North and Mr. Fox, though both acted in opposition to Government, yet remained nevertheless still in complete and hostile separation. Scarcely did they refrain, on every occasion that presented itself, from personal reflec-

tions on each other. Neither the peace made with the American States, nor even the recognition of their independence by Great Britain, being however in themselves complete till a treaty should be likewise concluded with France, public attention became wholly directed to the issue of the pending negotiations with that Court. On their termination, whether it should prove hostile or pacific, all men foresaw that the two great parties who now stood at bay, without joining each other or uniting with Lord Shelburne, would necessarily take some decisive step most beneficial or most injurious in its results to the Administration.

Never perhaps at any period of our history did two successive sessions of the same Parliament commence under circumstances more dissimilar than those of 1781 and of 1782. At the opening of the former, when the speech from the throne announced the disaster at Yorktown, consternation or depression might be legibly traced in almost every countenance. America was lost, Gibraltar invested, Jamaica menaced, our dominions in the East nearly subverted. But in December 1782 the clouds had dispersed, not, however, so much from the change of Ministers as of measures. We no longer pursued the delusive phantom of subjecting the Transatlantic colonies. Rodney, whom Lord Sandwich had sent out to the West Indies, had captured or dispersed a large portion of the French navy. Eliott had destroyed the Spanish gunboats before Gibraltar. Lord Howe had thrown supplies into that fortress, and afterwards offered battle to the combined fleets. Nor were our affairs throughout the Peninsula of Hindostan less improved. Hyder Ally was driven from before Madras. Peace had been concluded with the Mahrattas, while Hughes, though not victorious, had frustrated all the efforts of Suffrein to



obtain a superiority on the Coast of Coromandel. The Rockingham Administration had scarcely in the slightest degree contributed towards these great national advantages. Fox had even recalled the victorious Admiral to whom we owed the 12th of April. Keppel fitted out his fleets with the stores provided by his predecessor in office, and to Lord Sandwich was, in fact, principally due the relief of Gibraltar. But Keppel had restored in some measure that unanimity to which the British navy had been strangers during the progress of the whole American contest. Lord Howe and Admiral Barrington, names deservedly cherished in our maritime annals, reappeared on the quarter-deck, from which they had been so long removed. The fleets of the House of Bourbon, which during three successive summers had approached, menaced, and insulted our coasts, no longer navigated the English Channel. Peace began to dawn upon us, and seemed to be at no remote distance. The First Minister, sustained by the sovereign at St. James's, derived no less benefit from the talents of the Chancellor of the Exchequer within the walls of the House of Commons. While in probity Pitt might be placed on an equality with Lord John Cavendish, not the slightest comparison could be made between their respective talents, and Lord Shelburne acquired incalculable strength from his support. On this apparently firm foundation stood the Ministry at the beginning of the session.

[*5th and 6th December 1782.*] The speech pronounced by his Majesty from the throne on the occasion may unquestionably be ranked among the most singular compositions ever put into the mouth of a British sovereign. In length I believe it had no parallel since the time of James I., and certainly it would be vain to seek for any similar production

since the accession of the House of Hanover. Some passages seemed more suitable to the spirit and language of a moralist or of a sage than of a monarch. In the midst of it was introduced an invocation, or rather a prayer, offered up by George III. to the Supreme Being, imploring His divine interference to avert the calamities which the American colonies, in consequence of their becoming independent states, might experience from the suppression of monarchical power. Burke held up this pious effusion of royal charity and philanthropy to great ridicule. "The King," exclaimed he, "is made by his Minister to fall upon his knees, and to deprecate the wrath of Heaven from the misguided American people, that they may not suffer from the want of monarchy. A people who never were designed for monarchy, who in their nature and character are adverse to monarchy, and who never had any other than the smell of monarchy, at the distance of 3000 miles! They are now to be protected by the prayers of their former sovereign from the consequences of its loss! Such whimpering and absurd piety has neither dignity, meaning, nor common sense." It must be owned that these comments, however severe, were not destitute of truth. Other parts of the royal speech afforded him equal subject for mirth and satire. The King concluding by a demand on Parliament for the exertion of temper, wisdom, and disinterestedness, subjoined as his last words, "My people expect these qualifications of you, and I call for them." "I believe," said Burke, "that since the days of Charles I., who advanced into this House and threw himself into the Speaker's chair to find out the members who had given him offence, such a strain of vapouring and blustering, such an insult and indignity, has not been offered to us. Are we to be slandered, or tutored, or instructed in the

principles of morals by his Majesty's Cabinet Ministers?"—"O wise Ministers! Dii tibi tonsorem donent! To all except one, who has no occasion for such a practitioner." The allusion to Pitt's youth could not escape notice. After paying, nevertheless, some compliments to the integrity of the young Chancellor of the Exchequer, which were all made, however, at the expense of the First Lord of the Treasury, Burke declared that the only proper description of the speech which the Minister had made the sovereign pronounce was to be found in *Hudibras* when he says—

"As if hypocrisy and nonsense  
Had got the advowson of his conscience."

Nor was Fox less severe in his animadversions on this first production of the Earl of Shelburne in his Ministerial capacity, though he was more argumentative, grave, and measured in his censures. On General Elliott and on Lord Howe he bestowed the highest encomiums—encomiums which were re-echoed from every part of the House. Having again recapitulated all the circumstances that attended and produced his own secession from the Cabinet, he endeavoured to show that his resignation, by forcing the Ministers to grant unconditional independence to America, had been productive of far greater advantages to his country, than he could have rendered by remaining a member of Administration. With great ingenuity and severity he pointed out Lord Shelburne's inconsistent declarations, many times repeated in the Upper House, that "he who should sign the independence of America would consummate the ruin of his own country and must be a traitor," now contrasted with his act in setting his hand to their complete emancipation. Such a contradictory language, coupled with his op-

posite system of conduct, could only, Fox observed, be properly characterised by two lines which he had somewhere read—

“ You’ve done a noble turn in nature’s spite ;  
For though you think you’re wrong, I’m sure you’re right.”

Pitt, however, who in a speech of equal ability, though much less diffuse, answered Fox on that evening, having defended his principal from the heavy imputations affixed to his political line of action in acknowledging American independence, after his many protestations to the contrary, added, “ If I may attempt a parody on the lines just quoted, I should say—

“ The praise he gives us is in nature’s spite ;  
He wishes we were wrong, but clearly sees we’re right.”

The promptitude and elegance of this retort, made amidst the hurry and distractions of a long debate in a crowded assembly, excited no little admiration. Nor did he touch with less delicacy and force of reasoning on the circumstance of his own youth, “ a calamity under which, he owned, he laboured, which he could not sufficiently lament, as it afforded such subject of animadversion to his opponents, but for which defect he pledged himself to atone by his care, industry, and assiduity in the public service.” If it had not been demonstrated already how great an acquisition Lord Shelburne had made in the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the debates of the 5th and 6th of December would have sufficiently proved the fact. Courtenay, when alluding to it a few days afterwards, observed, “ The noble Earl at the head of the Treasury has shown his judgment in securing such an auxiliary. Every man reposes confidence in him. There is a species of magic in the name and lineage of Pitt, which must

produce its influence on the nation. The First Minister, who is himself a great philosopher, has no doubt been informed by Dr. Priestley that the best mode of correcting and purifying corrupted air is by the introduction of a young vegetable."

Lord North never appeared to me, during the whole time that I sat in the House of Commons, whether he was in or out of office, in a more dignified and elevated point of view than on the first of those two evenings—I mean the 5th of December. His position was singular; standing aloof equally from Ministers and from the Rockingham party, holding the balance between both, placed on a sort of elevation by the events which had taken place since he resigned his employment; sustained by the glorious victories of Rodney and of Eliott, no longer menaced with impeachment, animated by steady loyalty to his sovereign, and not less propelled by attachment to his country. Such was his situation, and his language corresponded with it. Perhaps it would have been fortunate if he had continued to occupy so advantageous, independent, and patriotic an eminence, without lending an ear to the seductions of ambition or of resentment, in forming, as he did only two months later, a coalition with Fox. Unquestionably he would have appeared more an object of respect and veneration to posterity by persisting in such a line of political action, superior to party, watchful over the constitution, and attentive only to the great public interests of the state, than by accepting a secondary situation as the colleague of Fox under the Duke of Portland,—a situation which, when obtained, he was unable to retain more than a few months, and in accepting which he must have made some sacrifices of feeling and of recollection, if not of principle. The speech which he pronounced on the first day



of the session was every way worthy of himself, and breathed the genuine spirit of a statesman, who, though no longer directing the machine, yet superintended its movements with undiminished zeal as well as ability. In contradiction to his usual style of speaking, he abstained from all levity, and refused to avail himself of those resources of wit and humour which he had always at command. No sentiment of hostility or of animosity towards the new Administration characterised his expressions. He declared that he felt not the most distant inclination to oppose the address, or to move any amendment, as the advantages accruing from unanimity at the present moment would, in a national point of view, be incalculable. From the instant that he rose till he sat down, not a word escaped his lips which indicated the smallest approach towards the Rockingham party. On Fox he was even severe when differing from him respecting various points of the greatest public importance. Nor did he spare Burke for his animadversions on the prayer of the sovereign contained in the speech from the throne. "Surely, Mr. Speaker," said Lord North, "a heart animated by patriotic feelings like that of his Majesty must experience the deepest sorrow at an act so calamitous to this country as is the relinquishment of America. His sensations are truly those of a patriot king, and I am assured that he felt far less for himself when he made so great a sacrifice than he felt for his people."

