

CHAPTER XIV

SECESSION FROM PARLIAMENT. PRIVATE LIFE. 1797-1800

I

Fox, once having retired from active parliamentary life, was reluctant ever to return to it. Political events were yet to override his inclinations, and before he died he was to experience once again a brief term of office. But now, in 1797, he was more than content to fill up his days with a life of easy courtesy and scholarship at St. Anne's Hill. He was not inactive; he liked Cowper's lines,

How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle!

He contemplated writing a *History of the Reign of James II.*, and later made some actual progress with the work, which was published in fragmentary form in 1808. It was, however, not until 1800 that he concentrated his studies on the subject. In the meantime, he made a leisurely but constant survey of the literature, particularly the classical literature, that he loved. He wrote a long argumentative letter to Grey about the nightingale's note, contending that Theocritus and Chaucer were right in holding it to be merry, against the far less reliable authority of the tragic poets, and concluding: "I am afraid I like these researches so much better than those that relate to Shaftesbury, Sunderland etc., as I do those better than attending the House of Commons." And, bookish man though he was, he was never difficult to dig out. A fine morning would see the green-aproned figure very seriously doing nothing much in the garden, and a warm summer evening might at any time mean a little excursion to some riverside resort with Elizabeth.

Under her influence, he had mended his habits altogether. He had become orderly without being ascetic, and in 1793 his finances had been put into sound shape by the generosity of a group of friends, who at a meeting in that year at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, under the chairmanship of Serjeant Adair, resolved to form a fund from which an annuity was to be paid by trustees to Charles in recognition of his public services. The proposal was submitted to him, and accepted in these terms:

“ST. ANNE’S HILL,

“June 6, 1793.

“DEAR SIR,

“You will easily believe that it is not a mere form of words, when I say, that I am wholly at a loss how to express my feelings. . . . To receive at once from the public such a testimony of the disinterestedness of my conduct, and such a reward as the most interested would think their lives well spent in obtaining; is a rare instance of felicity which seems to have been reserved for me. It would be gross affectation, if, in my circumstances, I were to pretend that what is intended me is not in itself of the highest value. But it is with perfect sincerity that I declare, that no manner in which a fortune could have come to me, would have been so gratifying to the feelings of my heart. I accept, therefore, with the most sincere gratitude, the kindness of the public; and consider it as an additional obligation upon me, if any were wanting, to continue steady to the principles which I have uniformly professed. . . .”

Subscriptions came in lavishly, from every rank of society; the great families, professional men, substantial merchants, country parsons, yeomen and shopkeepers from all over the country sent in handsomely according to their means. It was no credit to Fox to be in this necessity, but the relief was honourably offered and

honourably taken. He had been an irresponsible spendthrift, but he could with a clear conscience say that his public career had been disinterested, and that he had never been a penny the better off for it save by his due wages as a minister. In an unpublished letter from the Powys papers referred to later, he says: "Of this I am sure, that I never had any publick Money in my hands for half an hour." Among the chief promoters of the fund was Coke of Norfolk, and he became one of three trustees, who found themselves in a position to pay their friend a yearly income of three thousand pounds. Charles never visited Newmarket again, nor played cards for money. It was on this occasion that George Selwyn, when he was told of the proposed annuity and asked how he thought Charles would take it, replied, "Why, quarterly to be sure."

Fox now, in 1797, was still under fifty, but his life had been a turbulent one. He had led a long fight against odds on which he seemed to make no impression. With a secure income, with small public ambition left, and even less hope of realising it, convinced that he had stood by his public duty until to do so longer was a mere waste of energy, he secluded himself at St. Anne's Hill with a sense of well-earned and greatly welcome relief. His life there was very pleasant, and it is very pleasant to contemplate.

II

In 1791 began a long correspondence between Charles and his nephew, Henry Richard Vassal Fox, "dear young one." The boy was then eighteen years of age, and had inherited the Holland title in infancy from his father, Stephen, Charles's brother. Fox was devoted to his young kinsman, watched his education with the most affectionate interest, and delighted to renew his own youth by discussing life with him on terms of easy intel-

lectral equality. "I rather agree with you that it would be better that Sheridan should not attend the meeting of the 14th of July." "I have not read Burke's new pamphlet, but hear a very different account of it from yours." "I believe the love of political liberty is not an error; but, if it is one, I am sure I never shall be converted from it—and I hope you never will be." "Your contrast of the manner in which the causes of Tyranny and Freedom are treated here is very good, and I daresay I shall make use of it in the House of Commons; so when you get the papers with the debates look sharp." "By the way, you should tell me, as I do you, what books you are reading, with a little criticism, if it is ever so little." "I have employed my odd five minutes etc. lately in looking over Horace's Odes; pray tell me which you think the most perfect and beautiful of them in their respective styles."

