

CHAPTER XV

PARIS. RETURN TO PUBLIC LIFE. DEATH OF PITT.
FOX AS MINISTER. 1800-1806

I

FOX seceded from the House of Commons in May, 1797. In December of the same year, he made a momentary return to speak on taxation, and the official record tells us that as he passed through the lobby he was received by a crowd of strangers with "a great burst of applause and clapping of hands." Thereafter he did not appear in parliament again till February, 1800; but in January, 1798, he came for a short time under public notice elsewhere.

On the 24th of that month the Duke of Norfolk, at a dinner of the Whig Club, in honour of Charles's birthday, proposed the health of the guest with significant reference to George Washington, who "had established the liberties of his country." At the close of the evening he gave a further toast, which also was drunk with acclamation: "Our Sovereign the People." The Duke was dismissed from his Lord Lieutenancy of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Fox felt called upon to associate himself plainly in public with his friend's disgrace. In May he addressed a meeting of the club, and there defended the doctrine of the people's sovereignty on the grounds that by it alone could the Hanoverian succession, or indeed any succession since James II., be maintained. There was logic in Charles's argument; and there was a good deal of passion. He concluded his speech by giving the toast again in Norfolk's precise words. Pitt seriously thought of advising the King to prosecute, but was afraid of a Westminster jury. In a letter to Wilberforce, he discussed alternative proceedings. Charles might be sum-

moned to the House; if he there disavowed the speech, the printer of the report could be prosecuted; if, on the other hand, he acknowledged it, he could be reprimanded by the Speaker. In which case he might be expected to appeal to the Whig Club against the House, which would be sufficient cause for expulsion. But then, again, there would be another Westminster election, which would probably be highly unpleasant for ministers. Or, happy thought, the House could legally commit him to the Tower for the remainder of the session; but, again, there were objections—moderate men might talk about a vindictive government, and, further, “at the end of three weeks he might be led home in procession, and have the glory of breaking windows.” This Fox was really an exceedingly tiresome fellow, and there was “a very general indignation” against him. But what to do about it Mr. Pitt for the life of him couldn’t tell. He decided at length to do nothing beyond advising the King to strike Charles’s name off the list of Privy Councillors, which His Majesty enthusiastically did. Wilberforce was not quite satisfied about it. He was convinced that these Whigs would “take up the sword against government” if they dare. But when Charles later proved to be sound about slavery, the abolitionist’s note changed.

It would be agreeable to suppose that Pitt was a little sly in his letter to Wilberforce, and intended no harm to Fox in any case. Between the two great rivals there was always apt to be an undercurrent of humour. When Fox took his seat again in 1801, Pitt referred quietly to him as “the new member”; and on another occasion Fox, following Pitt in debate, concluded a speech by saying, “There is one point, and one point only, on which I entirely agree with the right honourable gentleman, (hear hear! from all parts of the House) and that is, in the high opinion he entertains of his own talents.” But it is clear that “Our Sovereign the People” upset Pitt’s



JOHN BULL'S ADVOCATE,
NON SUITED.

humour and his balance. Though, after all, it was presumably only a sense of humour that spared history the spectacle of Pitt sending Fox to the Tower.

II

St. Anne's Hill was Fox's life from this time until 1800. On January 17 of that year he wrote to his nephew that he had decided, "against inclination, common sense, and philosophy," to attend on the question of Buonaparte's overtures for peace. He went up to London, stipulating that he would stay at Holland House for two nights only. On arriving, he was informed that Pitt was ill, and the debate postponed. Dear Young One "saw tears steal down his cheeks, so vexed was he at being detained from his garden, his books, and his cheerful life in the country." The debate took place on February 3, and Fox spoke for something over three hours. Lord John Russell properly observes that his tactics were not wholly well conceived. Fox devoted a great part of his time to a discussion of the origins of the war and their justice. His views on this matter were well known, and history is at least evenly divided in his favour. But it was futile as policy at that stage to challenge a powerful government on a cause to which it had been deeply committed for nearly ten years. That Charles himself knew this, his long abstention from parliament made clear enough. His present energy should have been concentrated on persuading the House to a careful consideration of the proposals now submitted by the First Consul, and it was only his incomparable power over an assembly whose political sympathies were overwhelmingly (two hundred and sixty-five votes to sixty-four) against him, that enabled him for more than two of his three hours to dispute a decided issue. But even so, the speech was a masterpiece of

sustained oratory. His faculty had not staled in retirement. Napoleon was told that there seemed to be no basis for peace; and Charles returned to St. Anne's Hill for another year.