On the conditions of peace which the enemy might offer, or which it became the Ministers to accept, Lord North expressed himself in language of equal dignity, wisdom, and moderation. "To just and reasonable terms," said he, "I will most cheerfully assent; but should France or Spain display arrogance and injustice in their demands, every

man in this assembly and throughout the nation will, I am persuaded, zealously concur in prosecuting the war with vigour. We unanimously demand an honourable treaty or a vigorous war. We are ready to negotiate on fair and equitable principles, but if in their insolence or imaginary power the enemy exact degrading conditions, we are determined to maintain the contest with our lives and fortunes." In terms of earnestness he recommended to the Ministers attention in marking out proper well-defined boundaries between the territory of Great Britain and the American frontier; but, above all, he trusted that they would provide an asylum for the loyal and unhappy sufferers who, throughout this long-protracted struggle, had remained faithful to their native sovereign. Over Lord Shelburne he threw a shield, and justified his assertion that "the sun of Britain was for ever set when the separation of the thirteen colonies should be signed. That calamitous event," observed he, "cannot justly be charged to the present First Minister merely because he consummates the deed. It is we, not he, who must sustain the culpability. If the sun of England is indeed set, the House of Commons is the magician who has brought it down from the skies." No part of this admirable speech justly attracted more approbation than the part in which he replied to Fox, who had attributed to Keppel's exertions the advantages which we had gained on the element of the water. "It is not a little extraordinary," said Lord North, "that the same person who, when he came into office eight months ago, drew a picture of our naval condition sufficient to make every man tremble in this House, should now stoutly affirm that our navy is equal to combating the united fleets of the House of Bourbon. But as ships do not spring up like mushrooms in a night,

by what magic could so great an addition be made to our navy within one summer, unless the former Admiralty, by their preparations of ships and stores, had facilitated the means of victory? I would say to the present naval Alexander, True, you have conquered; but you have conquered with Philip's troops." During the whole of the two debates which took place at the opening of the session, though General Conway and Mr. Secretary Townshend occasionally rose, yet the defence of the Ministerial measures principally rested on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. No Administration could commence under fairer auspices, which was destined to terminate so soon; not any attempt to divide the House being made either by Lord North or by Fox, who appeared to be reciprocally animated by the most hostile sentiments.

[11th December 1782.] Among the weapons of attack which the Rockingham party directed with most success against the First Minister was the imputation of insincerity or duplicity. It was asserted that he interpreted the conditional or provisional articles concluded with the American States in a different sense from the meaning annexed to them by other members of the Cabinet, Lord Shelburne, it was pretended, regarding them as capable of being revoked or annulled in case that the pending negotiations respecting peace between England and France should be finally broken off, while Pitt, Conway, and Townshend declared that they were in every event final and irrevocable. Unquestionably some reasons for doubt as to the interpretation of the word *provisional* might be reasonably entertained; and as the war with America might be revived if the independence of the Transatlantic States was not unconditionally and unequivocally

acknowledged by Great Britain, Fox endeavoured to probe this Ministerial wound. He did not indeed venture to divide the House upon it nor attempt to stop the supplies, because he knew how insufficient was his parliamentary strength for making either of those experiments with success. But he endeavoured to extort a clear reply from some of the Ministers relative to the point under discussion. They, on the other hand, refused or declined making any specific answer during the actual state of affairs, and demanded time.

Burke, in his metaphorical and figurative language, compared them to the *amphisbæna*, which some credulous naturalists describe as having two heads, one at each extremity. "Such a serpent, I hope," added he, "exists only in chimera; but Ministers resemble such an animal. They hiss an opposite language from the head and from the tail, so that the nation is confounded between their contradictory stories." Even Lord North, though he approved of the silence observed by the Treasury bench under the circumstances of the moment, and though he further declared that if any motion was made for compelling the Administration to lay the provisional treaty before Parliament, he would give it his negative, yet admitted that its interpretation was exceedingly problematical. As the Rockingham party was too feeble to come to extremities unless sustained by Lord North, Fox contented himself therefore with laying on the First Minister the heaviest charges of double-dealing in all his proceedings. Powis, who joined in these opinions, said that he held the three members of the Cabinet who had seats in the House pledged as hostages to the country for the ratification of the provisional treaty according to their construction of it. Such reflections thrown on the Earl of Shelburne, however

they might originate in the violence of party and of political enmity, yet, as impeaching the candour and the rectitude of his public conduct, must have been equally painful to that nobleman himself and to his associates in the Government.

[12th December 1782.] Though Parliament sat for only a very short period during the month of December, scarcely exceeding a fortnight previous to their adjournment till after Christmas, yet one very interesting debate which arose in the House of Commons produced a material operation on some articles of the peace then negotiating with the House of Bourbon. Rumours, which acquired considerable, if not implicit, credit, were circulated throughout the metropolis stating that Lord Shelburne had not only manifested a disposition, but had even consented, with the approbation of the Cabinet, to cede Gibraltar to Spain on certain conditions. He had indeed very early felt the pulse of Parliament on the subject. Mr. Bankes,<sup>1</sup> member for Corfe Castle, who seconded the address to the throne on the first day of the session, and who seems to have been more deeply initiated in the secrets or informed of the intentions of Administration than the mover of the address on that occasion, alluded in very clear and intelligible, though in general terms to the possible, or rather probable, cession of the fortress in question. He accompanied the intimation with remarks on the great expense and little comparative value or national advantages connected with retaining its possession. Fox instantly animadverted with equal force and severity on the idea thus suggested, which he held up to condemnation as an act most pernicious to the state if it should ever be carried into execution. In language of energy he depicted the respect which our proud

<sup>1</sup> Henry Bankes.—ED.



position on that isolated rock excited among the European nations. "Cede to Spain," exclaimed he, "Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean becomes a pool, a mere pond, on which the Spaniards can navigate at their pleasure. Deprive yourselves of this commanding station, and the states that border on that sea will no longer look to England for the maintenance of its free navigation." Nor did he let pass the occasion of wounding George III. through the sides of the King of Spain. Adverting to the opinion which had been given by Bankes in the course of his speech that "the Cabinet of Madrid, having ascertained the folly and impracticability of attempting to reduce Gibraltar by their recent discomfiture, would never again employ the forces of the monarchy on so vain as well as so ruinous a siege," Fox exposed the fallacy of such arguments. "There may be," observed he, "near the heart of every prince a longing after some object which a thousand disappointments or defeats cannot extinguish. Those who recollect the history of this country during near nine years past will agree with me that it is not easy to convince men of their follies even when experience has proved them to be such. We have persisted through many ruinous campaigns in a war for the subjection of the American colonies. What then should hinder us from believing that Charles III. may not persevere as pertinaciously in his longing for the reduction of Gibraltar as a sovereign nearer home was taught to pursue the phantom of unconditional submission from America?" The very truth of this observation, which could not well be contested, ought in prudence to have prevented Fox from making it in so public a place.

Burke, supporting with all the powers of his eloquence the positions advanced by his friend, trusted

that Ministers would not dare to sport with the feelings of the nation respecting an object so justly cherished as Gibraltar. "That fortress," said he, "is invaluable, because impregnable. The sovereign of Spain has not an appendage of his crown equalling it in importance. The capitals of Mexico and Peru are not at his disposal, and the island of Porto Rico, if offered, would by no means form an adequate compensation. Gibraltar is not merely a post of pride; it is a post of power, of connection, and of commerce." In terms more measured, Lord North appreciated its value. "I will not go so far as to assert," observed he, "that Gibraltar is inestimable, and in no possible case ought to be ceded to Spain. If peace cannot otherwise be obtained, such a sacrifice may become necessary, but its price should be large, and no Ministers would be justified in resigning a possession so honourable, so useful, as well as so dear to this country, unless for an equivalent of the highest importance." The offers made by Charles III. were indeed of such a nature as in the estimation of many able men would have fully justified Ministers in restoring to the Catholic King that expensive fortress. I have been assured that, in his eagerness to re-annex Gibraltar to the Spanish monarchy, he tendered in exchange for it the Canary Islands together with Porto Rico in the West Indies, the former of which possessions, from their happy situation in the Atlantic, their climate and productions, might be rendered most invaluable acquisitions to Great Britain, while the latter island must be considered as scarcely inferior to Jamaica in extent, fertility, and political importance. Gibraltar, however dear to the national vanity, and whatever flattering recollections the late glorious defence might awaken, could not, it was imagined, be put in competition

with the Canaries and Porto Rico. In a commercial point of view, no comparison could indeed be made between the two possessions, but as an object of national consideration, respect, and power, we shall probably admit that Gibraltar would have been ill exchanged for any Atlantic or West India islands. I am of that sentiment in 1818, though I am ready to confess that I thought otherwise in 1782.

Sir George Howard, himself a general officer, having nevertheless unexpectedly brought forward in the House of Commons a discussion relative to that fortress, and the possibility that its cession or alienation to Spain might be in contemplation, it soon appeared that men of all parties were imbued with partialities so violent in its favour, and such indignation was manifested at the bare idea of ceding it, even for any equivalent however valuable, that the intention was relinquished. No act could assuredly have been further from Sir George's intention, who was an excellent courtier, than to have agitated any subject which in its results might embarrass the councils of the crown. But General Conway having moved the thanks of the House to General Elliott for his glorious defence of Gibraltar, Howard proposed to add, "the most valuable and important fortress of all our foreign territories." These few words operated like the apple of discord, and afforded to Opposition an ample field for declamation. Lord North was not present on that evening, but Fox instantly availed himself of the occasion. Sir George, finding that while he had only intended to place General Elliott's public merits in the fairest point of view by demonstrating the importance of his services, the motion had produced a great political question, would willingly have withdrawn his amendment. Fox, however, expressed the utmost disinclination to consent. "I do not, myself," said

he, "credit the reports of an intended cession of Gibraltar, because I am convinced that there is not in the Cabinet a single man who dares to give it up. The amendment, if it should be carried, will convince the public at large how false are these rumours, but it will likewise prove to the Spanish Government that the nation is not disposed to permit of such a cession." Burke maintained the same arguments, and Mr. Daniel Parker Coke declared that he would rather suffer his right hand to be cut off than ever consent to restore Gibraltar. Sir George Howard's amendment was nevertheless finally withdrawn by consent of the House, but the substance of the debate having been taken down in shorthand by a person stationed in the gallery, and immediately communicated to Lord Shelburne, he dispatched a messenger with it the next morning to our Minister at Paris, Mr. Fitzherbert, now Lord St. Helen's,<sup>1</sup> enjoining him to lay it before the Count de Vergennes and the Count d'Aranda. I know from good authority that the latter nobleman, who was then the Spanish ambassador at the Court of Versailles, had received the most positive instructions not to sign any peace with Great Britain, however favourable the terms might be in other respects, unless the cession of Gibraltar constituted one of the articles of the treaty. Finding, nevertheless, after the communication above mentioned, that no equivalent would be accepted for its restitution, and that the British Cabinet did not dare to do it in violation of public opinion, D'Aranda, in disobedience to these orders, finally affixed his name to the act, taking on himself the risk and the responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> Alleyne Fitz-Herbert was created Baron St. Helen's in the peerage of Ireland in 1791. Raised to the peerage of the United Kingdom in 1801, he died in the Isle of Wight in 1839, when the peerages became extinct.—ED.

