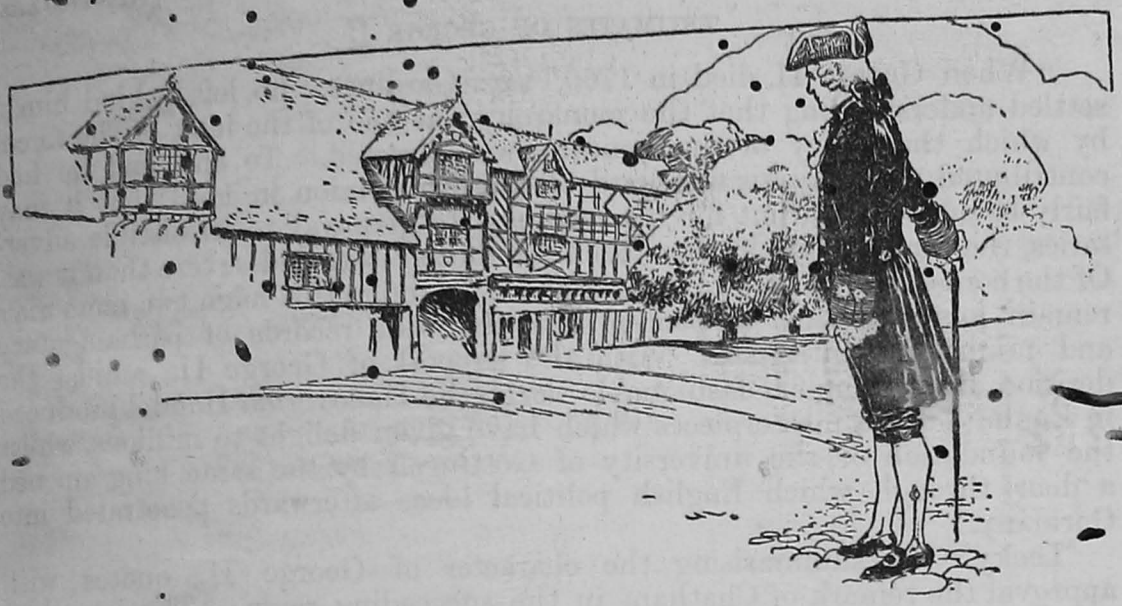

CHAPTER XV

THIRTY YEARS OF GEORGE THE THIRD

[1760–1791 A.D.]

George III.—whose reign, including the years of regency, proved to be the longest and the most eventful in the English annals — was, at the time of his accession, twenty-two years of age. His figure was tall and strongly built; his countenance open and engaging. A heartfelt and unaffected Christian piety formed the foundation of his character. In the private and domestic virtues few men, and certainly no monarch, ever excelled him. But his manner in conversation did great injustice to his endowments. His rapid utterance and frequent reiteration of trivial phrases — his unceasing "What! What!" and "Hey! Hey!" — gave him an aspect of shallowness to mere superficial observers. and obscured (literary subjects apart) the clear good sense, the sterling judgment within. Thus also his own style in writing was not always strictly grammatical, but always earnest, plain, and to the point. To the exalted duties of his station he devoted himself with conscientious and constant attention. At all times, and under all vicissitudes — whether in victory or in disaster — whether counselled by ministers of his own choice, or in the hands of a party he abhorred — he was most truly and emphatically an honest man. — STANHOPE.[b]

THE young prince of Wales—henceforth King George III—was riding with Lord Bute in the neighbourhood of Kew, when a groom first brought him the hasty tidings of his grandfather's decease. Ere long the groom was followed by Pitt as secretary of state. His majesty, after returning to Kew, proceeded to Carlton house, the residence of the princess dowager, to meet the privy council, and, according to ancient form, read to them a short address, which he had directed Bute to prepare. Next morning he was proclaimed in London with the usual solemnities. On these and the ensuing days the demeanour of the young monarch was generally and justly extolled. He seemed neither elated, nor yet abashed and perplexed, by his sudden accession; all he said or did was calm and equable, full of graciousness and goodness. The address to his council was well and feelingly delivered, and he dismissed the guards on himself to wait on his grandfather's body. "He has behaved throughout,"

says Horace Walpole, a critic of no courtly temper, "with the greatest propriety, dignity, and decency."

From the first moment of the new reign the ascendancy of Bute had been foreseen and foretold. Only a few days afterwards a hand-bill was affixed to the royal exchange, with these words: "No petticoat government—no Scotch favourite—no Lord George Sackville!" Of the second of these surmises confirmation was not, indeed, slow in coming. On the next morning but one after his accession the king directed that his brother, Edward duke of York, and his groom of the stole, Lord Bute, should be sworn of the privy council; and Bute appears henceforward to have been consulted on all the principal affairs. The quick-eyed tribe of courtiers at once perceived that this was the channel through which the royal favours would most probably flow, and to which their own applications would most wisely be addressed.

But while the king thus indulged his predilection towards the friend of his early years, he received all his grandfather's ministers with cordial kindness, and pressed them to continue in his service. Pitt declared his willingness to remain on the same footing as before. Newcastle, now sixty-six years of age, made at first a show of resignation, with a view, no doubt, of enhancing his importance, but as he took care to consult only such followers and expectants as had an interest in his stay, he did not fail to receive earnest entreaties in support of his real inclinations, and magnanimously consented to resume the treasury.

On the 31st of October the king highly gratified the more serious portion of his people by a proclamation "for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for preventing and punishing of vice, profaneness, and immorality." Such proclamations are worth little more than the paper they are written on when not consonant to the personal conduct of the sovereign, but in this case the document was happily upheld by half a century of undeviating royal example. It was also observed, with satisfaction, that the archbishop of Canterbury, proud of so promising a pupil, and having no longer a Lady Yarmouth to encounter, had become frequent in attendance at the court.

The parliament, which had been prorogued for a few days on account of the demise of the Crown, was on the 18th of November opened by the king. Never, it was remarked, had there been greater crowds at such a ceremony, nor louder acclamations. The royal speech had been drawn up by Lord Hardwicke, and revised by Pitt; but when complete his majesty is said to have added with his own hand a paragraph as follows: "Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton; and the peculiar happiness of my life will ever consist in promoting the welfare of a people whose loyalty and warm attachment to me I consider as the greatest and most permanent security of my throne." Such cordial language met with no less cordial responses from both houses. "What a lustre," exclaim the lords, "does it cast upon the name of Briton, when you, sir, are pleased to esteem it among your glories!" "We acknowledge," say the commons, "with the liveliest sentiments of duty, gratitude, and exultation of mind, these most affecting and animating words."

In other passages his majesty's speech professed a thorough concurrence in the counsels which during the last few years had guided his grandfather's reign. It praised the "magnanimity and perseverance, almost beyond example," of his good brother the king of Prussia; to British victories it adverted in becoming terms of exultation: it declared that his majesty would have been happier still could he have found his kingdoms at peace; "but since," it added, "the ambition, injurious encroachments, and dangerous designs of my

[1760-1761 A.D.]

enemies rendered the war both just and necessary, I am determined to prosecute this war with vigour." In conclusion, the king expressed his delight at the present happy extinction of divisions, and recommended to his parliament "unanimity." Never was any recommendation more fully complied with; scarce one public difference of opinion appeared. Another annual subsidy of £670,000 to the king of Prussia was proposed by Pitt, and granted by the house of commons. Supplies to the unprecedented amount of nearly £20,000,000 were cheerfully voted. The civil list for the new reign, on the king's surrendering the branches of his hereditary revenue, was fixed at £800,000 a year. Nothing was heard in either house but dutiful addresses and loyal congratulations.

GEORGE III
(1738–1820)

But, however fair and specious seemed the unanimity which greeted the new reign, it was no more than apparent. Beneath that smooth surface jealousy, rancour, and ambition were already beginning to stir and heave. A small knot of grasping families among the peers — which wished to be thought exclusively the friends of the Hanover succession, and which had hitherto looked upon court officers, honours, and emoluments as almost an heirloom belonging to themselves — viewed with envious eyes the admission of new claimants, not as involving any principle of politics, but only as contracting their own chances of appointment. Such malcontents found a congenial mouthpiece in the duke of Newcastle.

On the other hand, the cabals of Bute were to the full as numerous and as crooked as Newcastle's. It was his object to hold himself forth as the sole expounder of the king's wishes and opinions — as the single and mysterious high priest of the royal oracle. On the 21st of March the parliament was dissolved by a proclamation, and the *Gazette* of the same day announced several changes in the ministry. On the 25th of March the *Gazette* made known to the world that his majesty had been pleased to appoint the earl of Bute one of his secretaries of state — Holderness being the minister removed. Neither Pitt nor Holderness himself had received any notice of the contemplated change as to the seals until that change was matured, and on the very point of execution. To soften Pitt, his kinsman, James Grenville,

was promoted from a lordship of the treasury to the lucrative post of cofferer of the household. Such a concession was not likely to have much weight with such a statesman as Pitt. It must, however, be owned that on this occasion he showed none of that haughty impracticability with which he has been often and not unjustly charged. He patiently endured the want of confidence indicated by the removal or the appointment of colleagues without his previous knowledge. But he was determined to allow no infringement of his province — to direct with full powers both the war and the negotiations — and to resign his office sooner than sacrifice his judgment.

THE KING'S MARRIAGE AND CORONATION (1761 A.D.)

On the 8th of July an extraordinary privy council was held; all the members in or near town having been summoned, without distinction of office or of party, to meet, as was declared, "on the most urgent and important business." The object, it was concluded on all sides (so carefully had the secret been kept), was to ratify or reject the treaty with France. It proved—to declare a queen. His majesty announced to the council his intended marriage with Charlotte, second sister of the duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, a house of ancient lineage and of tried Protestant principles. Of the princess herself, who was scarcely seventeen, and not remarkable for beauty, little as yet was or could be known. The character of this princess in after life — as queen consort of England for fifty-seven years—confirmed the soundness of the judgment which had raised her to that rank. An ever present, yet unostentatious piety; to the king an affectionate reverence; to her children an unremitting care, prudence, economy, good sense, and good temper—were amongst her excellent qualities. Pure and above all reproach in her own domestic life, she knew how to enforce at her court the virtues, or, at the very least the semblance of the virtues, which she practised. To no other woman, probably, had the cause of good morals in England ever owed so deep an obligation.

The form of announcement to the privy council having been duly gone through at St. James', Earl Harcourt was despatched to Strelitz on another form — a public demand of the princess in marriage. The duchesses of Ancaster and Hamilton and the countess of Effingham were likewise sent over to attend upon the person of their future sovereign. A royal yacht, the *Carolina*, was appointed to convey her, its name being first with much solemnity, and in the presence of all the lords of the admiralty, altered to the *Charlotte*; and the fleet that was to serve as escort was commanded by Anson himself. The contract of marriage having been signed in state, the princess proceeded on her journey amidst great public rejoicings in the towns of Mecklenburg and Hanover, until Cuxhaven, where her highness embarked for England. At length on the 6th of September, and at Harwich, she set foot on English ground. On the 8th she arrived at St. James'. The king met her in the garden, and when she would have fallen at his feet prevented and embraced her. That same afternoon they were married in the chapel royal by the Archbishop of Canterbury. On the ensuing day their majesties held a crowded drawing-room, and gave a splendid ball. Horace Walpole, who was present, thus describes her: "She is not tall, nor a beauty; pale, and very thin; but looks sensible, and is genteel." And in another letter he adds: "She has done nothing but with good-humour and cheerfulness. She talks a great deal; is easy, civil, and not disconcerted. Her French is tolerable."

The coronation of both their majesties followed on the 22nd of September. Never had there been greater eagerness among all classes of the people to

[1761 A.D.]

behold the gorgeous pageant. Thus the platform from St. Margaret's round-house to the church door, which at George II's coronation had been let for £40, produced at this no less than £2,400. Thus, also, any disguise, however humble, was readily assumed as a passport of admission. A gentleman present writes as follows to his friend in the country: "I should tell you that a rank of foot-soldiers was placed on each side within the platform, and it was not a little surprising to see the officers familiarly conversing, and walking arm-in-arm with many of them, till we were let into the secret — that they were gentlemen who had put on the dresses of common soldiers." It has been said—a rumour which we are not able either to confirm or to deny—that, mingled among the spectators, in another disguise, stood the ill-fated pretender to that day's honours — Charles Edward Stuart. The solemn rite in Westminster abbey, and the stately banquet in Westminster hall — when a Dymoke, clad in full armour, and mounted on the same white horse which George II had ridden at Dettingen, asserted, as champion, the king's right against all gainsayers, and flung down his iron gauntlet in defiance — were equally admired for their magnificence.[b]

THE RETIREMENT OF PITT (1761 A.D.)

Meantime the war was still prosecuted. An expedition under Commodore Keppel and General Hodgson succeeded in taking the isle of Belleisle on the coast of Brittany (June 7th). The island of Dominica in the West Indies was also reduced.

France had hitherto been a great sufferer by the war; for she made no progress in Germany, she had lost her colonies, and her commerce had nearly been destroyed. She was therefore anxious for a peace with England, and a treaty for that purpose was entered on; but as she required that England should abandon the king of Prussia and make certain concessions to Spain, Mr. Pitt spurned at the proposals. A treaty, named the Family Compact, had been secretly arranged between the courts of Versailles and Madrid, where Charles III (late king of Naples, and the ablest monarch that Spain has possessed since the days of Philip II) now reigned. It was signed at this time; and Pitt, who, it is said, had procured secret information of its contents, which were hostile to England, proposed in the council to recall the British ambassador from Madrid and to send a fleet to intercept the Spanish galleons; but the majority of the council rejected the measure, affecting to regard it as contrary to good policy and to justice and honour. Finding he could not prevail on them, the haughty minister exclaimed, "I was called to the administration by the voice of the people; to them I have always considered myself accountable for my conduct; and therefore I cannot remain in a situation which makes me responsible for measures I am no longer allowed to guide." Lord Granville, the president of the council, made a dignified and sensible reply.[c]

Pitt, adhering to his first opinion, and having delivered his reasons in writing, on the 5th of October resigned his office. In this course he was followed by Lord Temple. When on the same day he waited on his sovereign to give up the seals, he found the demeanour of the young king most kind and gracious. His majesty expressed his concern at the loss of so able a servant, and offered him any reward in the power of the crown to bestow, but declared that his own judgment was adverse to the sudden declaration of war, adding that if even his cabinet had been unanimous for it he should have felt the greatest difficulty in consenting. Pitt, who appears to have anticipated a

different reception, was deeply touched by the king's cordiality of manner and expression. "I confess, sir," said he, "I had but too much reason to expect your majesty's displeasure. I did not come prepared for this exceeding goodness. Pardon me, sir; it overpowers, it oppresses me." And he burst into tears.

Such then was the close of Pitt's justly renowned administration. Even amidst the full blaze of its glory there arose some murmurs at its vast expense — the only objection of any weight, it seems, that has ever been urged against it. Yet, as a shrewd observer writes at the time, "It has cost us a great deal, it is true, but then we have had success and honour for our money. Before Mr. Pitt came in we spent vast sums only to purchase disgrace and infamy."

THE ASCENDENCY OF BUTE

The retirement of Pitt from the administration left a complete and undisputed ascendency to Bute. It was now his lordship's object to strengthen himself by large and powerful connections. The privy seal was kept in reserve for the duke of Bedford, while the seals of secretary were bestowed upon the earl of Egremont, who had been intended for plenipotentiary at the congress of Augsburg, but who was chiefly remarkable as the son of Sir William Wyndham.

But the most pressing object with Lord Bute was to avert or soften the resentment which the removal of the great commoner might probably excite in the nation. Under these circumstances, on the very day after Pitt's resignation, Bute addressed a letter to him by the king's commands, declaring that his majesty was desirous, nay, "impatient," to confer on him some mark of his royal favour. His majesty, continued Bute, requests some insight into Mr. Pitt's own views and wishes, and meanwhile proposes to him either the government of Canada, combined with residence in England, and a salary of £5,000 a year, or the chancellorship of the duchy of Lancaster, with as much of emolument and nearly as little of business. The reply of Pitt — after a profusion of obsequious thanks — states himself "too proud to receive any mark of the king's countenance and favour, but, above all, doubly happy could I see those dearer to me than myself comprehended in that monument of royal approbation and goodness with which his majesty shall condescend to distinguish me." In compliance with the hint thus given a peerage was conferred on Lady Hester, by the title of Baroness Chatham, with remainder to her issue male, and a pension of £3,000 a year was granted to Pitt for three lives: namely, his own, Lady Chatham's, and their eldest son's.

The bestowal of the title and the pension on the retiring minister fully attained the object which Lord Bute had in view. He was enabled in the same *Gazette* to insert, first the resignation, next the honours and rewards, and, lastly, a despatch from the earl of Bristol, stating at large the favourable and pacific assurances of the Spanish court. "These," says Burke, "were the barriers that were opposed against that torrent of popular rage which it was apprehended would proceed from this resignation. And the truth is, they answered their end perfectly; this torrent for some time was beaten back, almost diverted into an opposite course."

On the 3d of November the new parliament met. The king's speech on opening the session was nearly in the same strain as those former speeches which Pitt had drawn; like them it promised a vigorous prosecution of the war; like them it praised the "magnanimity and ability" of the king of Prus-

[1761–1762 A.D.]

sia. How far Lord Bute was in earnest when framing these expressions will presently be seen. Meanwhile the turn of the debates afforded Pitt several opportunities to explain or vindicate his recent course of policy. He spoke with unwonted temper and moderation, defending his own conduct without arraigning that of his former colleagues. If, as some detractors allege, his harangues at this time were inflammatory, they were so from the force of his topics, and not from the violence of his language.

Notwithstanding the eloquence and the popularity of Pitt, it appears that he had at this time but few parliamentary followers. On a motion to produce the papers respecting the Spanish negotiation so scanty were his numbers that he could not venture a division.

WAR WITH SPAIN (1762–1763 A.D.)

During this time the progress of the Spanish negotiations had been precisely such as Pitt had foreseen and foretold. On the 21st of September Lord Bristol announced to the secretary of state that the *flota* had safely anchored in the bay of Cadiz; and on the 2nd of November he adds: "Two ships have lately arrived at Cadiz with very extraordinary rich cargoes from the West Indies, so that all the wealth that was expected from Spanish America is now safe in Old Spain." In that very same despatch of the 2nd of November the ambassador has to report a "surprising change in General Wall's discourse," and "haughty language now held by this court, so different from all the former professions." It now became evident, even to Lord Bristol's apprehension, that the Spaniards had been pacific only while awaiting and expecting their resources for war. The claims of Spain upon England were urged anew in the most peremptory terms, while the request of the court of London for some information or explanation respecting the rumoured Family Compact was met with a positive refusal. Further notes or further interviews served only to widen the breach. Before the close of the year the earl of Bristol received orders to leave Madrid, and the count de Fuentes orders to leave London. All hope of conciliation had vanished, and a declaration of war against Spain was issued on the 4th of January, 1762.[b]

A new change in the British cabinet took place in the following month of May; the duke of Newcastle resigned, and Lord Bute now occupied the post of which he was so covetous, but for which he was utterly unfit, and became the prime minister. The duke of Newcastle, whose fidgety temper, vanity, jealousy, meanness of spirit, and disregard of promises were the general topics of ridicule,[1] had, by his great wealth, his command of votes in the commons, a certain degree of talent of his own, and the far superior abilities of his late brother, maintained himself in office with little interruption since the year 1724. He now retired with some dignity; for though he had greatly injured his private property by his zeal for the house of Brunswick, as it was termed, he refused a pension when offered, saying, that "if he could be no longer permitted to serve his country, he was at least determined not to be a burden to it."

The courts of France and Spain called on the king of Portugal to break through all the ties of gratitude, honour, and interest, and join in the confederacy against England. On his refusal, they both declared war against him, and their troops invaded his kingdom at three several points. The king called

[1 "Newcastle," says Gardiner,[b] "was ignorant and incompetent, and made himself ridiculous by his fussy attempts to appear energetic. He always, it was said, lost half an hour in the morning and spent the rest of the day in running after it."]

on England for aid, which was promptly afforded. English troops were sent to Portugal, where the supreme command was given to the count de la Lippe-Buckeburg, a German prince of high military character, and the invaders were speedily obliged to recross the frontiers.