And so on. Throughout the correspondence, which was constant over a period of fourteen years—considerably more than a hundred of Charles's letters to his nephew during that time are preserved—the older man repeatedly emphasises his distaste for the political scene, while making a current summary of political events and persons. His only public satisfaction is that he has always opposed the French war; his only hope, continually frustrated, for peace. Literature he discusses with inexhaustible zest. Pope he thought a miserable moralist and a superficial and faulty reasoner, but highly endowed in poetry and wit. Dryden he admired greatly (he thought of editing him), but found that he "wanted a certain degree of easy playfulness that belongs to Ariosto." Chaucer he was never tired of praising, and he considered that Burns had written "the best pastorals in any modern language." But the classics were his real devotion. He returns in his letters to the Greek and Roman poets with ever advancing eagerness. What the

authorities may say of his scholarship I do not know; but no one can dispute his passionate enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that he thought the *Medea* to be beyond question "the best of all the Greek Tragedies." But his last word is always for Homer. "You see, I have never done with [him]; and, indeed, if there was nothing else, except Virgil and Ariosto, one should never want reading."

Also in these letters there is frequent and delightful evidence of the tenderness that was so deep a part of Fox's nature. Sometimes it is but playfully implied: "I have played at tennis several times since I saw you, and last week, two days following, single matches which rather over-fatigued me, but I shall nevertheless be at it again Wednesday, not to-morrow, because if it is fine we go to the boat-race at Richmond." And, on the same topic: "We had a very pleasant party . . . but I am sorry to tell you that the Duke [of Bedford] has overtaken me at tennis, and beat me even; last year I gave him near fifteen." Apologising for delay in writing, he says: "When I get up I am in a hurry to get out, and when I come home, I am in a hurry to dress for dinner; and when I am going to bed I am tired and sleepy." Often the tenderness appears more directly. "Mrs. A. gives her love to you, and longs to see you here; indeed, at present, that is all that is wanting to our perfect happiness." "There is your picture on the other side of the room ready to say, I *say* my Uncle, and I do assure you that Mrs. A. looks at it with almost if not quite as much pleasure as I do." When his nephew makes his first speech in the Lords, Fox praises him, and someone in the family suggests flattery: "I do assure you, my dear Young One, that I do not flatter you at all, if by flattering is meant saying more than one thinks, but if praise is to be called flattery, then : . . I know enough of the family constitution to know that it is remarkably good and wholesome

for us all, and that too, in good doses." And when the young peer is emulating his uncle in taking up an unpopular position, he is told: "It is a sad thing, My dear Young One, to come young and vigorous into an old, worn out, jaded opposition: however if you can in any degree *rajeunir*, it you will do . . . the greatest service to the country." We may leave this correspondence, so rich in Fox's most amiable virtues, with a passage of touching beauty:

"Never allow yourself to think for a moment that I can ever be forgetful of you, or not feel interested concerning you. Indeed, if I were to accuse myself at all upon this head, it would be rather for loving you too much, than too little. I do not mean more than you deserve, but with regard to that proportion which one ought if possible to preserve in one's affections. The truth is, that all men when they are no longer young must look forwards to something they expect to last beyond themselves. My friends whom I love most are all about my own age, and consequently, one supposes they will go off the stage about the same time as oneself. So when I have a mind to build castles, and to look forward to distant times with pride and pleasure, I must think of you and only you, and I feel myself quite sure that you will not disappoint me. Perhaps the natural disposition one has to love one's near relations, would be a more true account of the interest I take in you than all this philosophy. Be it as it may, you are in more danger of being teased by my affection than of ever being hurt by my neglect."

The third Lord Holland lived until 1840, to preserve the memory of this affection with devoted and loving duty.