[13<sup>th</sup>—23<sup>d</sup> December 1782.] Previous to the adjournment of the House of Commons before Christmas, Fox made another ineffectual attempt to compel the production of the provisional treaty with America. The debate which took place on this occasion, being in fact the last that arose of an important nature previous to the peace with our European enemies, and consequently previous to the union of Lord North with the Rockingham party, was distinguished by some very interesting circumstances. Fox grounded his motion for laying the treaty in question before the House on the notorious disagreement between the First Lord of the Treasury and his colleagues in the Cabinet on its acceptance, Lord Shelburne declaring it to be revocable if peace should not be finally made with France, while others of the Ministers maintained it to be in every event final. Such a discordant exhibition of sentiment on so important a point seemed to call for some explanation or disclosure on the part of Administration. Fox, however, well aware how weak was his numerical strength within those walls unless sustained by Lord North, after endeavouring to justify his demand of the treaty on principles of public expediency, added, "I expect support in my motion, though I do not court it. I do not indeed know whether I may calculate on the aid of the noble Lord in the blue ribband seated below me, as, by a strange mode of reasoning, he brings himself to vote with Ministers though he totally disagrees with them in opinion." The Treasury bench preserving a profound silence, Thomas Pitt moved the order of the day, at the same time advising and adjuring his Ministerial friends not to violate their oath as privy councillors, since nothing except misconstruction and misrepresentation could arise from their explanations.



At this period of the discussion Lord North presented himself to the Speaker's notice and delivered one of the most entertaining speeches ever heard in that assembly. Rarely, I believe, has more wit been crowded into so narrow a compass. Every sentence conveyed the most delicate irony or the most contumelious yet amusing ridicule. He began by lamenting that the wholesome and sage advice just given to Ministers on the subject of observing discretion and secrecy should have come too late to be of any use, they having already been guilty of divulging their opinions. Having expressed his concern that it was impossible to agree with a divided Cabinet collectively, he said he would nevertheless agree with them partially and vote for the order of the day, as he should at least be sure of coinciding with those members of Administration who sat opposite to him. "For," added he, "though I perfectly agree with the right honourable gentleman (Fox) in all his statements and principles, yet I cannot think the present moment a seasonable one for producing the provisional articles." With inconceivable humour he contrasted and exposed the different versions of the treaty, first as presented in the King's speech from the throne at the opening of the session, next in Lord Shelburne's language, and lastly in the declarations of the other Ministers. "I prefer, however," said he, "the edition of this matter as we have it on royal paper before all the subsequent editions, *cum notis variorum*, which have been since published." On the subject of that oath, to the strict observance of which the members of the Cabinet were entreated by Tom Pitt to adhere, he made some observations so ludicrous as put all gravity to flight. "If," observed he, "this mysterious treaty depended on no contingency whatever, it would resemble, not a privy councillor's

oath, of which we have heard so much to-day, but a much less serious oath, of which we have all heard, and which some of us may probably have taken. I mean the oath administered at Highgate, by which a man swears that he never will drink small beer when he can get strong, unless he likes the former best, nor ever kiss the maid when he might kiss the mistress, unless he choose the maid in preference."

Continuing, or rather resuming, his speech as soon as the House had recovered from the violent effects of this simile on their muscles, he directed his artillery of jests against the Cabinet, of which three members were present. "It has been asserted," observed Lord North, "that the contradictory opinions of Ministers might be reduced to some certainty by subjecting them to the wisdom of this assembly. I cannot think so, for surely the present Cabinet is the place where we might expect, of all others, unanimous agreement on matters of state policy. It is composed of eleven men of distinguished talents, immense wisdom, consummate experience, and determined firmness. This assemblage of genius has besides as many more agents or commissioners now employed at Paris on the important work of peace. If such men are not able to fix the determinate import and meaning of the treaty before us, how can we expect it to be done within our walls? I have heard this House called the temple of eloquence, of reason, of freedom, and of fame; but I never yet knew it to be called the temple of concord." As, however, though Lord North had held up the Administration to ridicule and had so pointedly spoken against them, he nevertheless declared his intention to vote for them, I believe Fox would not have divided the House if General Conway had not provoked him to it by asserting on his legs that "the member who had originated the

debate would not dare to take the sense of the House, well knowing by how small a minority he would be attended into the lobby." Irritated at such an insinuation, of which he expressed his indignant sense, Fox persisted, and a division taking place on the original motion for the order of the day, the Rockingham party could only muster forty-six votes. Government, supported by Lord North and his adherents, exhibited a triumphant majority of two hundred and nineteen, thus carrying the question by one hundred and seventy-three. It is difficult to determine with any certainty the respective numbers that voted with Administration and with Lord North on that evening. I should, however, estimate the followers of the latter at seventy to eighty. That he could incline the balance to which ever side he pleased was evident. He appeared, indeed, throughout the whole debate not only pre-eminent in talents of every description, but as the arbiter of the scene. Like Henry VIII., he might have assumed for his device "*Cui adhæreo, præest.*" Nor could Fox avoid perceiving that his own entrance into the Cabinet, unless he chose to serve under the present First Minister, must lie through Lord North's assistance, and could be effected by no other mode. That nobleman, since the day on which he had resigned his power, had not occupied a more dignified place in the public eye and in parliamentary estimation. These facts, and the reflections to which they necessarily gave rise, produced within two months the memorable coalition. A few days subsequent to the above debate an adjournment of the two Houses of Parliament took place till the 21st of January.

[*January 1783.*] Throughout a considerable part of the month of January the greatest fluctuation of public opinion prevailed relative to the final success

of the treaties agitating at Paris ; and as late as the 18th, the Queen's birthday, the prevalent ideas in the drawing-room were generally adverse to the probability of a favourable issue ; but five days afterwards intelligence arrived in London that peace had been signed at Versailles. Lord Keppel, either from repentance of his conduct in having quitted Fox after the Marquis of Rockingham's decease, or suspicious of the approaching dissolution of the actual Ministry, or (as he asserted afterwards on the debate which took place in the House of Peers) disapproving the articles of the treaty recently concluded, immediately resigned his employment of the First Lord of the Admiralty. He was succeeded by Lord Howe, and early in the month of February the Marquis of Carmarthen<sup>1</sup> was named Ambassador to the Court of France. Though the House of Commons met on the 21st of January, pursuant to its adjournment, yet no business of moment was brought forward, either by Ministers or by their opponents, during the considerable interval of near a month which elapsed previous to the day fixed for discussing the articles of the peace in both Houses of Parliament. They had intermediately been exchanged and ratified by the two Governments. A more than ordinary interest was excited on the subject throughout the nation ; the stability or dismissal of the Administration evidently depending on the parliamentary approval or disapprobation of the treaty. In the House of Lords there seemed to be, indeed, little danger of incurring a vote of censure ; but it was otherwise in the Lower House, where the Minister, in addition to his own slender personal strength, and the individuals holding offices under the Crown, could only expect support either from

<sup>1</sup> Francis Godolphin, succeeded his father as fifth Duke of Leeds. He was born 29th January 1751, and died 31st January 1799.—ED.

persons inclined to maintain indifferently every Government, or from those independent members who, disregarding all motives of party, might be induced to approve the treaties on the ground of their abstract merits, and their just claim to national gratitude.

Facts such as these, which were palpable to all, could not possibly escape the attention of him who was most deeply interested in their result. And it has always appeared to persons uninformed one of the most inexplicable events of our time that Lord Shelburne, who must have perceived the great improbability of his being able to maintain himself in power after the conclusion of peace without the aid of one or the other of the two great parties in opposition, should nevertheless have allowed Parliament to meet for the express purpose of discussing the merits of the peace, without conciliating previously the leaders of either side. Was he then indifferent to the preservation of that office, which he had acquired with so much address, and not unaccompanied with a degree of obloquy? No person can believe or suppose it. Neither his adherents nor his enemies ever maintained such an opinion. How therefore are we to interpret a conduct so contrary to all the dictates of ambition, policy, and self-interest? In order to explain it, I shall state such circumstances as have been related to me by individuals of eminence and respectability possessing information which will throw considerable light upon the subject.

