LORD NORTH

1732 - 1792

REGINALD LUCAS

QUO NON ASCENDAM
CREDE PENDEREL
MARQUIS PENDEREL DI BOSCOBEL

ISAAC FOOT

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LORD NORTH

Charles James Fox.

Engraved by Charles Turner from a drawing.

LORD NORTH

SECOND EARL OF GUILFORD, K.G.

1732–1792

BY

REGINALD LUCAS

AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE II. AND HIS MINISTERS,' ETC. ETC.

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LORD NORTH

CHAPTER XI

IN TIME OF PEACE

THE year 1773 brought renewed rumblings of the storm that was to beat upon the Government of Lord North; but not to destroy it until the full fury had been endured. There were the tea riots in Boston Harbour, and the issue between the Home Government and the Colonies was no longer to be evaded. It must be admitted that from this moment Lord North's conduct laid him open to the charges of indecision and infirmity of purpose that were so plentifully brought against him. We know that he once told Parliament that he had not been in the Cabinet when the American duties were first imposed; that he did not approve of them, and was not responsible for them. Yet in 1769 he was one of the Cabinet that voted for the retention of the tea duty. Again he told Parliament:

'Would to God I could see any reason from the subsequent behaviour of the Americans to grant

them further indulgence, and extend the proposal to the removal of the other duties which it was my intention at that time to do.'

Of all men in England, Lord North was the most likely to refrain from taxing the Americans; even to repeal an obnoxious tax; for the sake of avoiding conflict. Grafton should be a competent judge, and this was his opinion:

'Lord North's abilities, though great, did not mark him as a character suited to the management and direction of great military operations. His lordship was formed for the enjoyment of domestic comforts and to shine in the most elegant societies: his knowledge, however, was very extensive, as was his wit; but he became confused when he was agitated by the great scenes of active life.'[1]

He was confused now. The King, after North had lost his favour, declared that he was

'a man composed entirely of negative qualities, and actuated in every instance by a desire of present ease at the risk of any future difficulty.'

In his Budget speech of June 15th, 1773, he made a curious confession:

'Though he was fond of indolence and a retired life, yet ever since he entered into office he had not been unused to contradiction nor unacquainted with storms . . . though those who looked into his conduct might perhaps see indolence and love of ease, yet they should not find a want of an honest perseverance in a great and public cause.'[2]

He was obviously liable at all times to surrender to this love of ease; but he was to be pushed or

[1] *Memoirs*, 303. [2] *Parliamentary History*.

dragged into action now. Horace Walpole wrote that he was 'overborne by the secret junto, not having resolution or honesty enough to adhere to his own opinion.' Dunning believed 'the noble lord was overborne by the violence of others in the Cabinet.' Walpole harped on this theme again and again: 'The war, averse as Lord North was—though more criminal by supporting it against his opinion—was eagerly pushed': and 'Lord North had neither devised the war nor liked it, but liked his place, whatever he pretended.' He certainly quotes two sentiments uttered by North in the House of Commons which appear strangely futile and show that he had not counted the cost before assuming responsibility for what was to come. 'Should we be defeated,' said he, 'we should but be where we were now': and, 'if we suffer from the war we shall at least have the satisfaction of making the Americans suffer more.' [1]

If one studies North's character, one is forced to the conclusion that Walpole was wrong. North liked politics and liked office well enough; but he never had any taste for prompt and bold decisions, and there is no reason to doubt that when he said he was miserable at the head of the Government he meant it in all sincerity. Nevertheless he was captive to the King, and his line of least resistance here was to speak the language of the Court. There was this much difference between the two men. The King was like a conscientious watch-

[1] *Last Journals*, 453–505.

dog, courageous, and ready to resent any sign of insult. North may be compared to a peaceful and well-disposed wether, goaded into a reluctant and ineffective attitude of self-defence.

Animated by the King, however, or roused to genuine indignation, North brought himself to a tolerably stout frame of mind. Even to Dartmouth, the colleague most prone to conciliation, he wrote as though he was resolved to use force if he were driven to it. The letter is endorsed 1774, without particular date:

'The fresh difficulties which every instant discover themselves of acting successfully against them with a Land Army make me wish to see some measure adopted on the efficacy of which we may rely with some certainty and which may prevent the bad effects which the too great appearance of lenity and concession may produce, if we resolve upon nothing but to send a Commission.' [1]

His attitude towards the tea tax was explained with sufficient clearness and detail in his speech of March 5th, 1770, which has already been quoted.

There is plenty of collateral evidence of a general impression that the Government was weak and that its weakness might be traced to its head. There was no strong hand to direct or repress. So, for one, thought the Tory Johnson, who communicated his misgivings to Boswell.

'*Johnson:* Our great fear is from want of power in Government. Such a force of vulgar storm has broken in.

'*Boswell:* It has only roared.

[1] Patshull House Papers: unpublished.

'*Johnson:* Sir, it has roared till the judges in Westminster Hall have been afraid to pronounce sentence in opposition to the popular cry.'[1]

Permanent officials were no better pleased. One Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office, Pownall, wrote to his colleague, Knox, at this time:

'Lord North's blindness, or rather indolence, in respect to the arts that are practised to ruin and disgrace our department and ultimately himself, is astonishing and unpardonable.'[2]

And two years later he can find no improvement. On October 13th, 1775, he writes to complain that Lord North has been captured by Eden, Under-Secretary to Secretary Lord Suffolk:

'As to measures for America I know nothing about them, for since I have been deserted by our principal, that business is got into other hands, and my friend Eden knows a great deal more and does a great deal more of the American business than your faithful servant. In short, my dear friend, our office makes a most pitifull figure and is most thoroughly disgraced by a conduct in Lord North that I cannot understand. Whether it proceeds from any personal dislike to me or from some fascination in Lord Suffolk and his Secretary I can't tell. . . .'[3]

In March 1774 North introduced his punitive measures, and this is how he defended his Boston Port Bill:

'The good of this act is that four or five frigates will do the business without any military force. . . . The rest of the Colonies will not take fire at the

[1] *The Tour*, August 18th, 1773.
[2] Hist. MSS Com., H. V. Knox Papers. [3] *Ibid.*

proper punishment inflicted on those who have disobeyed your authority. . . . If the consequences of their not obeying this act are likely to produce rebellion, that consequence belongs to them and not to us; it is not what we have brought on them, but what they alone have occasioned. We are only answerable that our measures are just and equitable. Let us proceed with firmness, justice, and resolution; which, if pursued, will certainly produce that due obedience and respect to the laws of this country and the security of the trade of its people which I do ardently wish for. Now is the time to stand out and to defy them—to proceed with firmness and without fear. They will never reform until we take a measure of this kind.'

Barré followed with a savage attack on the bill and on Lord North's policy. 'Instead of sending the olive branch you have sent the naked sword,' said he; and we are told that 'it was observed that Lord North trembled and faltered at every word of this motion.'[1] However, he was not going to run away, and he kept his tone high enough:

'Do you ask what the people of Boston have done? I will tell you then. They have tarred and feathered your subjects, plundered your merchants, burnt your ships, denied all obedience to your laws and authority. Yet so clement and long-forbearing has our conduct been that it is incumbent on us now to take a different course. Whatever may be the consequence, we must risk something; if we do not, all is over.'

It is only right to add that he did not convince everybody of his earnestness and resolution. At the time when he was making these brave speeches,

[1] Hazlitt's *British Senate*, ii. 112.

Sir William Meredith enquired, 'How is it possible for a man to derive strength even from the whole world if he will not know his own mind for quarter of an hour together?' And when North promised some American papers in the House of Commons, his Attorney-General disloyally blurted out, 'I never heard anything so impudent: he has no plan yet ready.' That was very likely true: but whatever infirmity of mind may have hindered him, he was endeavouring to deal in a practical spirit with the crisis from which he could not escape.

There is another unpublished letter amongst Lord Dartmouth's papers which adds testimony to this assertion. It will be remembered that General Gage had been in England, and had been telling the King that a show of force was all that was required to reduce the impudent colonists. He was now in chief command in America, and his practice failed to keep pace with his preaching. It also failed to satisfy Lord North who, if indeed he were drifting into war, was not ignorant of his destination. On December 18th, 1774, ex-Governor Pownall wrote to Lord Dartmouth:

'Lord North . . . and the Sol^{r} Genl . . . were clearly of opinion that the proceedings of Congress were criminal to a great degree and that the resolutions of Suffolk contained Treason and Rebellion in every line . . . The manner in which Gen. Gage writes and the Inactivity and Irresolution of his Conduct under the many circumstances he relates of actual Rebellion have both astonished and alarmed. Lord North thinks that some other

person must be immediately sent out either to supersede or advise and assist Gen[l] Gage. . . . I am totally at a Loss to account for the strange conduct of Gen[l] Gage which seems devoid both of sense and spirit.'[1]

Meanwhile North had other things to think about besides America. We have seen what trouble Fox gave him in connection with the Royal Marriages Bill in 1772. It was not an unreasonable measure in principle, nor uncalled for in the circumstances. George III. was essentially a domestic man; and he intended to be master in his own family as well as in his own house. His brother the Duke of Cumberland was a scapegrace. After being co-respondent in the Grosvenor divorce, he had secretly married Mrs. Horton. The Duke of Gloucester had secretly married Lady Waldegrave as far back as 1766. The Act of 1772 provided that no descendant of George II., except the issue of a princess, married abroad, could make a legal marriage before the age of twenty-five, without the consent of the Sovereign; or after twenty-five, without giving twelve months' notice to the Privy Council, and provided that neither House of Parliament presented a petition against it. This at all events appears to be the law, and so it is generally interpreted.[2] In the original bill there was to be no age limit. Fox by his resignation extracted this concession from Lord Mansfield, who was in charge of the measure.[3] A layman, however,

[1] Patshull House Papers: unpublished.
[2] *E.g.* Lecky, iv. 250.
[3] *Early Life*, 499.

must beware how he expounds legal principles. Queen Victoria once asked Lord Melbourne whether any one of the royal family, when of age, could marry anybody without her consent. The Prime Minister could not say: it was difficult to be sure of these things, he said. They had better ask Lord Chancellor Cottenham. She did: and his reply was, 'No, certainly not.'[1] We acknowledge the eminence of such an authority. We can only present the version which appears to be generally accepted.