III

Before passing to the final stage of Fox's public life, we may supplement this account of his personal ways and contacts. Mr. Powys has kindly placed at my disposal a few unpublished letters from his family papers. The following, written from St. Anne's Hill to Dennis O'Bryen, the political pamphleteer, shows, with a homely insistence, how loth Charles was to disturb the seclusion of his later years. It is addressed to "Dennis O'Bryen, Esq., at Mrs. Hough's Fulham, to be left at Cloud's at the Leaping Bass Hammersmith." It is undated, but belongs to the period of Fox's retirement.

"DEAR O'BRYEN,

"Nothing can be worse than the weather to-night or the prospect for to-morrow; but if it is *very* fine to-morrow Morning, we will set out, but it must be *very* fine to tempt us. If we do not go to-morrow we will take the chance of a fine morning on Tuesday, but if that fails us, we must put off our expedition for the present till some more settled weather. I do not think we shall be at Richmond till two or thereabouts. Now as to staying two nights it is out of the question, and as I must have my way in some things, I do desire of you as a real favour not to press us, and no pressing will succeed . . . as to being on the water till dark, I should think we shall have had quite water enough by the time we have had our dinner, as we set out at nine. . . . Remember we do not start to-morrow morning unless it is *very* fine.

"Yours ever,

"C. J. F."

In another note to the same correspondent he writes:
 "When I say I shall be in town to-morrow, I mean *We*

and "(alas!) to stay." On another occasion he encloses a note of hand to O'Bryen for payment to some fund, and says: "I must desire you will attempt no excuses about the note on the other side for I will take none. My name in the list, which Adam showed to some friends, was put down for 50£, and I should feel guilty of a fraud of the meanest kind, not upon you but upon those who might regulate their conduct in a certain degree upon my example, if I did not do what it was stated that I had done. The only consequence of your making any difficulty would be my sending the draft to Adam instead of to you."

For his niece Caroline he had an affection scarcely less warm than for "dear Young One," her brother. Among Mr. Powys's papers are several letters to her, from which the following paragraphs are taken:

"I send you a receipt for an eye-water on the same paper with that for Stephen's wash. The eye water may be used as often as you please, and, if I were to judge from myself, with very little effect, but many Persons have said they find great benefit from it. Mrs. F. would write but I have undertaken to do it for her and yet it is *I* that am commonly called idle." [1804.]

* * * * *

"I shall have so much more pleasure in seeing Henry for the first time here, that I do not mean to go [to town] unless he is prevented from coming to me for any time, in which case I must go to town, but only for a few hours as I dislike leaving this place now more than you can conceive." [1792.]

* * * * *

My dear Caroline Pray give the
envelope to Henry as I do not know
where to send it him. I certainly
would have taken the liberty even
without being asked of dinner at
Lansdown House to day, if I had
gone to town, but I shall have so
much more pleasure in seeing Henry
for the first time here, that I do not
mean to go unless he is prevented from
coming to me, for any time in which
case I must go to town, but only for a
few hours as I do not like leaving this
place now more than you can conceive.
I heartily wish you joy with all
I am, &c.
Anne Hill
Lansdown

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM FOX TO HIS NIECE CAROLINE

"DEAR CAROLINE,

"Mrs. Fox sends you a dozen pair of gloves which she brings you from L^y. Holland, and begs you will be so good as to accept of a little *ridicule* that accompanies them.

"Yours affly.

"C. J. Fox." [No year date.]

* * * * *

"Nothing can be so bad in every way in Politics, only those who have more of malice than I take some delight in seeing the ridiculous figure Pitt makes. . . . The Rain, inconvenient as it is, adds to the beauty of this place considerably." [1803.]

* * * * *

"I return you many thanks, my dear Caroline, for your letter and Henry's verses, some of which I think excellent, but they are unequal as all his are. . . . I wish you would teach Your Brother to write as well as you do." [No year date.]

* * * * *

It was Caroline Fox who helped to soothe Charles's dying hours by reading aloud to him. "I like your reading, young one," he once said to his nephew, "but I liked it better before I heard your sister's. That is better than yours, I can tell you."