In February, 1801, Pitt resigned on the question of Catholic relief, which he favoured. The King was thrown into one of his mental storms by the event, but when the Speaker, Henry Addington, consented to take the seals, George recovered on reflecting that he was after all a little tired of so masterful a minister as Mr. Pitt. When Fox was convinced that the whole transaction was not merely a piece of juggling, he decided once more to attend the House. On March 25, 1801, he supported Grey's motion for an Enquiry into the State of the Nation; the motion was defeated, but now only by two hundred and ninety-one votes to a hundred and five; and again Fox went back to St. Anne's Hill, this time for six months. In November he returned to take part in the debate on the preliminary articles of peace with France that had been signed in October and were concluded in the Treaty of Amiens in the following March. Fox, it need not be said, welcomed the peace, and none the less warmly because its terms were held by many people to be glorious to France rather than England. It had, he said, been a wholly inglorious war, and we had no right to expect, nor did he desire, a glorious peace. "If the peace be glorious for France, without being inglorious for England, it will not give me any concern that it is so. Upon this point, the feelings and opinions of men must depend in a great measure upon their conceptions of the causes of the war. If one of the objects of the war was the restoration of the ancient despotism of France, than which I defy any man to produce in the history of the world a more accursed one . . . then I say it is an additional recommendation of the peace, that it has been obtained without the accomplishment of such an object." That Fox at this time

sincerely believed in the liberal and pacific intentions of Napoleon as head of the new Republic, there can be no doubt.

III

He was soon to have his faith shaken. In the early part of 1802 he spoke twice in the House, once on the Civil List, and once to deliver a panegyric on his friend the Duke of Bedford, who had died at the age of thirty-seven, a nobleman of whom he said justly that "to be useful, whether to the public at large, whether to his relations and nearer friends, or even to any individual . . . was the ruling passion of his life." At the end of July, Fox set out for France with his wife, accompanied by Trotter and another friend. Travelling by way of Dover, Calais, Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels, they reached Paris towards the end of August. Everywhere on the journey Fox was received with civic and popular honours, and Trotter gives a pleasing account of the eager visits to picture galleries, the general sight-seeing, and the daily reading of poetry, that made the long stages seem short. They observed everything with interest, the pigs in Cassel market place, "very miserable in appearance and condition—a fact which very ill agreed with the excellent farming we had witnessed": the theatre at Lisle, where "free admission was given, of course, to all Mr. Fox's friends": "the amiable and happy females" of Ghent: the monotony of scene, relieved by *Tom Jones*, of an otherwise agreeable though very hot journey by canal to Utrecht: the woods at The Hague: and "a considerable cultivation of poppies through French Flanders." On arriving at Paris, where they stayed at the Hotel Richelieu, Charles found himself "very cheerful, and well pleased at having ended his journey, rejoiced that Mrs. Fox was quite well, notwithstanding great inconvenience from the

heat, and animated by the novel scene, and variety of objects, crowding upon his attention."

But rumours were already in the town that the First Consul was dreaming of an Empire. This was by no means so pleasing to contemplate. Theatres—where there were cries of "Bravo, Fox!"—and galleries, excursions to Versailles and St. Cloud, and social amenities of various kinds took up several days. Kosciusko called on them, they dined several times with Talleyrand, and Lafayette was a visitor. At length the day was fixed when Fox was to attend the Consular Levee for the reception of foreigners. But before the event an incident occurred that further provoked Charles's suspicions. He was with some friends in one of the galleries at the Louvre when his wife cried out "Mr. Fox! Mr. Fox!" to announce that Buonaparte was passing in state to the Senate. The company crowded to the windows, but Charles, after a glance at the ceremony of green and gold liveries that boded ill for plain republicanism, turned hastily away and resumed his inspection of the pictures.* Trotter tells us of another occasion when Fox was similarly affected by a parade of consular guards in the Place de Carousel.