There were others besides Fox who objected to the bill. One gentleman described it as a measure 'giving leave to Princes of the Blood to lie with our wives and forbidding them to marry our daughters.' Walpole says the lawyers differed, no one understanding it: also that North was not as firm in its defence as Mansfield. Conway opposed it; and North, to avoid his motion, 'chicaned on forms of making the amendment which took up time,' until Thomas Townshend called out, 'Let us have no dirty tricks.'[2] The King's brothers continued to cause North a good deal of annoyance, and apparently he in turn annoyed one of them, at all events. Walpole is never safe to follow when he writes of his niece's husband, the Duke of Gloucester; but, according to him, North could not be induced to risk the King's anger by pressing for attention to the Duke's affairs. He implies

[1] *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, ii. 45.

[2] Lord Holland told Lord Broughton that 'Tommy Townshend was the only person who could ruffle Lord North.' *Recollections of a Long Life*, iii. 249.

that North never liked having to do with the business. When he did succeed in opening negotiations, he carried his messages with such a poor grace that the Duke told Walpole 'he behaved as hoggishly as if he brought an angry message.' One communication North received on a Friday, and sent word to the Duke that he was going out of London and would call on Monday. The Duke was ill, and anxious about the fate of his family; but North was not going to be deprived of his weekly holiday at Bushey; and Walpole railed against 'such insolent impertinence, such inhuman carelessness . . . the brutality of such a message.'

It was not for love of the King's brothers, then, that North was shy of the Marriages Bill. He knew it was unpopular in the country: it was fiercely assailed in Parliament, and the mutiny and desertion of Fox shook, for a moment, the steadiness of the party. But their loyalty could endure a sharper test than this, and the bill was carried into law.

Walpole, in his vexation, has a parting thrust at North. His acquiescence he declares to have been purchased by a grant of the Savoy, or part of it, for the sale of which a bill had been passed—'corruption so scandalous that it ought not to be believed till the proof shall come out.' We need not believe it because no proof has come out. In no published account of the Savoy is any mention to be found of North's name, and no evidence that he ever had any interest in the property.

North at this time had considerable cause for anxiety as head of the Treasury. There was a financial panic. A banker's clerk named Fordyce had risen to the dignity of a banker on his own account. His spirit of enterprise was not satisfied with this, and he engaged in desperate speculations. Down went his bank, involving others in the fall. There was consternation: some of the sufferers committed suicide. The brothers Adam were amongst those whose fortunes disappeared. The effect was felt in Scotland, and the Dukes of Queensberry and Buccleuch gallantly offered their estates to the Bank of England as security for the Bank of Scotland. It was believed that Holland was going to make a run on the Bank. 'Thus,' says Horace Walpole, 'did one rascal shake the mighty credit of such a nation as Great Britain.'[1] And British credit was North's peculiar care.

In 1773 North brought in a bill for the regulation of the Government of India, of which the most noteworthy feature was the promotion of Warren Hastings, President of the Bengal Council, to be Governor-General of Bengal, which was in effect Governor-General of India. Thus he started the unhappy man on one of the most stormy careers that have ever fallen to the lot of a public servant. North's Indian policy was memorable for two reasons. On April 27th, 1773, he moved in Parliament to allow the East India Company to export such part of their tea, as was at present in

[1] *Last Journals*, i. 122.

their warehouses, to British America—a most momentous resolution. Apart from the financial proposals, involving a large loan, there were constitutional changes of magnitude. The tendency was towards the transfer of the powers of the Company to the State—a tendency that came to its logical conclusion in time. North's scheme gave the nomination of the first Governor-General and his Council of four to Parliament. They were to be named in the Act. When their term of five years should expire, their successors were to be nominated by the Court of Directors with the consent of the Crown. There was much criticism and opposition; and it is not easy to see a wide difference in principle between North's plan and the subsequent plan that proved so disastrous to Fox. Once more North showed an unleaderlike shrinking from responsibility. On May 10th he told the House of Commons that he sat there as a Member of Parliament: in that light only during the East India debates he desired to be considered.[1]

There was no national pride and not much confidence bestowed upon India. 'Who can believe we shall long retain possession of the Indies?' asked Walpole. It was, in a measure, under chronic suspicion. Clive, all his original achievements notwithstanding, was the object of many grave charges, and his conduct was at this moment subject to enquiry by Parliament. Men's eyes were always scanning the mysterious East in search

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

of new scandals, and Hastings soon found that he was not to be overlooked. In September 1777, a year in which he was threatened with dismissal, he wrote to North a grievous complaint:

'My Lord: It is a truth of which I beg you to be sure that I have no desire in these affairs but to acquit myself to your lordship for the past with perfect indifference for the future. If it be your lordship's wish and his Majesty's pleasure that I should remain in the administration of your government I shall accept your trust with a grateful obedience and an ambition above all other considerations to fulfil your expectations in it . . . but unless I know it to be your wish and his Majesty's pleasure, no consideration upon earth shall prevail on me to solicit it. I wish to approve myself a profitable agent to the Company, a benefactor to my country, and a good and loyal subject and servant to the Crown. . . . I will not suffer the remainder of my days to be embittered by needless contention.' [1]

Never was a resolution more vainly formed: never were man's latter days to be more obnoxiously embittered by contention.

North was not always a firm protector of Hastings, but it was upon the whole his opinion that he was a sound man. In October 1782 he wrote to Robinson:

'As to the recall of Mr. Hastings I am certainly of opinion it is a rash and ill-advised measure, especially at this time when the circumstances of India require in a Governor-General the most tried abilities and the greatest experience . . . and

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 29139.

when the last advices from thence have given the Company every reason to be satisfied with the late conduct of Mr. Hastings.'[1]

And six years later he declined to be one of the managers of the trial, pleading in excuse his own failing sight.

As to Clive, North had no settled opinions. We are told that he 'wavered from censure to encomium,' inclined towards indulgence; slept through most of the debate (1773); finally changed his mind, and voted with the minority against him. Even the censorious Burke saw no harm in Clive; but the King thought badly of him, and the consciousness of that probably came between North and his slumbers. 'Lord North spoke for the enquiry,' Gibbon told Holroyd, 'but faintly and reluctantly.'

The year 1774 was much occupied with electioneering matters. Grenville's Act for the trial of disputed elections was made permanent in spite of Lord North's opposition. It was frankly resisted by some on the ground that it made the art of manipulation a crime. Rigby plaintively asked whether it was supposed that voters could be induced to go from Lynn to Norwich without being treated to a glass of beer. An election without baits and bribes was beyond the range of the political philosophy of the Rigbys; and North was so far a professional electioneerer

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

that he could have no romantic sympathy with the purifying spirit of the Act. Walpole says he was a 'friend to the bill,' but gives no explanation of his vote. As an example of North's carelessness he says he opposed the motion, 'not having even taken the pains to inform himself whether it would be palatable or not.' North was in a minority of 122 to 250.

Walpole, who was much out of humour with him, goes on to say that he now refused to propose an increase of revenue sought for by the King: that he tried to postpone the general election in expectation of some vacancies in the Exchequer: thus he would provide for his family, and then slip out of office, leaving the new Parliament to deal with the question. This was probably the invention of his malice. As a matter of fact Parliament was dissolved on September 30th—the second occasion only, since the accession of George II., on which the statutory limit of seven years had been curtailed. If Lord North was unwilling to propose an addition to the King's income it was because he did not want to have another unpopular measure to answer for at election time. His followers had sufficient to defend and excuse in the Marriages Act and, in some quarters, his India Act. He had no cause for alarm, however; the country was on his side and his majority was re-established.

In one respect North could follow the precept and practice of his master, willingly and heartily.

They both found the labours of election agent congenial, and they were never too busy to attend to them. We can easily illustrate North's habit. We find him in 1770 writing to Lord Hardwicke that his lordship may command a stewardship to vacate the seat of either of his two sons, Sir Joseph or Mr. Yorke, but, for choice, not Sir Joseph, because he does not want to risk an election at Dover: he would prefer Mr. Yorke. He will, however, do as his lordship wishes. Apparently the object was to bring in one of them for Cambridgeshire. Some correspondence followed, and North, in spite of his promise to do as his lordship wished, insisted on having his own way; and Mr. Yorke was chosen. Next year North was anxious to oblige Hardwicke in another matter to make up for this: he

'regrets that there is no vacancy in the Lottery Commission, but he apprehends that a place at the Board of Hackney Coaches will soon be vacant, and hopes to obey his lordship's commands.'

Now in 1774 he had a long correspondence with Mr. Yorke, who appears to have found his late exchange unsatisfactory. In recommending various constituencies North says of one, 'you will not have a troublesome seat or be at a larger expense than 2500*l.*'[1] With Robinson, Secretary to the Treasury, he had plenty of business to do:

'Mr. Legge can afford only 400*l.*,' he writes: '. . . Gascoign should have the refusal of Tregony

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35424, 35370.

if he will pay 1000*l.*, but I do not see why we should bring him in cheaper than any other servant of the Crown.'[1] Cornwall was a great stronghold of borough patrons, and North looked there as to a natural recruiting-ground. To his other Treasury Secretary, Cooper, he sends a message:

'His lordship (Falmouth) must be told in as polite terms as possible that I hope he will permit me to recommend to three of his six seats in Cornwall. The terms he expects are 2500*l.* a seat to which I am ready to agree.'

These letters, and others which will follow in the proper place, ought at least to dispel the imputation of incorrigible idleness which was brought against North from time to time. He was in fact apt to be over-zealous in details, and there was more justice in the admonition conveyed in one of Eden's letters: 'there are many who think you charge yourself with too much business of little detail to find time for great superintending duties.' For he was like the King again in this; no burden of labour or anxiety in the strain of war time would prevent him from attending with jealous care to the disposal of the smallest piece of patronage in Church or State.