IV

Fox does not appear to have been intimate with any of the notable poets of his time, but with several of them he had relations greatly to his credit. Landor, indeed, inflamed always by acute horror of Napoleon, spared a little of his voluble wrath for Fox. "I believe there has rarely been a weaker or a more profligate statesman than Mr. Fox; but," he adds, "he was friendly and affectionate; he was a gentleman and a scholar." Further, "He was

unlucky in all his projects. On one occasion he said he had a peace in his pocket, when he no more had a peace in it than he had a guinea. He was, however, less democratic, less subversive of social order and national dignity than his rival [Pitt].” Again, “He had more and warmer friends than any statesman upon record; he was the delight of social life, the ornament of domestic. Mr. Fox was a man of genius and (what in the present day is almost as rare) a gentleman.”* In his *Commentary* on Fox, written in 1811, Landor allowed these personal considerations little weight. His attack on Fox’s political character there knew no moderation. But while Landor was a great poet, he was also sometimes a great donkey, and as by various wrong attributions of statements it is clear that he was often extremely uncertain as to who was who, confusing Charles now with Chatham and now with William Windham, his opinion has not too serious an authority.

Coleridge also attacked Fox’s political conduct. The poet had long been an admirer of the statesman. In 1793, when he was at the University, Coleridge wrote: “Have you read Mr. Fox’s letter to the Westminster Electors? It is quite the political *Go* at Cambridge, and has converted many souls to the Foxite faith.” In 1800 he told Southey, “except Fox, I, you, or anybody might learn to speak better than any man in the House.” But on the Peace of Amiens, in 1802, Coleridge, at the age of thirty, wrote two open letters to Fox in *The Morning Post* (November 4 and 9),† criticising Charles’s reception of the terms, his visit to France, and his association there with Napoleon. He attributed the highest motives to a man whom he denounced as having fallen into a morass of political error. He allowed that his views and conduct on the outbreak of the Revolution had been shared and

* These passages are quoted by Mr. Stephen Wheeler in his edition of Landor’s *Commentary* on Trotter’s *Memoirs* of Fox.

† Reprinted in Coleridge’s *Essays on His Own Times*, vol. ii. 1850.

applauded by all enlightened citizens of his own country. "You welcomed this stupendous event, Sir, with the spirit of an Englishman; with a spirit, which, even in its excesses, was truly English." To Fox's personal worth and character, he paid glowing tributes, and he allowed further that in his constant attacks on the British ministry Charles had been amply justified. But he argued that he had been misled into thinking that everything French must necessarily be right, and that the present designs of Buonaparte and the conditions of the peace were such as should be supported by no liberal and sound English patriot. We need not here renew a forgotten quarrel. There was something in what Coleridge said, and in *The Morning Post* he said it in his best dialectical style, making, in particular, very effective ironic play of the honours that Fox received in France. But also there was a good deal to be said for Fox. Sir Robert Adair, writing to Lady Melbourne, on October 2, 1802, from Paris, said: "I asked Fox about his election to the Institute. He says that he knows nothing more about it than that La Place and some of the great literary men told him it was intended. I have no doubt that it will be so. If anybody should abuse Fox for receiving these and other distinctions (I say receiving for he does not in the least court them) tell him to come to live a short time in Paris, and see with his own eyes the necessity of there being some leading men in the Councils of England to whom France can look up for the preservation of Peace. I promise you that War is half declared with the present incapable ministers, who are just able to irritate but much too weak to encounter France or gain any point over her. Addington and his little council of youngsters will be receiving continued insults from France, and when they can submit no longer they will go to War about a straw. If Fox were minister Buonaparte could not quarrel with him without rendering his views plain to the world, and quarrelling with

all the public opinions of his own country at the same time. . . . In a question of Peace or War it [public opinion in France] would be greatly felt, and yet more perhaps decisively if it were a question of War with a Gov^t of which Charles Fox was the head. A war with Addington would be much more easy, and indeed, as I said before, is half made already."* Fox once said that he never read anything written against him: "that is what they want me to do, but I won't." And eight months after *The Morning Post* attack we find Coleridge writing to Southey: "It grieved me to hear . . . that Fox had not read my two letters, but had heard of them, and that they were mine, and had expressed himself more wounded by the circumstance than anything that had happened since Burke's business."