An expedition of considerable magnitude, under Lord Albemarle and Admiral Pocock, sailed from Portsmouth on the 5th of March. Its object was to give a heavy blow to the Spanish commerce; and its destination was Havana, in the isle of Cuba, which it reached on the 5th of June. Many difficulties, from climate and from the number of the garrison, the strength of their defences, and the gallantry of their resistance, impeded the operations of the besiegers; but the abilities of the commanders, seconded by the indomitable spirit and courage of their men, overcame them all, and the town at length surrendered (August 14th). The loss to Spain was fourteen sail of the line and four frigates taken or destroyed in the harbour, and treasure and merchandise to the amount of £3,000,000. This was perhaps the greatest and richest conquest ever made by the British arms. It was not, however, the only loss sustained by Spain. An expedition from Madras in India, under Admiral Cornish and Sir William Draper, took Manila, the capital of the Philippine islands. All the public property was given up to the English, and a ransom of £800,000 was agreed to be paid for the private property. Two ships of the British squadron then intercepted and took the *Santissima Trinidad*, a ship from Acapulco with a cargo worth £600,000. To add to the misfortunes of Spain, the *Santa Hermione*, from Peru, with treasure on board to the amount of £1,000,000, was captured off Cape St. Vincent. The losses of France this year were the islands of Martinique, Grenada, St. Lucia, Tobago, and St. Vincent, in the West Indies.

These brilliant successes almost turned the head of the nation; visions of glory and wealth floated before the public eye; and the mercantile interest clamoured loudly for continuing a war by which they were great gainers. The ministry, however, were not so dazzled; they saw that all the objects of the war were gained, the pride of the house of Bourbon was humbled, the king of Prussia was secured; at the same time the expense to England had been and would be enormous. The overtures of France for peace were therefore readily listened to; and both parties being in earnest, the preliminaries were readily settled at Fontainebleau (November 3rd). In spite of the declamation of Mr. Pitt and his party, they were approved of by large majorities in both houses of parliament, and a treaty was finally signed at Paris (February 10th, 1763).

By this treaty England was to retain all Canada with Cape Breton and the other islands in the gulf of St. Lawrence, and Louisiana eastward of the Mississippi; in the West Indies, Dominica, St. Vincent's, and Tobago; in Africa, Senegal. She was to receive back Minorca in exchange for Belleisle, and was secured divers advantages in India. Spain ceded to her the two Floridas, gave up all claim to fish on the banks of Newfoundland, and allowed the English to cut logwood on the coast of Honduras. England restored all her other conquests.

England has never concluded a more honourable peace than this, and Lord Bute was justified in declaring that "he wished no other epitaph to be inscribed on his tomb than that he was the adviser of it." Mr. Pitt, who, great as he undoubtedly was, had too violent a lust for war, condemned it; the selfish king of Prussia exclaimed against it, as if England were bound to waste her blood and treasure for his aggrandisement; but history pronounces the Peace of Fontainebleau an honourable termination of a war which had added seventy-five millions to the national debt of Great Britain.

[1763 A.D.]

BUTE IS SUCCEEDED BY GRENVILLE (1763 A.D.)

Soon after the conclusion of the peace, Lord Bute retired from office. He was never popular; his manners were cold and repulsive; his partiality for his countrymen, the Scots, was extreme; and the outcry against the peace was general. The passing of a bill for an excise on cider raised the clamour to its height. He therefore resigned a post for which he felt himself unsuited, alleging his preference for domestic life and literary retirement.[c]

This sudden step, it is said, took the king by surprise nearly as much as the people. After the first pause for wonder, men began to inquire Lord Bute's motive, and according to their own prejudices or partialities assigned the most various — from a philosophic love of retirement down to a craven fear. According to some friends he had always declared that as soon as he had signed the peace, and carried through the budget, he should consider his objects as attained and his official life as ended. Others thought that his nerves had been shaken by the libels and clamours against him.

On calmly reviewing the whole of this transaction there seems no reason to doubt that, according to Lord Bute's own statement of his motives, his coolness with his colleagues and his sense of duty to his sovereign might weigh with him no less than the violence of his opponents. It is certain, however, that he did not then, nor for some time afterwards, lose his back-stairs influence, nor lay aside his ambitious hopes. It is probable that he expected to allay the popular displeasure by a temporary retirement, and meanwhile, in merchants' phrase, to carry on the same firm with other clerks.

With Lord Bute retired both Dashwood and Fox. For the former an ancient barony, to which he was one of the co-heirs, was called out of abeyance, and thus he became Lord le Despencer. Fox was likewise raised to the upper house as Lord Holland — the same title which had been already bestowed upon his wife. But although Lord Holland, during two more years, continued a placeman, it may be said of him that he had ceased to be a politician. Henceforth, until his death in 1774, he took little or no further part in public affairs. In his retirement his principal pleasure was the construction of a fantastic villa at Kingsgate, on the coast of Thanet.

The successor to Lord Bute proved to be George Grenville, who on the very day that the favourite resigned kissed hands on his appointment as both first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer. No one doubted that this choice had been made under the influence of Lord Bute, and was designed for the preservation of that influence. At the same time it was intimated to the foreign ministers that the king had now entrusted the principal direction of his affairs to three persons, namely, to Mr. Grenville and the secretaries of state, lords Egremont and Halifax. Thus it happened that the chiefs of the new administration received from the public the name of the Triumvirate.[b]

THE AFFAIR OF WILKES AND THE *North Briton* NO XLV

When the Grenville administration was formed, a tremendous fire was opened on it from the press. The most destructive battery was a periodical named the *North Briton*, conducted by John Wilkes, esquire, member for Aylesbury, a man of considerable talent, but profligate in character and ruined in fortune. He was, like almost every demagogue, strongly aristocratic in feeling; but being refused a lucrative post, he took up the trade of patriotism, and commenced a series of attacks on the persons and measures of the minis-

ters. Of these they took no notice, till in the forty-fifth number of his paper he assailed the speech from the throne (April 19, 1763), accusing the king of having uttered direct falsehoods. A general warrant was issued from the office of the secretary of state to seize the authors, printers, and publishers of the *North Briton*, and their papers, and bring them before the secretary. Wilkes was accordingly taken and committed to the Tower. On his application to the court of common pleas for a writ of *habeas corpus*, it was granted, and Chief-Justice Pratt having decided that his privilege of parliament (which can only be forfeited by treason, felony, or breach of the peace) had been violated, he was discharged.

The attorney-general then commenced proceedings against him for a libel, and Wilkes, now the idol of the mob, took every mode of courting prosecution. The ministers, instead of leaving the courts of law to deal with him, unwisely brought the matter before the house of commons, by whom number forty-five of the *North Briton* was voted to be a false, scandalous, and seditious libel against the king and both houses, and was ordered to be burned by the common hangman. At the same time, as Wilkes had printed at a press in his own house a poem called an *Essay on Woman*, in which impiety contended with obscenity, and had affixed to the notes on it the name of Bishop Warburton; it was voted in the house of lords to address his majesty to order a prosecution against Mr. Wilkes for breach of privilege and for blasphemy. It was very injudiciously arranged that the mover should be Lord Sandwich, a man whose own private character was anything but immaculate.

The question of privilege was then taken up in the house of commons; and in spite of the eloquence of Mr. Pitt, and in the face of the decision of the court of common pleas, it was decided by a large majority that privilege of parliament does not extend to the case of writers and publishers of seditious libels. With this decision the house of lords concurred after a long debate.

A riot took place when the attempt was made to burn the *North Briton;* and when several of the persons who had been arrested brought actions against the messengers, juries gave them damages. Wilkes himself brought actions, against the two secretaries of state, and against Mr. Wood, the under-secretary, and he obtained a verdict against the latter for £1,000 and costs. On this occasion Chief-Justice Pratt pronounced the general warrant to be illegal, and a similar decision by Lord Mansfield, the chief justice of the king's bench, set the question at rest.

Wilkes was expelled the house; he was tried and convicted for publishing number forty-five and the *Essay on Woman;* and as he did not appear in court to receive sentence, he was outlawed, and fled to France.

THE STAMP ACT (1765 A.D.)

We shall see, in a few years, John Wilkes, and all the chorus of his political drama, passing away, "like an insubstantial pageant faded." Another scene was to be opened, which, devoid of interest as it might at first appear, was to be developed in a series of long-continued action which involved not only the interests of England but eventually the destinies of the Anglo-Saxon family, and incidentally of all the human race. The triumphant administration of Mr. Pitt had given a firmness and compactness to the British Empire in North America, which appeared to promise a long continuance of prosperity to the mother country and her colonies. These colonies were founded upon principles of freedom and toleration, by a race nurtured in those principles, and, in some cases, seeking for a happier field for their establishment than they could

[1764–1765 A.D.]

find under a temporary suspension of the old English right to be well governed. The colonial assemblies or parliaments of the thirteen provinces of North America, elected by the people, trained men of industry and ability to the consideration of questions of public policy and local administration. The trade between Great Britain and her colonies had been always based upon principles wholly opposite to those of commercial freedom. The Englishman was forbidden to smoke any other than Virginia-grown tobacco, and the Virginian could wear no other coat than one of English-made cloth. It was an age of regulation and balance in small matters as well as in great — in commerce as in war. No particular injury was contemplated towards the colonists in the trade regulations; although the monopoly of the English merchants was regarded as the supreme advantage of colonial possessions. The state regarded these colonists as a happy family of good children, to be kept in order by that paternal authority which knew best what was for their advantage. At last the parent took up the fancy of compelling the children to pay something in acknowledgment of the heavy cost of past protection, and as a contribution towards the expense of that protection in future. A Stamp Act to raise £60,000 produced a war that cost £100,000,000.

On the 10th of March, 1764, Mr. Grenville moved in the commons a series of resolutions for imposing small duties on certain articles of American commerce; to "be paid into the receipt of his majesty's exchequer, and there reserved, to be from time to time disposed of by parliament, towards defraying the necessary expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the British colonies and plantations in America." Following this resolution for the appropriation of the produce of duties upon the foreign trade of the American colonies, came the 14th of the series, in these words: "That towards further defraying the said expenses, it may be proper to charge certain stamp duties in the said colonies and plantations." Walpole says, "This famous bill, little understood here at that time, was less attended to. The colonies, in truth, were highly alarmed, and had sent over representations so strong against being taxed here, that it was not thought decent or safe to present their memorial to parliament." The colonists could not see, in Grenville's proposition for a paltry tax, any other than the beginning of an attempt to tax them largely without their own consent. They denied the right of the house of commons to tax them unless they had representatives in that house. Grenville had rashly termed his resolution for a stamp act as "an experiment towards further aid." Where was the system, thus begun, to end? The Stamp Act was passed, without a debate or division in the house of lords; and it received the royal assent on the 22nd of March, 1765. The act was to come into operation on the 1st of November. When the enactment first became known in America, there was a deep expression of grief, but scarcely any manifestation of resentment. But in the state assemblies, a determination not to submit without remonstrance was quickly manifested. Virginia, the most attached to the monarchy of all the provinces — the most opposed to democratic principles — was the first to demand a repeal of the statute by which the colonists were taxed without their own consent. The resolutions of the assembly of Virginia went forth as an example to the other provinces, many of which passed similar resolutions.

Yet the desire almost universally prevailed amongst the colonists to regard themselves as bound in allegiance to the British crown. The alienation was a gradual result of a mistaken view of the policy that ought to prevail, between a colony that had grown to a real capacity for independence and the parent state. It was a result, also, of that system of parliamentary corruption and of court influence which at that time entered so largely into the government

of England. Walpole[d] says that the Stamp Act "removed the burden of a tax to distant shoulders"; that Grenville contemplated his measure "in the light of easing and improving an over-burdened country." Burke in his memorable speech on American taxation on the 19th of April, 1774, exhibited this fact more distinctly. The Americans, Burke says, "thought themselves proceeded against as delinquents, or at best as people under suspicion of delinquency." They were irritated enough before the Stamp Act came. They adopted such counter measures as appeared efficient to a people that had not yet begun to feel their own strength, and understand their own resources. They agreed amongst themselves to wear no English manufactured cloth, and to encourage the breed of sheep that they might manufacture cloth from their own wool. They protested against the English monopoly; and they devised, feebly enough, such measures as they thought might overcome it. At last what Burke calls "the scheme of a regular plantation parliamentary revenue" was established — "a revenue not substituted in the place of, but superadded to, a monopoly; which monopoly was enforced at the same time with additional strictness, and the execution put into military hands." It was one of the misfortunes of Mr. Grenville's scheme that his Stamp Act was popular in England. "Great was the applause of this measure here. In England we cried out for new taxes on America, whilst they cried out that they were nearly crushed with those which the war and their own grants had brought upon them." Such was the commencement of a struggle which ended in the independence of the American colonies.

THE REGENCY BILL (1765 A.D.)

During the progress of the bill for the taxation of the American colonies, the king was attacked by a serious indisposition. On the nature of that illness the greatest secrecy was maintained. The family of George III at that time consisted of George, prince of Wales, born on the 12th of August, 1762; and of Frederick, duke of York, born on the 16th of August, 1763. The differences of opinion between the king and his ministers upon the Regency Bill are of minor importance in a view of public affairs at this distance of time, and require no elaborate detail. The king wished that the power of nominating a regent should be vested in himself. The ministry thought it desirable that a regency during the minority of the successor to the throne should be distinctly named. The king, indignant at the conduct of his ministers, sent for his uncle the duke of Cumberland; and commissioned him to negotiate with Mr. Pitt for a return to power. It was an embarrassing time in which to contemplate a change of ministry. America was getting into a flame of anger at the Stamp Act. London was terrified by riots of Spitalfields weavers, upon the rejection of a bill which would have prohibited the importation of foreign silks. What Burke calls "the vertigo of the Regency Bill" produced changes which an untoward aspect of national affairs might have failed to effect.

The rumours that the king contemplated a change of ministers produced an opinion in one then unconnected with official life, but who looked upon political affairs, and public men, from a higher elevation than most observers of the shifting scenes of that time. Edmund Burke announced to a friend, with reference to Pitt, that "this crisis will show whether pride or patriotism be predominant in his character." The duke of Cumberland went to Hayes, and there learned the "plan of politics" which Pitt chose "to dictate"—that general warrants should be repudiated; that dismissed officers should be restored; that Protestant alliances should be formed, to balance the Family

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Compact of the Bourbons. There was some difference of opinion about appointments, but these might have been removed. Earl Temple was sent for; and although he was intended for the office of first lord of the treasury, he persuaded his brother-in-law to give up the negotiation. He was seeking a ministerial alliance with his brother, George Grenville, to whom he had become reconciled, and he conceived the plan of inducing Pitt to join them; in which union he fancied he saw a power that would enable them to stand alone without the support of ducal whigs or courtly tories. The king was obliged to call back his ministers, Grenville and Bedford. They dictated terms to the king, who bowed to the ministers to retire, and said "if he had not broken out into the most profuse sweat he should have been suffocated with indignation." Pitt was again applied to; and he again declined to take office without Lord Temple, who persevered in his resolution, at an audience which both had of the king.

ROCKINGHAM ASSUMES THE MINISTRY (1765 A.D.)

The whig families were again resorted to. The duke of Newcastle again obtained a post of honour in receiving the privy seal; the duke of Grafton became one of the secretaries of state, with General Conway as the other secretary; and the marquis of Rockingham was named first lord of the treasury. Untried colts and worn-out hacks were harnessed together, to drag the state coach through the sloughs in which it was travelling. They pulled honestly side by side for a brief journey; and then came to a dead stop. This ministry had the lasting credit of bringing one man of extraordinary genius into public life, though in a subordinate situation. The eloquent gratitude of Edmund Burke to the marquis of Rockingham has made us think favourably of the head of this ministry, for "sound principles, enlargement of mind, clear and sagacious sense, and unshaken fortitude." Such qualities were needed at such a crisis.

The Rockingham administration came into office on the 10th of July. Parliament had been prorogued previous to their appointment; and a few months passed on without any disturbing events. At last came intelligence which demanded grave and anxious consideration. In the autumn of 1765, various letters were received by Mr. Secretary Conway, from official persons in America, relating the particulars of riots at Boston and in the colony of Rhode Island. At Boston, the effigy of the gentleman who had accepted the office of stamp-distributor was hung upon a tree, which was subsequently called Liberty Tree; his house was sacked, and he was compelled to promise to resign his office. These riots went on for a fortnight, with much wanton destruction of property. A letter from New York of the 25th of September, to Conway, says "the general scheme concerted throughout seems to have been, first, by menace or force, to oblige the stamp-officers to resign their employments, in which they have generally succeeded; and next, to destroy the stamped papers upon their arrival — that, having no stamps, necessity might be an excuse for the dispatch of business without them." But more important than the outrages of mobs were the solemn proceedings of a congress at New York, comprising delegates from nine assemblies. They continued their sittings for three weeks; and then passed fourteen resolutions, in which they maintained the right of every British subject to be taxed only by his own consent, or that of his legal representatives; and that their only legal representatives were those annually chosen to serve as members of the assembly of each province.

The administration was in a position of extreme difficulty. The strong opposition of the colonial assemblies was a reason for ministers re-considering the measures of their predecessors; but a submission to the violent resistance to the authority of the imperial legislature would be to manifest an unworthy fear, which might have the effect of encouraging other resistance to the law. But there were consequences arising out of the discontent and resentment of the colonists which were productive of immediate evils at home, and threatened greater dangers for the future. A petition of the merchants of London trading to North America set forth, that this commerce, so necessary for the support of multitudes, was under such difficulties that its utter ruin was apprehended; and that several millions sterling, due to the merchants of Great Britain, were withheld by the colonists, on the plea that the taxes and restrictions laid upon them had rendered them unable to meet their engagements. Scarcely seeing a way out of the difficulties that surrounded them, the ministers, on the meeting of parliament on the 14th of January, after the Christmas recess, laid the papers before the two houses which "give any light into the origin, the progress, or the tendency, of the disturbances which have of late prevailed in some of the northern colonies." Such were the terms of the king's speech. His majesty said, that he had issued orders for the exertion of all the powers of government for the suppression of riots and tumults; and added, "Whatever remains to be done on this occasion I commit to your wisdom."

THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT (1766 A.D.)

A debate ensued in the commons, which was reported by two members, and printed in Paris — the houses still strictly forbidding the publication of their proceedings. On that night Burke made his first speech in parliament; and Pitt, whose voice had not been heard for a year, delivered one of those orations which, however imperfectly recorded, give us a notion of that supremacy that, broken as he was in health, wrapped in flannels, and giving effect to his action with a crutch, he still, above all men, exercised over his contemporaries. In a letter which he wrote from Bath on the 9th, he said, "If I can crawl, or be carried, I will deliver my mind and heart upon the state of America." What he then spoke was remembered and repeated as the great contest went on; and by none more diligently than by the colonists. He went with them to the full extent of denying the right of the British legislature to impose taxes without representation. He touched upon great principles that extended beyond this question of taxing the American colonies: "There is an idea in some that the colonies are virtually represented in this house. I would fain know by whom an American is represented here? Is he represented by any knight of the shire, in any county in this kingdom? Would to God that respectable representation was augmented to a greater number! Or will you tell him that he is represented by any representative of a borough — a borough, which, perhaps, its own representative never saw? This is what is called 'the rotten part of the constitution.' It cannot continue the century; if it does not drop, it must be amputated. The idea of a virtual representation of America in this house is the most contemptible idea that ever entered into the head of a man; it does not deserve a serious refutation. The commons of America, represented in their several assemblies, have ever been in possession of the exercise of this, their constitutional right, of giving and granting their own money. They would have been slaves if they had not enjoyed it."

Grenville replied to Pitt, and defended his Stamp Act: "When I pro-

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posed to tax America, I asked the house, if any gentleman would object to the right. I repeatedly asked it, and no man would attempt to deny it. Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience. If not, tell me when the Americans were emancipated? When they want the protection of this kingdom, they are always very ready to ask it. That protection has always been afforded them in the most full and ample manner. The nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them their protection: and now they are called upon to contribute a small share towards the public expense, an expense arising from themselves, they renounce your authority, insult your officers, and break out, I might almost say, into open rebellion. The seditious spirit of the colonies owes its birth to the factions in this house."

Pitt was permitted again to speak, the house being clamorous to hear him. There are passages in his second speech which show how much the house gained in this departure from its ordinary rules. We may give the concluding summary of the orator's opinions: "A great deal has been said without doors, of the power of the strength, of America. It is a topic that ought to be cautiously meddled with. In a good cause, on a sound bottom, the force of this country can crush America to atoms. In such a cause, your success would be hazardous. America, if she fell, would fall like a strong man. She would embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her. Is this your boasted peace? Not to sheathe the sword in its scabbard, but to sheathe it in the bowels of your countrymen? The Americans have not acted in all things with prudence and temper. They have been wronged. They have been driven to madness by injustice. Will you punish them for the madness you have occasioned? Rather let prudence and temper come first from this side. I will undertake for America that she will follow the example. There are two lines in a ballad of Prior's, of a man's behaviour to his wife, so applicable to you and your colonies that I cannot help repeating them:

> Be to her faults a little blind:
> Be to her virtues very kind.