It seemed certainly most natural that, of the two parties excluded from power, Lord Shelburne should have addressed himself to that body of men who still considered Lord North as their leader. To many of the individuals composing it I know that he did, in fact, make advances, either personally or



by his friends. Mr. Orde,<sup>1</sup> the Secretary of the Treasury, in whose department lay the management of the House of Commons, was not idle during the autumn of 1782. At his residence in Park Place, St. James's Street, he gave Ministerial dinners, principally to members of Parliament. I have myself dined with him at that time. The American war being terminated, the principal object of disunion between the late and the present First Minister had ceased to exist. Lord Shelburne was, moreover, known to have pertinaciously resisted the concession of independence to America. His reluctance and pretended duplicity, or rather his ambiguity relative to granting unconditional independence to the thirteen colonies, formed one of the most prominent points of accusation against him on the part of Fox and the Rockingham party. It could not be doubted that the King, who, availing himself of favourable circumstances, had elevated the First Lord of the Treasury to the place that he held, and who deprecated no event so much as being a second time compelled to take Fox into his councils, would secretly approve, and would sincerely promote, any measure tending to exclude him from Administration. Of all political unions that could be effected with a view to strengthen the Ministry, an alliance between Lord North and the Earl of Shelburne, it was therefore assumed, must be most agreeable to the sovereign. Nor, as I have been assured, did there exist any insurmountable personal antipathies or impediments between those two noble persons which could have prevented the accomplishment of so desirable a reconciliation. Lord North was the most placable of human beings. But though they might have been willing to coalesce, there were other individuals in the Government not possessed of so tractable or so

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Orde, afterwards Baron Bolton (see *ante*, pp. 265, 358).—ED.

conciliating a disposition. Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond both inflexibly refused to sit in Cabinet with Lord North, and they remained firm upon the point.

Partial as I am to the memory and character of that amiable nobleman, I am far from blaming their determination. They considered Lord North as the Minister who, during many years, had carried on and supported by his ability a contest, become hopeless, which had precipitated Great Britain into disgrace as well as debt. His subserviency to the royal will or wishes, even if proved, would only in their eyes have aggravated his culpability. They regarded the loss of our American colonies as the necessary consequence of his councils or of his administration. He was besides accused by them of having made Parliament the corrupt instrument of his policy, and of having purchased the support which he received in both Houses. Political principle therefore dictated and produced their refusal to associate him to their Ministry. Such an obstacle was neither to be surmounted nor to be removed. The Duke of Richmond might, indeed, have been dismissed without apprehension of its producing very injurious results of any kind, but Mr. Pitt was essential to the Ministerial existence and duration. His high character and his name joined to his eminent parliamentary talents formed Lord Shelburne's best security for carrying any measure through the House of Commons. Neither Townshend nor Conway possessed the eloquence, ability, or hereditary weight, all which met in the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If, therefore, in order to gain Lord North, the First Lord of the Treasury had thrown Pitt into Opposition, no exertions could have long resisted his and Fox's united attacks, fighting side by side. And the House itself would probably, nay,

infallibly, have reprobated such a junction when attained by the expulsion of Pitt from power. These causes prevented any attempt being made to gain Lord North's support by admitting him and his principal friends to places in the Cabinet, and his friendship, it was obvious, could not be obtained on inferior terms.

[21st January—15th February 1783.] The strongest indications were meanwhile given on the part of Fox's adherents, as well as by some of the friends of Lord North, that they intended to attack and to arraign the treaties of peace just concluded.<sup>1</sup> No sooner had the preliminaries signed between England and the two branches of the House of Bourbon, together with the provisional articles made with America, been brought down to the House of Commons and read by the clerk, than Eden instantly rose to express the feelings of concern, or rather of indignation and distress, with which the fifth article of the American treaty inspired him. It regarded the Loyalists, who, as appeared from the nature of the provisions, were abandoned by Great Britain, and left exposed to the severest treatment from the provincial assemblies. This circumstance took place on the 27th of January. Four days later, Fox, in answer to some remarks which fell from General Conway on the subject of the recent pacification, observed that though he did not mean to anticipate the consideration of the treaties, for which discussion a proper time would be appointed, yet that he did not consider it to be as good a peace as might have been made by Ministers. Eden<sup>2</sup> entered his protest on the same evening against the cession of

<sup>1</sup> Franklin always maintained that the Opposition would never have obtained more favourable terms than those agreed to by Ministers. He used prophetically to add that England would recover her greatness and be worthy of respect.—D.

<sup>2</sup> William Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland (see vol. i. p. 237).—ED.

a vast portion of Canada, comprehending no less than 18,000 square miles, declaring it to be his opinion that in dissevering so large a territory from the Empire, Administration had violated a positive Act of Parliament. On the 10th of February, Fox, while alluding to the preliminaries, said that they did not bear on their face their justification. Lord Nugent, though generally disposed to support Government, yet spoke in language of the utmost violence on the subject of the Loyalists. "If his Majesty's Ministers," exclaimed he, "have omitted any possible exertion in favour of those unfortunate men, no punishment can be adequate to their crime. Their blood alone can wipe away the stain inflicted on the honour of their country." Governor Johnstone repeated these denunciations in scarcely milder terms, while Sheridan, who already seemed to fix on Pitt as an object of his personal reprehension and attack whenever a favourable occasion arose, exhorted the Chancellor of the Exchequer not to speak in so high a tone from the Treasury bench. "If," added Sheridan, "he and his colleagues had held as lofty a style to the enemies of Great Britain during the late discussions relative to peace as they do here, they would not be compelled to stand so much on the defensive as they probably must do when the examination of the preliminaries comes before us." Every circumstance announced a determination to push matters to extremity, and if possible to drive the Ministers from their posts, for having sacrificed the honour as well as the interests of Great Britain in the recent treaties.

Lord Shelburne, conscious of the approaching danger, and desirous of averting a parliamentary conflict so doubtful in its issue, caused overtures of a conciliatory nature to be made to Fox, offering to

replace him in his late office, and to provide for his friends or connections who had followed him out of power after Lord Rockingham's decease. The King was induced, though reluctantly, to allow and to approve of the proposals, on the ground of state necessity, it being esteemed a less serious evil to admit Fox into the Cabinet by negotiation than to incur the risk of his entering it by storm. In the first case, he would remain still in a minority, while the Treasury would be completely independent of him; whereas, in the second event, he would dictate the law. But Fox, though he professed himself willing to make a part of an Administration formed upon a broad basis, and therefore disposed to listen to the proposition, exacted one indispensable preliminary, namely, Lord Shelburne's dismissal or resignation. Unless the Treasury were placed in the hands of the Duke of Portland, as the new recognised head of the Rockingham party, and unless Lord Shelburne were wholly excluded from a place in the Cabinet, he peremptorily refused to accede to any terms of accommodation. With all the other principal individuals composing the Ministry he declared his readiness to act, but personally to Lord Shelburne his repugnance continued insurmountable, and could not be removed by any efforts.

In embracing this determination, it seems impossible to doubt that he was more impelled by passion—in using which term I mean rivalry, party feelings, and personal aversion to the First Lord of the Treasury—than by moral or political principle. Even his secession from the Cabinet in July 1782, though it originated in a difference of opinion on a great state question of the deepest importance, namely, the grant of unconditional independence to America, yet was consummated from resentment and precipitation. Probably he regretted it when



too late ; for it was proved by facts that, whatever Lord Shelburne might have meditated, or even declared, relative to not conceding independence to the Transatlantic colonies, he was overruled, and compelled by the Cabinet to carry into execution that humiliating measure. Nay, more ; we have the authority of General Conway, when addressing the House of Commons on the subject, for asserting that the First Minister not only overcame and subdued his own reluctance to declaring the American States independent, but by his arguments or persuasions prevailed on the King his master to surmount his strongly-rooted antipathy to the same act of renunciation. Fox, indeed, always asserted and maintained that his resignation of office had produced more benefit to the country, and had operated more powerfully to force Lord Shelburne's acquiescence on the point in question, than he could have done by remaining a member of the Cabinet. But it is evident that he did not lie under any necessity of throwing up his employment or of sacrificing his principles. The dispute never arrived at that alternative, for which he ought to have waited before he came to extremities. If he had temperately and steadily opposed the First Minister, appealing to his colleagues, Lord Keppel, Conway, and the Duke of Richmond, for support, sustained as he was by Lord John Cavendish, the Earl of Shelburne must have given way, or he would have been left in a minority. No doubt Fox's secession and appeal to the House of Commons, or rather to the nation, forced the First Minister, as well as his colleagues, to concede unequivocally independence to America. But if Fox had been more master of himself, and less under the dominion of anger or of the desire to dictate in the Cabinet, he might have effected his object by a menace of resignation, and yet have

retained the seal. In forming an alliance with Lord North, as he soon afterwards did, he made a far greater surrender of principle, and at the same time shocked public opinion much more than he could possibly have done by acting with Lord Shelburne, whatever measures had been adopted by Administration.

Such, as I have always understood, were the leading principles or circumstances on which was subsequently reared that celebrated junction between Lord North and Fox, which, from its extraordinary nature and more extraordinary effects, has obtained in English history, by way of distinction from all other political unions or alliances ever contracted in our time, the name of the "Coalition." The proscription of Lord North by Pitt and of Lord Shelburne by Fox of necessity drove the two excluded Ministers into each other's arms, at once obliterated all causes of offence between them, and impelled them, banishing every retrospect, as well as in some measure setting general opinion at defiance, only to look forward to the joint possession of power. As the 17th of February stood fixed for the consideration of the articles of peace in both Houses of Parliament, and as Lord North disapproved of many of those articles no less strongly than Fox, it became obvious that they must, in all cases, divide together on that night against the Administration. And if they should find themselves in a majority, as was highly probable, it seemed to follow that the Ministers must retire from office. But, in order to avail themselves of their triumph and to form a new Administration, some mutual understanding, if not some principles of permanent accommodation, became absolutely necessary to be adopted by both individuals. Otherwise, however victorious they might prove in Parliament, they

would probably derive no benefit from their superiority, and Lord Shelburne, though vanquished in the House of Commons, might still contrive to retain his seat in the Cabinet as First Minister.