About 1781, Fox, at Burke's house in Beaconsfield, had made the acquaintance of George Crabbe, then a young man of twenty-six or so. Fifteen years later he met him again at a country-house shooting party. He expressed his disappointment that no new poem had appeared in succession to *The Newspaper* of 1785, and at Crabbe's wish promised that he would look over anything that the poet might later have ready for the press. In 1806, Crabbe was preparing to publish *The Parish Register*, and reminded Fox of his promise. Fox died before the book appeared, but Crabbe's dedication to Lord Holland—"dear Young One"—tells us what happened. "When . . . I had collected some poems for his inspection I found my right honourable friend engaged by the affairs of a great empire, and struggling with the inveteracy of a fatal disease; at such a time, upon such a mind, ever disposed to oblige as that mind was, I could not obtrude the petty business of criticising verses; but he remembered the promise he had kindly given, and repeated an offer which, though I had not presumed to expect, I was happy to

* *In Whig Society*. By Mabell Countess of Airlie. 1921.

receive. A copy of the poem, now first published, was immediately sent to him, and the poem which I have named *The Parish Register* was heard by Mr. Fox, and it excited interest enough, by some of its parts, to gain for me the benefit of his judgment upon the whole. . . . Nor can I deny myself the melancholy satisfaction of adding that this poem (and more especially the history of Phoebe Dawson with some parts of the second book) were the last compositions of their kind that engaged and amused the capacious, the candid, the benevolent mind of this great man."

The condescension of eminent Whigs to obliged and humble scribes is not always a grateful theme; but Fox did this sort of thing with a rarely becoming grace. Crabbe was a poet whose dedication was ample honour to anyone, but Charles could bestow the same liberal attention on a little and uncounted man. In 1806 an anonymous writer published a pamphlet on Fox, with a title that covers a page and is too long to quote. He lived in a house two miles distant from St. Anne's Hill, and in his daily walks frequently passed the great man, finding it "some satisfaction to gain even a passing glance at [not from] a man of Fox's reputation." He had, we find, scarcely finished his first drama. He feared that it was too *sombre* for a comedy. Anxious for the "opinion of a good critic," he submitted it to "a celebrated physician," with whose opinion—"excellent man" as he was—the dramatist was, however, by no means satisfied. "A sudden thought suggested itself, and I sent it to Mr. Fox who at that time was unacquainted even with my name." He knew not how to excuse the trouble of the present application, beyond confidence in Mr. Fox's "goodness and general sympathy in the interest of others." And then, from Mr. Fox's profoundly respectful and devoted humble servant, this: "The Drama which accompanies this, is written by a man who is unused to

the drama, but from long habit and education, has a passionate attachment to letters in general. May I presume, Sir, to request your perusal—may I advance one step farther, and humbly solicit your opinion.”

Inconsiderable men often receive such solicitations, and have their formulæ for polite evasion. But one of the most occupied, and one of the greatest men in England, answered the request in these words, conveyed by “one of Mrs. Armisted’s servants”: “Mr. Fox’s compliments to Mr. —, and in his present leisure has to thank Mr. — for the perusal of his drama.” Charles read the play, thought it bad, said so, and recommended its author to throw it into the fire, “in revenge for its having occupied so much time.” Which the author duly did. And Fox thereafter kept a careful watch on Mr. —’s fortunes, and finding them to be not as auspicious as might be, begged the privilege of offering a small loan. Mr. —, to his credit, seems to have declined it, but thenceforth he greatly enjoyed the advantage of being allowed to pass the time of day with Mr. Fox on the morning walk, and even of taking a wayside seat with him and discussing English landscape and politics.

V

In 1805, Thomas Campbell wrote to Walter Scott: “It is surely good news to send a poet of the first order, that the great verdict of Fox is among the classical tastes given in warm admiration of your *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.” And in 1806, Campbell, aged twenty-eight, notes in his autobiography: “What a proud day for me to shake hands with ‘the Demosthenes of his time’ . . . whose sagacity I revered as unequalled . . . and to walk arm in arm round the room with him. But I must own that when the great man treated me [so] I hardly knew . . . whether I was standing on my head or my feet. Luckily

for me, however, Fox drew me into a subject on which I was competent to converse. It was the *Æneid* of Virgil. . . . I delivered myself so well on the subject that he said to me at parting, 'Mr. Campbell, you must come and see me at St. Anne's Hill, and there we shall talk more about these matters.' Lord Holland afterwards told me that Fox said . . . 'I like Mr. Campbell; he is so right about Virgil.' What struck me particularly about Charles Fox was the electric quickness . . . of his attention. . . . At a table of eighteen persons, nothing that was said escaped him, and the patest animadversion on everything that was said, came smack upon us."