This leads us to inquire whether North was guilty of deliberate bribery and corruption. It must be remembered that he inherited the traditions of Walpole and Henry Fox. Parliament must be managed. Fox had been made

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

leader of the House of Commons in 1763 for no other reason. Bute's secretary, Mackay, in 1790, positively declared that the Peace had been 'carried through and approved by pecuniary distribution.'[1] The business of buying and selling boroughs was scarcely covered with a veil of apology, and in this North took part without scruple. The Grenville Act aimed at the suppression of bribery, but so far was the custom recognised that in 1777 the Newcastle Election Committee dismissed a number of charges, because the men bribed had always supported the same family and it was considered only natural and just that they should receive the usual price for their votes.[2]

There was nothing outrageous, according to the standard of the time, in North's electioneering morality. His dealings with the House of Commons require a little more consideration. When he became Prime Minister only seven years had passed since Bute and Fox had boldly bought their Peace. Could North be expected, had he any inclination, to cleanse the political system from such stain and taint for all time to come? Walpole denied the intention. He tells of two occasions on which North had to defend himself against charges of attempted bribery. In 1778 Lord George Gordon accused the Minister of offering the Duke of Gordon 1000*l.* to get him out of Parliament; and we are told that North did not deny the allegation. It is said that his object was

[1] Wraxall, iv. 663. [2] Trevelyan, iii. 207.

to exchange Lord George for his brother Lord William, whose politics were of a different complexion, and who would support the Government.[1] Again: In 1780 Sir Fletcher Norton, whose days of Speakership were numbered, declared that when he took office he was promised by Grafton that, on his retirement, he should have 'the best place in the law that should become vacant': that North had been privy to this; and that now, instead of trying to fulfil the pledge, he was offering a bribe to de Grey, Chief Justice of Common Pleas, to make way for Wedderburn. To make matters worse, he averred that Wedderburn would not pay the bribe himself, and expected the Treasury to find the money. If this were done, said Norton, he would impeach Lord North. North denied knowledge of the promise, and added that, in any case, he was not bound by the engagements of his predecessor. 'The dialogue degenerated into Billingsgate between Lord North and Sir Fletcher Norton,' says Walpole. Whatever may have been the truth about the negotiations, Wedderburn did in fact take de Grey's place. Norton did not think it necessary to impeach North, and found his consolation in a peerage two years later.

To Walpole's malevolent industry we are indebted for a good deal of gossip concerning North's determination to manage the House of Commons, not by bribery, but by an arbitrary

[1] *Last Journals*, ii. 261, note.

exercise of power. It was his habit to refuse any application for the Chiltern Hundreds if the vacation of the seat were inconvenient. He told a member in 1775 that he would never move for a writ unless it were for a friend. The member, whose name was Bailie, reported this to the House, and North angrily complained of his ungentlemanly conduct. In the same year Foley asked for the Chiltern Hundreds, in order that he might exchange into the seat held by his father, who was to be made a peer. North refused, because he wished Alderman Harley to succeed the father. Foley then asked Lord Harrington, his future father-in-law, to make him agent for his troop of horse, an appointment that would vacate his seat. North was quite equal to the occasion, and retorted with the threat that if this were done Lord Harrington would lose his troop. Foley then gave in. There was another way, less open and direct, by which members of Parliament could be attached to Government. The war loans could be allotted at discretion:

'Lord North,' says Sir George Trevelyan, 'himself admitted that, on a single loan of twelve millions, upwards of a million had gone in clear profit among the individuals to whom it had been allotted; and half of them were politicians who sat behind him in the House of Commons.' [1]

In the loan of 1781 Walpole says Drummond, the banker, had 84,000*l.* in his own name and treble in those of his clerks. And Wraxall says of it

[1] iii. 199.

that several members of Parliament got 50,000*l.*; seven got 70,000*l.*; and one 100,000*l.* Drummond, the banker, admitted that clerks were entered as nominal holders.

'Lord North, compelled to remain a passive witness and spectator of this disclosure before a crowded House of Commons, did not exhibit the dignified aspect and attitude befitting his high station. I never saw him apparently less at his ease,' says Wraxall.

Drummond's admission to favour is to be explained on the assumption that it was through his hands much of the money passed that bribed county voters, or enlisted borough-owners. Unhappily the archives of the Bank contain no State secrets. So far North was helping himself; but no charge lies against him of having put a shilling into his private purse. Here is a letter which testifies to his personal integrity, and which there is no reason to think insincere:

'I am sorry I did not receive your application for Lady Francis sooner, but I do assure her that it has not been usual for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give notice of an intended lottery to his friends, and that I had not myself in the last lottery, nor have I in the present, a single ticket. Whether I am doomed to the misery of continuing in my office another year I know not; but if I am I will venture to promise it shall be as little profitable to me as the two last have been.' [1]

He was not a reformer, and not sufficiently his own master, even had he been so, to abolish old

[1] *North American Review*, *cit.*

abuses: but he was an honourable man, and there was all the difference between feeding his party and being greedy for himself. It was hardly to be expected, indeed, that in the midst of his many and great perplexities and cares he should have embarked on an enterprise as far-reaching and, it might have seemed, as romantic as that of Don Quixote. This sentence describes the state of corruption in public life with which he would have had to deal:

'In 1782, when the change of Ministry took place, there was not literally a single office in the kingdom which was not worn out with corruption, relaxation, and intrigue. All the executive offices were sold to the enemy, by inferior persons in each department. The particulars of Admiral Barrington's instructions were communicated to the enemy within an hour after they had been issued from the Cabinet.'[1]

Before we leave the subject of Parliamentary management it is worth while noticing this amusing illustration of the ramifications of political patronage. In July 1783 North wrote to Northington, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland:

'The King was much concerned to learn that in consequence of prior engagements entered into by the Bishop of Ossory and Clogher, your Excellency is not likely to derive all the assistance from that Parliamentary interest at the approaching general election that you had reason to expect. His Majesty does not choose to have his name mentioned as interfering with any positive promise, especially when such promise has been

[1] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 226.

made in the favour of a gentleman attached to the Crown upon whose support in the House of Commons his Government in Ireland may confidently rely; but he agrees with your Excellency that it is an improper conduct in any Bishop so to hamper himself in engagements touching his Borough Interests as to put it out of his power upon a vacancy to comply in every respect with the wishes of the Lord-Lieutenant.'[1]

There is every reason to suppose that a General Election was an added embarrassment to North in his private capacity. We are told that his father lent him money for his expenses; but he required punctual repayment. What an election cost North we cannot tell, but twenty years after he ceased to be member, it was expensive enough. The sitting member was Dudley North.[2] In 1811 Francis, the fourth Earl, told Lady Glenbervie

'that the last contest cost him 5000*l.*, which he expected Fred North and the Bishop of Winchester (as next in the succession to the estate) to contribute to the payment of, which they have not done. . . . That he will sooner see Banbury at the Devil than incur the expense of another contest.'[3]

Meanwhile, the General Election of 1774 assured North's position, with the support of such electors as there were. As a set off, he had

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 33100.

[2] He was a descendant of Sir Dudley of Glemham. His mother married Mr. Long, who took the name of North. Dudley married Lord Yarborough's daughter, who survived him, and at her death left Glemham to the sixth Earl of Guilford.

[3] *Glenbervie Journals*, 151.

the experience to which the most popular of public men are at all times liable. He was shot at; but he escaped unhurt: his unfortunate postilion was hit instead.

On April 19th, 1774, there had been a motion by Mr. Fuller to repeal the tea duty; North had shown no disposition to waver:

> 'Convince your colonies,' he said, 'that you are able and not afraid to control them, and depend upon it obedience will be the result of your deliberation.'

In the Budget debate of May 18th he incurred the unexpected reproach of not paying off debt, the principle upon which he set much store. He made a long defence, involving a comparison with the finances of France. He admitted his unwillingness to raise revenue by imposing new taxes, and concluded with the accommodating assurance that 'when Parliament thinks proper to lay taxes, I shall not oppose it.'

In 1775 came the first of the fighting in America. It will be remembered that Chatham's conciliatory bill was thrown out, and that North passed one of his own which was to represent an olive branch held out to the Americans. He was, however, still halting between two opinions. In February he had carried an address to the King, praying him to take measures to suppress the revolution: he also passed a punitive measure to prevent the colonists of America from fishing in Newfoundland. This restriction was not popular

in England: moreover it was so far ineffective that it was not to come into operation for a year. It was pointed out that the only immediate result would be to drive the aggrieved individuals into the rebel ranks, if they were not there already. 'The Scotch faction,' says the merciless Walpole, 'were outrageous at North's indolence and were for pushing on the war with the utmost violence.' It is Walpole's charge that North threatened without preparing, and was actually instrumental in hindering the provision of an adequate military force. It is true that he still spoke the language of peace. To Burgoyne in July he wrote:

'Our wish is not to impose on our fellow-subjects in America any terms inconsistent with the most perfect liberty. I cannot help thinking that many of the principal persons in North America will, in the calmness of the winter, be disposed to bring forward a reconciliation. Now they are too angry, too suspicious, and too much under the guidance of factious leaders.'[1]

Meanwhile in Parliament he displayed a growing petulance. On January 23rd, 1775, upon a motion for reconciliation he asked how it was possible for him to foretell that the Americans would show resistance at being able to drink their tea at ninepence in the pound cheaper. In a second debate on the 26th he complained that

'the gentleman made a point not even of attacking, but threatening me . . . when that black,

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

bitter, trying day should come . . . he trusted he should be able to give a particular answer.'

On the Address to the King (February 2nd) he declared he had not meant to tax America ; and added that if they would submit to us the constitutional right of supremacy, the quarrel would be at an end. This, indeed, reads like a begging of the question : and no guiding light is revealed in his speech on his own conciliatory proposals of February 20th. He was for leaving the Colonies at liberty to contribute voluntarily to the alleviating of public burdens, reserving to Parliament the right of rejecting or increasing those voluntary aids at pleasure.[1]

We have learnt from Pownall's letter to Dartmouth that North was not ignorant or neglectful of the need for action ; but it is not easy to deny that war preparations were generally tardy. In August the King wrote :

'the misfortune is that at the beginning of this American business, there has been an unwillingness to augment the army and navy.'

Walpole says that on November 16th,

'Lord North, who was half asleep, owned that New York might have been saved if a few regiments had been sent in time.'

But if North had been the most aggressive of War Ministers, he would not have found his task made easy for him. On August 2nd he wrote to Eden :

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

'I do not see the prospect of raising (the force in Boston) to what is required without encouraging new levies, which you know has been hitherto objected to, not only from the War Office, but from a much more considerable quarter. . . . I am on the whole satisfied that their opinion is right who say that if America is ever brought to own the authority of Great Britain, it must be by the Fleet, but I think that a large land force is necessary to render our naval operations effectual . . . but upon military matters I speak ignorantly.'[1]

And in an undated fragment he adds:

'I cannot reconcile to myself how any political Lyar can be bold enough to publish false articles of capitulation.'

The employment of German troops was condemned without hesitation by the Opposition. Catherine of Russia refused assistance, 'not in so genteel a manner as I should have thought might have been expected of her,' wrote King George. On October 3rd Barrington wrote to North,

'There are no more troops in England than are absolutely necessary for securing the peace and collecting the revenue.'

It is not easy to account for North's implied assertion that the King objected to the raising of new levies. The absence of willing recruits is not difficult to explain. It was not that reluctance upon principle to fight against the Americans which held back certain distinguished officers. North at all events had no reason to be

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34412.

distressed at symptoms of disapproval amongst the people. There were public protests indeed; but addresses of encouragement were showered upon the Government. 'Lord North was as much surprised at the first that came up as we could be at Sheffield,' wrote Gibbon to Holroyd. The war was not yet unpopular: far from it: but active service overseas undoubtedly was.