These considerations, in themselves most forcible, acquiring hourly strength as the day approached for the discussion of the peace, reproduced some symptoms of mutual tendency towards reconciliation. Never, perhaps, did two men exist more inclined by nature to oblivion of injuries or to sentiments of forgiveness than Lord North and Fox. The latter, whatever might be his defects of character, possessed in an eminent degree placability and magnanimity of mind. "*Amicitia sempiternæ, inimicitia placabiles,*" was a maxim always in his mouth. The former, too indolent to retain the burthen of enmity, and conscious that Fox's hostility towards him had always been more political than personal, gladly deposited his resentments, his recollections, and his injuries, at the feet of his interest and ambition. Both equally concurred in the necessity of agreeing on some plan of concerted action, before they took their places side by side on the front or Opposition bench. Hitherto, though Lord North usually or always sat there, Fox continued to speak from the third bench above it, as did likewise Burke. But however deeply they might both be impressed with these feelings, they nevertheless abstained from any direct interview, leaving all matters to the intervention of mutual friends. The Honourable George Augustus North, eldest son of Lord North, then member for Harwich, and afterwards himself Earl of Guildford,<sup>1</sup> acted as the negotiator for his father on this occasion, while the Honourable Col-

<sup>1</sup> George Augustus, third Earl of Guilford, born 11th September 1757. His second wife was Susan, daughter of Thomas Coutts, the banker. He died 20th April 1802.—ED.

onel Fitzpatrick,<sup>1</sup> Fox's most intimate friend and companion, conducted the treaty on the other part. Eden, who enjoyed much of Lord North's confidence, exerted his utmost efforts to accelerate the successful progress of the negotiation. Mr. North by no means wanted talents, but in address, capacity, and accomplishments, Fitzpatrick possessed an infinite superiority. Each was actuated by a warm desire to conduct the business to a successful issue. Two or three days elapsed in conferences and discussions, nor was it till a very late hour of the night of the 16th of February that, after many visits to and fro between Fox's lodgings in St. James's Street, and Grosvenor Square, where Lord North then resided, they finally settled the outlines of a convention by which, on the part of the two principals, it was stipulated that if they effected a change of Administration, the Treasury should be given to the Duke of Portland; that Lord North should likewise take a Cabinet office; that a fair partition of the spoils, in other words, of the great posts and emoluments of the state, should be made between the two parties, who agreed henceforward to coalesce. And lastly, that in the debate of the approaching evening, they should speak, act, and divide in concert.

[*17th February 1783.*] Such were the general preliminaries of the "Coalition." Many difficulties on both sides, which impeded the progress of the negotiation, protracted its termination, nor did either Lord North or Fox retire to rest till four or five in the morning, when the business was at length concluded. Fox, accustomed to pass the greater part of the night at Brookes's, appeared in the House of

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Richard Fitzpatrick, son of John, first Earl of Upper Ossory, born 30th January 1747. Secretary at War in 1783. He died 25th April 1813.—ED.

Commons with his usual freshness on the ensuing evening, and manifested throughout the debate that ensued neither inattention, lassitude, nor fatigue. But Lord North, whose natural somnolency was increased by having sat up during so many hours of the preceding night under circumstances of considerable agitation, as well as by the prodigious heat arising from a crowded House, after taking his seat near his new ally on the Opposition bench, found himself so overcome by sleep that its effect became irresistible. Unwilling, probably, to exhibit such a spectacle at such a moment, which would have excited matter of animadversion or of ridicule to both parties, he at length quitted his seat and came up into the gallery. I had placed myself there immediately over the Treasury bench, every part of the House below being completely filled. Lord North having seated himself by me, made every effort in his power to keep himself awake, but to accomplish it exceeded his ability. As the discussion had already taken a very personal turn, severe sarcasms as well as reproaches being levelled from the Treasury bench against the unnatural coalition just formed, particularly by Dundas, who stigmatised it with the strongest epithets of contumelious reprobation, he requested me to awaken him as often as any such expressions should be used by Ministers. I did so many times, but when he had listened for a few minutes, he as often involuntarily relapsed into repose. At the end of about an hour and a half, during the greater portion of which time he seemed scarcely sensible to any circumstance that passed, he began to rouse himself. By degrees he recovered his faculties, and having heard from my mouth some of the most interesting or acrimonious passages that had taken place while he was asleep, he went down again into the body of the



House, placed himself by Fox on the floor, and made one of the most able, brilliant, as well as entertaining speeches that I ever heard him pronounce within those walls. No man who listened to it could have imagined that he had lost a single sentence of the preceding debate, or that his intellectual powers had been clouded by fatigue and want of rest.<sup>1</sup>

Lord John Cavendish, whom Fox always selected for special and important occasions, as his high character for integrity and uprightness spread a sort of veil over the irregularities of his party, moved an amendment on that night to the address proposed by the friends of Administration. Lord John's amendment was, however, couched in terms so guarded, with a view to secure as many votes as possible, that it might rather be termed a hesitation in approving than any direct censure on the peace. Even Lord North, who afterwards proposed a second amendment, in which he recommended the American Loyalists to his Majesty's consideration, implied more than he asserted that they had been forgotten or abandoned by the framers of the articles of pacification concluded with the thirteen colonies. The Coalition itself, avowed by Fox, was not only defended with the boldness and decision that marked his character, but he retorted on the Lord Advocate all the acrimonious expressions which fell from the latter upon the sudden union of two such inveterate opponents. Mr. Townshend, as Secretary of State, excelled himself in his defence of the peace, and

<sup>1</sup> Lord North was pre-eminent in his replies, and in nothing did he more astonish the House than in this intuitive seizure of all the prominent points in debate, whilst he had evidently been sleeping the greater time. An annotator of these Memoirs writes—"I have heard him more than once after he had become blind, and shall never forget the mild tone and gentle suavity of his manner, nor the respectful attention with which he was heard."—ED.

may really be said to have in some measure earned on that night the peerage which he soon afterwards obtained.<sup>1</sup> I never saw him display so much animation nor heard him manifest such ability. Nor was Pitt wanting to himself or to his party. But all their efforts proved unavailing to sustain an Administration which, having been originally established on too shallow foundations, had received no subsequent reinforcement. After a debate protracted till near eight o'clock in the morning, they were left in a minority of sixteen.<sup>2</sup> Only nine votes, therefore, taken from the Coalition and transferred to Ministers, would have given them a majority, and above four hundred and thirty members voted on the occasion.

Many curious and interesting circumstances, some among them of a personal nature, took place in the course of that long discussion which were calculated to make a deep impression on the memory. Powis, first of any individual who rose to speak, assumed the existence of a political union between Lord North and Fox, reasoned upon it as a fact consummated, and reprobated it in terms of the severest irony or condemnation. "The House now beholds," said he, "for the first time the lofty defenders of royal prerogative allied with the zealous worshippers of the majesty of the people. The most determined supporter of the influence of the crown joins hands with the purifier of the constitution, the reformer of the household." With great ability and still greater candour Powis pointed out the defects and conces-

<sup>1</sup> Raised to the English peerage as Baron Sydney in 1783, and advanced to a Viscountship in 1789.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> The minority was seventeen. The peace was condemned by a majority of 207 to 190. "I hear," says Lord Grantham to Sir James Harris, "nothing ever equalled the speech which Pitt made. . . . He is a most extraordinary phenomenon (he was up three hours), and his character untainted."—D.

sions of the treaties just concluded, expressed his regret that such features of the work should excite his disapprobation, but added, "Yet, considering the whole collectively and the national position at the present moment, I am ready to give my full assent to the address moved, and to declare my perfect satisfaction." If similar sentiments, superior to the spirit of party, had animated the assembly at large, Lord Shelburne would have kept his office. So guardedly couched indeed was the amendment which Lord North moved, that Townshend offered to agree with it if the noble Lord would vote for the address, but the Secretary of State's proposal met with an instant rejection. Burke answered Powis's animadversions on the junction between Lord North and Fox, the principles of which union he justified; though as to the fact, he neither denied nor admitted it. "Those persons, however," observed he, "who hold that opinion and censure so violently the alliance have only to direct their eyes to the Treasury bench, where they will behold a learned Lord sitting between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State." Dundas instantly rose, and in a speech of considerable length as well as of great ability, full of most galling personalities to Fox, contrasted his former denunciations of Lord North while First Minister with his present line of action. He desired Fox to recollect his own assertions that "almost any peace ought to be made in order to extricate the country from its embarrassments and to dissolve the combination of powers leagued against us." Nor did Dundas omit to remind him of his pretended declaration that "he had a peace in his pocket," as well as his assertion of the ruined state of the navy, which incapacitated us for continuing the contest with our European enemies. On the newly consummated union

between the two chiefs of Opposition, and on the sickly offspring of their political embrace, namely, the motions submitted to the House, he indulged in the keenest sarcasms.

Lord North's speech on that night was worthy a statesman who had been the Minister of a great empire. In a masterly manner, without any mixture of passion, disdaining his usual appeals to ridicule, he reviewed consecutively all the features of the peace, and demonstrated the vices or errors interwoven throughout almost every article of the three treaties. While he was engaged in discussing one of the most serious points of the question under examination, a dog, which had taken shelter and concealed himself under the table of the House, made his escape and ran directly across the floor, setting up at the same time a violent howl. It occasioned a burst of laughter, and might have disconcerted an ordinary man. But he, who knew how to convert the most awkward occurrences to purposes of advantage, having waited till the roar which it produced had subsided, and preserving all his gravity, addressed the chair. "Sir," said he to the Speaker, "I have been interrupted by a new member, but as he has concluded his argument, I will now resume mine." Governor Johnstone, with his characteristic violence of tone and language, declaimed against various stipulations or cessions contained in the American treaty, which, he asserted, could only have been made by gross ignorance, geographical and political. Among others, having mentioned the restitution of the two Floridas to Spain, he accused Ministers of an utter unacquaintance with the value, the productions, or the naval and commercial importance of those provinces. "I was myself," added he, "Governor of West Florida, and I know its consequence. As to East Florida, it can boast

of one of the finest harbours on the globe, infinitely superior to the Havannah—more capacious, more safe, and more healthy.” The Secretary of State, who sat opposite to him, expressing by his looks and gestures the astonishment which these encomiums excited. “I perceive clearly,” exclaimed Johnstone, “that the Secretary is ignorant of the existence of this bay. I will tell him where it is situate, and how it is named. The harbour to which I allude is that of Spirito Santo or Tampa, situate on the Bay of Mexico. Its possession would be invaluable to Great Britain.” Townshend did not attempt to deny that he was uninformed upon the subject; nor probably was there another individual within the walls of the House, except Johnstone, who possessed any accurate knowledge of the bay in question. Similar acts of Ministerial ignorance are to be found in almost every treaty between nations.