John Cam Hobhouse, in his *Recollections of a Long Life*, tells us that Tom Moore was not so lucky as Campbell. Fox thought well of Moore, and wished to meet him. The master of ceremonies warned the statesman not to receive the Irish bard with a "Humph!", and turn his back, as he was apt to do in moments of abstraction. Charles promised to behave himself. But when Moore was presented, "Humph!" and the turned back betrayed the promise. Protest by the host at once led Fox to say that he would make all well by sitting next to Moore at supper. But as they moved to the table, Wordsworth attracted Charles's attention, and a three-quarters of an hour conversation left Moore without any further words from the man to whom he was anxiously prepared to improve his best Irish melodies.

In 1801, Thomas Poole, who earns his place in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a friend of Coleridge, noted that by his advice, and at Longman's expense, copies of the new edition of *Lyrical Ballads* "with appropriate letters," had been sent to "the Duchess of Devonshire, . . . Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others." He dictated all the letters but one; that was to Fox, and was written by Wordsworth. In

1801, Wordsworth was thirty-one years of age, in the prime of his vision and intelligence. His, of all others, was perhaps the testimony that an Englishman in that year might wish to hand down as his passport to posterity. And he wrote this to Fox: "It is not without much difficulty that I have summoned the courage to request your acceptance of these volumes." Having referred briefly to the nature of the poems, he explains that he does not ask approval, but wishes to use them as an introduction to a man who may be able to help a class of people to whose difficult condition two of the poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, refer. It is in itself a noble appeal, and this is the man to whom Wordsworth believed he was appealing:

"In common with the whole of the English people, I have observed in your public character a constant predominance of sensibility of heart. Necessitated as you have been from your public situation to have much to do with men in bodies, and in classes, and accordingly to contemplate them in that relation, it has been your praise that you have not thereby been prevented from looking upon them as individuals, and that you have habitually left your heart open to be influenced by them in that capacity. This habit cannot but have made you dear to poets; and I am sure that if, since your first entrance into public life, there has been a single true poet living in England, he must have loved you."

If Fox's reputation had to stand by a single testimony, I do not know that a better choice than that need be made. Wordsworth there, it seems to me, says precisely the most honourable thing that can be said of any statesman, and he made no mistake in supposing that Fox deserved it. Wordsworth was careful of these high compliments, and he is a decisive witness. Fox wrote a suitable

acknowledgment of the "obliging letter," confessed that he was "no great friend to blank verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity," assured the poet that he admired many of the poems in the collection, and was pleased to find that Mr. Coleridge in one of the pieces from his hand "combats very successfully the mistaken prejudice of the nightingale's note being melancholy." Benjamin Haydon records in his journal of 1815 that at breakfast one morning Wordsworth said: "You always went away from Burke with your mind filled; from Fox with your feelings excited; and from Pitt with wonder at his having had the power to make the worse appear the better reason."

The following letter as a further example of Fox's interest in contemporary literature is taken from Mr. Powys's papers. It is written from St. Anne's Hill, dated February 17, 1799, to Matthew Gregory ("Monk") Lewis, who had published his celebrated romance in 1795.

"SIR,

"I received by Friday's Coach your Poem of the Love of Gain [A Satire, imitated from Juvenal], which I have read with great pleasure indeed. The whole of it appears to me to be excellent, but as even in the best Poems some parts must be better than others, allow me to say that I think the Lines following v. 293 are some of the most beautiful in that style I ever saw. If I could venture to criticise, I should perhaps say that the word *een* in v. 4 seems to me to give a sense quite different from Juvenal's, and that the Variation is not for the better.

"You will readily believe that I feel myself to the highest degree flattered by your very handsome dedication, and that I am with great regard, Sir,

"Your obliged humble Serv^{vt}.

"C. J. Fox."

In Lewis's *Poems of 1812* are *Lines on returning from the Funeral of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox*, that have considerable if wholly forgotten merit.

The Sovereign's power enjoined no public show,
The *pomp* was public, for the *grief* was so.

* * * * *

Here thronged with swelling hearts and streaming eyes
The Good, the Great, the Learned, and the Wise,
Here met to grieve firm Faith and Love sincere,
The patriot Worth sustained the kindred bier.
Here Britain sighed o'er many a ruined plan,
Friends o'er the Friend, and Nature o'er the Man!

* * * * *

Nor did the Nobler ranks all tears engross;
A general anguish spoke a general loss.

* * * * *

The Mourners past, alone marked out to view
By weeds of black; the Crowd were Mourners too.