North's own feelings were undergoing no considerable change. On October 26th, 1775, he told Parliament that if the proposal to repeal every American Act since 1763 were adopted there would certainly be an end to the dispute, for from that moment America would be independent of England:

'We are prepared to punish, but we are nevertheless ready to forgive; and this is, in my opinion, the most likely means of producing an honourable reconciliation.' Next day 'he confessed that indolence of temper which the honourable gentleman had noticed, and that dislike to business; but declared that he was forced into the post he now held.'

On December 7th he confided to them that he was but an indifferent judge of military operations.[1]

It must be admitted that he was not a sound judge of naval preparations. He had repeatedly declared that all was well with the Navy: but the Navy, in truth, was in a bad way, and we shall see that it continued to be in a bad way until the end

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

of the war. At Christmas 1774 it had been decided not to augment the fleet: in February 1775 an addition of 2000 men was voted. It is easy enough to blame North and Sandwich, but there were sailors in Parliament who must be given their share of responsibility. According to Grafton the Government in 1767 held to the policy of a two-power standard; 'constantly to have a fleet in forwardness equal to what both houses of Bourbon could bring forth.' But in 1772, when there was menace of war, two Admirals in Parliament, Keppel and Sir Charles Saunders, opposed an increase of strength. If Walpole is to be believed they confessed that as sailors they could not object; as politicians they would not approve. In the more sober pages of the *Parliamentary History*[1] we find the two Admirals reported together as condemning the naval administration of the Government on all grounds. There was no need for more men. And modern naval critics will be interested to hear that they committed themselves to the policy of skeleton crews: let us be provided with ships, they said; emergency crews could always be supplied by the agency of impressment. Next year Saunders is reported to have said to some members of Parliament:[2]

'. . . I hope there will be some motion made that I may go down to the House and vote against Administration. I shall go . . . to Ports-

[1] January 29th, 1772. [2] Chatham Cor. iv. 261.

mouth on Thursday and will hoist my flag and get into my ship and never stir out of it while I stay in England. . . . If I sail it will be war'—

than which it is difficult to imagine a more contradictory and suicidal state of mind.

Sandwich was now First Lord, and we shall hear plenty of his shortcomings—and a little of his merits—as we go on. He was of the extreme fighting party. In March 1775 he jeered in Parliament at the Americans as raw, undisciplined, cowardly men: he wished that instead of 'forty or fifty thousand of these brave fellows, they would produce in the field at least two hundred thousand': the more the better: the easier and speedier would be the conquest. And it was he that overruled Dartmouth, who was in favour of considering Lord Chatham's Bill. He insisted on immediate rejection. There was a good deal of discussion in those days of the advantages of having a sailor as First Lord. It may be that the virtues of the seaman are easily corrupted by the depravity of the politician, but it does not appear that naval First Lords have ever been conspicuously successful. Anson was probably the best. Howe was ineffective. Grafton had desired the appointment of Howe or Keppel instead of Sandwich: a dozen years later he was to receive this curt note from Shelburne: 'Duke of Grafton: I will fairly tell you that as to Lord Keppel, I should be happy to see him away from this board'[1]: a desire which

[1] There were perhaps additional reasons to account for this.

was quickly gratified by Keppel's resignation. Hawke was a failure. After his death, Mulgrave, in the House of Lords, deprecated excessive praise of his friend, who, he candidly confessed, was too great a seaman to be fit for the details of office work. St. Vincent said, 'I have known so many good and gallant admirals make a very contemptible figure at this Board': and his own record was not very brilliant. He was strongly opposed to a renewal of war with France after the Peace of Amiens, we are told; he hoped and believed that it would endure:

'acting upon this belief and on his own knowledge of the unsatisfactory and disorganized condition of the French fleets, he had carried out great economies in the Navy. He seems to have had a passion for economy, and in two years the expenses had been reduced by two millions.'[1]

So there was a civilian at the Admiralty, who uttered terrible threats, but made no proportionate show of strength. He was indeed embarrassed by a strike in all the dockyards during the month of July 1775. The shipwrights demanded an increase of pay and became so riotous that troops were required to keep the peace. Next month there was trouble amongst the sea-going men of Liverpool, which might have been relied on as a recruiting field: again troops were employed and lives were lost.

Meanwhile the Government were committed to

[1] *Life*, by Capt. W. V. Anson, R.N., 284, 301.

a war policy, with a navy and army or without. Grafton, who was becoming more and more estranged from Government, resigned in December, not without the King's approval. There were other Cabinet changes. Rochford, one of the Secretaries of State, was not comfortable in office, and he made way for the return of Weymouth, who was a favourite with the King. Dartmouth apparently was regarded as too much a man of peace for the times. He was offered the appointment of Groom of the Stole with Cabinet rank; but this he declined: and in the end he was made Privy Seal in Grafton's place. There was clearly no personal breach between him and North. He was at Wroxton in September, and the absence of his host was assuredly not due to ill will. On September 4th (1775) North wrote:

'My dear Lord,—I am sorry that I shall not be here to enjoy Wroxton in your company, but I have promised a great personage to be at St. James on Thursday. On Saturday I shall set out for Somersetshire upon a party, not of pleasure, but of business; and then for London, Parliament, and vexation. . . . My best compts wait upon Lady Dartmouth to whom you will be so good as to mention my concern at not seeing her all this summer. It is not one of the least disappointments which have lately fallen to my unhappy lot. I am, my dear Lord,

'Most faithfully and sincerely yours

'North.'

Dartmouth was succeeded by Lord George Germain, a man whose career was of the stormy

kind. Son of the Duke of Dorset, he had sunk the family name of Sackville when he inherited a fortune from Lady Betty Germain. At the battle of Minden he had failed to bring his cavalry into action at the crisis of the fight: for this he was tried by court-martial and broke. He was not a coward: he could fight his duel as well as any man. His conduct may have been due to jealousy, misapprehension, an error of judgment, or some other accident of the moment. But he was declared unfit for any further military employment and his name was struck off the Privy Council. So dark was the stain upon his name that when he was created Viscount Sackville in 1782 the Peers professed that their House was insulted by his presence. There is a story of a clergyman who desired to exchange his living because it was perilously near a powder mill. He sought the aid of the new Secretary of State, not understanding that Germain was an adopted name. To make his case seem urgent he unluckily protested that he dreaded powder as much as Lord George Sackville.

Germain was not a man of first-rate ability, although Mr. Lecky credits him with being 'an able administrator and a still more able debater.' He had a most difficult part to play, and at all events he displayed energy and courage. He was firm in his resolve to subdue the Americans, and thus he won the favour of the King, who in due course rewarded him by agreeing to the special

conditions of peerage which Lord George rather nervously requested.

Walpole's friend Conway joined in the secession. His habit of mind must have made him an uncongenial colleague to Sandwich and Germain, even if North could contrive to vary his tone, and hold terms with men who did not love the war. North's position was not easy or exhilarating, yet his good-humour appears to have been left unimpaired. It is true that Sir George Trevelyan tells of a dinner of the West India Merchants where 'his lordship, who generally affects to be joyous, was unusually dull.'[1] But this was a public dinner and probably the ordeal itself was dull. Gibbon, on the other hand, met North dining at Twickenham, and told his stepmother that 'if they turned out Lord North to-morrow, they would still leave him one of the best companions in the kingdom.'

At the risk of tedious repetition, let us again observe the attitude of Lord North now that his Government was fairly committed to war. We can repeat the extract, already given, from the letter of the Rev. J. B. Chandler to the Rev. Charles Inglis of New York (October 3rd, 1775):

> 'Lord North, however misrepresented and abused, has always been desirous of an amicable settlement, and were your leaders as much disposed for it as he and Lord Dartmouth are, the deadly wound would begin to heal on all sides before Christmas.'

[1] ii. 15.

On October 20th, 1775, North wrote to Grafton as follows:

'Your humble servant, and I believe I may add His Majesty's other counsellors still remain ready to agree with any province in America upon the footing of the resolution of the House of Commons of the 27th of February last: but the leaders of the rebellion in the Colonies plainly declare themselves not satisfied with those conditions and manifestly aim at total Independence. Against this we propose to exert ourselves using every species of force to reduce them; but authorising at the same time either the Commander-in-Chief, or some other Commissioner, to proclaim immediately peace and pardon, and to restore all the privileges of trade to any colony upon its submission. . . . I am afraid that declaring a cessation of arms at this time would establish that independence which they . . . now almost openly avow.'

The resolution in question was that which offered a compromise on the basis that any colony that undertook to contribute towards the upkeep of civil government and the administration of justice, should be exempt from imperial taxation, and only liable to duties for the regulation of commerce—these duties to go to the account of such colony. The conciliatory nature of these proposals had astonished, and for the moment alienated, North's supporters. His endeavour had been futile; but it had been sincere, and in his heart he cherished its purpose still. He was not for unsparing vengeance on the disobedient colonists: he would infinitely prefer peace, if it could be had on honourable terms. This is how he had spoken

in the debate of February 20th of the same year (1775):

'On the matter of taxation, although the Parliament of Great Britain could never give up the rights, although it must always maintain the doctrine that every part of the Empire was bound to bear its share of burden and service in the common defence, yet as to the matter of that right, and with respect to the mode of contribution, if the end could be obtained, and if the Americans would propose any means and give assurance of the prosecution of those means . . . he did not apprehend that Parliament would hesitate a moment to suspend the exercise of that right; but would concede to the Americans raising their share of contribution by themselves. . . . If the Americans would propose any mode by which they would engage themselves to raise their share . . . the quarrel of taxation was at an end. . . . Some gentlemen will ask—will you treat with rebels? I am not treating with rebels. It has never been said yet that all Americans are rebels. . . . There is certainly in the province of Massachusetts a rebellion. But, Sir, could I open the door even to rebels to return to their duty, I should be happy.'

It will be noted that taxation was here justified on the principle of common obligation of Imperial defence.

But North was subject to strong counter-irritants. It was not easy to escape the contagion of the King's fiery enthusiasm. There was beyond that the spirit of the nation. We have seen that public opinion was not unanimous. In February 1775 Lord Camden had written:

'I am grieved to observe that the landed interest is almost entirely anti-American, though the common people hold the war in abhorrence, and the merchants and tradesmen, for obvious reasons, are likewise against it.'