At the Levee, however, Napoleon, "a small, and by no means commanding figure, dressed plainly, though richly in the embroidered consular coat, looked, at the first view, like a private gentleman, indifferent to dress, and devoid of all haughtiness in his air." Fox was presented by the English Ambassador, and Trotter, standing by, recorded Napoleon's words: "Ah! Mr Fox! I have heard with pleasure of your arrival—I have desired much to see you—I have long admired in you the orator and friend of his country, who, in constantly raising his voice for peace,

* Accounts of this incident are given by Mrs. Opie, who was present, and by Dr. Parry—as reported by Hobhouse. Parry said that Fox "lifted up his hands with disgust and impatience."

consulted the country's best interest—those of Europe—and of the human race.” And more to the same purpose. But Charles was not responsive. He “said little, or rather nothing, in reply . . . nor did he bestow one word of admiration or applause upon the extraordinary and elevated character who addressed him. A few questions and answers relative to Mr. Fox's tour terminated the interview.” Trotter observes that “to a complimentary address to himself, he always found invincible repugnance to answer.” That may have had something to do with it; but altogether there is a feeling that Fox found Napoleon less of a success than he had hoped. And he probably was a little disconcerted when his friend Amelia Opie took to singing, “Fall, Tyrants, Fall!” along the Paris boulevards. A week later he attended a consular dinner, and one of Josephine's drawing-rooms. The latter function, says Trotter, was “short, cold, and insipid,” and Madame ill concealed the disparity between her age and her husband's by a liberal application of rouge. Fox was not at all at ease, and, after paying formal respects, withdrew.

He found a number of English friends in Paris, and with them was in high spirits, affecting particularly dinner parties for six. But a considerable part of his time was spent in searching the French Archives for material for his *History of James II.* To this work he devoted a great deal of industry, but in writing it he was always hampered by the conviction that his style suffered from thirty years of oratory in the House. There is something in the self-criticism, and it was confirmed by contemporary opinion when the book was published in a handsome quarto* by his nephew in 1808. Francis Jeffrey wrote: “as to the style of Mr. F.'s book. . . . I do not think there are

* *A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James the Second with an Introductory Chapter.* By the Right Hon. Charles James Fox. London. Printed for William Miller. 1808.

any felicities in it. It is often unequivocally bad, and when it is best, there is little more to be said than that it is nothing particularly objectionable." Tom Moore, in his diary for 1828, noted: "Talked of Fox's style in his *History*. I pronounced it bad, but had no recollection how very bad it was, till I took down the book and read over some of the passages. All agreed that nothing could be more constrained and ungraceful." It is, in fact, very far from being as bad as all that. In temper the book is inspired by the Whig view of James that Mr. Belloc has recently attacked in a prejudiced but effective study of the last Stuart. In manner it sometimes moves heavily, but it always has the merit of clear-headed contact with its subject, and there are pages that are no mean examples of eighteenth-century prose. Fox set a good deal of store by the work, but it is unlikely that it finds any readers to-day, and in perspective it is but an inconsiderable incident of his life. Even when he was employed on it, as we have seen, he was always ready to be called away to more congenial studies, and indeed he was often not indisposed to neglect even those. Rogers once remarked to him how delightful it would be to lie on the grass all day with a book in one's hand. "Yes, indeed," said Charles, "but why with a book." In leaving the *History*, we may give one passage representative of its best. Fox is writing of Monmouth:

"One of the most conspicuous features in his character seems to have been a remarkable, and, as some think, a culpable degree of flexibility. That such a disposition is preferable to its opposite extreme, will be admitted by all who think that modesty, even in excess, is more nearly allied to wisdom than conceit and self-sufficiency. He who has attentively considered the political, or indeed the general, concern of life, may possibly go still further, and rank a willingness to be convinced,

or in some cases even without conviction to concede our own opinion to that of other men, among the principal ingredients in the composition of practical wisdom. Monmouth had suffered this flexibility, so laudable in many cases, to degenerate into a habit, which made him often follow the advice, or yield to the entreaties, of persons whose character by no means entitled them to such deference. The sagacity of Shaftesbury, the honour of Russel, the genius of Sidney, might, in the opinion of a modest man, be safe and eligible guides. The partiality of friendship, and the conviction of his firm attachment, might be some excuse for his listening so much to Grey; but he never could, at any period of his life, have mistaken Ferguson for an honest man."