Upon the whole, I will beg leave to tell the house what is really my opinion. It is that the Stamp Act be repealed absolutely, totally, and immediately. That the reason for the repeal be assigned, because it was founded on an erroneous principle. At the same time let the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of legislation whatsoever. That we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever, except that of taking their money out of their pockets without their consent."

The petitions against the American Stamp Act, and the papers laid before parliament, occupied in the commons the attention of a committee of the whole house for three weeks. Several persons were also examined, amongst whom was Benjamin Franklin. After this examination of papers and witnesses, the repeal of the Stamp Act was recommended by the committee of the whole house, and a declaratory resolution was adopted: "That the king's majesty, by and with the consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons of Great Britain, in parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever." The distinction which Pitt had maintained, that parliament was not competent to pass a law for taxing the colonies, was set at nought by this resolution. But it was contended that

though the right existed, it was impolitic to exercise it, and therefore the Stamp Act ought to be repealed. Pitt adhered to his opinion, but did not attempt to divide the house. A Declaratory Bill was passed, embodying the principle of the power of parliament to bind the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

Whilst this bill was passing into law, a strong opposition was getting up against the bill for the repeal of the Stamp Act, which was about to be proposed by the government. The house of commons came to a decisive vote on the 21st of February, on the resolution that leave should be given to bring in a bill for the repeal of the Stamp Act. The resolution was moved by Conway. He drew a strong picture of the mischiefs that had already ensued. The trade of England was not only stopped, but in danger of being lost. The conflict would ruin both countries. "If we did not repeal the act, he had no doubt but France and Spain would declare war, and protect the Americans." Grenville exposed the futility of maintaining a right in the Declaratory Bill which the government would not dare to assert. Pitt demanded the repeal as due to the liberty of unrepresented subjects. The scene after the termination of the debate on that February morning has been described by Burke[c] in glowing words; but words not too lofty for the great occasion: "I remember, sir, with a melancholy pleasure, the situation of the honourable gentleman who made the motion for the repeal; in that crisis, when the whole trading interest of this empire, crammed into your lobbies, with a trembling and anxious expectation, waited, almost to a winter's return of light, their fate from your resolutions. When, at length, you had determined in their favour, and your doors, thrown open, showed them the figure of their deliverer in the well-earned triumph of his important victory, from the whole of that grave multitude there arose an involuntary burst of gratitude and transport. They jumped upon him like children on a long absent father. They clung about him as captives about their redeemer. All England, all America, joined to his applause. Nor did he seem insensible to the best of all earthly rewards, the love and admiration of his fellow citizens. Hope elevated and joy brightened his crest." Such was the enthusiasm towards Conway, the mover of the resolution. Walpole[d] has described the difference in the reception of Pitt and Grenville. When Pitt appeared, the crowd pulled off their hats, huzzaed, and many followed his chair home with shouts and benedictions. Grenville was hissed; and in a rage, seized the nearest man to him by the collar. "Providentially the fellow had more humour than spleen — 'Well, if I may not hiss,' said he, 'at least I may laugh,' and laughed in his face. The jest caught; had the fellow been surly and resisted, a tragedy had probably ensued." The bill for the repeal finally passed the commons by a large majority; and the lords, by a majority of more than thirty.

PITT CREATED EARL OF CHATHAM (1766 A.D.)

Pitt has been greatly blamed for not allying himself with the Rockingham administration. He was invited by them with an earnestness that approached to obsequiousness. He turned a deaf ear to their overtures. They fell, from their inability to stand against the unwilling support of the sovereign, and the intrigues of those who arrogated to themselves the exclusive title of the king's friends. This ministry did popular things. They gave in to the clamour of the weavers, by passing an act for restraining the importation of foreign silks. They repealed the cider tax. They passed resolutions declaring the illegality of general warrants, and condemning the seizure of private papers, to discover

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the authors of libels. Their concessions in some degree indicated their weakness. Several of their minor supporters deserted them. The duke of Grafton left them, resigning his office of secretary of state, on the ground that they wanted "authority, dignity, and extension"; that he knew but one man who could give them strength and solidity; and that were that person to give his assistance, "he should with pleasure take up the spade and the pickaxe, and dig in the trenches."

A disagreement ensued in the cabinet; the king was told that the ministry could not go on as they were; and his majesty, in July, resolved to send for Mr. Pitt, and so told his servants. The king wrote him a letter, expressing his desire to have his thoughts "how an able and dignified ministry may be formed." Pitt answered the king — "penetrated with the deepest sense of your majesty's boundless goodness to me, and with a heart overflowing with duty and zeal for the honour and happiness of the most gracious and benign sovereign." Lord Temple was sent for by the king; and his majesty wrote to Mr. Pitt, who was ill, that he had opened a desire to see his lordship in the treasury; but that "he seems to incline to quarters very heterogeneous to my and your ideas, and almost a total exclusion of the present men." Temple was ambitious. He was indignant at the idea of being "stuck into a ministry as a great cypher at the head of the treasury, surrounded with other cyphers all named by Mr. Pitt." The ministry was at length formed. The duke of Grafton became head of the treasury; General Conway and Lord Shelburne, secretaries of state; Lord Camden, lord chancellor; Charles Townshend, chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Pitt, to the great surprise of the world, on taking the office of lord privy seal went to the house of peers as earl of Chatham.

The transformation of Pitt into Chatham is held to have destroyed his popularity. "That fatal title blasted all the affection which his country had borne to him, and which he had deserved so well. The people, though he had done no act to occasion reproach, thought he had sold them for a title." The city of London declined to present an address on the appointment to office of the man they had idolised. The objectors seem to have forgotten the bodily infirmities which necessarily prevented him taking the post in the house of commons which a prime minister was expected to take; and they scarcely gave him credit for the power which remained to him of influencing his colleagues by the vigour of his plans, when he could not command a popular assembly by the splendour of his eloquence. He had large projects of statesmanship. He was anxious to cement an alliance with the Protestant states of Europe, to counterbalance the Family Compact of France and Spain, which was leading those powers again to meditate attacks upon England. He sent an ambassador to confer with the czarina of Russia and Frederick of Prussia; but Frederick was indignant at the treatment he had received at the peace, and could place no reliance on a policy so subject to the consequences of ministerial change. There is a strong testimony to the rare powers of Lord Chatham's mind, at an early period of his administration. Charles Townshend for the first time attended the cabinet as chancellor of the exchequer, when the great statesman developed his views of the position of Europe. "Mr. Townshend," says the duke of Grafton in his memoirs, "was particularly astonished, and owned to me, as I was carrying him home in my carriage, that Lord Chatham had just shown us what inferior animals we were, and that much as we had seen of him before, he did not conceive till that night his superiority to be so very transcendent." The minister contemplated important changes in the government of Ireland. "To enable himself to contend with the powerful connections there, he proposed to establish himself upon the basis of a just

popularity, by shortening the duration of parliament, and granting other measures which the Irish appeared to have most at heart." Lord Chatham also had in view organic changes in the constitution of the East India Company — their astonishing dominion having now become an anomaly in the absence of government control, and their vast revenues the means of administering to private rapacity and injustice.

The administration entered upon its duties at a period of domestic trouble. The season was one of extreme wetness. The harvest failed; and riots attended the rising price of corn. But the price had not quite reached the point at which exportation was forbidden. By an order in council an embargo was laid on exportation. The parliament had not been called together, as it might have been, to sanction the measure, which came into operation on the 24th of September. Parliament met, according to the date of its prorogation, on the 11th of November. The first appearance of Chatham in the house of lords was to defend the order in council on the ground of public necessity. Camden and others in both houses maintained its legality. Fierce debates ensued, in which this exercise of the prerogative was compared to former unconstitutional attempts to set up a dispensing power. It was thought essential to mark that such an exercise of the prerogative was not constitutional. An act of indemnity was therefore passed to exonerate those who had advised and acted upon the order in council. A parliamentary inquiry into the affairs of the East India Company was now forced on by Chatham, in opposition to the wishes of several of his colleagues. He refused to impart to them the nature and extent of his plans. Several of the Rockingham party resolved to secede from him. He had to form new combinations of public men, and to quiet the apprehensions of those who were accused of being despotically governed by him.

CHATHAM'S ILLNESS

During the Christmas recess Chatham went to Bath, where he became seriously ill. Parliament assembled, and the prime minister was not in his place. His cabinet fell into disorder. The fatal effects of the absence of the chief, and his unwillingness to entrust responsibility to his colleagues, were signally manifested, when the chancellor of the exchequer commended the Stamp Act, and again proposed to tax the colonies. Burke has described in his speech upon American taxation this strange disorganisation of Lord Chatham's minstry. "When his face was hid but for a moment, his whole system was on a wide sea, without chart or compass."

That portion of the life of Chatham when he was nominally the head of the administration, but wholly incapable of directing the national affairs, and altogether shrinking from that direction, is as difficult to understand as it is melancholy to contemplate. The true solution of this mystery is that the intellect of Chatham was temporarily enfeebled, almost destroyed; that he did not resign office, although incapable of performing its duties, because the ordinary perceptions of his mind were clouded to an extent that left him no power of judgment; and that when he did resign, in October, 1768, on account of "the deplorable state of his health," his mind had to some extent resumed its vigour, though his bodily infirmities were as great as ever.

The ministry struggled on with considerable difficulty through the session of 1768. There had been many changes in its composition. Charles Townshend had died of fever. His brilliant talents were neutralised by his levity; and it was clear that if his ambition had placed him at the head of the govern-

ment, he would have done some rash things — perhaps precipitated a war with America earlier than the nobleman, Lord North, who succeeded Townshend as the chancellor of exchequer. The parliament, now approaching the end of its septennial term, was dissolved on the 11th of March, 1768.

The new parliament was opened on the 10th of May, 1768. In this most important session the non-publication of debates was enforced with almost unequalled strictness. The rigid enforcement of the standing order for the exclusion of strangers went on from 1768 to 1774 — the whole term of the duration of this parliament, thus known as the Unreported Parliament.

ANOTHER WILKES CONTEST (1768 A.D.)

At the opening of parliament the ministry comprised Lord Camden, lord chancellor; the duke of Grafton, first lord of the treasury; Lord Shelburne, secretary of state; Lord North, chancellor of the exchequer. Lord Chatham still held the privy seal, but continued unable to discharge any official duties. It was the duke of Grafton's ministry. The new parliament commenced in a tempest of popular violence, such as had been unwitnessed in England for many years. John Wilkes, the outlaw, suddenly returned from France, at the time when the writs had been issued for a general election, and he declared himself a candidate for the city of London.[e] He was of course the favourite of the rabble; but prone as that constituency generally is to favour demagogues, he was rejected. The ministers, instead of trying to disarm him by clemency, or of crushing him at once by putting his sentence into execution, rested content with his letters to the law-officers of the treasury pledging his honour to appear in the court of king's bench. He forthwith stood for Middlesex; and the electors there being chiefly of the lowest class, he was chosen by a large majority. When he surrendered himself, he was committed to the king's bench prison; meantime the city was kept in a constant state of terror by the riots of his partisans. It was his boast that he could "halloo the rabble like so many bull-dogs" to any purpose he pleased, by the use of the words "liberty," "arbitrary power," and similar magic terms.

The court of king's bench reversed Wilkes' sentence of outlawry on account of some irregularity in it, but the two verdicts against him were confirmed, and he was condemned to pay two fines of £500, and be imprisoned for two years. Subscriptions were forthwith raised among his admirers to pay his debts; he received abundance of presents; and his face, which was remarkable for its ugliness, became the ornament of numerous signboards. The demagogue soon after, having got hold of a letter from Lord Weymouth, the secretary, to the Surrey magistrates, approving of their conduct in putting down a riot in St. George's fields, in which some lives were lost, published it with a preface, calling that affair in the true demagogic style "a horrid massacre, and the consequence of a hellish project deliberately planned"; and as at the bar of the house he claimed the thanks of his country for having set "that bloody scroll" in a proper light, he was expelled the house, and a new writ was ordered for Middlesex.

Every artifice for inflaming the populace was put in requisition, and Wilkes was re-elected; but the house declared him incapable of sitting during that parliament. He was returned again, and again his election was declared to be void. He stood once more, and Colonel Luttrell who opposed him was pronounced to be duly elected, though Wilkes had an immense majority of the votes. The needy patriot had already been relieved by a subscription; and the citizens of London, honouring the mere names of liberty and patriotism in

one who disgraced them both, with that absence of real political wisdom characteristic of such bodies, elected him to the dignity of alderman. A political club, named the "Society for supporting the Bill of Rights," of which he was a principal member, was formed in 1770, but it was soon discovered that a great part of the funds had been diverted to the payment of the patriot's debts and to the purchase of an annuity for him. The democratic party, however, still adhered to him; he was lord mayor in due course, and finally obtained the great object of his ambition, the lucrative post of city chamberlain.

A rival of Wilkes in the trade of patriotism, but a less fortunate adventurer, was the reverend John Horne. This man had entered the church, it would appear, merely as a profession, and without even a belief in its doctrines; but finding it not to answer his expectations, he abandoned it. A man who has been a teacher of religion, and who from scruples of conscience has retired from the sacred profession, should, in our opinion, select some pursuit, medicine for instance, which would harmonise in some measure with that which he had abandoned, if it were only to evince his having acted from pure motives. But Horne had none of this delicacy of feeling; he was ambitious of turbulent distinction; he aimed at being a lawyer and a member of parliament. He ran a career of vice and sedition; was familiar with the walls of prisons, and died a dependent on the bounty of his friends.

THE LETTERS OF JUNIUS

It was also at this time that that most powerful but most unscrupulous of political satirists who subscribed "Junius" to his letters attacked the king and his ministers in the most envenomed style. His letters now form a portion of our literature, and are models in their class of compositions. His secret was never divulged, and ingenuity has long been exercised in the attempt to discover the real author. Lord George Germaine and Sir Philip Francis[1] are those in whose cases the strongest apparent proofs have been given. Lord Chatham, Edmund Burke, and other persons have been on various grounds suspected of the authorship.[c]

The one paramount desire of Junius was to destroy the administration of the duke of Grafton. He had no large conception of a general policy that should unite a great party in the conduct of affairs if that administration were destroyed. The two questions which absorbed the thoughts and divided the opinions of all public men were the contest between parliamentary privilege and Wilkes, and the more perplexing quarrel between the mother country and the North American colonies. It was known that the king held the most decided opinions on both these questions — that he would have pursued Wilkes to the utmost reach of power, whatever might be the unpopularity; and that he would assert the right of taxation over the colonies, whatever might be the danger of rebellion and war. The ministry of the duke of Grafton was committed, in a great degree, to an agreement with the will of the sovereign, less perhaps from conviction than from an imperfect view of the consequences of persisting in a doubtful career. At this juncture Lord Chatham, having ceased to be at the head of affairs, was free to pursue his own declared sentiments on the subject of American taxation, and to form

[1 But who was Junius? Who lurked beneath that name, or rather, according to the motto he assumed, that "shadow of a name"? This question, which has already employed so many pens and filled so many volumes, cannot be so fully dealt with in these pages. But I will not affect to speak with doubt when no doubt exists in my mind. From the proofs adduced by others, and on a clear conviction of my own, which I am bound thus frankly to express, I affirm that the author of Junius was no other than Sir Philip Francis.—STANHOPE.[b]]

[1769–1770 A.D.]

an independent judgment on the case of Wilkes. He had become reconciled to his brother-in-law, Lord Temple, and was looked upon as having joined the Grenville party. But though he agreed with George Grenville on the unconstitutional proceedings of the house of commons in the matter of the Middlesex election, he was totally opposed to him on the subject of America. The Rockingham party, of whose policy Burke was now the great parliamentary expositor, held fast to the popular principles in the dispute with the freeholders of Middlesex, but repudiated any such assertion of authority over the colonies as George Grenville had maintained. Junius not only supported but prompted Wilkes in every act that could damage the ministry. But he also spoke in the most contemptuous terms of any individual or any party that deemed the colonists anything but rebels, to be trodden down as troublesome vermin. Ostensibly he was an adherent of George Grenville. Had he any real principles? He was not a politician, in the higher sense of the word. He had some selfish ambition to gratify; he had some private grievances to revenge. He might be a writing puppet, moved by some one of higher mark — a Francis, or a Dyer, prompted by a Temple. He might be a man of noble birth, mining like a mole; whose vanity was gratified by the notoriety which he commanded — pleased with acquiring another self-consciousness than that which belonged to his proper person. Whoever he was, he had essentially a paltry mind.

THE REAPPEARANCE OF CHATHAM (1769 A.D.)

On the 9th of May, 1769, the parliament was prorogued. It was the day after the final decision on the Middlesex election. In the speech from the throne the members were exhorted, "with more than ordinary earnestness," to exert their utmost efforts for the maintenance of the public peace. The excitement throughout the country was considerable, but it rarely took the form of tumult. It was manifest, however, that the supposed victory of the government would not give the nation that quiet which sanguine courtiers anticipated. Lord Chatham came forth from his long retirement, and attended the king's levee on the 7th of July — "he himself, *in propria persona*, and not in a strait waistcoat," as Walpole writes. From the manuscript memoirs of the duke of Grafton we find that Chatham, when called by the king into his closet, objected to the course which had been pursued in the case of Wilkes, and stated "that he doubted whether his health would ever again allow him to attend parliament, but if it did, and if he should give his dissent to any measure, that his majesty would be indulgent enough to believe that it would not arise from any personal consideration."

On the 9th of January, 1770, the parliament was opened by the king. With a singular want of perception of the ridiculous, the first words of the royal speech were these: "My lords and gentlemen: It is with much concern that I find myself obliged to open the session of parliament with acquainting you that the distemper among the horned cattle has lately broke out in this kingdom." The petitions which had been presented from corporations and counties received no notice in this speech. Junius, with some justice, said to the duke of Grafton, "While the whole kingdom was agitated with anxious expectation upon one great point, you meanly evaded the question; and instead of the firmness and decision of a king, gave us nothing but the misery of a ruined grazier." But a voice more terrible than that of Junius was to rouse the government from its seeming unconcern. In the house of lords, Chatham moved an amendment to the address, pledging the peers that

they would take into their most serious consideration the causes of the discontents which so generally prevailed, and particularly the late proceedings in the house of commons touching the incapacity of John Wilkes, esquire, to be elected a member of the present parliament. The scene in the upper house on this occasion must have been as exciting as any in the history of England. The speech by which Chatham introduced the amendment, as well as the speech of Lord Mansfield, and Lord Chatham's reply, were first published in 1792, from a report of Mr. Francis, afterwards Sir Philip Francis, upon whom rests the prevailing opinion that he was Junius. We may judge by the following passage of the tendency of Chatham's speech: "The liberty of the subject is invaded, not only in the provinces, but here at home! The English people are loud in their complaints; they demand redress; and depend upon it, my lords, that, one way or another, they will have redress. They will never return to a state of tranquillity till they are redressed. Nor ought they. For in my judgment, my lords, and I speak it boldly, it were better for them to perish in a glorious contention for their rights, than to purchase a slavish tranquillity at the expense of a single iota of the constitution." Lord Mansfield spoke, contending that the proposed amendment was an attack upon the privileges of the other house of parliament. This produced a reply from Lord Chatham.

WILLIAM MURRAY, EARL OF MANSFIELD
(1705–1793)

After Chatham's speech, the lord chancellor, Camden, rose from the woolsack, and thus threw off all restraint: "I accepted the great seal without conditions; I meant not, therefore, to be trammelled by his majesty — I beg pardon, by his ministers — but I have suffered myself to be so too long. For some time I have beheld with silent indignation the arbitrary measures of the minister. I have often drooped and hung down my head in council, and disapproved by my looks those steps which I knew my avowed opposition could not prevent. I will do so no longer, but openly and boldly speak my sentiments; I now proclaim to the world that I entirely coincide in the opinion expressed by my noble friend — whose presence again reanimates us — respecting this unconstitutional vote of the house of commons. If, in giving my opinion as a judge, I were to pay any respect to that vote, I should look upon myself as a traitor to my trust, and an enemy to my country. By

[1770 A.D.]
their violent and tyrannical conduct, ministers have alienated the minds of the people from his majesty's government — I had almost said from his majesty's person — insomuch, that if some measures are not devised to appease the clamours so universally prevalent, I know not, my lords, whether the people, in despair, may not become their own avengers, and take the redress of grievances into their own hands."