But Camden was a Chatham man and he held a brief against the war. North was undoubtedly convinced, and most probably justified in his conviction, when he wrote in May:

'The temper and spirit of the nation are so much against concessions that if it were the intention of the Administration, they could not carry the question.'[1]

Wraxall gives similar evidence in a different way. It was in its commencement a popular war, he says:

'Failure made it unpopular, but no influence of the Crown could have kept the support of the House of Commons if the nation had been really opposed.'

Lord Brougham cannot be supposed to have felt much tenderness for North's policy; yet he admits that there was firmly rooted in the country this principle, that

'no Government whatever could give up any part of its dominions without being compelled by force, and that history afforded no example of such a surrender without an obstinate struggle.'

This he condemns as 'senseless folly, but,' he asks, 'what more did Lord North, and the other

[1] Stanhope, vi. 103.

authors of the disgraceful contest with America, than act upon this bad principle?'[1]

Hear now Lord Morley, no more than Lord Brougham an apologist for North:

'George III. and Lord North have been made scapegoats for sins which were not exclusively their own. They were only the organs and representatives of all the lurking ignorance and arbitrary humours of the entire community.'[2]

Sir George Trevelyan probably goes too far when he says:

'Lord North himself at every stage of the protracted business hated war as cordially as did the leaders of the Opposition, and he had far stronger personal motives than any of them to incline him towards pacific courses. . . . Seldom had the chief of any Cabinet been less in love with the task on which he was engaged.'[3]

North was no lover of war: he would most gladly have avoided it: but perhaps Walpole was even more reluctant to declare war upon Spain in 1739. Moreover, North's political faith was not of a kind to allow of easy communion with the leaders of Opposition. His Tory instincts inevitably drew him towards the side of authority. He could never be as ready to yield as Richmond. He could have nothing whatever in common with the avowed anti-England frenzy of Fox. Inclination kept him, as a choice of evils, on the King's side. The practice of politics and the impulse of human nature deterred him from deserting his party and

[1] *Historical Sketches*, i. 82. [2] Burke, 78. [3] ii. 15.

abandoning his office. Lord Brougham, with something like a sneer in his candour, says:

'Is any man so blind as seriously to believe that, had Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox been Ministers of George III., they would have resigned rather than try to put down the Americans? If so, let him open his eyes and ask himself another simple question: What minister would ever volunteer his advice to dismember the Empire?'[1]

North's mind was not cast in the heroic mould of a Chatham or a Pitt. He had not the dogged obstinacy of his master. There was to be a day, if Walpole is to be believed,[2] when he could blurt out this confession of despair: 'I wish the time was come for my being abused for having made a disgraceful peace.' He certainly contrived to leave a lasting impression of half-heartedness. It is steadily asserted that he disapproved of the war and had not sufficient strength of mind to oppose it.[3] But that is to underestimate the force of his determination that if England could preserve her sovereignty and her declared rights by no other means than the rifle and the sword, then to arms she must resort. Here is his avowal after the fall of Yorktown:

'The war with America I admit has been unfortunate, but not unjust. And should I hereafter, as I am menaced, mount the scaffold in consequence of the part that I have performed in its prosecution, I shall still continue to maintain that it was founded in right and dictated by necessity.'

[1] *Historical Sketches*, ii. 140. [2] *Last Journals*, ii. 43.
[3] *E.g.*, Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i. 49; Trevelyan, ii. 25, *sq.*

At the close of 1775 North's state of mind is revealed to us by a letter and a speech. Eden, who was his guest at Bushey, wrote to Lord George Germain on October 3rd. His letter makes it clear enough that North believed that he was obliged to engage in war: also that upon the whole he had the support and approval of the country.

'The cause therefore is now (which it never was before) generally understood, and the heart of the nation is warmly engaged in it. The nation is at the same time so candid as to feel no impatience with their rulers for having in common with all the world undervalued the rebellion and only feels resentment against those whose designs appear so much worse than they were supposed to be. With such a cause to fight for such a nation Lord North looks forward to the event with full confidence of success though with concern for the harsh measures which must necessarily lead to it.'[1]

The abstract right of taxation he could never abandon. Short of that he would make any sacrifice for the sake of peace. But as things were, he was obliged to meet force to force. On November 20th, 1775, he introduced his prohibitory bills: trade and commerce with the Colonies were to be suppressed: all American ships and goods captured at sea were to be forfeit to the captors. In the course of his speech North told the House of Commons

'. . . that he should also be ready to repeal the

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

tea duty on the same ground that he would suspend every exercise of the right of taxation, if the Colonies themselves would point out any mode by which they would bear their share of the burden and give their aid to the common defence. . . . That this business of the quarrel with the Colonies about taxation was begun and prepared for him before he engaged in it as a minister ; that he took it up, not when it was a question whether it was right or wrong to tax the Colonies or not, but when they disputed our having any such right and at a time when this country was determined not to give it up : as he engaged when this dispute was actually begun, he was bound to see it through ; and if the Colonies, by appealing to arms, had made war the medium, although peace was the only point he ever retained in his view, he must pursue it through that medium : being thus engaged, he did declare that, unless the King dismissed him or a majority of the House, disapproving his conduct, desired his dismission, he would not give up the conduct of this business to anybody else.'

Thus we have the mind of Lord North at the opening of the war.

CHAPTER XII

In Time of War

IF North had ever enjoyed the flattering hope that in the post of First Lord he was to find an agreeable combination of ease and dignity, he must by this time have been finally disenchanted. We learn from the fact that in the year we have now reached, 1776, he fell from his horse and broke his arm, that he had not been robbed of all leisure or lost all inclination to take exercise; but it is evident that he felt the full weight of the burden upon his shoulders, and that he made a gallant effort to carry it so long as it lay there. Wilkes was moving for Reform in the House of Commons, and North wrote personally to his friends who controlled votes in Parliament to secure their influence.[1] He might pretend that the conduct of the war was no affair of his, yet we find him writing to Howe on a matter of departmental detail.

In June a second division of Hessians had been sent out, and the Prime Minister was not above considering their peculiar notions of comfort. He says:

'We will send out some more sour krout towards

[1] *E.g.*, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 33090.

George Washington.

the end of the year, but I am afraid there is some danger in your not being supplied with it in time as the cabbages will not be ripe enough to make it till the month of September. . . . Your army is I doubt now grown too large for us to supply it with porter in the same proportion that we did last year.'[1]

In Parliament his language was ever the same. The war was not of his seeking: it came of events for which he was not responsible. He was eager to end it on honourable terms; but he was not there to make a humiliating surrender. On March 11th, 1776, in Supply he told the House that

'whatever uneasiness this dispute with America might occasion, whatever consequences it might have, he hoped it would be recollected that he had not raised and had not disturbed the question. It was in agitation before he came into office. He found it there. . . . Governor Johnstone expressed astonishment . . . he instanced the tea duty. Lord North suddenly said, should he answer that? The duty was not laid on by him: he only carried it forward.'[2]

And on May 22nd, upon the instructions given to the Howes to seek terms of accommodation, he said that

'taxation was not to be given up: it was to be enforced. But whether at present or hereafter was a point of policy which the Commissioners would learn by sounding the people on the spot.'[3]

He could surely depend upon it that the Com-

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., American Papers.
[2] *Parliamentary History.* [3] *Ibid.*

missioners would find no solution by offering taxation hereafter instead of now.

In the new Colonial Secretary, indeed, North may have found occasional comfort.

'Lord G. G., with whom I had a long conversation last night,' wrote Gibbon to Holroyd,' was in high spirits and hopes to reconquer Germany in America. On the side of Canada he only fears Carleton's *slowness*, but entertains great expectations. . . .'

North was fully alive to the value of Canadian loyalty and security: in August he wrote to Carleton:

'Whether all or any of the Colonies do or do not return to their duty, Canada must be the main support of British authority in North America.'[1]

But if Germain's sanguine spirits were infectious, there was plenty of gloomy talk to extinguish any sparks of cheerfulness they might ignite. The Duke of Richmond was foremost in assuming the character of Cassandra. He boldly averred that the Americans were no longer rebels; they were resisting acts of unexampled cruelty and oppression. North would certainly deny this proposition; but he may have felt a nervous sinking when the Duke proceeded to this shrewd prophecy:

'The Americans,' he said, 'could never be subdued except at ruinous expense; and by continuing the war they would be forced into alliance with France. If subdued now, they would take

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

the first opportunity of revolting again, choosing a moment when Great Britain was in trouble.'

North was to be spared one portion of his heavy task. It was his constant and most formidable duty to match himself, with very little help, against an Opposition bench on which sat Fox and Burke. The strain of daily battle in debate must have been fatiguing alike to body and mind. Now the Opposition decided to protest against the Government policy by a general secession—a manœuvre which has more than once been carried out, and has never brought credit to the seceders nor inflicted damage on the Government. Horace Walpole becomes a more uncertain guide than usual about this period. He first urges the Opposition to secede: then exclaims, 'How mischievous this secession was!' and finally praises the 'proud obstinacy' of those who would not return.[1] He was far gone in hatred of Government and had good words for nobody but his friend Conway. To him he wrote:

'Whatever happens in America, this country is undone'; and, 'I would have come to town, but . . . I thought it would look as if I came to enjoy the distress of the ministers—but I do not enjoy the distress of my country.'

He cannot afford to buy a house in London, 'unless I do it to take some of my money out of the stocks, for which I tremble a little.'[2] He loves to pose as a friend of liberty; yet, when Lord

[1] *Last Journals*, ii. 92, *sq.* [2] June 30, July 31, 1776.

Stormont, British Ambassador in Paris, spoke of America as 'almost become a great and independent empire,' Walpole thought it most humiliating: and when North later produced his conciliation plan, he declared it was 'a day for ever ignominious in the English annals.' In fact nothing done by Government could be right. At the end of the year there were outbreaks of fire in the dockyards at Bristol and Portsmouth. A man known as Jack the Painter was arrested, found guilty, and hanged. He was proved to be acting under the inspiration of Silas Deane, the American agent in Paris. Walpole would not hear a word of conspiracy, or believe in the connection of the two fires. When this was made manifest, he could only abuse Lord Temple, who had been concerned in the investigation, for having 'entrapped and sacrificed Jack the Painter.'

To add to North's troubles it had been found necessary to go to Parliament for payment of the King's debts and an increase of the Civil List. It was in reporting these grants in the House of Lords that Sir Fletcher Norton, discharging to the full his function as Speaker, harangued his Majesty without scruple. In times of grievous stress, a supply had been granted beyond example, and really beyond the royal needs or deserts; King George must be duly grateful and more careful in future. So the Sovereign was told; and it is not difficult to imagine what he thought of it. There were others who objected to the speech as unwar-

ranted, and Rigby attacked Norton in the House of Commons. Fox defended him:

> 'Lord North,' says Walpole, 'was exceedingly alarmed during the debate and wrote several notes to Rigby across the House to beg him to submit, which though he did and asked pardon, the Speaker was stout and declared he would resign the Chair next day unless the House gave him satisfaction.'