A little rotund in figure, perhaps; but that, surely, is saying something very well.

IV

Fox and his wife got back to St. Anne's Hill from France on November 17, 1802. Already the peace of March was in danger. Speaking on the Address at the opening of parliament at the end of the month, Charles found himself abused in the Tory press as the "apologist of France" and the "agent of the First Consul." In the middle of December, he wrote to his nephew that he must go again to Westminster; "but it shall be for a very short time, I swear; only while there is hope of contributing to prevent war. I feel myself in a manner bound." Napoleon's ambitions were growing apace. He made an armed entry into Switzerland, and Charles wrote on January 1, 1803: "The conduct of France in the Swiss business is no doubt disgusting," but he could still add, "everybody seems to think that peace is more and more safe." However, consular proclamations annex-

ing this territory and that grew more and more alarming, and while there was a popular desire for peace, there also arose the popular terror of Napoleon that was to make Britons sleep uneasy in their beds for the next thirteen years. Addington, of whom the warmest current eulogy ran:

And but little though he meant,
He meant that little well,

was clearly no man to face the rising menace. The country began to call again for Pitt, who since his resignation had attempted no interference in government. He now came back to support Addington with his counsels, and it was soon clear that before long he would have to take over the leadership again. As signs of French aggression increased, opinion in England hardened towards a renewal of war. Fox's belief in Napoleon was waning; he continued to write to his friends that if we had to fight again the fault would be Addington's, but he ceased to advocate the French cause in public. The government at length presented an *ultimatum* to Paris, demanding the restoration of Malta (which had been ceded in the Treaty of Amiens) for ten years, and making the evacuation of Holland and certain concessions to the Swiss conditions of our acknowledging French claims in Italy. Napoleon rejected the proposals; on May 12, 1803, the English Ambassador was recalled from Paris; and on the 18th war between the two countries was again declared.

On the 23rd the debate on the situation opened in the House. On that day Pitt, who had been rapidly approaching estrangement from Addington, supported the war, but pointedly refrained from any approval of ministerial conduct. On the 24th, Fox spoke, again for over three hours. He severely criticised the government, and with a wealth of detail explained his belief that the negotiations had been bungled, that possibilities of an honourable settlement had been neglected, and that what-

ever the conduct of France had been it could not, on the evidence before the House, be construed as an adequate cause for our declaration of war. He added, moreover, that we were totally without means of sustaining a new conflict, and that we could not look for an effective ally in Europe. His arguments and his plea to the House for renewed efforts to avert this further disaster were alike sound; and they were alike unheeded. In these respects Fox spoke as it was inevitable that he should; but in another we remark a notable change of tone. He now attempted no defence of French behaviour; he was, indeed, unsparing in his censure. Napoleon had, in defiance of an explicit treaty, outraged the people of Switzerland. No one, said the speaker, contemplated this "violent act of injustice" with greater indignation than he. The case of Holland was yet more intolerable. No words that he could use were strong enough to express his horror of French infamy towards the Dutch. Further, he was convinced that the French envoys who were in this country as commercial commissioners were in reality military spies, and he was decidedly for their immediate expulsion and a demand for explanation from the consular government. In short, France was behaving abominably, but he was not yet convinced that it was our duty or our honour to correct her at immeasurable expense of means and life to ourselves.