* * * * *

Still should his Line its public virtue prove;
Till Britain's Gratitude and Britain's Love
The Epithet and Name so well shall blend,
That who says—"Fox"—has said—"the People's Friend."

Not in the highest manner; but not so bad a manner
either.

VI

Of Fox's classical studies during his retirement, the most complete account is to be found in his correspondence with Gilbert Wakefield, beginning at the end of 1796, and closing with Wakefield's death a few months after his release from Dorchester Gaol in 1801. Wakefield's imprisonment in 1799 for sedition naturally roused Charles's sympathetic indignation, and he used all his influence to make the unitarian wrangler's confinement as easy as possible. The correspondence between the two men, published in 1813 in a series of sixty letters, is

almost entirely confined to classical commentary, and reveals Fox as at least a very diligent scholar with an easy range of information. Occasionally there are excursions into other topics, as when, in September, 1799, Wakefield is distressed to hear that his friend has been injured in the shooting field by the bursting of his gun. He is distressed, but he adds: "Am I, Sir, indecently presumptuous and free . . . in pronouncing those pleasures to misbecome a man of letters, which consist in mangling, maiming, and depriving of . . . its existence, an inoffensive pensioner on the universal bounties of the common Feeder and Protector of all his offspring?" Fox replies that there is point in the argument, but that there is also much to be said against it. Logic fails him, as it has done a good many other men in the matter. "However, I admit it to be a very questionable subject: at all events, it is a very pleasant and healthful exercise." His wound goes on well, but is likely to keep him away from St. Anne's Hill for more weeks than he had hoped to spend days in town. Wakefield returned to the subject, but Fox found it "best not to continue the controversy about field sports; or at least, if I do, I must have recourse . . . to authority and precedent rather than to argument." Wakefield assented: "I say, also, peace to our controversy! And I wish that every dispute . . . could terminate as amicably, and after such gentle litigation." Charles, as we have seen, was devoted to every kind of game and sport. It was a devotion that began in childhood. When he was at his preparatory school, at the age of eight, he wrote to Stephen Fox a letter that I take from Mr. Powys's papers:

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I hope you are as well as I am. Mr. and Mrs. Fannen send their best respects, and hope to see you in a short time settled at holland house. Harry sends his love and a kiss. I chose

to come to school before the FitzGerald's and I am very glad of it for I don't lose my time as they do and I see my mama as often and oftener than they do, for I come Home every Saturday and I shall be able to go to Etcn. before them. pray send FitzGerald's cricket bat as soon as you can.

"I am Your Loving Brother

"CHS: JAS: FOX

"P.S. Aunt Louise and Sally Ophaly and FitzGerald are well and send their love. Mama is not well, which you will be sorry to hear."

In the years of his retirement after 1797, Fox was seldom seen in his old London haunts. The last of his bets recorded in Brooks's book is dated March 24, 1794: "Mr. Fox bets Mr. Thompson 60 to 50 that Mr. Sheridan is not married on or before 26th March 1795." It cannot be said that his mind mellowed in seclusion, since it had never known asperities; but its native generosity grew more and more settled in habit. Coke of Norfolk said that Fox had hardly ever been known to speak harshly of any man. When someone called an acquaintance a damned stupid fellow, Charles replied that he was no such thing, but the best driver of a four-in-hand in England. Once in the House, Fox observed that he had been frequently caricatured, but that he defied anyone to paint him in the character of Envy. Gibbon said of Fox and North, the violence of whose political conflict we have seen, that "they had never felt any personal animosity to each other, their reconciliation was easy and sincere, and their friendship had never been clouded by the shadow of suspicion or jealousy." Moore heard Lords Holland and Wellesley agreeing that even Fox and Pitt "had kindly and generous feelings towards each other."

VII

North was among the notable figures of Fox's intimacy whom death claimed before the turn of the century. As early as 1784 one of the greatest of them all had gone. In December of that year, Windham, a pall-bearer at Johnson's funeral, wrote to Fox:

"His particular friends, including the Club of which you are a member, mean to attend his corpse on Monday morning from his house in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, to its place of interment in Westminster Abbey. You are not too much of a philosopher to share in the vulgar feeling that leads men to pay homage to the dead. If you can make it convenient to be in Fleet Street by 11 o'clock, or in Westminster Abbey by 12, I trust you will put on a black coat and show yourself among the mourners at his funeral."