North at all events had no need to shrink from divisions: in October the majority on the Address was 242 to 87 in the House of Commons, and in the House of Lords 91 to 26.

From one other care he was relieved. No man can give all his heart and strength to public life who is continually oppressed with domestic anxiety. We have seen that North was never rich. At this time he was so much troubled about money that the King's suspicions were aroused. He made enquiries of Robinson and received the answer which has already been given.[1] On the same day, September 19th, 1777, he wrote the following letter to North. It does credit to his natural sympathy that he should have paid heed to anybody's private affairs at such a time, but it will be observed that his feelings did not move him so far as to propose an immediate gift out of the increased revenue that North had secured for him from Parliament. It was to be subject to 'proper arrangements'; and in the end there was a wrangle.[2] Here is the letter:

[1] Vol. i., p. 12. [2] Vol. i., p. 125.

'You have at times dropped to me that you had been in debt ever since your first settling in life and that you had never been able to get out of that difficulty; I therefore must insist you will now state to me whether 12 or 15,000*l.* will not set your affairs in order; if it will, nay, if 20,000*l.* is necessary, I am resolved you shall have no other person concerned in freeing them but myself. Knowing now my determination, it is easy for you to make a proper arrangement and at proper times to take by degrees that sum. You know me very ill if you do not think that of all the letters I have ever wrote to you this one gives me the most pleasure, and I want no other return but your being convinced that I love you as well as a man of worth as I esteem you as a minister.'

North's affairs must have been bad and notoriously bad. On December 20th, Sir John Irwine wrote to Lord Buckinghamshire in Dublin, 'by what I hear, the poor man, his wife and children, are actually starving.'[1]

There was, however, another financial problem which not even King George could solve for him. North was Chancellor of the Exchequer and he must have watched the decline of national credit with something like dismay. In 1774 Consols had stood at eighty-nine. Before the fighting at Long Island in 1776 they were at eighty-four: afterwards, in spite of Howe's success, they fell to eighty-two. In October of the present year, 1777, they had fallen to seventy-eight. When the news of Saratoga arrived they went to

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Lothian Papers.

seventy. The final blow at Yorktown was to drive them down to fifty-four.

Meanwhile he was obliged to lay on new taxes, which he had always been anxious to avoid. On February 10th, 1777, he told the House that

'he had never said they had nearly subdued America. What he said was that they were in a fair way of subduing it.'

In his Budget speech, May 14th, he said:

'There was a great majority of the nation at large who were for prosecuting the war against our rebellious subjects in America till they should acknowledge the legislative supremacy of Parliament or be compelled to it.'

This was a variation on the right-to-tax theme. Legislation does not necessarily involve taxation. However, no notice was taken of this. Then he announced his new home taxes. Male servants were selected because of the great numbers that were employed in large houses. An additional stamp duty must have suggested an unpleasant association. Glass and sales by auction presented themselves as useful sources of revenue. Then he assured Parliament that France did not contemplate hostilities. At the end of the year, November 18th, he repeated this; and on the 26th he spoke of the friendly disposition of Holland. Again on December 10th he professed conviction in the peaceful intentions of France and Spain. And this is strange. He had little to gain by mis-

leading Parliament at such a moment, and we have already had his letter telling Eden, about this time, that his news from Paris put an approaching rupture with France out of doubt.

We have said that North was never at his best when foreign affairs were concerned. This year afforded additional evidence. On February 25th, 1777, there was a debate in Parliament upon the capture of a British ship by Spanish Guarda Costas. Captain Blair, the aggrieved mariner, complained that he had been kept waiting for redress five months. North answered in what may be called a non-Palmerstonian manner. 'In all the circumstances,' he said, 'he may think himself well off if he obtains it in five times five months.' Then we have this curious note: 'Here his sleeve was again pulled and set right (*sic*) as he was frequently in several other facts affirmed by him when up.'[1] It may be that he was moved by a forlorn endeavour to keep on good terms with Spain.

North was so good-humoured that he could stand a personal attack as well as any man, yet this is not the kind of communication that a harassed Minister cares to receive. It bears no date, but it seems to belong to this period. It is signed C. F.:

'My Lord,

'Betwixt a weak stupid fat headed mule of a —— and an Administration without either

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

understanding spirit or regard for the honour and prosperity of the country, particularly a drowsy indolent premier whose only talent lies in feeding with the most indecent shameless hoggish gluttony his own insatiable avarice—Betwixt all these and a most abandoned Opposition, in which I am almost the only man who has the least spark of real patriotism . . . the nation has been ruined.'[1]

The gentleman promises to write again and sign his name, but no other letters are forthcoming. North may have been shocked at the irreverent allusion to his master: he may have been justly indignant at the charge of avarice: otherwise the letter was only one more stone on the rough road he had to tread. But despite his good-humour, and despite the occasional comfort that met him by the way, his endurance was over-taxed and he was for a time seriously ill.[2] The nature and gravity of the complaint are unknown, but report, at all events, made the most of it. Gibbon wrote to Holroyd: 'Lord North is out of danger (we trembled for his important existence).' And Hans Stanley wrote to Lord Buckinghamshire on March 20th:

'. . . Lord North's illness has for very near a month past prevented any propositions of business coming before (the House of Commons). The attack has been a very serious one, and his recovery for some time but slow. He went, however, on Sunday last, to Bushy Park; and

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 36595.
[2] *North American Review*, *cit.*

C. Townshend . . . assures me that . . . he mends apace.'[1]

That it left him in a state of physical and mental depression is made evident by this letter to his father:

'*Downing Street, August* 16*th*, 1777.

'My Lord,—In the course of ten years' hurry and vexation, I have never been so hurried or so vexed as I have been for these last two or three months. Indeed, I am almost worn out with continual fretting. It may very possibly be that my uneasiness proceeds from my own faults, but the fact is that so long a continuance in a situation which I dislike, and for which I am neither adapted by temper or capacity, has sunk my spirits, weaken'd my understanding, impaired my memory, and fill'd my heart with a kind of uneasiness from which nothing can deliver me but an honourable retreat. I am sorry to say that I do not foresee the moment when that happiness will fall to my lot.

'To this state of mind and to a more than ordinary hurry of business, your Lordship will be so good as to attribute your having waited so long for an answer to your letters, and not to any want of gratitude, duty and respect, and affection, where I am sure I owe them by every tie, and where I trust I have been always ready to pay so just a debt. . . .

'My letter ends rather more pleasantly than it began, thoughts of seeing your Lordship at Wroxton have enlivened me, but my heaviness will, I fear, soon return.

'I am, My Lord, your most dutiful son,

'North.'[2]

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Lothian Papers.
[2] *North American Review, cit.*

He was not without reserve of spirit, however. Richmond was untiring in his advocacy of the American cause: 'I would sooner give up every claim to America than continue an unjust and cruel civil war,' was one of his professions of this year: but when he so far intimidated Suffolk, Secretary of State, as to extract a promise of papers, North in the Commons, though this was reported to him, strongly resisted a similar motion. On the other hand, his confidence in the military prospects was not sanguine, and on August 25th he wrote to Eden:

'It has for many months been clear to me that if we cannot reduce the Colonies by force now employed under Howe and Burgoyne, we cannot send and support a force capable to reduce them.'[1]

Again, on October 7th: 'The enclosed from Sir William Howe is very unpleasant and begins to make me rather uncomfortable.' Yet upon the same day he wrote to Knox at the Colonial Office, either to preserve an appearance of equanimity, or in a moment of reaction:

'. . . I am neither soldier enough or well enough acquainted with the country to reason upon the situation of the army, but it seems to me that if Sir Henry Clinton and General Burgoyne make themselves masters of the North River and Sir William Howe cuts off Washington from the Southern Provinces, Washington must, after a little time, be reduced to fight or disband his army. In either case I flatter myself that the

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

war seems to be taking a more decisive turn than I thought a little while ago.'[1]

To Eden again he wrote a curious confession of indecision on November 4th. The victory at Brandywine had been reported; not yet the disaster of Saratoga, although North's 'rather uncomfortable feeling' had already been justified. For the moment there was good news, and upon this the King's speech could be framed. Will Eden see and consult the Druid; whom it is no easier to identify than the Moses of other letters. . . .

'How shall we mention America?' he goes on, 'Shall we be very stout or shall we take advantage of the flourishing state of our affairs to get out of this d——d war and hold a moderate language? . . . My pen is wretched and I am very melancholy notwithstanding our victory. My idea of American affairs is that if our success is as great as the most sanguine politician wishes or believes, the best use we can make of it is to get out of the dispute as soon as possible.'[2]

All through the letter there runs an undercurrent of lamentation over his troubles with the Law Officers. Wedderburn wanted promotion. He considered that North had shown scant appreciation of his services and was complaining in private of ingratitude and neglect.[3] Thurlow was an invaluable colleague; but he terrified his friends as much as his foes, and North was never at ease

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34414.
[3] *Lives of the Chancellors*, by Lord Campbell.

with him.[1] 'I am in a sad scrape,' he wrote, 'and run the risk of losing their support and assistance entirely.' To this letter Eden, who plumed himself on his diplomatic talents, sent for reply the draft of a speech 'on the supposition of goodish news'; which indeed was not to come.

North ended the year in a wavering mood. On December 9th he received this gloomy letter from Lord Chancellor Bathurst:

'. . . My despondency has been greatly increased by the ill-success of this year. . . . You can best judge whether there is not great reason to imagine that France will soon make a treaty with Congress as an independent state, and then they are for ever torn from us and the West Indies must follow. With these apprehensions I own myself to be for peace on any terms.'[2]

Even Germain was failing him. On December 2nd the Colonial Secretary admitted to the House of Commons 'that if America was to be conquered by force it would be of no utility.' Chatham, with Shelburne to back him up, was still denouncing the war in one sentence and declaring against independence in the next. Saratoga had undoubtedly damped North's spirits. When he had to speak of it on December 3rd he could only repeat that no man from the beginning had more firmly wished for peace than he, and that no man would do more to obtain it

[1] *Lives of the Chancellors*, by Lord Campbell.
[2] Cirencester House Papers, unpublished.

now; . . . he owned he had been dragged to his place against his will. On December 10th Wilkes moved to repeal the Declaratory Act of 1766. Said North, propositions for treaty and conciliation might become necessary: the moment for making them would depend on the state of the war, the domestic situation, and the disposition of both countries. Yet there was the King to reckon with, and North was not ready, therefore, to concede too much. He announced his intention of producing a plan for treating with the Americans after Christmas, and added with rather feeble defiance that 'I trust we shall still have force enough to bring forward an accommodation.'