In the house of commons, the marquis of Granby voted for the amendment which had been proposed in opposition to the government. The lord chancellor, and the commander-in-chief, were thus in open hostility with the other members of the cabinet. Such an anomalous state could not long endure. Chatham, Temple, and their friends, were waiting the issue with extreme solicitude. Granby had been earnestly entreated to retain his command of the army in spite of his vote. "The king, it seems, and the duke of Grafton are upon their knees to Lord Granby not to resign," writes Temple to Chatham. Chatham grieves that twenty-four hours' respite has been granted to a minister's entreaties. He was at last set at rest by Granby's resignation. But he regrets that the chancellor had dragged the great seal for an hour at the heels of a desperate minister. His high office had been offered to Mr. Charles Yorke, the son of Lord-chancellor Hardwicke. It was a prize he had long coveted; but to accept it would be to desert his party. He declined. Three days after he went to the levee at St. James'; and, at the earnest entreaties of the king, he kissed the royal hand as chancellor. Camden was dismissed. Yorke, borne down by agitation of mind, died, as was supposed by his own hand, on the 20th of January. On the 22nd there came on another great debate in the house of lords on the state of the nation, in which Chatham announced his cordial union with the party of Rockingham.

The continued debate on the state of the nation was deferred till the 2nd of February. On the 28th of January, the duke of Grafton resigned. The king was not unprepared for this event. On the 23rd of January he thus wrote to Lord North: "Lord Weymouth and Lord Gower will wait upon you this morning to press you in the strongest manner to accept the office of first lord commissioner of the treasury. My mind is more and more strengthened in the rightness of the measure, which would prevent every other desertion. You must easily see that if you do not accept, I have no peer at present that I would consent to place in the duke of Grafton's employment." "The rightness of the measure" was to be tested by twelve years of national calamity.

COLONIAL AFFAIRS

The domestic agitations during the period of the duke of Grafton's ministry required to be given in an unbroken narrative. We now take up the more truly important relation of those events in the North American colonies, and of the mode in which they were dealt with by the imperial government. These facts form the prologue to the tragedy of the American Revolution.

In 1768 a third secretary of state was appointed. The office of secretary of state for Scotland had been abolished; but now a new place was created for the earl of Hillsborough — the secretaryship of the colonies. It was a position of authority which demanded a rare union of firmness and moderation. But the secretary was a member of a cabinet divided in judgment on the great question of American taxation; and Lord Hillsborough was of the

party of the duke of Bedford, who held opinions on that subject, not exactly in consonance with that championship of our free constitution which has been claimed for him. Hillsborough had to deal with colonial subjects of the British crown, whose indignation at the Stamp Act had been revived by Charles Townshend's fatal measure for granting duties in America on glass, red and white lead, painters' colours, paper, and tea.

The king, on opening the parliament on the 8th of November, 1768, spoke in severe terms of the proceedings in North America. "The spirit of faction had broken out afresh; one of the colonies had proceeded to acts of violence and of resistance to the execution of the law; the capital town of that colony was in a state of disobedience to all law and government — had adopted measures subversive of the constitution, and attended with circumstances that might manifest a disposition to throw off their dependence on Great Britain. Not a word was uttered of the cause of this disobedience. Turbulent and seditious persons were to be defeated. On the 15th of December, in the house of lords, the duke of Bedford moved an address to the king, recommending that the chief authors and instigators of the late disorders in Massachusetts should be brought to condign punishment; and beseeching his majesty that he would direct the governor of that colony "to take the most effectual methods for procuring the fullest information that can be obtained touching all treasons or misprision of treason, committed within this government since the 30th day of December last, and to transmit the same, together with the names of the persons who were most active in the commission of such offences, to one of your majesty's principal secretaries of state, in order that your majesty may issue a special commission for inquiring of, hearing and determining, the said offences within this realm, pursuant to the provisions of the statute of the 35th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, in case your majesty shall, upon receiving the said information, see sufficient ground for such a proceeding." This most arbitrary proposal was carried without a division. In the house of commons, at the opening of the session, Mr. Stanley, the seconder of the address, said that the people of the insolent town of Boston "must be treated as aliens."

We have now reached the period of Lord North's administration. On the 5th of March, 1770, on the house of commons proceeding to take into consideration the petition of the merchants of London trading to North America, the first lord of the treasury, in a temperate speech, moved the repeal of such portions of the act of 1767, as laid duties upon glass and other articles, omitting any mention of tea. "I cannot propose," he said, "any further repeal than what it was my intention to promise them. The Americans, by their subsequent behaviour, have not deserved any particular indulgence from this country." Upon this principle, many a mistaken policy has been persisted in, out of pure defiance of the excesses which that policy has provoked. "We will not be driven to repeal by any threats held out to us," said the minister. He anticipated no larger revenue than £12,000 a year from the tea duties, but he would not give up the right to tax America which was asserted in the preamble of the act imposing the duties. The proposition of Lord North was carried by a majority of sixty-two.

When the American colonists came to know that the British parliament had repealed all the duties laid by the act of 1767, except that on tea, the spirit which had prompted the non-importation agreements was somewhat allayed. The citizens of New York determined by a large majority to resume importations from England; and many orders were despatched in July for every kind of merchandise but tea. Other provinces were indignant with

[1770–1771 A.D.]

the New Yorkers. Massachusetts maintained a position of sullen defiance. Although, for two or three years, there was in America an apparent calm — a deceptive absence of violence which looked like peace — the time was rapidly approaching when the exhortation of Mr. Wedderburn, in 1770, before he became Lord North's solicitor-general, would be looked upon as a prophecy: "How, sir, will it hereafter sound in the annals of the present reign, that all America — the fruit of so many years' settlement, nurtured by this country at the price of so much blood and treasure — was lost to the crown of Great Britain in the reign of George III?". Whilst there is a lull in this trans-Atlantic tempest, let us revert to our domestic affairs — petty in their details, but very significant in their tendencies.

ARRESTS FOR PUBLISHING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

In the session of parliament of 1771, there was a contest between the house of commons and the corporation of London, which was eventually productive of the highest public benefit. Although both houses held strenuously to the principle that it was the highest offence to publish their debates, the speeches of particular members were frequently printed. On the 8th of February, 1771, Colonel Onslow complained to the house of commons that two newspapers had printed a motion he had made, and a speech against it; and moreover had called him Little Cocking George. Upon his motion, the papers were delivered in and read; and the printer of the *Gazetteer*, R. Thompson, and the printer of the *Middlesex Chronicle*, J. Wheble, were ordered to attend the house. The printers could not be found to serve the orders upon them, and then the house addressed the king that he would issue his royal proclamation for their apprehension. On the 12th of March, Colonel Onslow said he was determined to bring this matter to an issue. "To-day I shall only bring before the house three brace, for printing the debates." This wholesale proceeding was resisted by motions for adjournment and amendments, which protracted the debates till five o'clock in the morning, during which the house divided twenty-three times. Four of the printers obeyed the orders of the house, made their submission, and were discharged. But the affair now took a more serious turn. The sergeant-at-arms had been ordered to take J. Miller, of the *London Evening Post*, into custody. Wheble and Thompson had been previously arrested collusively, by some friends or servants; and being taken before Alderman Wilkes and Alderman Oliver, were discharged. Miller was apprehended by the officer of the house of commons at his house in the city; but the officer was immediately himself taken into custody by a city constable. The parties went before the lord mayor, Crosby; who was attended by Wilkes and Oliver. The lord mayor decided that the arrest of a citizen without the authority of one of the city magistrates, was a violation of its charters; and ordered Miller to be released, and the officer of the commons to give bail to answer a charge of assault.

On the 18th of March, the deputy-sergeant-at-arms was desired by the speaker to give an account of the transactions in the city. It was then moved that Brass Crosby, esquire, lord mayor, and a member of parliament, should attend in his place the next day. The lord mayor, although he was ill, came amidst the huzzas of a crowd that echoed through the house. He was permitted to sit whilst defending his conduct; and then he desired to go home, having been in his bed-chamber sixteen or seventeen days. The lord mayor was allowed to retire. Charles Fox said "there are two other criminals, Alderman Oliver and Alderman Wilkes," for which expression

"criminals" he was gently reproved by Wedderburn, who had become solicitor-general. Alderman Oliver was then ordered to attend in his place. Wilkes had written a letter to declare that he was the lawful member for Middlesex, and would only appear in the house as a member. Mr. Calcraft writes to Lord Chatham, "The ministers avow Wilkes too dangerous to meddle with. He is to do what he pleases; we are to submit. So his majesty orders; he will have 'nothing more to do with that devil Wilkes.'" On the 25th of March the lord mayor and Alderman Oliver were in their places. In the course of the debate upon a proposal to commit them to the Tower, members came in, and reported that they had been insulted on their way to the house. The magistrates of Westminster were called, and were ordered to disperse the mob. The debate proceeded. The lord mayor, being again permitted to withdraw, said he should submit himself to whatever the house should do. The populace took the horses from his coach, and drew him in triumph to the Mansion house. After a sitting of nine hours, a motion for adjournment was rejected. When the speaker asked Alderman Oliver what he had to say in his defence, he replied, "I know the punishment I am to receive is determined upon. I have nothing to say, neither in my own defence nor in defence of the city of London. Do what you please. I defy you."

Before the motion for committing Alderman Oliver to the Tower was carried, Colonel Barré left the house, followed by Dunning, and about a dozen other members. He wrote to Chatham, "I spoke to this question about five minutes only, but I believe with great violence." To the Tower was Oliver conducted quietly at seven o'clock on the morning of the 27th. On that day the lord mayor again came to the house to attend in his place. A tremendous riot ensued. Mr. Calcraft described the scene to Lord Chatham: "The concourse of people who attended the lord mayor is incredible. They seized Lord North, broke his chariot, had got him amongst them, and but for Sir William Meredith's interfering would probably have demolished him. This, with the insults to other members, caused an adjournment of business for some hours." The justices came to the bar to declare they could not read the Riot Act.

The lord mayor and Alderman Oliver remained prisoners in the Tower, till the parliament was prorogued on the 8th of May. A prorogation suspends the power under which the privilege of committal is exercised. The house wisely resolved not to renew the perilous dispute with the city in the ensuing session. With equal wisdom the printers of the debates were no more threatened or arrested. On the 1st of May, Chatham told the peers some wholesome truths, on the subject of the publication of parliamentary proceedings. The dissatisfaction of the people "had made them uncommonly attentive to the proceedings of parliament. Hence the publication of the parliamentary debates. And where was the injury, if the members acted upon honest principles? For a public assembly to be afraid of having their deliberations published is monstrous, and speaks for itself." It was some years before these principles were completely recognised, in the conviction that a full and impartial report of the debates in parliament is one of the best securities for freedom, for a respect for the laws, and for raising up a national tribunal of public opinion in the place of the passions of demagogues and the violence of mobs. The triumph of the "miscreants" of 1771 led the way to the complete establishment of that wonderful system of reporting, which has rendered the newspaper press of this country the clearest mirror of the aggregate thought of a reflecting people.

THE ROYAL MARRIAGE ACT (1772 A.D.)

On the 20th of February, 1772, the following royal message was brought down to both houses of parliament: "George R. his majesty being desirous, from paternal affection for his own family, and anxious concern for the future welfare of his people, and the honour and dignity of his crown, that the right of approving all marriages in the royal family (which ever has belonged to the kings of this realm as a matter of public concern) may be made effectual, recommends to both houses of parliament to take into their serious consideration whether it may not be wise and expedient to supply the defect of the laws now in being; and, by some new provision, more effectually to guard the descendants of his late majesty King George II (other than the issue of princesses who have married or may hereafter marry into foreign families) from marrying without the approbation of his majesty, his heirs, or successors, first had and obtained."

The Royal Marriage Bill was presented next day to the house of lords. It made provision that no prince or princess descended from George II — with the exception of the issue of princesses married abroad — should be capable of contracting matrimony without the previous consent of the king, his heirs, or successors. But it also provided that if any such descendant of George II, being above the age of twenty-five, should persist in a resolution to marry, the king's consent being refused, he or she might give notice to the privy council, and might at any time within twelve months after such notice contract marriage, unless both houses of parliament, before the expiration of twelve months, should expressly declare their disapprobation of such intended marriage. After continued and vehement debates in both houses, the bill became law; and it still continues in force. Its provisions appear to be imperfectly understood. It is called by Massey *f* "an encroachment upon the law of nature — an impious and cruel measure." There is a constitutional appeal against an unjust exercise of the prerogative. Such an appeal has never been made; but it would most probably not be made in vain, if any case should arise which would justify parliament in not supporting the sovereign in the assertion of an arbitrary power.

EAST INDIAN TEA IN BOSTON HARBOUR

In 1773, the parliament turned from its long course of anti-popular contests, to look seriously at a matter of paramount national importance. The pecuniary affairs of the East India Company had fallen into great disorder. On the 2nd of March a petition was presented from the company to the house of commons, praying for the assistance of a loan of a million and a half sterling. In the previous session a select committee of the house had been appointed to inquire into the affairs of the company. The necessity for such an inquiry was strongly urged, upon financial and moral grounds. The net revenues of Bengal had decreased; the natives were distressed and discontented; the company's servants were arbitrary and oppressive. General Burgoyne, the mover of the resolution for a committee, made an eloquent appeal to the feelings of the house: "The fate of a great portion of the globe; the fate of great states, in which your own is involved; the distresses of fifteen millions of people; the rights of humanity; are involved in this question."

[The details of this affair are given in our history of India (volume xxii) and need not be repeated here. But there was one feature of the parliamentary adjustment that has peculiar significance from our present standpoint.]

The directors of the East India Company had in their warehouses seventeen million pounds of tea, for which they wanted a market. Permission was given by act of parliament to export teas belonging to the company to any of the British plantations in America, with a drawback of the duty payable in England. The colonial tax of three pence in the pound was to be paid in the American ports. Ships were freighted, and consignees appointed to sell their cargoes. Fatal boon, whose consequences no one saw.

It was Sunday, the 28th of November, 1773, when there sailed into Boston harbour the English merchant ship *Dartmouth*, laden with chests of tea belonging to the East India Company. The act of parliament which allowed the treasury to license vessels to export the teas of the company to the American colonies, free of duty, was the signal for popular gatherings in Boston. Town meetings were held, when strong resolutions were adopted. In this state of things the first tea-ship arrived. A committee met twice on that Sunday, and obtained a promise from Rotch, the commander of the ship, not to enter his ship till the following Tuesday.

Thirteen days after the arrival of the *Dartmouth*, the owner was summoned before the Boston committee, and told that his vessel and his tea must be taken back to London. It was out of his power to do so, he said. He certainly had not the power; for the passages out of the harbour were guarded by two king's ships to prevent any vessel going to sea without a licence. On the 16th, the revenue officers would have a legal authority to take possession of the *Dartmouth*. For three days previous there had been meetings of the Boston committee; but their journal had only this entry — "No business transacted matter of record."

On the 16th of December there was a meeting in Boston of seven thousand persons, who resolved that the tea should not be landed. The master of the *Dartmouth* was ordered to apply to the governor for a pass for his vessel to proceed on her return voyage to London. The governor was at his country house. Many of the leaders had adjourned to a church, to wait his answer. The night had come on when Rotch returned and announced that the governor had refused him a pass because his ship had not cleared. There was no more hesitation. Forty or fifty men, disguised as Mohawks, raised the war-whoop at the porch of the church; went on to the wharf where the three ships lay alongside; took possession of them; and deliberately emptied three hundred and forty chests of tea into the waters of the bay. It was the work of three hours. Not a sound was heard but that of breaking open the chests. The people of Boston went to their rest as if no extraordinary event had occurred.

On the 27th of January, 1774, the news of this decisive act reached the English government. On the 29th there was a great meeting of the lords of the council to consider a petition from Massachusetts for the dismissal of Hutchinson, the governor, and Oliver, the lieutenant-governor. Doctor Franklin appeared before the council as agent for Massachusetts. Franklin was treated with little respect; and Wedderburn, the solicitor-general, assailed him with a torrent of invective, at which the lords cheered and laughed. Franklin bore the assaults with perfect equanimity; but from that hour he ceased to be a mediator between Great Britain and the colonists. The council reported that the petition from Massachusetts was "groundless, vexatious, and scandalous." Two days after, Franklin was dismissed from his office of deputy postmaster general. He said to Priestley, who was present at the council, that he considered the thing for which he had been so insulted as one of the best actions of his life.

[1774 A.D.]

THE BOSTON PORT BILL (1774 A.D.)

The parliament had met on the 13th of January. It was the 7th of March when Lord North delivered the king's message relating to "the violent and outrageous proceedings at the town and port of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, with a view to obstructing the commerce of this kingdom, and upon grounds and pretences immediately subversive of the constitution thereof." On the 14th of March, Lord North brought in a bill for removing the custom house from Boston, and declaring it unlawful, after the 1st of June, to lade or unlade, ship or unship, any goods from any landing-place within the harbour of Boston. There was little opposition to this measure, which was passed in a fortnight, and when sent to the lords was as quickly adopted.

The Boston Port Bill, backed up by military force, was to be followed by other measures of coercion. On the 28th of March, Lord North brought in a bill for regulating the government of Massachusetts Bay. "I propose," he said, "in this bill to take the executive power from the hands of the democratic part of government." The proposition went, in many important particulars, to annul the charter granted to the province by William III. The council was to be appointed by the crown; the magistrates were to be nominated by the governor. This bill also passed, after ineffectual debate. A third bill enacted that during the next three years the governor of Massachusetts might, if it was thought that an impartial trial of any person could not be secured in that colony, send him for trial in another colony; or to Great Britain, if it were thought that no fair trial could be obtained in the colonies. The object of the bill was distinctly stated by Lord North — "Unless such a bill should pass into a law the executive power will be unwilling to act, thinking they will not have a fair trial without it."

THE CONFLICT IMMINENT

Whatever may be now the prevailing sentiment upon the colonial quarrel, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the controversy was one that involved great principles, and called forth the highest energies of great intellects. On either side of the Atlantic was manifested the grandeur of the Anglo-Saxon mind. Chatham, in 1775, paid a deserved tribute to the qualities displayed in the first American congress: "When your lordships look at the papers transmitted us from America — when you consider their decency, firmness, and wisdom, you cannot but respect their cause, and wish to make it your own. For myself I must declare and avow that in all my reading and observation — (I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master-states of the world) — that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the general congress at Philadelphia. I trust it is obvious to your lordships that all attempts to impose servitude upon such men, to establish despotism over such a mighty continental nation, must be vain, must be fatal."

Gibbon has described the striking scene he witnessed in the British house of commons: "I assisted at the debates of a free assembly; I listened to the attack and defence of eloquence and reason; I had a near prospect of the character, views, and passions of the first men of the age. The cause of government was ably vindicated by Lord North, a statesman of spotless integrity, a consummate master of debate, who could wield, with equal dexterity, the arms of reason and of ridicule. He was seated on the treasury-bench between

his attorney and solicitor-general, the two pillars of the law and state, *magis pares quam similes;* and the minister might indulge in a short slumber, whilst he was upholden on either hand by the majestic sense of Thurlow, and the skilful eloquence of Wedderburn. From the adverse side of the house an ardent and powerful opposition was supported by the lively declamation of Barré, the legal acuteness of Dunning, the profuse and philosophical fancy of Burke, and the argumentative vehemence of Fox, who, in the conduct of a party, approved himself equal to the conduct of an empire. By such men every operation of peace and war, every principle of justice and policy, every question of authority and freedom, was attacked and defended; and the subject of the momentous contest was the union or separation of Great Britain and America. "The eight sessions that I sat in parliament were a school of civil prudence, the first and most essential virtue of an historian."

The differences of opinion in America ought to have retarded the terrible issue that was approaching. The fears of the timid, the hopes of the loyal, were opposed to the advocates of resistance, and might have prevailed to avert the notion of independence. In an unhappy hour, blood was shed; and conciliation then became a word that was uttered to deaf ears in England as in America. We must in this chapter rapidly trace the course of events till we reach that crisis.

The ministry after passing their coercive bills had determined to send out General Gage to supersede Hutchinson as governor of Massachusetts, and to be commander-in-chief in the colonies. He would have to act upon a system distinctly opposed to the old chartered system of free local government. He undervalued, as we have seen, the resistance which was to be brought against him, and relied too absolutely upon "four regiments." His appointment was not disagreeable to the New Englanders. He had lived amongst them, and had honourably executed the military authority with which he had been previously entrusted. In an unhappy hour he arrived at Boston, on the 13th of May, 1774. A vessel which came there before him brought a copy of the Boston Port Bill. When Gage came into the harbour, the people were holding a meeting to discuss that act of the British legislature which deprived them of their old position in the commerce of the world — which doomed their merchants and all dependent upon them to absolute ruin. There was but one feeling. The meeting entered into resolutions, to which they invited the co-operation of the other colonies, for the purpose of suspending all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, and the West Indies, until the act was repealed. Copies of the act were everywhere circulated, printed with a black border. But there was no violence. The new governor was received with decorum, but without the accustomed honours. General Gage gave the assembly notice that on the 1st of June, according to the provisions of the act, their place of meeting would be removed to the town of Salem. When the spirit of opposition to his dictates was rising, the governor suddenly adjourned the assembly. He was asked to appoint the 1st of June as a day of general prayer and fasting. He refused. In Virginia the house of burgesses appointed the 1st of June as a day of humiliation, to avert the calamity of their loss of rights, or the miseries of civil war. They were immediately dissolved. The assembly of Virginia did not separate without recommending a General Congress. The idea universally spread. Meanwhile General Gage had an encampment of six regiments on a common near Boston, and had begun to fortify the isthmus which connects the town with the adjacent country. The 1st of June came. There was no tumult. Business was at an end; Boston had become a city of the dead.