But the loss that came nearest to Fox's heart was that of Edmund Burke in 1797. He had his own views of Burke's character and temper, as we have seen, but the great Irishman had meant a great deal to his life, and, for many years, to his affections. After the breach of 1791 he had more than once made approaches towards reconciliation, but Burke was inflexible. When Burke's son Richard died in 1794, the two estranged friends happened to meet in the House of Lords. "Fox went up to Burke," Greville tells us, "and put out both his hands to him." Burke was almost surprised into meeting this cordiality in the same spirit, but the momentary impulse passed away, and he doggedly dropped his hands and left the House." He would consent to no meeting unless Fox signed a renunciation of his principles in respect of the French Revolution. Even at the end he refused his old ally's request for an interview. According to one early biographer, Charles broke down in tears

when he heard that Burke was dead. And the same year saw the death of Horace Walpole, of whose fastidious interest in Fox's career we have seen so much evidence.

Fox's appearance has been made familiar to us by scores of portraits and cartoons. Readers of this book will have no difficulty in arriving at the truth by composing into one presentment the grand manner of Reynolds, the friendly directness of Dighton, and the pertinacious ferocity of Gillray. A dandy in his youth, Charles later affected a studied neglect in his clothes, partly perhaps from indifference, and partly in emulation of his revolutionary friends. He startled the House by adopting Washington's style of dress, and his colours, according to the prints, were always buff and blue. In 1782, a young German schoolmaster, Carl Philipp Moritz, made a visit to England, and left a very entertaining account of his travels.* He heard Fox in the House on two or three occasions. "It is impossible for me to describe with what fire, and persuasive eloquence he spoke, and how the Speaker in the chair incessantly nodded approbation from beneath his solemn wig; and innumerable voices incessantly called out *hear him! hear him!* and when there was the least sign that he intended to leave off speaking, they no less vociferously exclaimed, *go on.*" He also heard Fox addressing the electors of Westminster: "Everyone called out *Fox! Fox!* I know not why, but I seemed to catch some of the spirit of the place and time, and so I also bawled *Fox, Fox!*" Moritz describes Fox as he saw him, thus: "This same celebrated Charles Fox is a short, fat, and gross man, with a swarthy complexion and dark; and in general he is badly dressed. There certainly is something Jewish in his looks. But upon the whole, he is not an ill made nor an ill looking man: and there are many strong marks of sagacity and

* Reprinted, in translation, by the Oxford Press in 1924.

fire in his eyes." Mrs. Amelia Opie, the novelist, who with her husband the painter saw a good deal of Fox in Paris in 1802, wrote to a friend: "I am very much afraid my spouse will not live long; he has gotten a fit of tidiness on him. . . . This confirms what I said to him the other day, that almost every man was *beau* and sloven, at some time of his life. Charles Fox once wore pink heels; now he has an unpowdered crop." The unpowdered crop, it is said, was sometimes not quite that. A white wig was a matter of some nicety, and Charles is supposed to have evaded the difficulty by using blue powder. Stratford Canning (*b.* 1786) wrote in his recollections: "Once, and only once I saw the great debater. He was walking up the House to his seat. Dark but open features, beetling eyebrows, short stout legs, and a broad expanse of waistcoat composed the figure which still lives in my memory."

In 1798, John Bernard Trotter, a young man of twenty-three, who subsequently became Fox's secretary, began to visit St. Anne's Hill, and in his *Memoirs of the Later Years of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox* we find a very attractive record of Charles's private life. We may close this chapter with the summary of an average day at St. Anne's Hill, as given by Trotter. "In summer he rose between six and seven; in winter before eight. . . . After breakfast, which took place between eight and nine in the summer, and at a little after nine in winter, he usually read some Italian author with Mrs. Fox, and then spent the time preceding dinner at his literary studies, in which the Greek poets bore a principal part. A frugal but plentiful dinner took place at three, or half-past two, in summer, and at four in winter; and a few glasses of wine were followed by coffee. The evening was dedicated to walking and conversation till tea-time, when reading aloud, in history, commenced, and continued till near ten. A light supper of fruit, pastry, or

something very trifling, finished the day, and at half-past ten the family were gone to rest." That was the rake-hell of George III.'s Westminster at the age of fifty. All very orderly and tranquil now; but the fires were by no means extinguished.