It was commonly allowed that in this debate both Pitt and Fox rose to the height of their oratorical achievement, and a confirmed Pittite asserted that of the two, Fox's was "by far the greater effort of mind." And shrewd observers had a suspicion that the great rivals were not so very far apart in their views on the crisis. A few days later the suspicion was confirmed. Fox moved that the mediation of Russia be sought in the Anglo-French dispute. To the astonishment of Addington and his colleagues, Pitt supported the resolution, and the

ministry evaded a division, by accepting its principle. The proposal, however, came to nothing. On June 3 a vote of censure on the government was moved by the opposition. Pitt equivocally said that he could not agree to it, but that he could not pronounce Addington free from blame. The minister secured an overwhelming majority; but he knew that he had lost the support of Pitt, who was preposterously playing into the impotent hands of the incorrigible Fox. By June 6 Charles was back at St. Anne's Hill, writing to his nephew that Pitt's speech was "the best he ever made in that style." And then: "We are now here for good; and beautiful and delightful it is beyond measure. The nightingales have almost done; but the singing of the other birds, the verdure, the flowers, the lights and shades of this April-like weather, make the scene from this window such that I do not envy the orange trees etc. of your southern climates." Pitt, although

he was to Addington
As London is to Paddington,

suffered temporary eclipse, a result of a curiously complicated vote on the censure.* And Charles remained in the country until the beginning of 1804.

V

By that time the political state of England had fallen into queer disorder. Addington's conduct of the war was plainly incompetent, and Pitt, actively concerned in strengthening our defences against France, was none the less increasingly dissatisfied with ministerial policy.

* Pitt proposed an amendment of his own; was heavily defeated by a majority that included Fox, who thereupon announced that much as he disapproved of the ministry, he should abstain from voting on the censure, as, if Addington was removed, a more dangerous successor might take his place.

Moderate men in the opposition gradually came to the conclusion that the proper thing would be a concerted movement between himself and Fox to overthrow Addington, but this he refused to undertake, and when Fox returned to the House in February, 1804, the opposition sat in two hostile groups, though Pitt for a time maintained a pretence that he was not in opposition at all. In the meantime the King's health again showed ominous symptoms, and a Regency was once more in prospect.

Difficult as it is to define periods in national life, there are moments when we are specially conscious of change. In 1804, England was approaching one of these. George III. was to retain a precarious sanity for five or six years yet, but the Prince's party was increasingly active. Johnson and Reynolds were dead, Byron was writing his first poems, and David Cox serving his apprenticeship by painting scenes in a London theatre. Westminster was passing to the generation of Castlereagh, Canning, and Spencer Perceval. The representative figure of the new Whig party was Grey, of whom Fox wrote in June, 1803, "he and I are, if possible, still more *one* than ever." The political spirit that Grey embodied was largely of Fox's inspiration, but the elder man was not to live to see its development in the new age. What his part in regency government might have been, had he done so, it is idle to speculate. When he came into office, he was already a dying man, and had but a few months in which to express himself. His part in political life from the opening of 1804 until his fatal illness in 1806 was important; but in noting its principal features we have to avoid drifting over into an era which was partly of his inception, but to which he did not belong.

In January, 1804, Charles told his nephew that he was "quite sick" of the political muddle, "so let us turn our minds to other subjects"—chiefly to scolding the young man for not having a better opinion of Cowper's poetry.

In February he spoke on the Volunteer Bill, when he and Pitt were divided, but the two leaders voted together in March on the motion for an enquiry into Lord St. Vincent's naval administration, and again in April on National Defence. On the last occasion, their combined attack reduced the government majority to twenty-one. In successive debates during April the pressure of opposition was maintained, Pitt assailing the ministers with growing passion, and Fox lending him astute and carefully timed support. Charles's friends were anxious. They foresaw the downfall of the government, and feared that Fox was not asserting himself sufficiently to keep the whip-hand of Pitt in any new arrangement. But there is no doubt that Fox had no such ambition; he was anxious for the dismissal of an incompetent minister, without any design of taking his place. On the 29th, Addington resigned, and on the 30th, Pitt was commanded by the King to submit his plan for a new administration.