[1774-1775 A.D.]

The first congress, consisting of fifty-five members, met at Philadelphia on the 4th of September. The place of their meeting was Carpenter's hall. Peyton Randolph was chosen as their president. Their proceedings were conducted with closed doors. The more earnest party gradually obtained the ascendency over the more timid. They drew up a declaration of rights. They passed resolutions to suspend all imports from Great Britain or Ireland after the 1st of December, and to discontinue all exports after the 10th of September in the ensuing year, unless the grievances of America should be redressed. They published addresses to the people of Great Britain and of Canada, and they decided upon a petition to the king. These were the papers that called forth the eulogium of Chatham. The congress dissolved themselves on the 26th of October; and resolved that another congress should be convened on the 10th of May, 1775.

After the 1st of June the irremediable conflict between the governor and representatives of the people soon put an end to the legal course of government. General Gage was so wholly deserted by the council that the meeting of the assembly, which was proposed to take place at Salem in October, could not be regularly convened. Writs for the election of members had been issued, but were afterwards annulled by proclamation. The elections took place. The persons chosen assembled, and styled themselves a local congress. A committee of safety was appointed. They enrolled militia, called Minute-men, whose engagement was that they should appear in arms at a minute's notice. They appointed commanders. They provided ammunition. The knowledge of the two acts of parliament which had followed that for shutting up the port of Boston not only provoked this undisguised resolve to resist to the death amongst the people of Massachusetts, but called up the same growing determination throughout the vast continent of America.

The new parliament met on the 29th of November, 1774. There was an end of the agitations about Wilkes; for, having been elected for Middlesex, he took his seat without opposition. The king's speech asserted his determination "to withstand every attempt to weaken or impair the supreme authority of this legislature over all the dominions of my crown." Corresponding addresses were voted in both houses with a large majority. In January, Lord Chatham brought forward a motion to withdraw the troops from Boston. "I wish, my lords," he said, "not to lose a day in this urgent, pressing crisis. An hour now lost in allaying ferments in America may produce years of calamity. For my own part, I will not desert for a moment the conduct of this weighty business, from first to last. Unless nailed to my bed by the extremity of sickness, I will give it unremitted attention. I will knock at the door of this sleeping and confounded ministry, and will rouse them to a sense of their important danger." Chatham knocked in vain to awaken these sleepers. His voice, whose noble utterance cannot now be read without stirring the heart, was called by George III "a trumpet of sedition." Again, on the 1st of February, that voice was heard, when Chatham presented "a provisional bill for settling the troubles in America." On the first occasion he had only eighteen peers to vote with him against sixty-eight; on the second occasion he had thirty-two against sixty-one. Chatham's oratory was in vain. The ministry that night declared they would send out more troops, instead of recalling any. Chatham's conciliatory bill made some impression upon Lord North, who proposed a very weak measure, as a resolution of the house of commons that if any of the American provinces, by their legislature, should make some provision for the defence and government of that province, which should be approved by the king and parliament, then it might be proper to

forbear imposing any tax. This was to attempt to put out a conflagration with a bucket of water.

If the highest efforts of argument could have been availing, the speech of Edmund Burke, on the 22nd of March, would have arrested the headlong course of the government. At this moment a bill was passing both houses which Burke called "the great penal bill by which we had passed sentence on the trade and sustenance of America." It was a bill to prohibit certain colonies from fishing on the banks of Newfoundland. Burke proposed a series of conciliatory resolutions, of a less sweeping nature than those of Chatham, and therefore more likely to be acceptable to men of temperate opinions. They were rejected on a division of two hundred and seventy against seventy-eight.

The contrarieties of public opinion in Great Britain and Ireland upon the American question were exhibited in petitions from various corporate bodies. Many manufacturing towns petitioned against the coercion acts, as destructive of the commerce of the country. Other petitions called for an enforcement of the legislative supremacy of Great Britain as the only means of preserving a trade with the colonies. There were war petitions and peace petitions. Those who signed the war petitions were held to be mere party men known as tories. Those who signed the peace petitions were discontented whigs, or something worse. The Quakers, whilst they exhorted to peace, maintained the loyalty of all religious denominations in America to the king's person, family, and government. The citizens of London, with Wilkes at their head as lord mayor, presented an address and remonstrance to the king on the throne, in which they denounced the measures of the government as deliberately intended to establish arbitrary power all over America. The king answered, that it was with the utmost astonishment that he found any of his subjects capable of encouraging the rebellious disposition which existed in some of his colonies in America. From such different points of view did men regard this great argument.

The close of 1774 was, in Massachusetts, the silence before the storm. The people were arming. The provincial congress had formed an arsenal at Concord, an inland town. The British troops made no movements during the winter to interfere with these hostile demonstrations. In his speech of the 27th of January, Chatham alluded to the position of the royal forces: "Their situation is truly unworthy; penned up; pining in inglorious inactivity. I find a report creeping abroad that ministers censure General Gage's inactivity. It is a prudent and necessary inaction. This tameness, however contemptible, cannot be censured; for the first drop of blood shed in civil and unnatural war might be *immedicabile vulnus*." That incurable wound was, too soon, to be inflicted.[e]

OUTBREAK OF THE AMERICAN WAR

The full treatment of the war that ensued belongs to American history, and will be given in a later volume. Here we shall epitomise the greater features of the contest in briefest compass, dealing at greater length with certain phases of domestic policy.[a]

On the 19th of April, 1775, General Gage, who commanded at Boston, learning that the provincials had collected a quantity of stores at the town of Concord, sent a detachment of his troops to seize them. At a place named Lexington, on the way, they found the militia drawn up to oppose them; they drove them off, and proceeded to Concord, where they accomplished their

[1775–1776 A.D.]

object; but on their way back they were greatly galled by the fire of the Americans from houses and from behind walls and hedges. They had sixty-five men killed and one hundred and eighty wounded; the provincials fifty killed and thirty-eight wounded. Soon after the militia assembled to the number of twenty thousand at Cambridge, and blockaded Boston. On the night of the 16th of June they threw up some intrenchments on an eminence near that town; the British advanced next day to drive them from it, and, though they suffered severely from the well-directed fire of the provincials, they succeeded in their object.

GRENADIER, 1775

The congress meantime had re-assembled (May 10th). They again drew up a petition and addresses, expressing the strongest desire for accommodation, at the same time adopting all possible measures for continuing the contest. The man on whom they fixed their choice for commander-in-chief of their forces was George Washington. He accepted that post of honour and danger; and, on joining the army at Cambridge, he found himself at the head of fifteen thousand men, ill-appointed and undisciplined. Fortunately for him, Gage, who had a superior force, was unenterprising; and his successor, General Howe, also remained inactive. By fitting out armed cruisers, the Americans succeeded in intercepting much of the stores and supplies destined for the troops in Boston.

In the spring of this year the provincials had conceived the daring design of invading Canada. They reduced the forts of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and while one force, under General Montgomery, advanced and took Montreal; another, under Colonel Arnold, made its way through the wilderness to Quebec, where it was joined by the former (December 1st), and the city was besieged. An assault was attempted (31st), in which Montgomery was killed and Arnold severely wounded, but he still kept up a blockade. He was reinforced in the spring, but was eventually driven out of the province by General Carleton. On this occasion, Captain Forster, who had taken a great number of prisoners, released them, Arnold engaging that an equal number of the royal troops should be returned; but the congress broke this cartel, on the pretence, which was notoriously false, that Forster had treated his prisoners barbarously.

The opening of the year 1776 found Washington still engaged in the blockade of Boston; but the difficulties which he had to encounter were numerous. His force was mere militia, bound to serve only for the term of a year; so that a new army was to be raised at the end of that period, and the knowledge and discipline acquired in the campaign became useless: he was ill-supplied with the munitions of war, while he could not venture to make

his real condition known, and even found it prudent to exaggerate his strength; and hence successes were expected from him which he could not accomplish: add to this, the thwarting and paralysing influence of a popular form of government and the jealousies of the different states. Fortunately for him, he had an ally in the incapacity of the British general, who remained on the defensive, with a disciplined and well-appointed army.

In the spring Washington resolved to make a bold attempt on Boston. On the night of the 4th of March a body of the provincials threw up works on Dorchester heights, which commanded the harbour, in which no ships could now remain; and the attempt to dislodge the enemy offered so many difficulties, that General Howe agreed to evacuate the town. The British troops proceeded by sea to Halifax, in Nova Scotia, whence they sailed (June 10th) for New York, and landed on Staten Island. Having here received large reinforcements of British and Hessian troops, General Howe passed over to Long Island and routed the provincials, with a loss of two thousand slain and one thousand taken, among whom were their generals Lord Stirling, Sullivan, and Udell; but, instead of attacking at once their lines at Brooklyn, he resolved to proceed by regular approaches, and Washington thus had time to convey his troops over the river. New York, however, surrendered, and remained in possession of the English during the war. Washington was finally driven over the river Delaware, and the province of New Jersey was reduced. On the night of Christmas Day, however, this able commander secretly crossed the river, and surprised and captured a party of Hessians at Trenton; and he finally recovered a great part of New Jersey.

On the 4th of July, 1776, the congress of the United States of America, as they now styled themselves, put forth their Declaration of Independence. It detailed every real and imaginary grievance, laying the blame of everything on the king himself, whom they scrupled not to designate as a tyrant. The object of those who devised it was evidently to cut off all hope of reconciliation with the mother-country, and to afford a pretext for France and other powers to aid them; for they felt that single-handed they could not resist the power of Great Britain: in fact, they had already entered into secret relations with the court of France, which had agreed to assist them in an underhand manner.

In the campaign of 1777, the British general, after an ineffectual attempt at bringing Washington to action, embarked his troops for the invasion of Pennsylvania. They landed at the head of Chesapeake Bay, and (September 11th) routed the American army on the banks of a river named the Brandywine. After an ineffectual attempt to save Philadelphia, Washington retired, and (27th) the British troops entered that city.

While Sir William Howe was thus successful in the central states, General Burgoyne was advancing from Canada to the Hudson with an army of about ten thousand British and Canadians. The Americans retired before him; but the impediments offered by the nature of the country were tremendous, and all the supplies had to be brought through Canada. Accessions of strength came every day to the enemy, who were successful in two or three affairs. At length Burgoyne reached Saratoga, not far from Albany, whence he advanced to a place named Still Water. He repelled two attacks of the indefatigable Arnold; but judging it necessary to fall back to Saratoga, he there found himself surrounded by an American army, under General Gates, three times as numerous as his own, exposed to a constant fire of cannon and rifles, and with no means of procuring provisions. In a council of war a capitulation was resolved on. The most honourable terms were obtained, the troops being

[1777-1779 A.D.]

granted a free passage to England, on condition of not serving again in America during the war. Desertion and other losses had reduced the British force to about five thousand eight hundred men, who laid down their arms (October 14th), and were marched to Boston.

Washington took up his winter quarters at a place named Valley Forge, and nothing could exceed the sufferings of the gallant men who served under him, unless it be their patient endurance. In miserable huts, without blankets or shoes, beneath the frost and snow of an American winter, often without food, they still endured, under the inspiring influence of their incomparable commander, and proved themselves worthy of eventual success.

FRANCE AND SPAIN AID THE COLONISTS

The intelligence of Burgoyne's surrender decided the court of France, and a treaty was signed, in which the independence of America was acknowledged. A loan was granted, and a fleet prepared to aid them. The English ambassador was recalled from Paris.

The command of the troops in America was now transferred to Sir Henry Clinton; and, in the prospect of a French war, it was resolved to evacuate Philadelphia and concentrate the forces. The army crossed the Delaware unopposed, but Washington impeded their march to New York in every possible manner. At a place named Monmouth an attack was made on the baggage, which brought on a partial action, in which the loss was between three and four hundred on each side. At the place of embarkation the British offered battle, which was declined, and they reached New York in safety (July 5th). A French fleet, under Count d'Estaing, with troops on board, having arrived, a combined attack was made by them and ten thousand Americans under General Sullivan on a British force at Newport, in Rhode Island; but Lord Howe, the English admiral at New York, though inferior in strength, having appeared off Newport, d'Estaing came out to engage him. An indecisive action was fought, after which d'Estaing, in spite of the remonstrances of his allies, went to Boston to refit; and Sullivan was soon driven out of Rhode Island.

The British troops were chiefly employed in petty expeditions, in which they did the provincials much injury by destroying their shipping and property in general. A corps of three thousand five hundred men, under Colonel Campbell, reduced the province of Georgia. In the West Indies, the island of Dominica was taken by the French; but St. Lucia surrendered to the English after d'Estaing had been repulsed, both by sea and land, by inferior forces, in his attempts to relieve it.

The following year (1779) Spain followed the example of France in declaring war against England, and a combined fleet of more than sixty sail of the line, with frigates, etc., appeared off Plymouth. Sir Charles Hardy, who commanded the Channel fleet, had only thirty-eight ships of the line, but he offered them battle, which they declined; and they quitted the Channel without having done more than give the ministry and nation a fright. Though d'Estaing acted mostly on the defensive in the West Indies, the islands of St. Vincent and Grenada fell into the hands of the French.

Washington directed his efforts chiefly to prevent the British from navigating the Hudson, for which purpose he fortified West Point, a strong position on that river, giving the command of it to General Arnold, and two other points, named Stony Point and Verplank. These last were taken and retaken

by the British during this year. An expedition from New York did great mischief in Connecticut, burning towns and shipping, and carrying off stores and ammunition. Another expedition did the same in Virginia. The chief seat of the war, however, was the southern provinces. At Savannah, in Georgia, General Prevost was besieged by d'Estaing, who had two-and-twenty ships of war, and was aided by an American army under General Lincoln. Colonel Maitland, who, with eight hundred men, had routed this officer and five thousand men in John's Island, arriving at Savannah, preparations were made for a vigorous defence. A proposal to d'Estaing to allow the women and children to leave the town was barbarously refused. An attempt, however, to storm the British lines having failed, with great loss, the assailants raised the siege and separated, and d'Estaing returned to France.

British Uniform, 1776

The year 1780 opened inauspiciously for England. Gibraltar was besieged by a combined Spanish and French force, and Minorca was equally hard pressed by the same nations. At the impulse of the empress of Russia, most of the European powers entered into an armed neutrality, on the principle that "free ships make free goods, with the exception of arms and munitions of war," in opposition to the right of search claimed by belligerent powers. But the sea is the element on which British glory has always risen in triumph, and England now had a hero equal to the emergency. Sir George Rodney had been selected for command by the king himself. He was to proceed for the West Indies, and, on his way, to convoy a squadron of transports for the relief of Gibraltar. As it was expected that he would leave the transports to proceed alone in a certain latitude, the Spanish admiral, Don Juan de Langara, was sent with eleven men-of-war to intercept them; but off Cape St. Vincent he was encountered by Rodney (January 16th). The action commenced at four in the afternoon, in a violent gale of wind, and was continued through a stormy night, and the whole Spanish fleet was taken or destroyed. Rodney relieved both Gibraltar and Minorca, and then sailed for the West Indies, where, soon after his arrival, he engaged off St. Lucia the count de Guichen. Rodney had twenty-one, the count twenty-three ships. By able manœuvres the English admiral had secured the prospect of a complete victory, but his captains (as formerly with Benbow), from jealousy, cowardice, or ignorance, disobeyed his signals, and the French fleet escaped. He brought one of the captains, Bateman, to a court-martial, and he was dismissed the service. Rodney tried ineffectually to bring the fleet again to action, but De Guichen sailed to Europe with the merchant-fleet, and Rodney then proceeded to the coast of America.

[1780 A.D.]

Though the independence of the revolted provinces had now been acknowledged by France and Spain, and these powers had, as it were, armed in their cause, never were the prospects of the colonists so gloomy. Even the firm mind of Washington began to despair.

Relieved of all apprehension from Washington, Sir Henry Clinton resolved to attempt the reduction of South Carolina in person. He sailed from New York and laid siege to Charleston, into which General Lincoln had thrown himself with seven thousand provincials. When he had completed his works and was preparing to batter the town, a capitulation was proposed and accepted. The whole province was speedily reduced, and Sir Henry Clinton then returned to New York, leaving Lord Cornwallis in Carolina with four thousand men. The American government sent thither General Gates, who assembled at Camden an army of six thousand men: Lord Cornwallis advanced to attack him with not more than two thousand, and (August 17th) gave him a complete defeat, killing eight hundred, and taking two thousand men, with all the baggage, stores, and artillery; his own loss in killed and wounded being only three hundred and fifty men.

Naval Uniform About 1782

In July a French fleet, having six thousand troops on board, under the count de Rochambeau, arrived at Rhode Island. It was proposed, when De Guichen, who was expected, should arrive, that a general attack by sea and land should be made on New York; but the activity of Rodney, as we have seen, disconcerted this plan.

While Washington was absent at a conference with Count Rochambeau, Arnold, who had been in secret correspondence with Sir Henry Clinton for betraying West Point, desired that some trusty agent might be sent to him. Major André, adjutant-general of the British army, volunteered his services, and he landed in the night from the *Vulture* sloop of war. At daybreak, when his conference with Arnold was concluded, he found it impossible to return to the sloop, and being furnished by Arnold with a pass under the name of Anderson, he attempted to reach New York by land. He was however met and stopped by three militia-men. He wrote without delay a letter to Arnold under his assumed name, and that general escaped on board the *Vulture* just before Washington's order to arrest him arrived.

André, who no longer concealed his name or quality, was brought before a court-martial, and tried as a spy. He denied that he was such, as he had come on shore under a passport or flag of truce from Arnold. The court however found him guilty, and sentenced him to be hanged. Every exertion was made to save him by Sir Henry Clinton, but in vain; Washington was inexorable; even the urgent request of the prisoner to be shot was refused, and he was hanged (October 2nd) amid the sympathy of the officers and soldiers of the American army.

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

As the contest was now drawing to its close, we will here pause and take a view of the state of affairs at home, for the last few years.

On the subject of the war with the colonies, feelings and opinions were divided. The great body of the nation was beyond doubt on the side of the ministry, and desirous of reducing the refractory colonists by force; and the king himself, with his characteristic obstinacy of character, was firmly set against concession. On the other hand, the whig party, partly from prudence and a regard for justice, still more perhaps out of opposition to the court and ministry, were in favour of conciliation. The dissenters were, of course, on the side of the colonists. Doctor Price published a work at this time on the *Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government*, etc., in which, as is usual in such writings, the blemishes of the British constitution were studiously displayed and exaggerated, while free reins were given to imagination in discussing the spirit and nature of the American revolution. There was however a judicious set of men, such as Dean Tucker, who saw clearly that prudence and interest equally counselled an acknowledgement of the independence of the colonies; but their number of course was small, and their arguments were slighted.

Lord Chatham had from the very commencement of the troubles been the advocate of conciliation. He was for yielding to all the reasonable demands of the colonists; he reprobated the employment of foreign troops against them, and he poured forth a torrent of his most impassioned eloquence on the subject of the employment of the Indians in the war by Burgoyne. But nothing was further from the mind of this great man than the dismemberment of the empire.[c]

The letters of the king sufficiently manifest the strong aversion which he had taken to the statesman who, in this crisis of his country's fate, was looked up to as the only Englishman who was likely to conciliate America while he alarmed France. The king declared on the 15th of March, that he did not object to Lord North applying to Lord Chatham to support his administration; but adding "that no advantage to my country, nor personal danger to myself, can make me address myself to Lord Chatham or to any other branch of opposition. Honestly, I would rather lose the crown I now wear than bear the ignominy of possessing it under their shackles." The national feeling with regard to Chatham was expressed in a letter by Thomas Coutts, the eminent banker. He said that "Every rank looks up to him with the only gleam of hope that remains." In a few weeks a higher power than courts or senates decided that Chatham should be at rest — indifferent to the hatred of a king, or the veneration of a people.

CHATHAM'S LAST SPEECH AND DEATH (1778 A.D.)