And all this time the cost of war was running up—'Forty millions they've spent for a tax of threepence,' ran a street ballad—and North had to think about the money. The charge of indolence and neglect of duty must be waived against him now at all events. To Eden he wrote on December 23rd:

'I was above two hours reading Wentworth's despatches last night after I returned from the Treasury, which I could not do till near twelve o'clock at night. I do not know what to think of them . . . whether there is or is not any wish for peace in 51.'

John Wentworth was one of the Colonial governors whose lot of late years had been that of affliction. Who or what was 51 we cannot say. 138 in the cipher is undoubtedly an individual:

whether the present reference is to Congress, a colony, or a man is after all immaterial.

From this time forward it may fairly be claimed for North that he was confronted by perplexities and perils numerous and grave enough to daunt the most intrepid spirit. It would not be easy to decide what was the darkest hour of England's history, for the long record is full of prophecies that the end of all things is at hand. But this was indeed a dark hour. The French had now declared their alliance with America. North wrote to Eden:

'*Downing Street, Friday.*

'Dear Sir,—The French Ambassador has this morning communicated the news of the treaty between France and the American Colonies. This will make it necessary to hold a Cabinet to-night. . . . The Ministry seems to me to be overturned. Adieu.'[1]

'The moment was one of the most terrible in English history,' says Mr. Lecky; '. . . terrible as was the condition of England in 1778,' he adds, 'the dangers that menaced it in 1804 were probably still greater.'[2] The Duke of Grafton, writing in 1804 of the passing year, said: 'At no period of my time have I ever known the situation of this country to be equally gloomy.'[3] He was an eye-witness of both periods and he supports this judgment. But Wraxall, another eye-witness, writing in 1815 says: 'Never did a deeper political

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 29475. [2] iv. 453–8.
[3] *Autobiography*, 14.

gloom overspread England than in the autumn of 1779.' During the last fourteen months of Lord North's administration, he declares, the state of the nation was worse than at the time of Bonaparte's threatened invasion or at any moment under the government of Pitt, or Addington, or Perceval.[1] Windham thought the end of all things had come in 1797 when there were mutinies in the fleet at Spithead and the Nore and a threatened mutiny in the Guards.[2] A recent writer names as 'the very darkest hour of our history' the year 1782, when provisional articles of peace were being signed in Paris.[3]

We are not exaggerating, then, if we say that North's burden was becoming too heavy to be long endured by any man not cast in the truly heroic mould. On January 22nd, 1778, he could only assure Parliament once more that this was 'a constitutional war, a popular war.' On February 17th he introduced two bills: one in effect surrendered the right to tax: the other provided for formal negotiation with Congress.[4] It was in vain that he declared that if conciliation and concessions were offered, they were prompted by reason, not necessity—we were in a condition to carry on the war much longer. His looks, if not his speech, bewrayed him. 'A dull, melancholy silence succeeded this speech,' we are told. 'It

[1] i. 318; iii. 317.
[2] Windham Papers, ii. 37, 50.
[3] *The Future of England*, by the Hon. George Peel, 165.
[4] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 12.

was thought that something extraordinary and alarming had happened.'[1]

At this inauspicious moment a quarrel broke out in the Cabinet. Germain was growing restive, and threatening to resign under the pretence of ill health. On January 23rd, 1778, he wrote to Under-Secretary Knox:[2]

'If I find myself unequal to the duties of my office, I trust I shall be relieved from it, for I shall be hurt to the greatest degree if the publick business suffers by my being in a state of mind which renders me too inactive and unfit for the office I now hold.'

He had evidently fallen out with Bathurst. On February 19th, North wrote the Chancellor a soothing letter deprecating threats of resignation. 'I cannot recollect any Cabinet meeting to which you were not summoned,' he says; and concerning some letter, which Bathurst complains was improperly suppressed, he assures him that it was in fact read to the Cabinet after Sandwich and Bathurst himself had left the room.[3] The Chancellor for a time was pacified. He writes several letters about legal appointments, all in the spirit of a good party-loving Chancellor: 'I assure you I would not do it if they were not both good friends to Government in the House of Commons,' he says of the two candidates of his choice.[4]

The expenses of the war made further taxes necessary. A tax on houses was added, and

[1] *Annual Register*. [2] Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.
[3] Cirencester House Papers, unpublished. [4] *Ibid.*

defended in one of those speeches which showed that North spoke with greater ease and satisfaction upon finance than upon any other subject. But, we are told, 'the gentlemen in opposition saw the taxes in a very contrary light and considered them highly oppressive and disproportionate.'[1]

On March 13th France announced herself as a new enemy to be dealt with, and North had to confess to Parliament that his confidence had been misplaced. There were doubtless many better qualified than he to conduct the war, he said, but he would be a coward to resign at such a moment. Then, undeterred by the exposure that had fallen on his assurances concerning France, he again pledged his word to the House that the Navy had never been in a better state than it was at this moment.

On January 18th Suffolk had communicated to the Cabinet a message from Lord Amherst, whose opinion had been sought, to the effect that it would not be possible to reduce the colonies by an effective war without an addition of thirty thousand men, and that in these circumstances the future operations must be principally naval.[2] On February 18th North had received secret information from France that there was so much alarm at the prospect of his conciliatory measures proving acceptable that the French Government were ready to confirm the new alliance upon any terms.

[1] *Parliamentary History.*
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

At all costs they were bent on preventing a reconciliation between England and her Colonies.[1] Such was the temper of the new-comers upon the scene, and this was a specimen of the counsel to be looked for from one who never wearied of finding fault with North's policy: 'What do you think of an idea of mine,' wrote Walpole to Conway, 'of offering France a neutrality? that is, to allow her to assist both us and the Americans?' North had introduced his conciliatory measures on February 17th, 1778. The right to tax was solemnly renounced, except for purposes of regulating trade. Commissioners were nominated to go on an errand of negotiation, with powers to offer to a people clamouring for independence everything they might demand—except independence. The proposals did him little good at home: 'I do not find that the world . . . are much inclined to praise Lord N.'s ductility of temper,' wrote Gibbon to Holroyd. And the Commission sent out with Carlisle, Eden, and Johnstone was, as we have seen, inevitably doomed to failure. Whether North had any faith in its prospects is to be doubted. To Eden he wrote about Lord Suffolk's letter of instructions:

'I should have thought it would have been enough to have said that we would never admit their claim to independency or consent to any negotiation with them unless they desisted from that pretension. But Lord Suffolk has given a very good reason for retaining the word sue, and

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

probably if the Americans are so far reduced as to make any overture at all, they will not be very difficult about words and phrases.'[1]

In one of his defensive speeches at this time he again repudiated the title of Prime Minister:

'He did not think the constitution authorised such a character. He stood responsible as one of his Majesty's Cabinet Council, but not as that animal called a Prime Minister.'

On June 14th he wrote Eden a curious letter:

'There will be differences of opinion,' he said, 'about the measures to be followed in Parliament, but my great concern is that no step they can take will give any reasonable prospect of peace. Independency is the avowed purpose of the Americans: they think they can bring it about and nothing less will satisfy them. We cannot propose it here; we cannot, I am afraid, be sure of preventing it by any exertion of force. I think that Lord George Germain will not let slip so fair and handsome an opportunity as L^{y} G——'s death, but I hope that no other person will follow his example. I will not run away first, but if my friends leave me I will not stay. If those with whom I ever act retire it will give me a much more justifiable cause of retreat than any family misfortune whatsoever.'[2]

It would not be easy for North to stand cross-examination on this letter. It will be seen presently that his denial of an intention to resign was not candid. His confession that it was equally impossible to grant independence or to prevent it, is a feeble confession of impotence. His admitted wish to get rid of Germain can be explained by the

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34415. [2] *Ibid.*

continued restlessness of the Colonial Secretary, from whom he had received another letter on May 12th. Lord George would like to have the Cinque Ports: if, however, North has any thought of the appointment,

'I can have no pretensions. When I consider my age I cannot expect to have health and activity much longer to discharge the duty of my present situation.'[1]

He was now sixty-two: but he had a large reserve of vigour. He showed no symptoms of nervous failure, and it may have been that North, with despair creeping into his heart, thought it might be well to get rid of one of his most uncompromising colleagues.

We have already learnt of the failure of the Carlisle mission. North, we may be sure, was not much surprised; but to such disappointment as he suffered were to be added some unpleasant passages with the Commissioners. Eden came back in a very bad temper. He admitted that they had done nothing towards contriving a settlement, but he maintained that they had done good in various ways by assisting and advising officers engaged in army organization. They had made great personal sacrifices. He himself was dissatisfied and reluctant to go back to his office at the Board of Trade:

'I own that seeing little appearance of a system for the year now commenced which should already

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

have been in great forwardness, I had better bear the acknowledged disgraces and distresses in poverty and privacy than in the affluence and bustle of confidence and office.'[1]

So he wrote in an undated letter, presumably at the beginning of 1779. In February he and Carlisle decided to move for papers. North begged him to refrain:

'Ill-intentioned men may make such a use of the papers as to raise unextinguishable jealousies and suspicions between Great Britain and America. . . . If you think us sinking, direct your measures against us personally without . . . mischief to the public.'

To this appeal Eden replies that he must go on for his own justification: otherwise his position will be invidious. Then North has recourse to first principles. Eden, who has already renounced further recompense by reason of the failure of his mission, is soothed by the grant of a pension of 600*l*. a year from the King.[2] In accepting this, he expresses a hope, in a letter carefully revised, that it may further be found convenient to confer on his wife the Deputy Rangership of the Green Park, or the office of Housekeeper at Windsor. And on February 19th he consents to withdraw his motion, if Carlisle agrees. It is noteworthy that both correspondents request the other to return or destroy these letters—and there they remain to this day.

Whilst we are on the subject we may as

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34416. [2] *Ibid.*

well go on to note that Eden remained such a comforter as Job had to endure. On August 25th, 1779, he wrote to North advising him to retire, if he was determined to do so, 'before the paralytic tendency of the present system ends in total ruin.' The party are disgusted, he says, but 'you are still amply equal to your situation if you choose to exert yourself.'[1] This letter is endorsed by North:

'In consequence of this he called on me on the 27th and went fully and frankly into the state of affairs—with what effect remains to be seen.'