Fox neither distinctly avowed, nor still less did he deny, his junction with Lord North. “That such an alliance has actually taken place between us,” said he, in reply to Dundas’s acrimonious remarks, “I can by no means aver; but, if it should be formed, I see not any ground for arraigning our conduct or stigmatising it as an unnatural union. That I shall concur on this night with the noble Lord in the blue ribband is very certain. The American war, and that only, constituted the subject of enmity between us. It is now terminated, and with it has ceased our hostility.” Then, having contrasted the honourable, open, and manly character of his new ally with the evasions, subterfuges, and insincerity which he imputed to the actual First Minister, he endeavoured to justify himself from some of the imputations laid to his charge by the Lord Advocate. Nor will I deny that in my judg-



ment he exculpated himself fully on almost every point. "I never said," replied he, "that I had a peace in my pocket; words falsely attributed to me. But I averred that there were persons empowered by America to treat of peace, who had applied to the Duke of Richmond and Lord Keppel, by whom I was authorised to mention it in this House. The learned Lord challenges me to produce the peace that I had projected to make when I was Secretary of State. Will any of the King's Ministers give me the same defiance? I dare them to do it. They know what it is, for they have it in the Foreign Office. If, on inspection, it disproves my assertion, let them take advantage of it; and let them hold me up to public condemnation, as a man capable of advising my sovereign to make, if it be possible, a worse and a more ruinous peace than the treaties now on the table." To Dundas himself personally Fox addressed some of his severest animadversions. "The learned Lord," said he, "informs us that he is always ready to support any Government whose principles he approves. I believe that he is sincere in his assertion, and in order that he may always be able to support Administration, he will take care invariably to approve of their principles, whatever they may be, or whoever may become Ministers."

But the circumstance which, above all, rendered that evening memorable as well as entertaining, was the altercation which arose between Sheridan and Pitt. It may be said to have originated with the former, who, adverting to an antecedent debate, during the course of which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had objected to the production of a depending treaty, on the ground that such an act had no precedent on the journals of Parliament, Sheridan treated his assertion with great asperity, not unaccompanied with ridicule. "If," said he, "the

right honourable gentleman's youth and very early political exaltation had allowed him time to look for precedents or to attain a knowledge of the journals, his discretion might have imposed some restraint on his precipitation. He would not then have manifested so much indignation at the questions put to Ministers, and which it became their duty to answer. These facts convince me that he is more of a practical than an experienced politician." Indignant at the style and language of Sheridan's reprehension, and perhaps hoping to crush at once an adversary so galling, Pitt no sooner rose to address the House than he directed all the force of his eloquence towards that quarter. "There is no man, sir," said he, when commencing his speech, "who admires more than I do the abilities of that honourable member," fixing his eye on Sheridan, "the elegant sallies of his mind, the pleasing effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic allusions. If they were only reserved for the proper stage, they would, no doubt, ensure, what his distinguished talents always have acquired, the plaudits of his audience, and it would be his recompense *sui plausu quodere theatri*. But this place is not the proper scene for exhibiting such elegances, and I must therefore call the attention of the House to more serious considerations of public importance."

If Pitt had pronounced this animadversion, so pointed, classic, and personal, at the close, not at the commencement of his discourse, and had instantly sat down, probably even Sheridan would have found himself unequal to replying on the instant, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer might have obtained at least a temporary triumph. But the length of time that he remained on his legs gave his opponent leisure for meditating a proper answer. Individuals of the common order would have sunk

under the reproof, or would have displayed more resentment than wit or composure. The reference to his theatrical occupations was no doubt illiberal, as well as calculated to oppress any except a man constituted like Sheridan. He, on the contrary, found in the attack matter of advantage over his adversary and of exaltation to himself. Rising as soon as Pitt had finished, and having prefaced with a few words under pretence of explanation—"With regard," said he, "to the particular species of personality which has just been introduced, I need not comment on it. The House will have appreciated its taste, its point, its propriety. But let me assure the person who has had recourse to it, that whenever he may think proper to repeat such allusions I will meet them with perfect good-humour. Nay, more, encouraged by the encomiums bestowed on my talents, should I ever again engage in the occupations to which he alludes, I may, by an act of presumption, attempt to improve on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the 'Angry Boy' in the 'Alchymist.'"<sup>1</sup> The admiration excited by a repartee so keen and so prompt cannot easily be conceived. Pitt never returned a second time to the charge mounted on the same horse, but a degree of mutual alienation seemed always to subsist between him and Sheridan, founded on the incompatibility of their characters, tempers, and humours. No two men were, indeed, ever cast in more dissimilar moulds. On the respective superiority of their intellectual endowments I shall not venture to decide or to pronounce. Both were the prodigies of their day.

Lee,<sup>2</sup> the late Solicitor-General, rising at a very

<sup>1</sup> *Kastril*, the "Angry Boy" in the "Alchemist," was one of the vapourers of the day. "Angry boy" was used in the same sense as a roaring boy or roarer.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> John Lee. Lord Rockingham writing to him in 1778 says, "We

advanced hour of the morning, as he was apt to do, exhausted his vehemence, or rather his rage, on the First Minister, whose character as well as his Administration, and in particular the peace just concluded, which he denominated "a dismemberment of the empire, disgraceful, wicked, and treacherous," he loaded with epithets of condemnation. On Lord North, as a statesman of incorruptible integrity, manly, and superior to artifice or evasion of every kind, he was as profuse in his panegyrics as he was indecorous and violent towards the Earl of Shelburne. Nor did Lee omit to express his approbation of the Coalition, as a political union calculated to produce benefits to the country. During the whole time that I sat in Parliament, I never was present at a speech more personally abusive, or which would have better justified interruption. Kenyon, who was placed opposite to him on the Treasury bench, and who was composed of as tough, as coarse, though not as boisterous materials, unable to support such a string of invectives without manifesting his indignation, severely reprehended his learned friend for "the swaggering language" to which he had recourse, strongly reprobating at the same time Lee's expressions relative to the First Lord of the Treasury. No disposition being, however, shown to retract or even to modify them, Rigby interposed with an apology for Lee as being a young member. Like his friend Dundas, Rigby spoke and voted on that night with Ministry, but since his dismissal from the Pay Office, he seemed to have lost much of the dictatorial manner and

assert that Councillor Lee, though somewhat a rough gentleman, has as tender and as feeling a heart as any lady of the land." Lee was a thorough party man, and a favourite saying of his was, "Never speak well of a political enemy." Yet the only piece of patronage he applied for was in favour of a Tory, Dr. William Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell.—ED.

style of speaking, which formerly characterised him when addressing the House. Great anxiety and agitation pervaded the Ministerial benches when the division took place. As no accurate opinion could be formed previous to the conclusion of the debate on which side the members would preponderate, the result when announced from the chair excited as much exultation among the adherents of Lord North and Fox as it spread dismay through the ranks of Administration.<sup>1</sup>

I composed one of the majority on that memorable occasion. But I owe it nevertheless to truth and to candour, which are the only guides or principles that I recognise, to acknowledge that when I consider the articles of the peace concluded by Lord Shelburne after the lapse of thirty years, I am inclined to view it through a much more favourable medium than I did at the time. Unquestionably, of the three treaties, namely, those signed with France, Spain, and America—for with Holland no definitive convention had been arranged—the American treaty was much the most humiliating as well as injurious to Great Britain. Besides the unconditional recognition of the independence of the colonies and the cession of so many fortified places, which it is difficult to suppose that the Americans could have taken from us by force of arms, our abandonment of the Loyalists seemed, in the estimation of people the most dispassionate, to affix a degree of degradation and dishonour on the nation itself. To Spain we likewise ceded East Florida, in addition to West Florida and Minorca, of both which that power had already obtained possession.

<sup>1</sup> The debate in the Lords was kept up till near five A.M. The division was in favour of Ministers by sixty-nine to fifty-five. Lord Falmouth told Hannah Moore how delighted he was to sit down to his soup and roast at eight in the morning, at which hour several Lords had company to dinner after the House broke up.—D.



But in recompense for these sacrifices, it must be remembered that France restored to us all our captured islands in the West Indies with the single exception of Tobago, while we possessed nothing to offer her in return except the restitution of St. Lucie. The stipulations respecting our possessions in the East Indies, those concluded relative to the gum trade on the coast of Africa, and the articles regulating the right of fishery on the banks of Newfoundland, if not favourable or advantageous in themselves, might yet have been signed between two crowns treating nearly on equal terms. Nor, when we consider the exhausted state of England at the close of the American war, could they justly be regarded as unbecoming us to concede, in order to dissolve the formidable combination then leagued against this country, which was sustained by the armed neutrality of the Baltic powers.