In this plan Pitt was sincerely anxious to include Fox as one of the Secretaries of State, but he let it be known that he would not make this an unalterable condition of his forming a government. Wilberforce notes that Pitt had told him that "he would never force Mr. Fox upon the King." Fox declared that he considered Pitt to be under no obligation whatever to him; and that he had no ambitions. But George, faithful to his old animosities, was decisive. He wrote to Pitt: "The whole tenour of Mr. Fox's conduct since he quitted his seat at the Board of Treasury, when under age, and more particularly at the Whig Club and other factious meetings, rendered his expulsion from the Privy Council indispensable, and obliges the King to express his astonishment that Mr. Pitt should one moment harbour the thought of bringing such a man before the royal notice. To prevent the repetition of it, the King declares that if Mr. Pitt persists in such an idea . . . his Majesty will have to deplore that he cannot



POLITICAL CANDOUR

(June, 1805.) After Gillray

Pitt Lord H. Petty Tierney Charles James Fox Wilberforce Windham
 Erskine Grey

avail himself of the ability of Mr. Pitt with necessary restrictions." And to Addington he wrote: "Mr. Fox is excluded by the express command of the King to Mr. Pitt."

Pitt yielded, with Fox's full approval. But Charles, with characteristic magnanimity, proposed that some of his friends should be included as strengthening the new ministry, and on their obvious deserts. This concession Pitt wrung from the King, but, not to be outdone in generosity by their leader, Grey, Windham, Robert Spencer, the Grenvilles, and other Whigs met at Carlton House, and thence conveyed a resolution to Pitt, desiring him to inform the King that they looked upon the exclusion of Fox as the exclusion of themselves. Political history has seldom provided a more inspiring spectacle of loyalty.

Pitt's proposed cabinet included the flower of intellect and character from both parties. The King's insensate prejudice reduced the plan to one of mediocrity. There has in recent years been a disposition in many writers to extricate George III. from the damaging processes of history. Sir John Fortescue, in the correspondence that he has recently edited with so much spirit, has given a fresh impulse to this attempt. In this study of Fox, due prominence has, I hope, been given to the King's unquestionable merits. But as a King, George emerges from a careful reading of his voluminously documented reign, with a reputation that is past repair. For over forty years, he pursued a fixed policy of interference with the rights of ministers and with their duty to the people. And in excluding the Whigs from Pitt's administration of 1804, he set the seal on a long career of wrong-headed pertinacity.

Political events had thus thrown the two great men into a partnership that was frustrated by the royal will. In the crisis following upon the King's veto both behaved

well; and in general terms there was between them a real if somewhat constrained respect. Though it must be added that at moments of exasperation Charles in his private correspondence gave expression to a distaste that Pitt's calculating coldness was always apt to excite in him. "He is a mean rascal after all," he wrote to Fitzpatrick "and you, who have sometimes supposed him to be high-minded, were quite wrong"; and, even more vehemently, to Grey: "He is a low, mean-minded dog." But these asides among friends are not to be taken too seriously.

Pitt's government, deprived of the support that he so rightly desired, carried on with increasing difficulty until the autumn of 1805. Fox was now again the leader of a powerful opposition that could drive the government to extremely narrow divisions; on one occasion, on the motion for proceeding against Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, for misuse of public funds as First Lord of the Admiralty, the figures were even, and the Speaker gave his casting vote against Pitt. This was in April, 1805, and the blow deeply affected the already ailing minister. Fox no longer opposed the war as such; he thought the government unduly alarmed about invasion, but he had now no illusions about Napoleon's imperial designs; it is engaging to note that he even enrolled in the Chertsey volunteers. But as the months went by, and affairs grew from bad to worse, he renewed his criticism of ministerial conduct, and in September Pitt felt himself forced again to beg the King to consent to a coalition. He was again refused, and Pitt was at the point of despair when his position was saved by news of Trafalgar. On November 7, Fox wrote to his nephew: "It is a great event, and by its solid as well as brilliant advantage, far more than compensates for the temporary succour which it will certainly afford Pitt in his distress. I am sorry for poor Nelson; for though his conduct at Naples was atrocious, I believe he was at bottom a good man, and

it is hard he should not enjoy (and no man would have enjoyed it more) the popularity and glory of this last business."

But grateful as the news of Trafalgar was to Pitt, it came to a dying man. The story of his last days does not belong to this study. Early in December he was moved to Bath in a state of extreme debility, but with renewed hopes. While he was there he received the news of Napoleon's crushing success at Austerlitz, and the shock was fatal to his already broken health. "Pitt," wrote Wilberforce, "was killed by the enemy as much as Nelson." With great difficulty he was carried back to his Putney Heath Villa, Hayes, which he reached on January 11. There he lingered until the 23rd, when Macaulay's "tall man in a crowd, who was forced on by those behind him," died, at the age of forty-seven, with the classic words on his lips, "Oh, my country—how I leave my country!" Pitt was not an easy person to love; but he was a very great Englishman.