The duke of Richmond had given notice in the house of lords of a motion which he intended to make on the 7th of April, "for an address to the king upon the state of the nation." On the 5th the duke sent to Lord Chatham the draft of his proposed address; which Chatham returned the next day, expressing his concern "to find himself under so wide a difference with the duke of Richmond, as between the sovereignty and allegiance of America." Chatham was slowly recovering from a fit of the gout; but he determined to go to town from Hayes, and take his place in parliament. Lord Camden, in a letter to the duke of Grafton, describing the closing scene of the great

THE DEATH OF THE EARL OF CHATHAM

(From the engraving of 1791, by F. Bartolozzi, R.A., of the painting by J. S. Copley, R.A., in the National Gallery)

[1778 A.D.]

earl's public life, says, "he was not in a condition to go abroad; and he was earnestly requested not to make the attempt." Camden saw him in the prince's chamber before he went into the house; and remarked "the feeble state of his body, and the distempered agitation of his mind." An eye-witness has recorded his appearance: "Lord Chatham came into the house of lords, leaning upon two friends, lapped up in flannel, pale and emaciated. Within his large wig, little more was to be seen than his aquiline nose and his penetrating eye. He looked like a dying man, yet never was seen a figure of more dignity." The two friends were his son, William Pitt, and Lord Mahon, his son-in-law. The duke of Richmond had proposed his motion for an address. Viscount Weymouth had opposed the motion.

The earl of Chatham, continues the narrative of the eye-witness, "rose from his seat with slowness and difficulty, leaning on his crutches, and supported under each arm by his two friends. He took one hand from his crutch, and raised it, casting his eyes towards heaven, and said, 'I thank God that I have been enabled to come here this day, to perform my duty, and to speak on a subject which has so deeply impressed my mind. I am old and infirm — have one foot, more than one foot, in the grave — I am risen from my bed to stand up in the cause of my country, perhaps never again to speak in this house.'" Lord Camden describes the words of Chatham as "shreds of unconnected eloquence, and flashes of the same fire which he, Prometheus-like, had stolen from heaven; and were then returning to the place from whence they were taken." That withering sarcasm which occasionally found its place in his impassioned harangues was not absent in this last effort. Speaking of the probability of invasion, he said, "Of a Spanish invasion, of a French invasion, of a Dutch invasion, many noble lords may have read in history; and some lords may perhaps remember a Scotch invasion." He looked at Lord Mansfield.

"My lords," said he in conclusion, "I rejoice that the grave has not closed on me, that I am still alive to lift up my voice against the dismemberment of this ancient and noble monarchy. Pressed down as I am by a load of infirmities, I am little able to serve my country in this most perilous conjuncture; but while I have sense and memory, I will never consent to deprive the royal offspring of the house of Brunswick, the heirs of the princess Sophia, of their fairest inheritance, or to tarnish the lustre of the nation by an ignominious surrender of its rights and possessions. Shall this great kingdom, that has survived whole and entire Danish depredations, Scottish inroads, the Norman Conquest, and the threatened invasion of the Spanish armada, now fall prostrate before the house of Bourbon? Shall a people, seventeen years ago the terror of the world, now stoop so low as to tell its ancient and inveterate enemy, Take all we have, only give us peace? It is impossible! I wage war with no man, or set of men; I wish for none of their employments; nor would I co-operate with those who persist in unretracted error; or who, instead of acting on a firm decisive line of conduct, halt between two opinions where there is no middle path. In God's name, if it be absolutely necessary to declare for peace or war, and if peace cannot be preserved with honour, why is not war commenced without hesitation? I am not, I confess, well informed of the resources of this kingdom, but I trust it has still sufficient to maintain its just rights, though I know them not. Any state, however, is better than despair; let us at least make one effort, and if we must fall, let us fall like men."

The duke of Richmond replied. As he proceeded in his argument, Lord Chatham, by the motion of his hand, indicated that he took notice of, and

would reply to some offensive expressions, but when he attempted to rise again to speak, he fell back in a convulsive fit. He was caught by those near him and carried into an adjoining apartment, whence he was conveyed to his villa of Hayes in Kent, where on the eleventh of the following May he breathed his last, in the seventieth year of his age. He was honoured with a public funeral, and his remains repose in Westminster Abbey.

The name of William Pitt, the great commoner, the man who by the sole force of talent raised himself to the highest point of eminence, stands in our annals invested with never-fading glory. His contemporaries speak with wonder of the powers of his eloquence, his commanding figure, his noble countenance, his eagle-eye, his graceful action, his lofty declamation, his withering invective, his keen irony and sarcasm. The purity of his private life gave lustre to his public virtues. In an age of corruption, calumny never ventured to breathe a suspicion on his name. The only charge that could be made against him was, that for the sake of embarrassing Walpole, he had advocated opinions which he renounced when himself in power. His ambition was boundless, his love of war was perhaps too great, and never did a minister more lavishly employ the resources of the country. Fortune, however, stood his friend; the successes of Wolfe in the west and of Clive in the east (with the last of which, however, he had no concern), shed glory on his administration; and the impulse which his genius had given to the nation, achieved resplendent triumphs even after his retirement from office. The chief defect in the character of this eminent man was a haughty and overbearing spirit, too often the concomitant of great political talents. As the vizir of an eastern monarch, Pitt would have been in his proper element, as all would then have yielded to his will, and there would have been no popular assembly to convince or to conciliate.[c]

William Pitt, First Earl of Chatham
(1708–1778)

Association for the Redress of Grievances (1780 A.D.)

The internal affairs of the country in the year 1780 are, in many respects, as interesting and instructive as those of any year in our annals. England was, unquestionably, distinctly threatened with some great political convulsion. The obstinate persistence in the war with America had brought upon the country its natural consequences — excessive taxation, and interruption to the usual course of profitable industry. Twenty years only had

[1780 A.D.]

elapsed since the nation looked back upon a period of unexampled prosperity, and of signal triumph; of victory abroad and of tranquillity at home. The nation had then confidence in the directors of its affairs; regarded the parliament as the true representative of public opinion; and viewed the sovereign power, according to the principles of the Revolution, as the especial guardian of the freedom and happiness of the people. A young prince had come to the crown, with every apparent disposition to rule righteously and constitutionally; and yet, from the first year of his accession, a system of favouritism had surrounded the throne with a host of placemen, who were chosen to assert an invidious distinction between the interests of the king and the measures of the responsible servants of the state. During these twenty years a great change had come over the popular convictions. The parliament had become opposed to the people; and the executive power had grown out of harmony with the theory of the constitution, through the tendency to govern by the corruption of the parliament. The preponderating influence of a great aristocratic party had indeed been weakened, and in many essentials destroyed; but with that weakness had come a proportionate weakness of the democratic element of the constitution. The time had arrived when the minority in parliament, whether peers or commoners, saw that, to renew their strength as a governing power, they must identify themselves more distinctly with the people. The abuses consequent upon the excessive number of sinecure offices, and of large pensions, unsanctioned by parliamentary authority, called for economical reform. The scandalous proportion of members of the house of commons returned for rotten boroughs demanded reform in parliament. A vast amount of public opinion was brought to bear upon these two points, in the form of associations for the redress of grievances.

On the 8th of February, Sir George Savile, the respected member for Yorkshire, presented to the house of commons the petition of a great meeting of the gentlemen, clergy, and freeholders of his county, which was signed by eight thousand persons. The Yorkshire petition set forth, as the consequences of a most expensive and unfortunate war, a large addition to the national debt, heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of the kingdom. It then came to the chief grievance: "Alarmed at the diminished resources and growing burdens of this country, and convinced that rigid frugality is now indispensably necessary in every department of the state, your petitioners observe with grief, that notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished condition of the nation, much public money has been improvidently squandered, and that many individuals enjoy sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service, to a large and still increasing amount; whence the crown has acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, may soon prove fatal to the liberties of this country."

The great meeting in Yorkshire gave an example to the rest of England. Twenty-three counties adopted similar petitions, and appointed their corresponding committees. Motions for economical reform had been brought forward in the house of lords before the recess; and Burke had given notice of the measure which he intended to propose. On the 11th of February he accomplished this intention, in the delivery of a speech which is amongst the masterpieces of English composition — unsurpassed in lucidness of detail, force of reasoning, historical research, and gleams of wit and poetry, by any example of parliamentary rhetoric. Out of seven fundamental rules which

he lays down, three, especially, will apply to all time; and, it may be feared, will never cease to require a vigilant application.

"That all jurisdictions which furnish more matter of expense, more temptation to oppression, or more means and instruments of corrupt influence, than advantage to justice or political administration, ought to be abolished.

"That all offices which bring more charge than proportional advantage to the state; that all offices which may be engrafted on others, uniting and simplifying their duties, ought, in the first case, to be taken away; and in the second, to be consolidated.

"That it is right to reduce every establishment, and every part of an establishment (as nearly as possible), to certainty, the life of all order and good management."

Burke, in his truly statesmanlike speech upon economical reform, argued that a temperate reform is permanent, because it has a principle of growth. Burke's proposals were so temperate, and so incapable of being refuted by argument, that Lord North offered no opposition to the reception of the first bill which was founded upon them. Other members were ready to go further than Burke. Sir George Savile, on the 15th of February, moved for an account of all places for life or lives, whether held by patent or otherwise, and also for an account of all subsisting pensions, granted by the crown, during pleasure or otherwise. The motion was opposed by Lord Nugent, upon the ground that many reduced gentry enjoyed his majesty's private bounty, and would not like their names to be made public — "many lady Bridgets, lady Marys, and lady Jennys." Lord North proposed an amendment, limiting the account to pensions payable at the exchequer. The whole amount payable under the name of pensions, he said, did not exceed £50,000. To publish a list would "prepare a feast for party-writers, and furnish materials for magazines and newspapers." Happy is the government that does not shrink from the eye of magazines and newspapers! Lord North carried his amendment only by a majority of two in a full house. The session was a series of parliamentary conflicts; some conducted with personal acrimony which involved the ridiculous arbitrement of duelling. A bill was carried in the house of commons against contractors sitting in parliament, which was rejected in the house of lords. Burke's own bill encountered every obstruction in its progress through committee; and the session was concluded without any practical result of the great statesman's incontrovertible exposition of abuses which agitated the minds of a whole people.

On the 18th of May the most important clauses in Burke's bill were lost in committee. The king has triumphed. "You cannot doubt," he writes to Lord North, "that I received with pleasure the account of Mr. Burke's bill having been defeated." His majesty was looking to a new parliament to continue the abuses that were odious to the nation, or, as it appeared to the royal mind, "to keep the present constitution of the country in its pristine lustre."

THE LORD GEORGE GORDON RIOTS (1780 A.D.)

According to the theory of a narrow-minded king, the pristine lustre of the constitution would have been shorn of its beams, if fifty useless places had not been held by members of parliament, to do the bidding of the court without the slightest reference to the interests of the nation. According to the theory of a large section of a somewhat intolerant public, the Protestant

[1778-1780 A.D.]

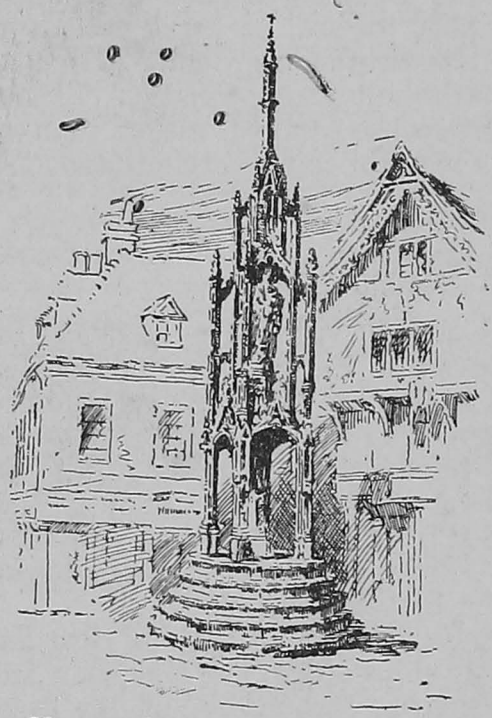
succession would have lost the best part of its value, if English Roman Catholics were allowed to hold property in land; if their spiritual instructors were not subject to the penalties of treason or felony; if a Protestant son could no longer eject his papist father from his estate. These severities of the statutes of the tenth and eleventh of William III had ceased to be applied; but they existed as a temptation to informers to extort money from the timid, and as a stigma upon the loyal and peaceful. In 1778, upon the motion of Savile, seconded by Dunning, these obsolete penalties were repealed, with the approbation of men of all parties. The Acts of William III, dating before the union with Scotland, did not affect the position of Roman Catholics there; and it was subsequently contemplated to repeal a statute of the Scottish parliament, which was as odious to right-thinking persons as the enactments of the days when popery was the great terror of England. The proceedings of the parliament in 1778 stirred up the fanaticism of Edinburgh and Glasgow at the beginning of 1779. Riots took place in Edinburgh. Houses of reputed Roman Catholics were assailed and damaged. A house where Catholics assembled for worship was set on fire. Those who by speech or writing advocated freedom of opinion, were threatened with vengeance, the brutal zealots selecting as one of the objects of their hostility their distinguished countryman, the historian Robertson. A Protestant association and committee was set up in Scotland; and a silly nobleman, Lord George Gordon, was chosen as its president. This fanatic had sat in parliament for several years, raving and gesticulating when any debate excited his monomania. Contemptible as he was in intellect, he acquired some consideration from the position he had obtained as the leader of a body of people, large in numbers and dangerous in their enthusiasm.

On the 29th of May he called a public meeting at Coachmakers' hall; where he harangued a great audience about the dangers of popery; and proposed a resolution that the whole body of the Protestant association should meet in St. George's fields on the following Friday, to accompany him to the house of commons to deliver their petition. If less than twenty thousand persons should attend him, he would not present it. He proposed that they should assemble in four divisions — the Protestants of London the first, of Westminster the second, of Southwark the third, and the Scots resident in the metropolis the fourth; and that every real Protestant should come with a blue cockade on his hat.[e]

On Friday, June 2nd, the petitioners assembled in St. George's fields, to the number of from forty to fifty thousand, and with Lord George at their head, and wearing blue cockades inscribed with "No Popery," marched in four divisions to the parliament house, where they blocked up the avenues and insulted several of the members. On the arrival of some troops in the evening they retired, but proceeded to demolish the chapels of the Sardinian and Bavarian embassies. On Saturday the populace remained quiet, but on Sunday they demolished the chapels and dwelling-houses of the Catholics about Moorfields. Their efforts on Monday were directed against the house of Sir George Saville in Leicesterfields, which was saved with difficulty. On Tuesday, which was the day for taking their petition into consideration, the mob again surrounded the house, and the members having passed some resolutions suited to the occasion, adjourned. In the evening Newgate was broken open, and three hundred ruffians turned loose; the house of Sir John Fielding, the magistrate, was demolished; the rabble then rushed to Bloomsbury square and attacked the residence of Lord Mansfield; they plundered and destroyed the furniture, pictures, and statues, and burned the books and

manuscripts; the earl himself and his lady escaping with difficulty. The day concluded by the breaking open of Clerkenwell prison. On Wednesday the King's Bench, the Fleet, and other prisons were broken open and set on fire, as also were several private houses, and attempts were made on the bank and pay-office.

Hitherto the mob had rioted and destroyed at will. On this day a privy council sat, but was rising without coming to a conclusion, when the king asked if nothing effectual could be recommended. The attorney-general said that he knew of but one course, which was to authorise the military to act without the presence of a magistrate. The council, though approving, hesitated to adopt this course; when the king, nobly declaring that he would take the whole responsibility on himself, signed the order. The guards and militia forthwith began to act against the rioters; the slaughter was considerable, but next day by noon the city was tranquil. Lord George Gordon was committed to the Tower on a charge of high treason. Numbers of the rioters were tried by a special commission, and fifty-nine were capitally convicted.



Market Cross, Winchester, as in Early 19th Century

Early in February, 1781, the trial of Lord Gordon came on before Lord Mansfield, as chief justice, and on a charge of high treason. The public mind had certainly much cooled since the numerous convictions in July, 1780; and the noble prisoner was no doubt far less criminal than silly. Still, however, it was fortunate for him that his defence depended on that most able advocate, Thomas Erskine, whose just fame will be ever blended with the records of this cause.

Erskine, as counsel for his lordship, found himself junior to Lloyd Kenyon. This was a worthy man, and excellent lawyer, deservedly raised both to the bench and to the peerage. But he was wholly destitute of eloquence, and in opening Lord George's defence, delivered a most ineffective speech. Under these circumstances, Erskine, contrary to the common rule, obtained permission to defer his own address until after the evidence for the prisoner had been closed. He rose soon after midnight, and quickly dispelled all feeling of weariness from all those who heard him, as he, with consummate skill, combined some passionate bursts of glowing oratory with a chain of the closest argument. Then, for the first and only time in our legal annals, did an advocate, addressing a court of justice, presume to use an oath. Erskine had been alleging whatever proofs the case could afford of his client's good and peaceful intentions; and when he had related how, in the midst of the disturbances, Lord George had gone to Buckingham House, and asked to see the king, and how he had told the secretary of state, Lord Stormont, whom alone he succeeded in seeing, that he would do his best to quell the riots; on completing this recapitulation, Erskine thus broke forth:—"I say, *by God*, that man is a ruffian who shall, after this, presume to build upon such honest, artless conduct as an evidence of guilt." So well did the voice, the eye, the

[1781 A.D.]

face, assist these words — so happily did the words chime in with the high-wrought feelings of the hearers — that instead of being shrunk from as profane, or rebuked as indecorous, they seemed rather to impart a tone of religious exaltation; and thus was the daring experiment crowned with complete success.

Erskine having ended, and the solicitor-general replied, the case was summed up by Lord Mansfield in remarks by no means favourable to the prisoner. The jury withdrew for half an hour, but at a quarter past five in the morning brought back to the thronged and anxious court their verdict of Not Guilty. There were still, in Scotland at least, some partisans left to Lord George, to rejoice at his acquittal, and subscribe nearly £500 towards his expenses. But the joy extended farther. It was felt on constitutional grounds by many who had not the slightest political leaning to the silly young fanatic. "I am glad," said Dr. Johnson, "Lord George Gordon has escaped, rather than a precedent should be established of hanging a man for constructive treason."[b]

CONCLUSION OF THE AMERICAN WAR

We now resume the narrative of the American War. The blockade of Gibraltar still continued (1781); famine preyed on the garrison and people, but Admiral Danby conveyed supplies to it in the face of a superior Spanish fleet lying in the bay of Cadiz. The besiegers then kept up for the space of three weeks one of the most tremendous bombardments in the annals of war, and they had brought their works to completion, when a sally of the garrison totally destroyed them. A combined force of sixteen thousand men was landed at Minorca for the attack of St. Philip's castle, and a combined fleet of seventy ships of war appeared in the British Channel.

The Dutch had joined in the war against England, but they paid dear for their treachery. Admiral Parker, as, with six ships of the line and some frigates, he was convoying a fleet from the Baltic, was encountered off the Dogger Bank (August 5th) by the Dutch admiral Zoutman, with ten sail of the line and frigates. The action, which lasted nearly four hours, was terrific; the English had five hundred, the Dutch twelve hundred, killed and wounded; both fleets were disabled, and the Dutch hardly got into their own ports. In the West Indies, Rodney took their island of St. Eustatius, in which, being a free port, immense wealth in goods and stores was collected: all this became the prize of the victors, who also captured a great number of merchantmen.

Sir Henry Clinton having sent General Arnold with a force into Virginia, directed Lord Cornwallis to form a junction with him. As he was advancing for that purpose, he sent Colonel Tarleton with a corps of eleven hundred men, to oppose General Morgan, who was acting on his left. At a place called the Cowpens, Tarleton came up with the enemy (January 17th), and in the hard-fought action which ensued, the British were defeated for the first time in an open field of battle. The American general Greene displayed considerable ability in impeding the measures of Lord Cornwallis till he found himself strong enough to engage him; he then (March 15th) gave him battle at Guilford Court House. The Americans had five thousand men, the British half the number. The latter gained the honour of the day, but want of provisions and the severity of the weather obliged them to retire, leaving their wounded to the care of the enemy. Lord Cornwallis then pushed on for Virginia, while Greene advanced toward South Carolina. At a place named Hobkirk's hill (April 25th) he was attacked and routed by Lord Rawdon; and,

after a variety of operations, he encountered (September 8th) at Eutaw Springs Colonel Stewart, who now commanded the British in that province. The action was the most obstinate that had yet been fought; the American militia acted nobly; both sides claimed the victory, but the British found it necessary to retire to Charleston.