While, however, I thus readily admit Lord Shelburne's title to national approbation, if not gratitude, for the peace of January 1783, though I voted against it as a member of the House of Commons, I must maintain, and I trust satisfactorily to prove, that if Lord North, instead of going out as he did in March 1782, had remained in office ten months longer, he would have concluded at least as advantageous, if not a more beneficial treaty. We shall in fact find, on examining the subject, that Lord North either adopted or laid down all the foundations on which his successor in office reared that superstructure. In other words, we must be compelled to perceive that Lord Shelburne only used the materials left or provided him by his predecessor. The peace rested on seven distinct grounds or principles, of which the first was the recognition of American independence. But Lord North manifested a much greater readiness to obey the wishes

of the House of Commons on that leading point than was afterwards shown by Lord Shelburne, who did not yield till he was out-voted in the Cabinet, whereas Lord North, after General Conway's successful motion of the 22d February, declaring "the attempt to reduce the colonies to obedience by force impracticable," immediately took measures for the purpose. On the 5th of March, a fortnight before he laid down his power, Wallace, then Attorney-General, moved in his place for leave to bring in a bill, "to enable his Majesty to conclude a truce or peace with the revolted colonies in America." Fox affected to treat it with derision, because he feared that its operation on Parliament and on the public mind might prolong the existence of an Administration which he had so nearly run down; but no impartial man questioned the First Minister's sincerity, and the victory of Congress in compelling Lord North, who had so long made war on them, to treat with America as a sovereign power, would have been more gratifying to the States than the same triumph obtained over any other Minister of Great Britain.

The second cause that produced peace was Sir George Rodney's victory over De Grasse, which event at once overturning all the plans of Vergennes in the West Indies, secured Jamaica from any further attack on the part of France. Of this splendid victory, though Fox reaped all the benefit, Lord North and Lord Sandwich had unquestionably the whole merit. We may even safely assert or assume that if the Rockingham Administration had forced their way into office three months earlier than they did, the action of the 12th of April 1782 would never have taken place or might have had a very different termination. It is not pretended that Pigot possessed any other merit than his connection with

Fox, cemented at Brookes's over the faro table. The measure itself of sending him out to deprive Rodney of the command excited just as well as general indignation; nor did he perform a single act of energy after his arrival which could have accelerated or facilitated the negotiations for peace, though Fox admitted in the House of Commons during the debate of the 21st February 1782 that Pigot was at the head of a fleet superior to the enemy and adequate to every offensive or defensive operation. Elliott's destruction of the Spanish gunboats before Gibraltar on the 13th September, by overwhelming all the projects of Charles III. for the reduction of that fortress, laid the third foundation of the treaty, as it disposed the Cabinet of Madrid to terminate the war. Happily, Fox did not recall Elliott, as he had done Rodney, nor send Burgoyne to supersede him. Lord Howe's most able manœuvres in supplying Gibraltar with stores of every kind, notwithstanding the combined opposition of France and Spain, formed the fourth groundwork of the peace. In the nomination of that naval officer to the command of the fleet, and in that measure solely, had Lord Shelburne any participation or share as contributing to terminate the contest. Nor would it be candid to deprive him of the merit which he may thereby claim; but neither ought we to forget that Admiral Darby had effected the same service in the preceding year under Lord North's Administration, and had relieved Gibraltar in defiance of nearly similar impediments.

The three last foundations of general pacification were all laid in the East, where, as early as 1778, Lord North had ably anticipated the French machinations by getting possession of Pondicherry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pondicherry, on the Coromandel coast, capital of the French possessions in India. It was constantly taken by the English and then

Of these leading causes, the most essential, perhaps, may be deemed the separate peace made with the Mahrattas, a measure exclusively due to that First Minister who, in the spring of the year 1781, sent out Mr. Macpherson<sup>1</sup> (since Governor-General of Bengal and created a Baronet) as a member of the Supreme Council. I know that his secret instructions were to endeavour by every exertion in his power, and even if necessary by making considerable sacrifices, to terminate the Mahratta war. In compliance with those directions, on his arrival at Madras in October 1781, without waiting to consult Hastings, who was then at a distance from Calcutta, Mr. Macpherson, together with Lord Macartney, Sir Edward Hughes, and the Nabob of Arcot, Mahommed Ally, acting together in concert, addressed letters jointly to the Peshwah at Poonah, expressing to him, in the name of the sovereign and Ministry of England, their sincere and ardent inclination to peace. It followed in a very short space of time, and flowed immediately from this source. Lord Sandwich, who sent out Sir Edward Hughes to command the British fleet in the East Indies, may claim the principal or exclusive merit of having laid the sixth basis of the pacification of January 1783, for though that naval commander did not vanquish Suffrein as Rodney defeated De Grasse, yet he repulsed the French admiral when we were inferior to him in number of ships, disabled the enemy's vessels, and finally compelled him to postpone his projects of co-operation with Hyder Ally, thus protracting

restored to the French. It was taken in October 1778, as mentioned in the text, and restored to the French in 1783.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> John Macpherson, appointed member of the Supreme Council of Bengal in 1780 and Governor-General after the return of Governor Hastings to England in 1784. Created a Baronet in 1786, returned to England in 1787, and became M.P. for Horsham. He died unmarried, 12th January 1821.—ED.

the contest till intelligence of a general pacification reached India.

The last groundwork of peace was laid by Hastings, acting as Governor-General of Bengal, in conjunction with the Supreme Council. His promptitude and decision, after Hyder's successful irruption into the Carnatic, in dispatching Sir Eyre Coote with military and pecuniary supplies to the aid of that nearly subverted Presidency, saved Madras. He first arrested the progress of the Sultan of Mysore, and finally compelled him to retreat across the mountains of the Ghauts into his own dominions. The vast fabric of British power in the East, originally convulsed by the errors or incapacity of the Bombay Government, degraded by Rumbold's mal-administration, and perhaps exposed to hazard by Hastings' plans of ambition or aggrandisement, was ultimately preserved and strengthened. When we fairly examine and appreciate these facts, we shall see that though Lord Shelburne signed, or rather concluded the peace of 1783, yet Lord North's Administration virtually made it. In fact, no Minister, however able or popular, could have longer prosecuted the war for subjugating the colonies, after near seven years of a ruinous and disgraceful contest, but any Minister, however moderately endowed with talents, having in his hands the means possessed by Lord Shelburne, might have terminated the struggle with our European enemies on making the recognition of American independence. Unquestionably Lord Shelburne obtained from the French Government great restitutions in the West Indies,<sup>1</sup> but the enemy kept possession of Tobago, and we restored St.

<sup>1</sup> This caused great discontent in France; but the latter country got rid of the "humiliating clauses" in the Treaty of Paris, and was now enabled to raise fortifications on many important points, among others Dunkirk. Thence too, in part, the existence of Cherbourg as a standing menace in the Channel.—D.



Lucie, which last island, considered as a military post, was inestimable to France. Powis's declaration on this great national subject, which he made in his place when addressing the House on the 21st of February 1783, has always appeared to me to comprise in it everything that can be said with justice either for or against the peace in question. His words were nearly these: "With respect to the treaties just concluded, I have already admitted that there are parts of them which I regret to have seen. But, nevertheless, such is the condition of the country, such the state of our finances, and so powerful is the confederacy united against us, that I am ready to accept the peace, such as it is, and to say that it deserves parliamentary approbation." Few members of that assembly united to a sound judgment so much impartiality and public principle as distinguished Powis.

Spain reaped the principal benefit of the treaty, as, in addition to Minorca, she retained or acquired the two Floridas; these advantages were, however, dearly purchased by her severe losses before Gibraltar in men, money, and ships. Louis XVI., besides Goree and Senegal on the coast of Africa, which possessions rendered him master of the gum trade, recovered the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, situate in the river St. Lawrence. Pondicherry, together with the French factories throughout Hindostan, were likewise restored by us; but Holland, in recompense for her unwise as well as unjust aggression, lost Negapatam, her only settlement of importance on the Coast of Coromandel. America triumphed in the contest, and the greatest statesmen whom England had produced, though they concurred in scarcely any other political opinion, yet agreed on the point that, with the defalcation of the thirteen colonies from the crown, the glory and

greatness of Britain were permanently extinguished. This sentiment pervaded Lord Chatham's last speech, pronounced on the 7th of April 1778. "I will never consent," exclaimed he, "to deprive the royal offspring of the House of Brunswick, the heirs of the Princess Sophia, of their fairest inheritance. Where is the man who will dare to advise such a measure?" He considered it as a consummation pregnant with the greatest national misfortunes. Lord Shelburne even surpassed him in expressions of distress at contemplating the consequences inevitably resulting, as he conceived, from the loss of America. Not once, but many times, he repeated this sentiment in the House of Peers, previous as well as subsequent to his becoming First Minister. On the 10th of July 1782, when constituted First Lord of the Treasury, he declared that "whenever the British Parliament should recognise the sovereignty of the thirteen colonies, the sun of England's glory was for ever set. He looked for a spark at least to be left, which might light us up in time to a new day. But if independence were once conceded, if Parliament considered that measure to be advisable, he foresaw in his own mind that England was undone." It seemed impossible to clothe his ideas of despair in stronger or more energetic language. Lord George Germain entertained, as I know, similar apprehensions. Speaking in the House of Commons, on the 12th December 1781, he maintained as a position admitting of no doubt, that "from the instant when American independence should be acknowledged, the British Empire was ruined." I heard Dunning make almost the same declaration in the same place on that very night. Although he spoke and voted with Opposition, yet he concurred with the Colonial Secretary in opinion that the ruin of the country

would be accomplished whenever America should be recognised as independent. Here then we have four individuals, all distinguished by pre-eminent talents, denouncing national destruction as inseparable from the loss of America. A similar sentiment had impressed all classes of men throughout the country. How are we to account for the non-fulfilment of these predictions? How was the threatened calamity averted, and by what measures was Great Britain after losing thirteen colonies rendered more formidable, wealthy, commercial, and great than before her misfortunes? Three causes appear to me to have principally produced so extraordinary a phenomenon, which has no parallel in the history of nations.