When public honours to Pitt were voted in the Commons, Fox opposed the motion in a speech that was a perfect epitome of his oratorical genius. He spoke with deep respect for his rival; he concurred warmly in the proposal that his debts should be paid; but he could not vote for public honours to a man whose whole conduct in recent affairs had been a denial of Fox's own faith. As an example of Fox's style, and as a revelation of his character, I have printed this speech at length in an appendix to this volume. And here may be added a note from Dr. Whalley, prebendary of Wells, to Anna Seward, who had written to him of "the wretched Pitt." It is dated April 23, 1806, when Charles was in office. "Though I have not your exalted opinion of Mr. Fox, yet I rejoice to see him our Secretary for Foreign Affairs, because he is very able, intrepid, and hates the despotism of France. Were I to show him your letter he would be disgusted

and hurt at its violence against his dead rival. He has done himself honour by evincing on several occasions that he knows how to acknowledge Mr. Pitt's merits."*

VI

The future was with Fox; or would have been but that he too was near his end. Pitt's party, in effective strength, amounted to no more than Pitt himself. His death left his followers confusedly lost without a leader. They told the King that they were incapable of forming a new administration. George, for once in his life, realised that argument was futile, and sent for William Wyndham, Lord Grenville, who told His Majesty that he could not proceed without consultation with Fox as the guiding spirit of the Whigs. The King replied that he knew his command to have that meaning.

Thus came into being, in February, 1806, the Ministry of All the Talents.† Grenville was its nominal head,

* *Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgwick Whalley* (1863).

† First Lord of the Treasury (Prime

Minister).....Lord Grenville.

Lord High Chancellor.....Lord Erskine.

President of the Council.....Earl Fitzwilliam.

Lord Privy Seal.....Lord Sidmouth (Addington).

First Lord of the Admiralty.....Lord Howick (Grey).

Master-General of the Ordnance.....Lord Moira.

Home Secretary.....Earl Spencer.

Foreign Secretary.....Charles James Fox.

War and Colonial Offices.....William Windham.

Chancellor of the Exchequer.....Lord Henry Petty.

Lord Chief Justice.....Lord Ellenborough.

Secretary at War (in addition to

Windham).....Richard Fitzpatrick.

Chancellor of the Duchy of

Lancaster.....The Earl of Derby.

President of the Board of Trade.....Lord Auckland.

Treasurer of the Navy.....Richard Brinsley Sheridan.



Making Decent ... *Bread bottomless getting into the Grand Costume*

MAKING DECENT

(February, 1806.) After Gillray

- Grey
- Sidmouth
- Fox
- Windham
- Grenville
- Moira
- Sheridan
- Bedford
- Tierney
- Robt. Spencer
- Erskine

but Fox, as Secretary of State, was its known dictator. The King's daughter, Princess Augusta, has left a record of the first meeting of her father, and his old antagonist in these sudden circumstances. "When Mr. Fox came into the closet for the first time, his Majesty purposely made a short pause, and then said: 'Mr. Fox, I little thought you and I should ever meet again in this place. But I have no desire to look back upon old grievances, and you may rest assured I shall never remind you of them.' Mr. Fox replied, 'My deeds, and not my words, shall commend me to your Majesty.'"