Lord Cornwallis, meantime, having reached the Chesapeake, in spite of opposition, fortified Yorktown and Gloucester point. He applied in vain for reinforcements to Sir Henry Clinton, who feared for New York. A large French fleet, under Count de Grasse, then entered the Chesapeake; and Washington and Count Rochambeau having joined their forces, their united army of twelve thousand men appeared before Yorktown, while De Grasse blocked up the mouth of the York river. The British force did not amount to seven thousand men. A gallant defence was made, but they were obliged to yield to numbers and capitulate (October 19th). With this event the contest in America terminated.

Fortune was elsewhere unfavourable to Great Britain, whom France had now deprived of all the Leeward Islands except Antigua and Barbadoes. Minorca was lost; St. Philip's castle, after one of the noblest defences on record, and the reduction of its garrison to eight hundred men, having been obliged to surrender.

The surrender of Yorktown sealed the doom of the North administration. An unfortunate minister is seldom secure in his power; the country gentlemen now opened their eyes to the folly of continuing the war; a formidable plan of attack was conceived and executed by the opposition, led on by General Conway and Mr. Fox, and sustained by their usual champions, with the accession of William Pitt, son of the great earl of Chatham, and Mr. Sheridan, both of whom had displayed great talent in debate. Day after day the ministerial majority declined. At length (March, 1782) Lord North announced that the cabinet was dissolved.

The opposition having gained the victory, had now to divide the spoils. But herein lay a difficulty. It consisted of two almost hostile parties; the one headed by the marquis of Rockingham, which was for conceding total independence to the colonies; the other, led by the earl of Shelburne, which though willing to yield up the right of taxation and terminate the war, trod in the steps of Lord Chatham, who almost with his dying breath had protested against a dismemberment of the empire. The new ministry was formed of five of each party; the chancellor, Lord Thurlow, to gratify the king, being allowed to retain the great seal. Lord Rockingham was premier; Lord Shelburne and Mr. Fox secretaries; General Conway commander-in-chief; Lord John Cavendish chancellor of the exchequer; Mr. Dunning (later Lord Ashburton) chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, etc; Burke was paymaster of the forces; Barré treasurer of the navy; Sheridan under-secretary of state. Pitt declined taking any office.

The watchword of the new ministry was peace, economy, and no patronage. Yet, when Mr. Pitt brought in a bill for a reform in parliament, it was rejected, and the whole of the retrenchments made amounted only to £72,000 a year, the far greater part of which was in the department of Mr. Burke, the great advocate of the measure. What further they might have done is not to be known, for the death of Lord Rockingham in the summer broke up the cabinet, as Fox and his friends refused to act under Lord Shelburne, and retired. Mr. Pitt now took office as chancellor of the exchequer, though only twenty-three years of age.

Negotiations for peace had been commenced, but the war still continued.

[1782-1783 A.D.]

On the 12th of April Rodney brought De Grasse to action in the West Indies, and by executing the manœuvre of breaking the line, he gave him a complete defeat, taking or destroying eight ships, and reducing almost to wrecks the remainder, two of which were captured a few days after by Sir Samuel Hood. But as Admiral Graves was conducting the prizes to England, and convoying the homeward-bound merchant-fleet, a terrific storm came on, in which all the prizes but one, two British men-of-war, and several of the merchantmen, perished, and three thousand lives were lost. At home the loss of the *Royal George* of one hundred guns, which was upset by a squall (August 29th) at Portsmouth, and went down with Admiral Kempenfelt and a thousand men and women on board, increased the calamities of the year.

The storm of war beat this year with unprecedented fury on the rock of Gibraltar and its heroic defenders. The duke of Crillon, the conqueror of Minorca, took the command of the besieging army; ten floating batteries, proof against shot and fire, were constructed; forty-seven sail of the line, beside frigates and other craft, were collected in the bay; while batteries, mounting two hundred guns and protected by forty thousand men, were raised on the isthmus. The whole force by land and sea amounted to a hundred thousand men. On the 13th of September a simultaneous cannonnade was opened on the fortress, which was returned by shells and red-hot balls. The whole peninsula seemed one blaze of flame, while the roaring of the artillery was not intermitted for a second. During the day no effect seemed to be made on either side, but in the night two of the floating batteries burst into flames; the light enabled the besieged to direct their guns, and by morning six more were in the same condition; the fire from twelve gunboats prevented the enemy from bringing off their crews, all of whom would have perished but for the humanity of the British, who saved about four hundred men. The siege was now at an end, and the war was thus concluded brilliantly by England in Europe as well as in the West Indies. Her success had been uniform in the east. General Elliot, the gallant governor of Gibraltar, was raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Heathfield.[c]

The parliament was opened by the king on the 5th of December, the houses having met on the previous 26th of November, and were then adjourned in the expectation of some definite result from the negotiations. The opening words of the speech are very memorable. His majesty declared he had lost no time in giving the necessary orders to prohibit the further prosecution of offensive war upon the continent of North America. Adopting with decision what he gathered to be the sense of his parliament and his people, he had directed all his measures to an entire and cordial reconciliation with those colonies. He had not hesitated to go the full length of the powers vested in him, and had offered to declare them free and independent states, by an article to be inserted in the treaty of peace. Provisional articles had been agreed upon, to take effect whenever terms of peace should be finally settled with the court of France. The king then said, "In thus admitting their separation from the crown of these kingdoms, I have sacrificed every consideration of my own to the wishes and opinion of my people. I make it my humble and earnest prayer to Almighty God, that Great Britain may not feel the evils which might result from so great a dismemberment of the empire; and that America may be free from those calamities which have formerly proved in the mother country how essential monarchy is to the enjoyment of constitutional liberty. Religion, language, interest, affections may, and I hope will, yet prove a bond of permanent union between the two countries."

On the 20th of January, 1783, the preliminaries of peace were signed

between Great Britain and France and Spain. With Holland there was a suspension of arms; and the preliminaries of peace were not signed until the 2nd of September. The articles of pacification with the United States, with the exception of the first article acknowledging their independence, are now of minor importance. By the treaty with France, England ceded St. Lucia and Tobago, and gained back Granada, St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Christopher, Nevis, and Montserrat. The French recovered some possessions in Africa, and in the East Indies. The old stipulations for the demolition of Dunkirk were given up. To Spain, Great Britain ceded Minorca and the Floridas. The principle of the final treaty with Holland was on the basis of mutual restitution.

PARLIAMENTARY CENSURES OF THE TERMS OF PEACE (1783 A.D.)

Thus, then, was finished one of the most calamitous wars that England had ever been driven into, through a mistaken view of the relative positions of a mother country and her colonies, and an obstinate reliance upon her power to enforce obedience. It might have been expected that a pacification which involved no humiliating conditions, beyond the acknowledgment of that independence of the United States which it was no longer possible to withhold, would have been received with unmingled satisfaction. On the contrary, a combination of parties was entered into for the purpose of removing Lord Shelburne and his ministry; a coalition which is not a pleasant exhibition of the motives which sometimes unite the most opposite factions in the pursuit of power. On the 17th of February, the two houses took into consideration the preliminaries of peace with France, Spain and America. In the house of lords the ministers carried the address of thanks to the crown by a majority of thirteen. In the house of commons they were defeated by a majority of sixteen. On the 21st of February Lord John Cavendish moved resolutions of censure on the terms of the peace, which were carried by a majority of seventeen. Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt were on this occasion brought into immediate conflict — "the tug of war" which was to last for twenty years was now begun. The particular points of attack or defence in the conditions of the peace have little to interest us. But the principles exhibited by these great rivals on so stirring an occasion have a permanent value. Fox defended the coalition of parties which some had censured; but he emphatically proclaimed his adhesion to his own party. Pitt was self-reliant in his own confidence in the purity of his intentions: "High situation, and great influence, are desirable objects to most men, and objects which I am not ashamed to pursue, which I am even solicitous to possess, whenever they can be acquired with honour, and retained with dignity. On these respectable conditions, I am not less ambitious to be great and powerful than it is natural for a young man, with such brilliant examples before him, to be. But even these objects I am not beneath relinquishing, the moment my duty to my country, my character, and my friends, renders such a sacrifice indispensable. Then I hope to retire, not disappointed, but triumphant; triumphant in the conviction that my talents, humble as they are, have been earnestly, zealously, and strenuously employed, to the best of my apprehension, in promoting the truest welfare of my country; and that, however I may stand chargeable with weakness of understanding, or error of judgment, nothing can be imputed to my official capacity which bears the most distant connection with an interested, a corrupt, or a dishonest intention." The struggle for office was over. On the 24th of February Lord Shelburne resigned. One of his secretaries of

[1783 A.D.]

state, Lord Grantham, wrote to Sir James Harris that the fallen minister trusted too much to his measures, and that the parliament, spoilt by long habits of interest, gave no credit to them. The measures of Lord Shelburne contemplated a much wider field of action than his opponents, with the exception of Burke, could have admitted into their views. In the king's speech at the opening of the session, his majesty recommended a revision of the whole English trading system, upon the same comprehensive and liberal principles that had been adopted concerning the commerce of Ireland. Shelburne's opinions upon a liberal system of commerce were before his time. They were entirely opposed to the existing ignorance of the commercial public, and they would necessarily have failed. If he had remained in power, the great trading communities would have ensured his fall, had he dared to promulgate the principles which could only be accepted when England had received the enlightenment of more than half a century's experience.

THE COALITION MINISTRY (1783 A.D.)

The coalition of the party headed by Lord North, and of the party headed by Mr. Fox, had succeeded in compelling Lord Shelburne and Mr. Pitt to resign; but it was not without difficulty that the coalesced chiefs could induce the king to admit them to power. After a considerable delay, the duke of Portland became first lord of the treasury, and Fox and North were appointed secretaries of state. The repugnance of the king to this extraordinary union of two political rivals — which, securing a majority in the house of commons, forced upon him as the real prime minister, a man whom he disliked with an intensity approaching to hatred — was more than tolerated by the majority of the nation. The coalition was odious to all men not bound by the trammels of the party. Fox and North received the seals on the 2nd of April, 1783. The acceptance of place by Fox rendered his re-election for Westminster necessary; and Romilly writes — "It is almost a general wish that some man of character and credit may be opposed to him as a candidate." He was re-elected, because no candidate was found; "but the populace received him with hisses, hooting, and every other mark of displeasure."

Pitt was now in opposition. He had in vain declared "a just and lawful impediment" to the "ill-omened and unnatural marriage," forbidding the banns "in the name of the public weal." The ministry were strong in their majorities. Pitt vainly opposed the conditions of the loan which they had raised upon very disadvantageous terms. On the 7th of May he, a second time, brought forward the question of parliamentary reform. He proposed that when the gross corruption of the majority of voters in any borough was proved before a committee of the commons, the borough should be disfranchised; and that a large addition of knights of the shire, and of members for the metropolis, should be made to the representative body. But Pitt openly declared against the practicability of a perfectly equal representation, and held that those places known by the popular appellation of rotten boroughs, were to be regarded in the light of deformities which in some degree disfigured the fabric of the constitution, but which he feared could not be removed without endangering the whole pile. Fox earnestly defended the proposition; North opposed it. Pitt's resolutions were rejected by a majority of 144. The young reformer was more successful in carrying through the house of commons a bill for preventing abuses in the public offices, the chief object of which was to abolish an odious system of perquisites and percent-

ages. In the house of lords the adherents of the ministry threw out the bill. The session came to a close on the 16th of July.

The session of parliament was opened on the 11th of November. The prince of Wales, previous to the arrival of the king, had been introduced to the house of peers, with great ceremony, and was conducted to his chair of state on the right hand of the throne. Carlton House had been assigned to him as a residence. The question of India was the most important topic of the king's speech. "The situation of the East India Company will require the utmost exertions of your wisdom, to maintain and improve the valuable advantages derived from our Indian possessions, and to promote and secure the happiness of the native inhabitants of those provinces." On the 18th of November Mr. Fox brought forward his India Bill. Mr. Fox proposed that the authority of the East India Company should be transferred to commissioners to be named by parliament, and not removeable at the pleasure of the crown. "His plan," he said, "was to establish a board, to consist of seven persons, who should be invested with full power to appoint and displace officers in India, and under whose control the whole government of that country should be placed." There were to be eight assistants to this board, who should have charge of the commercial concerns of the company, but subject to the control of the other seven. The board was to be held in England; it was to be established for three or five years, to try the experiment. If experience proved the utility of the board, then the king was to have the future nomination of its members.

CHARLES JAMES FOX

(1749–1806)

The principle of Mr. Fox's India Bill was resisted upon its first introduction to parliament. Mr. Pitt declared his opinion that the whole of the proposed system was nothing more on one side than absolute despotism, and on the other side the most gross corruption. Previous to the second reading of the bill, the corporation of London, in common council assembled, adopted a petition to the house of commons that the bill might not pass into law. The example of the city was followed by many other corporations. Nevertheless, Fox triumphed in the house of commons by large majorities. The second reading of his bills was carried by a majority of 114; and on the 9th of December they were presented by the minister and a numerous body of members at the bar of the house of lords.

On the day when the coalition ministry entered office, the king wrote to Earl Temple, then lord-lieutenant of Ireland, to express his hope that many months would not elapse before "the Grenvilles, the Pitts, and other men of character" would relieve him from a thraldom to which he had been compelled to submit. The opportunity which the king so ardently desired did

not come till the India Bill had provoked a manifestation of popular opinion which might enable the crown to defy a majority of the house of commons. It was a dangerous experiment. The nobleman to whom the king had confided his sorrows in April was ready in December not only to whisper to the peers, but confidently to state, that whoever voted for the India Bill would be considered by the king as his enemy. The effect upon all those who desired to live only in the sunshine of royal favour was instantaneous. "The bishops waver, and the thanes fly from us," writes Fitzpatrick. He adds, "the public is full of alarm and astonishment at the treachery as well as the imprudence of this unconstitutional interference. Nobody guesses what will be the consequence of a conduct that is generally compared to that of Charles I in 1641." The India bills were rejected in the upper house on the 17th of December, by a majority of ninety-five to seventy-six. On the 18th, at midnight, a message was sent by the king to Lord North and Mr. Fox, commanding them to give up their seals of office by their under-secretaries, as a personal interview would be disagreeable to his majesty.

PITT AT THE HELM (1783 A.D.)

On the 19th Pitt was appointed first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer. Earl Temple, who had received the seals of secretary of state, was for the immediate dissolution of parliament. Pitt was against this, and Temple resigned on the 22nd, leaving the young prime minister to sustain, almost alone, the most severe conflict for power recorded in the annals of parliament.

In forming his administration Pitt had scarcely a statesman of any reputation to support him, with the exception of Thurlow, as chancellor, and Dundas, who was not of the cabinet. His father's friend, Camden, stood by him in the house of lords, although not originally forming one of the ministry. Pitt had almost wholly to depend upon his own ability and courage to sustain the attack he had to expect from a large majority of the house of commons, headed by Fox, Burke, North, and Sheridan.

On the 12th of January, 1784, Pitt appeared in the house of commons as the head of the government. Violent were the debates on points of form and questions of principle. The minister was beaten upon two divisions, and five adverse motions were carried against him that night. The king wrote to him the next day, "I am ready to take any step that may be proposed to oppose this faction, and to struggle to the last period of my life." It was well that the king had found a minister whose prudence was equal to his courage. Regardless of his defeat, Pitt, on the 14th of January, brought forward his own plan for the government and management of the affairs of the East India Company. His bill was read a first time. In a committee of the whole house on the state of the nation, it was moved that "the continuance of the present ministers in trusts of the highest importance and responsibility is contrary to constitutional principles, and injurious to the interests of his majesty and his people." The resolution was carried by a majority of twenty-one. An adjournment took place for a few days; but still no resignation. On the 23rd of January, Mr. Pitt's India Bill was thrown out; and Mr. Fox reproduced his own bill. The contest between the two parties was carried on in various shapes, till the 8th of March. Attempts were made to form a union between the leading members of the late government and those of the present, but Pitt steadily refused to resign as the preliminary condition of such a negotiation. At length, on the 8th of March, an elaborate

remonstrance, in the form of an address to his majesty, which was drawn up by Burke, and moved by Fox, was carried by a majority only of one. The battle was over. The victory remained with Pitt. The Mutiny Bill was passed; the supplies were voted; and on the 24th of March, the king went to the house of lords, to put an end to the session, and to say, "I feel it a duty which I owe to the constitution and the country, to recur as speedily as possible to the sense of my people, by calling a new parliament." On the 25th parliament was dissolved.

During this extraordinary contest, from the 12th of January to the 8th of March, there were fourteen motions, upon which the house divided, carried against Mr. Pitt; besides many others, upon which there was no division. The mode in which the coalition ministry was ejected, through the royal interference with the vote of the house of peers upon the India Bill, was mean and unconstitutional. It has been conjectured that Pitt was probably acquainted with the manœuvres of Thurlow and Temple. But it has been also said that when Temple resigned, he "carried away with him the scandal which the best friends of the new government could not but lament. The fame of the young prime minister preserved its whiteness. He could declare with perfect truth that, if unconstitutional machinations had been employed, he had been no party to them." Whatever opinion may be formed upon this point, even the political opponents of Pitt agree that in this fiery struggle of two months, he "joined to great boldness, sagacity and discretion. By patience and perseverance he wearied out a foe who was more ardent than measured in his attacks; and while he bore his defeats with calmness, the country, saturated with calumny, began to resent the attempt of the coalition party as the cabal of a domineering aristocracy."

Never did minister of Great Britain appear in so triumphant a position as William Pitt when he entered the house of commons, on the 18th of May, to meet the new parliament. He had been himself returned at the head of the poll for the University of Cambridge. His friend Wilberforce, the son of a Hull merchant, had contested the county of York against two whig candidates of large fortune and high connections. With the almost unanimous support of the manufacturers of Sheffield, and Halifax, and Bradford, and Leeds, he had beaten the great Yorkshire aristocracy, as the representative of the middle classes. The example presented by this stronghold of independent principles was powerful through the country. Pitt looked upon the benches of opposition, that for two months had echoed with the cheers of those who had denounced him with every virulence of invective, now thinned to a very powerless minority. The coalition had lost a hundred and sixty members. [The members of the opposition who lost their seats were popularly known as Fox's martyrs.]

PITT'S FINANCIAL MEASURES

Pitt commenced his career as a financial minister with more than common boldness. The permanent taxes produced half a million less than the interest of the debt, the civil list, and the charges to which they were appropriated. The annual land-tax and malt-tax fell far short of the naval and military expenditure and that of miscellaneous services. There was a large unfunded debt. The deficit altogether amounted to three millions. The confidence in the national resources was so low that the three per cents were fallen to about 56. Smuggling, especially of tea and spirits, was carried on to an enormous

extent. The tea vended in the smuggling trade, conducted in the most systematic manner through consignments from foreign ports, was held considerably to exceed the five million and a half pounds annually sold by the East India Company. Pitt took the only effectual way to prevent smuggling. He reduced the duty upon tea from 50 per cent. to 12½ per cent.; and he also reduced the duties on foreign spirits. To compensate for the expected deficiency of revenue, he increased the tax upon windows. To meet the large general disproportion between receipt and expenditure, he imposed other taxes, that have been abolished, as injurious to industry, by the sounder economists of later times. These taxes enabled him to provide for the interest of a new loan, in which a large amount of unfunded debt was absorbed. Taxes upon hats, linens, and calicos, have long been condemned, though the commons of 1784 willingly granted them. Duties upon horses, excise licences, and game certificates, hold their ground. Taxes upon candles, and upon bricks and tiles, were amongst the devices that have had no permanent existence. The tax upon paper, which Mr. Pitt increased, appears to be the last of those restraints upon industry to which purblind legislators have clung, upon the principle that the consumers do not feel the tax — the principle announced by the minister of 1784, when he proposed his additional duty on candles, namely, that as the poorest cottagers only consumed about 10 pounds of candles annually, that class would only contribute fivepence a year to his new impost.

A Buck from Old Fashion Book, South Kensington Museum

The chancellor of the exchequer carried his proposed taxes without any difficulty. He was equally successful with his India bills. He relieved the East India Company from its financial embarrassments. He associated with its directors in the government of India that body of commissioners, appointed by the crown, which was long known as the board of control.

In the session of 1785 Mr. Pitt brought forward a subject announced in the king's speech, the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland. The propositions of Mr. Pitt, large and liberal as they were, although encumbered with some provisions opposed to a really free commercial policy, were thoroughly distasteful to the manufacturers of England, and equally opposed to the narrowness of what in Ireland was deemed patriotism. The resolutions of the minister were carried by considerable majorities in the British parliament, but being passed by a very small majority in the Irish parliament, the bill was withdrawn. Whilst this measure was being debated at Westminster, Mr. Pitt a third time brought forward a bill for reform in parliament. His specific plan was to disfranchise thirty-six rotten boroughs; giving compensation to those who regarded them as property; to transfer

the right of election to counties and to unrepresented large towns; and to extend the franchise in counties to copyholders. The bill was not introduced as a government measure; and it was rejected by a large majority, as its author probably expected it would be.