The first and leading cause was the preservation of the British constitution. Lord North, though he lost armies, commercial fleets, garrisons, islands, and provinces, yet defended and preserved the palladium of civil liberty. He transmitted to Lord Rockingham in March 1782, as he had received from the Duke of Grafton in January 1770, that invaluable possession inviolate. No Minister of George III. more highly estimated its blessings or held its preservation nearer his heart. When on the 21st of February 1783 Sir Cecil Wray, then member for Westminster, accused him of blindly maintaining the prerogative of the crown on all occasions, he justified himself in language equally dignified and convincing from the imputation. I was present and heard him. "I do not know, nor can I conceive," said Lord North, "on what premises the honourable member forms his logical conclusion. I certainly have frequently asserted, and I have uniformly maintained, the prerogative of Parliament to bind and legislate for those colonies, which were then united to Great Britain by every bond of

duty and obedience. But I defy him or any man to specify a single instance in which I ever attributed to the crown any other prerogative than is vested in it by our constitution, or than a king of this country is acknowledged to possess by every sound Whig, and by all those authors who have written on the side of freedom. I never did, nor ever wished to extend the power of that branch of the Legislature one inch beyond the limits prescribed to it by law. And however loudly clamour has been raised against me as a Minister who desired to govern only by the influence of the crown, I trust the charge has been already found wholly untrue." Our obligations to Lord North are great and indelible, for never, perhaps, did any Minister surmount more severe attacks than he endured. The losses and disgraces of the American war, followed by heavy annual loans, gave rise to meetings and associations whose professed object was not only a change of Administration, but to effect reforms and alterations in the parliamentary representation. These convocations of freeholders, which began in the county of York towards the end of 1779, soon spread over the kingdom, and were adopted in the capital at an early period of the year 1780.

Their resolutions, patriotic in profession and perhaps in their intention, were not the less revolutionary in practice. Like the clubs at Paris in 1790, they immediately appointed corresponding committees, whose duty it was to prepare plans of association for ameliorating the constitution. Men of the highest rank, of the largest property, and of the most unsullied character, carried along by the torrent and impatient to overturn the Ministry, lent themselves to the accomplishment of this work. As early as February 1780, Sir George Savile, when

presenting in the House of Commons the York petition, accompanied it with language such as Ireton or Fleetwood might have used when addressing the Rump Parliament in 1652—language calculated to intimidate, and appealing obviously to external interference. These menaces were outdone by Sir James Lowther in April of the same year on bringing up the petition from Cumberland. He, whom "Junius" denominates "the little contemptible tyrant of the North," threatened in his place that if "the grievances enumerated were not redressed, the subscribers would withhold the taxes," thus attempting to overawe the legislative body whom he addressed. Fox, as might well be imagined, far exceeded his adherents in the violence of his appeal to the people. On the 6th of April 1780, the corresponding committee having convened the inhabitants of Westminster in Palace Yard, Fox read and commented on the report presented by that committee, while the Dukes of Devonshire and of Portland were present at his side, but the Marquis of Rockingham absented himself. Government having very properly ordered out a military force for the protection of Parliament and suppression of tumult or riot, Fox proceeded so far as to declare in the House of Commons, that "if soldiers were thus let loose on the constitutional assemblages of the people, all who attended them must go armed." The Cardinal De Retz, when conducting the Parisian populace and attempting to overturn the First Minister of that day, held and practised precisely the same doctrine. So would Mirabeau have done in our time, or Sir Francis Burdett and Horne Tooke.

Even previous to the actual commencement of the American war, as early as 1774 attempts were



made by the enemies of Government to excite the shipwrights and other artificers in the royal dockyards to associate, to remonstrate, and in fact to assume a deliberative public character. I was present in the House of Commons when Sir Hugh Palliser related and detailed this curious fact, respecting which no man could speak with more accuracy, as he presided at the Navy Board when the transaction took place. Humphrey Minchin, member for Oakhampton, whom I very particularly knew, having brought forward a discussion relative to the condition of the navy in the month of March 1781, with a view to criminate Lord Sandwich, then first Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Hugh, in justification of that nobleman, stated broadly that "the enemies of the country had found means to frustrate his plans for regulating the dockyards on new principles of great public utility." In fact, the workmen were secretly instigated to insubordination. "Associations," Palliser declared, "were formed among them. Remonstrances, clothed under the name of petitions, were transmitted to the Navy Board; committees were appointed; nay, deputies or delegates were sent up to London empowered by their constituents to treat with the Commissioners of the Navy in the nature of a congress." Notwithstanding the bursts of laughter which the word *congress* produced from both sides of the assembly, yet Burke, anxious to efface the impression made by the narrative of Palliser, endeavoured to render the whole ridiculous, justifying particularly the associations formed as well as the petitions presented, which were, he said, intended for preventing the lavish expenditure of the public money. But Bamber Gascoyne instantly stood forward to protect his friend, Sir Hugh.

Gascoyne, with whom I was well acquainted, represented at that time the borough of Truro, and occupied a seat at the Admiralty Board. He possessed a clear and sound understanding, with a most convivial disposition, though not a very cultivated mind nor highly polished manners. Rough, frank, and manly, he was not intimidated by Burke's eloquence. In terms the most positive he confirmed Palliser's account of the delegates, adding that "the whole mischief was effected by the enemies of England, whether foreign or domestic he would not assert, who stimulated the inferior orders of people to associate, to form committees of correspondence, and to throw the nation into a ferment." Indignant at such a charge, which involved himself and all the Opposition leaders in the guilt of acts approaching to treason, Burke started up, called Gascoyne to order; but he, appealing to the chair against the interruption, Burke, scarcely under the dominion of reason, exclaimed that "if the honourable gentleman proceeded any further in accusing that side of the House with such nefarious proceedings he would move to have the words taken down." Far from being terrified at this menace or affected by the cries uttered from the Opposition benches of "Take down! take down!" Gascoyne, with perfect calmness, assured the House that no clamour would deter him from performing his duty. He then repeated verbatim his preceding words, declaring that if any gentleman now wished to have them taken down he would assist him by pronouncing them distinctly a third time. But not an individual rose, and Gascoyne was permitted to continue his speech without further molestation. Yet Fox was present at this scene, the particulars of which I relate as they passed under my own eyes.

How subversive of the constitution, and how destructive of all subordination to Government were Fox's avowed opinions, while he was in opposition, on the right of the people to appoint delegates, and thereby to dictate their pleasure to Parliament, was apparent from his speeches or declarations on various occasions. I recollect one in particular that I witnessed, the impression of which will not easily be erased from my mind. On the 2d of April 1781, Mr. Duncombe, one of the two representatives for the county of York, having, in the absence of Sir George Savile, presented a petition to the House of Commons from several associated counties, signed by certain freeholders whom he denominated delegates, Daniel Parker Coke (the Andrew Marvel of that time) strenuously opposed its reception. He approved indeed highly, he said, the object of the petition, and would support it, but not the nomination of delegates, whom he considered to be altogether unconstitutional as well as dangerous. In this sentiment he was sustained by Powis, member for the county of Northampton. Dunning, on the other hand, whose law always appeared to me to be under the control of his politics, and who did not then foresee how soon he should be translated to the Upper House of Parliament, as well as to a place in the Cabinet and to the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, undertook to defend the legal or constitutional right of the subject to nominate delegates. But Fox, rising in his place, far exceeded him in boldness of affirmation and in violence of language. "I will not sit here, Mr. Speaker," exclaimed he, "and hear the assertion that it is unconstitutional or illegal to appoint delegates, or that those delegates so named should petition Parliament. On the contrary, I consider it not merely as a correct and authorised but as a laudable

measure in the present condition and circumstances of this country. By what law is it declared to be unconstitutional for the people of England to name delegates who shall reside in London and watch over the conduct of their representatives? And who shall presume to impede those delegates so constituted from petitioning Parliament in loyal and respectful terms? Do they lose the privilege of a freeholder because they assume the title of a delegate? Certainly not. I should have been ready to sign the petition now brought up in my delegated capacity, and I would have defended it in my representative character within the walls of this House, as a faithful representative of the people." Whether such opinions are patriotic or factious,—whether they can be maintained and acted upon without inevitably producing confusion,—whether any man can assume two public characters of a political description, the duties of which may be incompatible and contradictory,—are questions which must be left to every person's decision. These principles appear to me to be not merely democratic or republican, but subversive of all good government, fit only for the Jacobins of France in the beginning of the Revolution, or for the modern reformers, the Watsons, the Thistlewoods,<sup>1</sup> the Brandreths, and the other advocates of insurrection, who wish to overturn the present order of things. Fox, indeed, was wholly guiltless, I am persuaded, of any such intention. His only aim was, by means of this scaf-

<sup>1</sup> On the 9th June 1817, Watson, Thistlewood, Preston, and Hooper were conveyed from the Tower to the Court of King's Bench to be tried for high treason. Watson was first tried, and was ably defended by Wetherell and Copley. His trial lasted seven days, and the jury returned a verdict of *not guilty*. The Attorney-General, Shepherd, then gave up the prosecution against the others. Thistlewood was less fortunate in 1820, when he was tried for a conspiracy to murder the King's ministers ("Cato Street Conspiracy"), and was hanged on the 1st May with Ings, Brunt, Davidson, and Fidd.—ED.

folding, to drive Lord North from power, to force his own way into the closet, and to compel the King to change his Administration. But his ambition, unlike that of Pitt, was not under the control of judgment, self-command, and moderation. George III. very properly availed himself of Fox's errors to expel him from the Cabinet, which he twice entered by storm.

END OF VOL. II.



to force  
the King  
to prohibit  
control of  
George  
s errors  
e twice