In personal conduct, Charles was punctilious from that moment in treating the King with every possible consideration. In public policy, he had three governing motives: peace with France; Catholic emancipation; and, under the steady persuasion of Wilberforce, the abolition of slavery. On the last question, two indications of Fox's attitude may be given. In March, 1806, Wilberforce had several interviews with him on the subject, finding him "quite rampant and playful, as he was twenty-two years ago." Charles told Wilberforce that he thought they could carry the reform in the Commons, but that it would be defeated by the Lords in deference to the wishes of the King, the Prince of Wales, "and other anti-abolitionists." But Wilberforce had no doubt of Fox's sincerity in the matter, and afterwards learnt that he had induced the Prince "to give his honour not to stir adversely." And the last speech Charles ever made in

Joint Paymaster-General.....	Earl Temple, Lord John Townshend.
Joint Postmaster-General.....	Earl of Buckinghamshire, Earl of Carysfort.
Master of the Rolls.....	William Grant.
Attorney-General.....	Sir Arthur Pigott.
Solicitor-General.....	Sir Samuel Romilly.
Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.....	The Duke of Bedford.

parliament, on June 10, was to move "That this House, conceiving the African slave trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy, will, with all practicable expedition, proceed to take effectual measures for abolishing the said trade, in such manner, and at such periods, as may be deemed advisable." In the course of this speech he said: "if, during the almost forty years that I have had the honour of a seat in parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort, and the conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty." The motion was carried by a hundred and fourteen votes to fifteen.

The question of Catholic relief was one of greater complexity. It was one that Pitt had been forced to abandon for fear of driving the King to renewed insanity. And now, Fox, in office, found himself faced with the same necessity for compromise. His views in favour of relief were well known, but he had a double reason for not advancing them now. "I am determined," he told the Austrian Minister, "not to annoy my sovereign by bringing [the Roman Catholic question] forward." Charles knew well enough the understatement of "annoy." To bring the matter to the King's mind meant almost certain derangement, and however much Charles may have desired a Regency, he had given his word that so far as honour permitted the King should be treated with consideration. And he believed that in advising the Catholics to bide their time, both honour and policy were served. He told them, quite justly, that if the government at that stage introduced an emancipation Bill, they would inevitably be defeated, and that a new ministry would probably be formed on a definitely anti-Catholic basis. He promised them that in the meantime the government would use every effort to lighten

the operation of existing laws in practice, and to extend privileges that they already enjoyed. He promised further that if, in spite of his counsel, their petition were presented to parliament, he would openly support it with all his power. And so Catholic relief dropped out of the immediate programme of the Ministry of All the Talents. That Charles firmly believed in the advantage of the reforms that were to come later, is clear from all his private and public utterances on the question; and it is no less clear that in advising a suspension of Catholic claims in 1806, he was speaking as an enlightened statesman.

VII

The chief preoccupation of Charles's mind on return to power was peace with France and a liberal readjustment of European affairs. Whether, if he had lived, his undoubted genius for foreign policy could have curbed the swelling tide of Napoleonic ambitions, we cannot tell. He was, perhaps, as likely as any man in Europe to do it, but again fortune was to leave his powers untested, and this time with a final interdict. Charles started well by a personal gesture. A political incendiary named Ger-villière called upon him to divulge a plot for the assassination of Napoleon. Fox had him arrested, and at once communicated with Talleyrand, warning him of the danger. Napoleon sent his thanks, recognising "the principles and honour which have always distinguished Mr. Fox," and hoping for a speedy solution of difficulties under the guidance of a cabinet inspired by such a spirit. It may have been no more than the language of diplomacy, but also it may have been that Fox was on the way to discovering an approach to the Emperor,* inaccessible to other men. But the promise of February had become

* Napoleon had been crowned in 1804.

obscured by the end of April, when Fox wrote, "All negotiation with France is now, I understand, at an end." It was renewed, only to be wrecked again by Napoleon's exorbitant demands. Fox was learning that his task was formidable beyond all his hopes. "The manner in which the French fly from their word . . . disheartens me. . . . They are playing a false game; and in that case it would be very imprudent to make any concessions which . . . could be thought inconsistent with our honour, or could furnish our allies with a plausible pretence for suspecting, reproaching, or deserting us." His determination for peace was unshaken, but he was a realist in his visions. How the determination would have prospered we do not know. At the end of May, Mrs. Fox was speaking with some anxiety of her husband's health. Early in June, Trotter was shocked by his appearance. On the 10th he spoke, as we have seen, on the Slave Trade, and for a few days continued to go down to the House. His friends wanted him to lighten his labours by taking a peerage, but he would not listen to them. By the end of the month he was incapable of attending Westminster, and his public life was at an end.