Pitt, at this time, was almost exclusively occupied with a great financial scheme, from which, with more than ordinary complacency, he sanguinely expected the most wonderful results. He wrote to Wilberforce, "The produce of our revenues is glorious; and I am half mad with a project which will give our supplies the effect almost of magic in the reduction of debt." It was the scheme of the sinking fund. The public income now happily exceeded the expenditure, and it was proposed that the notion of an accumulating fund to be applied to the reduction of the debt, which was partially attempted by Sir Robert Walpole, should be engrafted upon the perpetual financial arrangements; that a million should be annually placed in the hands of commissioners, so as to be beyond the power of a minister to withdraw. It was believed that, accumulating at compound interest, with the addition of such terminable annuities as should fall in, it would gradually extinguish the claims of the public creditor. The plan might have worked well, if the minister had been debarred from contracting any new loans. For years the public had as much confidence in this scheme as its author had. It was boasted that "in eight years, Mr. Pitt's sinking fund, in fact, purchased £13,617,895 of stock at the cost of £10,599,265 of cash"; and it was proclaimed that "this measure, then, is of more importance to Great Britain than the acquisition of the American mines." There was a superstitious belief, long entertained, that the new sinking fund would, "by some mysterious power of propagation belonging to money, put into the pocket of the public creditor great sums not taken out of the pocket of the tax-payer." The delusion was manifest when it was demonstrated that during the war the debt had been actually augmented, to the extent of eleven millions, by the less advantageous terms upon which money was borrowed by the exchequer, compared with the purchases made by the commissioners who managed the sinking fund. A great authority in finance has put the whole philosopy of the matter in the form of an axiom: "No sinking-fund can be efficient for the purpose of diminishing the debt, if it be not derived from the excess of the public revenue over the public expenditure."

On the opening of the session on the 23rd of January, 1787, the king announced that he had concluded a treaty of navigation and commerce with the king of France. The negotiation was completed at Versailles, on the 26th of September, 1786. The provisions of this treaty were of the most liberal character. There was to be the most perfect freedom of intercourse allowed between the subjects and inhabitants of the respective dominions of the two sovereigns. The duties to be paid on French commodities in England were thus rated: Wines, no higher duties than on those of Portugal; brandy, seven shillings per gallon; vinegar, less than half the previous duty; olive-oil, the lowest duty paid by the most favoured nation. The following duties were to be levied reciprocally on both kingdoms: hardwares and cutlery, cabinet wares, furniture, turnery, not higher than 10 per cent. ad valorem; cotton and woollen manufactures, except mixed with silk, 12 per cent.; gauzes, 10 per cent.; linens, same as linens from Holland; saddlery, 15 per cent.; millinery, 12 per cent.; plate glass and glass ware, porcelain and earthenware, 12 per cent.

That the commercial treaty was not a failure as regarded the products of Great Britain is evident from the fact that the annual average export

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of British manufactures to France in the six years ending with 1774 was £87,164; in the six years ending with 1792 it was £717,807.

To Mr. Pitt belongs the honour, in this, the fourth year of his administration, of simplifying the complicated system of indirect taxation, by consolidating the several duties of customs, excise, and stamps. The duties required to be paid upon one article were sometimes to be hunted through twenty or thirty acts of parliament, each charging some additional duty, or making a special appropriation of the proceeds of a particular tax. The complication may be judged from the fact that three thousand resolutions were required to carry a measure of consolidation into effect. When Pitt had introduced his measure, Burke characterised the speech of the minister as one of extraordinary clearness and perspicuity, and said that it behooved those who felt it their duty frequently to oppose the measures of the government, to rise up manfully, and, doing justice to the right honourable gentleman's merit, to return him thanks on behalf of themselves and the country, for having in so masterly a manner brought forward a plan which gave ease and accommodation to all engaged in commerce, and advantage and increase to the revenue. "Thus," says Lord John Russell, "in the course of little more than three years from Mr. Pitt's acceptance of office as first lord of the treasury, great financial and commercial reforms had been effected The nation, overcoming its difficulties, and rising buoyant from its depression, began rapidly to increase its wealth, to revive its spirit, and renew its strength. Such was the work of Mr. Pitt, now no longer the minister of the court, but of the nation. The cry of secret influence, and the imputation of his being an organ of an unseen power, was heard less and less as the resources of his powerful understanding developed their energies and ripened their fruits." [e]

THE ILLNESS OF THE KING (1788 A.D.)

Toward the close of the year 1788 an event occurred of considerable importance in the legislative history of the country. The health of the king had been lately in a precarious state, and his disorder finally terminated in mental derangement. When the fact had been ascertained, Mr. Pitt (December 10th) moved for a committee to inspect the journals for precedents. Mr. Fox insisted that the heir-apparent had an indisputable claim to the exercise of the executive authority. This Mr. Pitt denied, declaring such an assertion to be little less than treason to the constitution: "Kings and princes," he said, "derived their power from the people; and to the people alone, by means of their representatives, did it belong to decide in cases for which the constitution had made no specific provision." The prince, he maintained, had no more right in this case than any other subject, though it might be expedient to offer him the regency. In the house of lords, the same view of the constitution was taken by Lord Camden.

Mr. Fox, finding that the principles he had advanced were generally disapproved of, then sought only to procure for the prince the full, unrestricted enjoyment of the royal prerogative; but Mr. Pitt had his reasons for imposing limitations.

The usual position of the house of Brunswick, in fact, continued; the heir-apparent was in opposition to the king, and on the usual account — money. The prince of Wales, who was of a remarkably dissipated and extravagant temper, had been allowed £50,000 a year, a sum sufficient, it might be supposed, for a single man even in his exalted station; but as the king himself,

when prince of Wales, had been allowed £100,000 a year, the coalition ministry had insisted on the same sum being given to the present heir-apparent; but partly from parsimony, partly from disapproval of the prince's mode of life, and partly from dislike of the proposers, the king had obstinately refused his assent. The consequence was that the prince got deeply in debt — a state, from which, as subsequent events showed, even the largest sum would not have preserved him. In 1786 he applied to his father for assistance, and meeting with a harsh refusal, he set about a pretended system of economy, selling all his horses (his coach-horses included), suspending his buildings, shutting up the most splendid apartments in Carlton House, his residence, etc. When this had been supposed to have produced its effect on the public mind, his friends in the commons proposed (April 20th, 1787) an address to the king for his relief. Mr. Pitt earnestly required that the motion should be withdrawn, as it might lead to the disclosure of circumstances which he would wish to conceal. Mr. Rolle used still stronger language; while Fox, Sheridan, and others of the prince's friends insisted that he feared no investigation of his conduct.

The matter alluded to was the secret marriage of the prince of Wales with a Catholic lady of the name of Fitzherbert — a fact, of which we believe at present there can be no doubt. Mr. Fox, however, a few days after, by the authority of the prince, declared that "the fact not only could never have happened legally, but never did happen in any way, and had from the beginning been a vile and malignant falsehood." The greater part of the house was, or affected to be, satisfied, and a meeting having taken place between the prince and Mr. Pitt, an addition of £10,000 a year was made to his royal highness's income; £161,000 was issued for the payment of his debts, and £20,000 for the works at Carlton House. The prince then resumed his former mode of life, and soon got into debt as deeply as ever.

As there could be no doubt but that the prince, when regent, would select his ministers from the party with which he had long been connected, Mr. Pitt, we may be allowed to suppose, from private as well as public motives, was anxious to limit his powers. The regency was therefore offered to the prince, subject to the conditions of not being enabled to confer any peerage, or to grant any office, reversion or pension, except during the king's pleasure; while the care of the royal person, with the disposition of the household, and the consequent appointment to all places in it (about four hundred in number) should be committed to the queen. The prince, though mortified, consented to accept this limited sovereignty. Had Mr. Fox and his friends been wise (which they rarely showed themselves to be), they would have snatched the reins of power at once; but instead of doing so, they interposed such numerous needless delays (though it was well-known that the king's health was improving every day), that the bill did not reach its second reading in the house of lords till the 19th of February, 1788; the accounts of the royal health were by that time so favourable, that the house judged it decorous to adjourn to the 24th, on which day his majesty's intellect had recovered its usual state, and the cup of power was once more dashed from the lips of the whigs.

On the 25th of February the issue of bulletins by the royal physicians was discontinued. On the 10th of March the commissioners who had been appointed by former letters patent to open the parliament, by another commission declared further causes for holding the same; and proceeded to state to both houses that his majesty, being by the blessing of Providence recovered from his indisposition, and enabled to attend to public affairs, conveyed

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through them his warmest acknowledgments for the additional proofs they had given of affectionate attachment to his person. The other subjects of a royal speech on opening parliament were then detailed.

Pitt had won his second great victory. In 1784, against odds almost incalculable, he had defeated the coalition with almost the unanimous support of the people. He had employed his unassailable tenure of power in carrying forward the resources of national prosperity by a series of measures conceived, not in the spirit of party, but with a large comprehension of what was essential to the public good. Another great trial came. He had to conduct another conflict, full of danger and difficulty, in which, fighting for his sovereign, he had in the same manner the support of the nation. Major Cartwright, so well known for his subsequent endeavours to promote a reform in parliament, wrote to Wilberforce: "I very much fear that the king's present derangement is likely to produce other derangements not for the public benefit. I hope we are not to be sold to the coalition faction." When the battle was over, George III wrote to his persevering minister that "his constant attachment to my interest, and that of the public, which are inseparable, must ever place him in the most advantageous light." On the 23rd of April, a public thanksgiving was appointed for the king's recovery. His majesty went to St. Paul's, accompanied by both houses of parliament, to return his own thanksgivings. The day was observed throughout the kingdom. Illuminations were never so general; joy was never so heartfelt. The minister, still only in his twenty-ninth year, had reached the pinnacle of power and popularity.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

On the 11th of July, 1788, the king, at the close of the session of parliament, said: "The general state of Europe, and the assurances which I receive from foreign powers, afford me every reason to expect that my subjects will continue to enjoy the blessings of peace." The differences with France on the subject of the United Provinces had been adjusted. On the 6th of September, Mr. Pitt exultingly wrote to the marquis of Stafford, "The state of France, whatever else it may produce, seems to promise us more than ever a considerable respite from any dangerous projects."[1] The "state of France" was that of a country in which the disordered condition of its finances appeared to render any new disturbances of Europe, from the ambition of the government and the restlessness of the people, something approaching to an impossibility. The "whatever else it might produce" was a vague and remote danger. Yet, in September, 1788, there were symptoms of impending changes, that, with a full knowledge of the causes operating to produce them, might have suggested to the far-seeing eye of that statesmanship that looked beyond the formal relations of established governments, some real cause for disquiet. The history of that Revolution is essentially connected with the history of England, almost from the first day of the meeting of the states general. The governments of the two countries were not, for several years, brought into collision, or into an exchange of remonstrance and explanation, on the subject of the momentous events in France. But these events, in all their shifting aspects, so materially affected the state of public opinion amongst the British people, that they gradually exercised a greater influence upon English external policy and internal condition, than any overthrow of

[1] A few months later the storm of the French Revolution was at its height.]

dynasties, any wars, any disturbances of the balance of power, any one of "the incidents common in the life of a nation" — to use the words of Tocqueville — even a far greater influence than the American Revolution, which was the precursor of that of France.

The time was approaching when those Englishmen who looked with apprehension upon the French Revolution, should be violently opposed to those who as violently became its partisans. The progress of this conflict of opinions was very gradual, but the tendencies towards a rupture of the old ties of one great political party were soon manifest. The distinctions of whig and tory would speedily be obliterated. Those who clung to the most liberal interpretation of the principles upon which the revolution of 1688 was founded, would be pointed at as jacobins — the title which became identified with all that was most revolting in the French Revolution. The tory became the anti-jacobin. Thus, through ten years of social bitterness, execration and persecution made England and Scotland very unpleasant dwelling places for men who dared to think and speak openly. Democratic opinions, even in their mildest form, were proscribed, not by a political party only, but by the majority of the people. Liberty and jacobinism were held to be synonymous.

COSTUME OF 1793

Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, from the commencement of the administration of Pitt, had been closely united as the chief leaders of the whigs. They had been brought intimately together as managers of the impeachment of Hastings, whose trial at the commencement of the session of 1790 had been proceeding for two years. Fox and Burke had cordially joined with Wilberforce, who was supported by Pitt, in taking a prominent part in advocating the total abolition of the slave trade, in 1789. On the 5th of February, 1790, when the army estimates were moved, Mr. Pitt held that it was necessary, on account of the turbulent situation of the greater part of the Continent, that England should be prepared for war, though he trusted the system uniformly pursued by ministers would lead to a continuance of peace. Mr. Fox opposed the estimates on the ground of economy alone. On the 9th of February, when the report on the army estimates was brought up, Mr. Burke proclaimed, in the most emphatic terms, his views on the affairs of France. He opposed an increase of our military force. He held that France, in a political light, was to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe. Burke held that, in this fallen condition, it was not easy to determine whether France could ever appear again as a leading power. Six years afterwards he described the views he formerly entertained as those of "common speculators." He says, "deprived of the old government, deprived in a manner of all government, France, fallen as a monarchy, to common specu-

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lators might have appeared more likely to be an object of pity or insult, according to the disposition of the circumjacent powers, than to be the scourge and terror of them all."

The influence of the French Revolution upon great questions of British domestic policy was very soon manifested in the proceedings of parliament. In 1789 a bill for the relief of Protestant dissenters was rejected by a very small majority. During the prorogation, the dissenters had agitated for the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts, with unwonted earnestness and considerable indiscretion. Some of the establishment were equally zealous in the encouragement of a resistance to the claims of the dissenters. Mr. Fox, on the 2nd of March, proposed the abolition of these religious tests. Mr. Pitt opposed the motion. Mr. Burke declared that had the repeal been moved for ten years before, he should probably have joined Mr. Fox in supporting it. But he had the strongest reasons to believe that many of the persons now calling themselves dissenters, and who stood the most forward in the present application for relief, were men of factious and dangerous principles, actuated by no motives of religion or conscience, to which tolerance could in any rational sense be applied. The motion was rejected by a very large majority. Two days after, a proposition made by Mr. Flood, to amend the representation of the people in parliament, was withdrawn; the minister, who had three times advocated reform, now holding that if a more favourable time should arise, he might himself bring forward a specific proposition; but he felt that the cause of reform might now lose ground from being agitated at an improper moment.

BURKE'S *Reflections on the Revolution (1790 A.D.)*

The sixteenth parliament of Great Britain, having nearly completed its full term of seven years, was dissolved soon after the prorogation in June, 1790. The new parliament assembled on the 25th of November, when Mr. Addington was chosen speaker. There was no allusion to the affairs of France in the king's speech. That the great events which had taken place in that country were occupying the thoughts of public men, there could be small doubt. Whilst the royal speech, and the echoing addresses, dwelt upon a pacification between Austria and the Porte, upon dissensions in the Netherlands, upon peace between Russia and Sweden, and upon war between Russia and the Porte, the national mind was absorbed almost exclusively by conflicting sentiments about the Revolution in France. A few weeks before the meeting of parliament, Burke had published his famous *Reflections on the Revolution*. Probably no literary production ever produced such an exciting effect upon public opinion at the time of its appearance, or maintained so permanent an influence amongst the generation to whose fears it appealed. The reputation of the author as the greatest political philosopher of his age, his predilections for freedom, displayed through the whole course of the American Revolution; his hatred of despotic power, as manifested in his unceasing denunciations of atrocities in India; his consistent adherence to whig principles as established by the Bill of Rights — this acquaintance with the character and sentiments of Burke first raised an unbounded curiosity to trace the arguments against the struggle for liberty in another country, coming from a man who had so long contended for what was deemed the popular cause at home. The perusal of this remarkable book converted the inquirer into an enthusiast. In proportion as the liberal institutions of Great Britain were held up to admiration, so were the attempts of France to build up

a new system of government upon the ruins of the old system, described as the acts of men devoted to "every description of tyranny and cruelty employed to bring about and to uphold this revolution." To the argumentative power was added an impassioned eloquence, which roused the feelings into hatred of the anarchists who led the royal family captives into Paris on the 6th of October, and directed every sympathy towards a humiliated king, a proscribed nobility, and a plundered church.

Six months elapsed between the publication of Burke's *Reflections* and his final separation from his party, involving an irrevocable breach of friendship with Fox.

THE BIRMINGHAM RIOTS (1791 A.D.)

In the debate on the proposed repeal of the Test and Corporation acts, on the 2nd of March, 1790, Mr. Burke read extracts from a sermon of Doctor Price, and from the writings of Doctor Priestly and other non-conformists; inferring from certain passages that the leading preachers among the dissenters were avowed enemies to the Church of England, and that thence its establishment appeared to be in much more serious danger than the church of France was in a year or two ago. The *Reflections on the Revolution* diffused this alarm more extensively through the country. The clamour was at last got up that the church was in danger. There were results of this spirit, which were more disgraceful to the English character than the violence of the Parisian populace in the attack upon the Bastille or the march from Versailles. It was a lower and a more contemptible fanaticism than had been evoked by the first call in France to fight for freedom, that produced the riots at Birmingham which broke out on the 14th of July, 1791.

Dr. Joseph Priestly, in 1780, became the minister of the principal Unitarian congregation in Birmingham. He was ardent in his political views, having written an answer to Burke's *Reflections*, and he did not hesitate to avow his opposition to the church, in his zeal to obtain what he deemed the rights of dissenters. But in his private life he was worthy of all respect, and in his scientific pursuits had attained the most honourable distinction. But even as a politician he avowed himself a warm admirer of the English constitution, as the best system of policy the sagacity of man had been able to contrive, though its vigour had been impaired by certain corruptions. He published, in 1791, *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham* — a work in which, according to Robert Hall, "the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered" which produced the outrages that we shall briefly relate.

On the 11th of July, according to a royal proclamation of the 27th of that month, "a certain scandalous and seditious paper was printed and published in the town of Birmingham," for the discovery of the author of which a reward of one hundred pounds was offered. This handbill called upon the people to celebrate on the 14th the destruction of that high altar and castle of despotism, the Bastille; but not to forget that their own parliament was venal; the ministers hypocritical; the clergy legal oppressors; the reigning family extravagant; the crown too weighty for the head that wears it. This paper, says the proclamation, was printed and published in the town of Birmingham. William Hutton, a cautious man, says that it was fabricated in London, brought to Birmingham, and a few copies privately scattered under a table at an inn. On that 14th of July about eighty persons assembled at a tavern, known as Dadley's, to commemorate this anniversary; and at the Swan Inn, some magistrates, and persons opposed to the celebrationists,

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met to drink "Church and King." There was a small mob about Dadley's tavern, who hissed and hooted; and there was another mob around the Swan. The dinner went off quietly amongst the friends of French liberty, the king and constitution being duly toasted, and afterwards the national assembly of France. After the company had separated, a rabble broke into the tavern in search of Doctor Priestly, who had not dined there, crying out that "they wanted to knock the powder out of Priestly's wig." The loyal company at the adjacent Swan huzzaed; and it is affirmed that a gentleman said, "Go to the Meetings." In another hour Priestly's chapel, in New street, called the New-Meeting-house, was on fire. This work accomplished, the Old Meeting-house was also quickly in a blaze. Doctor Priestly lived at Fair hill, about a mile and a half from the town. He and his family had fled from mob vengeance; but his house was destroyed, and his books burned with his manuscripts and his philosophical instruments.

The burnings and plunderings, invariably of the houses of dissenters, continued till the night of Sunday, the 17th, in Birmingham and the neighbourhood. On the 15th the house of Mr. Ryland, at Easy hill, was burned down, six or seven of the rioters, who had drunk themselves insensible with the booty of the wine-cellar, perishing in the flames. Mr. Ryland was a friend of Priestly—a man devoted to the public interests of Birmingham, and emphatically described as "a friend to the whole human race." On that day Bordesley hall, the residence of Mr. Taylor, another dissenter, was burned. The warehouse of William Hutton was then plundered; and on the next morning his country-house, at Bennett's hill, was set on fire and consumed. Five other houses of dissenters, whether Presbyterians, Baptists, or Unitarians, were that day burned or sacked. Justices of the peace sat in conclave; squires made speeches to the mobs, telling them they had done enough. The Birmingham magistrates issued a placard, addressed to "Friends and Brother Churchmen," entreating them to desist; for that the damage, which already amounted to £100,000, would have to be paid by the parishes. On the Sunday there were burnings of chapels and private houses in the neighbourhood of Birmingham; and then three troops of light dragoons rode into the town, having come in one day from Nottingham, and this disgraceful exhibition was at an end.[e]