Not with a sedative effect altogether; for in an undated letter he is at work again:

'As you took no notice of my late croakings . . . I must suppose you feel no relish for such impertinences. . . . There is not a man in the kingdom who doubts the extent of your capacity or thinks it not equal to the capacity of any minister who ever existed, but there are some who think that your personal virtues and gentleness occasionally check the exertions which you must know to be necessary.'

Let us go back a little and see how far North was misleading Eden when he told him in June 1778 that he would not be the first to run away. The truth is that he had already begun the futile struggles to get out of office that were to continue until the end. In January we find the King writing to reproach him for having made the suggestion. Years afterwards North said to the Dean of Westminster,

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34416.

'Year after year I entreated to be allowed to resign, but I was not allowed and was earnestly entreated to remain.'[1]

The last part of this is undoubtedly true. The King appeals to his 'personal affection for me and sense of honour.' Again:

'I am grieved at your continually recurring to a subject on which we can never agree.' 'Had you . . . real duty and affection . . . and sense of honour . . . would oblige you (*sic*) at this hour to stand firmly to the aid of him who thinks he deserves the assistance of every honest man.' 'Are you resolved, agreeable to the example of the Duke of Grafton, at the hour of danger to desert me?'

After two years of this North wrote to his father:

'I always hated my part and that aversion increases daily. It is very hard that when a man has no favour to ask but his dismission, he is not able to obtain it in two years.'

On this we must observe that in 1778 he did in fact receive a new favour from the King, whether asked for or offered as a bribe. He was made Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. There was no fear of the breed of true Court spaniel becoming extinct, said Shelburne, in the House of Lords, with all the venom of a party man.[2]

In spite of the King's protest, he was forced to consider a reconstruction of Government. In

[1] Donne, ii. 127, note. [2] *Parliamentary History.*

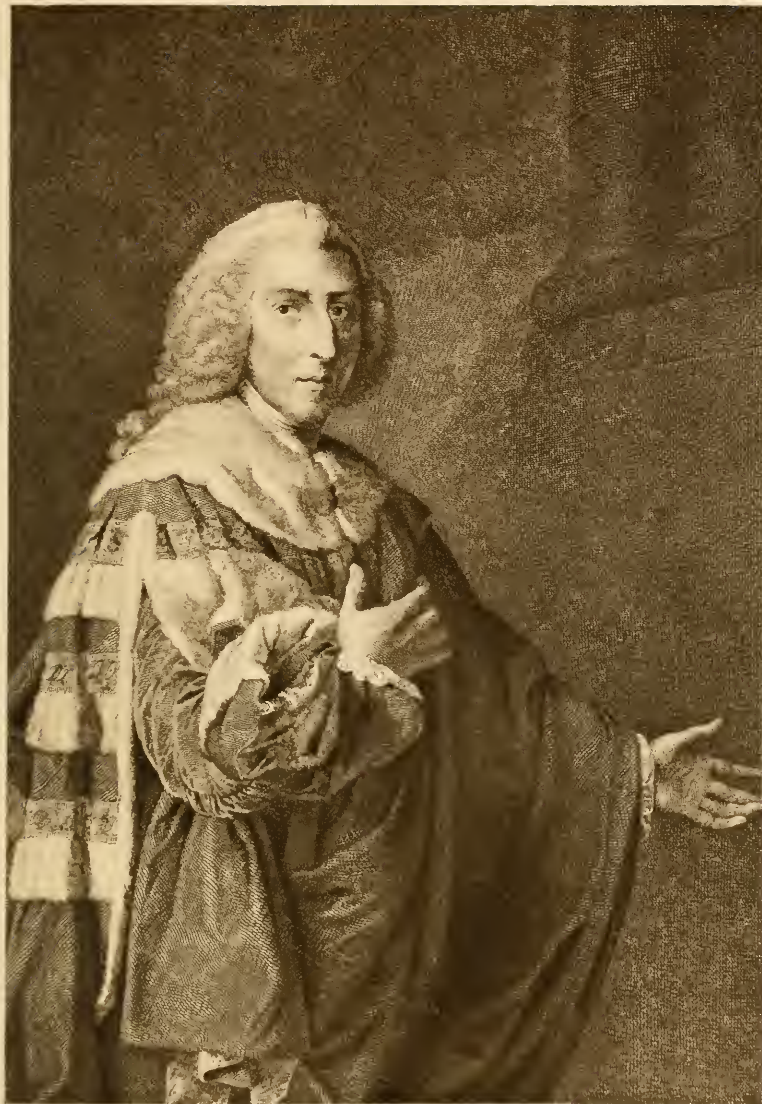
March 1778 negotiations were set in motion which are not very easy to follow and which led to no result. There was a general demand for Chatham. The King shuddered. 'No advantage to this country, nor personal danger to myself, can ever make me address myself to Lord Chatham,' he said —' or to any other branch of opposition,' he added, thinking probably of Fox. 'He would rather abdicate than be trampled on by his enemies,' he declared. And it was now that he gravely and repeatedly threatened to abdicate. Meanwhile, the irrepressible Eden was very active. He carried the message from Bute to Chatham which drew forth the reply that if the old minister dared to show his face, he should be impeached. And it ought to be noted that in November North declared in the House of Commons that there was no truth in the rumour that Bute was once more influencing the King and the King's ministers. Chatham in fact was not disposed to make himself cheap. Eden then tried his luck with Shelburne. Shelburne's terms were that Chatham must be dictator: Grafton and the Rockingham party must be included. Mansfield must go, and Gower and Germain. Eden ought to have been fond of Mansfield, who presently wrote to him:

'I think the confidence you are known to be in, as well as your own talents and knowledge of business give a dignity and air of seriousness to the (American) commission which I was afraid it would have gone without.'

It is doubtful whether Eden, with all his passion for intrigue, did not destroy what little chance of success may ever have existed. Walpole said he was a superlative jackanapes, who had been a creature of Wedderburn's and had been recommended by Suffolk to Lord North in 1775 to bribe members of Parliament. He was fit for better work than that; but he was attempting a task beyond his powers now. He did not escape the anger of the King, who distrusted him thenceforward. Shelburne the King 'disliked as much as Alderman Wilkes.'[1] To him both negotiators were 'perfidious men.' Chatham, we know, gave Eden a cold reception; but he condescended to go so far as to consider his own terms. He must have North and Germain turned out. As to smaller offices he was magnificently accommodating: 'he should not meddle with the dirty people of the Court: if the King liked dirty company, he was welcome to keep it.'[1]

Fox meanwhile was in communication with Rockingham and reported overtures from Weymouth, whom the King liked. Fox was eager for office on any terms so long as North, Sandwich, and Germain were excluded. But there was an immediate obstacle to the co-operation of all sections of Opposition. Shelburne, speaking as a Chatham man, 'would never consent that America should be independent.' Fox, as a Rockingham man, though not without considerable licence,

[1] *Last Journals*, ii. 244.



Painted by R. Brompton — *Engraved by*

William Pitt, First Earl of Chatham.

thought that 'the dependency of America it was impossible for us to regain.'

The King's conditions were that Thurlow should be Lord Chancellor. He had confidence in Thurlow. Weymouth he would have for Privy Seal. He stood out for a coalition; not an entire change of Government. He still insisted on keeping North where he was. Chatham would have a clean sweep made, or he would be no party to the arrangement. And so, for the moment, negotiations came to an end. On April 7th, 1778, Chatham was struck down in the House of Lords and on May 11th he died. On April 8th the King without any sentiment put it to Lord North, 'May not the political exit of Lord Chatham incline you to continue at the head of my affairs?' Probably North had not considered the question. When the House of Commons paid its tribute to the memory of the dead man, North told them that 'he would have troubled the House longer if he had had more preparation and was not so out of breath.' Things were moving too fast for him. And still the King never left him alone. 'Remember the last words you used were that you did not mean to resign,' he wrote on May 6th. On June 16th another letter shows that North had, nevertheless, renewed his supplication. The King was as tenacious as ever, yet he did not fail to speak sharply when a bad division in the House of Commons made him think his minister required keeping up to the mark. On November

2nd he wrote about a scheme for ensuring a better attendance of members of Parliament: 'This you promised to draw up; yet the week has elapsed without your producing it, and your aversion to decide would lead you to postpone it.' On November 14th he reproaches North for saying that he has neither authority nor ability requisite for the conduct of affairs: 'I have never had a political thought which I have not communicated unto you.' It may have been this merciless and incessant admonition that depressed North's spirits to such an extent that, if Walpole can be believed, he burst into tears one night in this month when Fox was attacking him.

Spain was now to be added to the active enemies of England, and unhappily England's navy was by no means ready for the emergency. North had been assuring the House of Commons that 'the Navy was never in greater strength.' Lord Sandwich produced flattering figures in the House of Lords: and in May neither ships nor stores were forthcoming. 'If a great fleet was not ready to sail at an hour's notice . . . your Lordship and the First Lord of the Admiralty ought to answer it with your heads,' said Pulteney to the Prime Minister in Parliament on May 5th. The ships certainly were not ready, and the indomitable King paid his visit to Portsmouth to urge on preparations by personal exhortation. The Government were the more severely charged inasmuch as it was alleged that they had long been in possession of the designs of

France and had deliberately concealed them, thus 'leading Parliament to measures of futility and public dishonour.'[1]

On both sides of the Atlantic the naval service was in a state likely to cause dismay rather than pride to the First Lord. Lord Howe came home vowing he would never serve again under a Government so neglectful and improvident.

'The conduct of the Admiralty,' we are told, 'was highly and very universally blamed; and it gave rise to the indisposition that appeared in the most distinguished of our naval officers to serve.'[2]

Nearer home there was trouble. It will be remembered that Keppel had allied himself with Admiral Saunders in opposing, as politicians, the naval preparations which, as sailors, they must have known were imperatively needed. Now Keppel was in command of a squadron in the Channel and in June 1779 he fought a disappointing and inconclusive action against the French off Ushant. Sir Hugh Palliser, his second in command, failed to respond to a signal and kept aloof, pleading that his ships were disabled. Horace Walpole was ready with an explanation. Palliser was no coward: his conduct was Mindenian finesse. That is to say that as Germain had refused to bring up his cavalry at Minden 'from malice to Prince Ferdinand, not cowardice,' so Palliser held aloof 'by order of the Trident-bearer.' Palliser

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 178.
[2] Grafton, *Autobiography*, 305–6.

was the friend of Sandwich, who was no friend of Keppel's, and the act of treachery was inspired by the First Lord.[1] The Duke of Richmond is said to have warned Keppel that the Government would sacrifice him:[2] and Eden told North that Keppel vowed he would never again serve under a Government which had endeavoured to take away his life and his honour.[3] But even if we admit that it was a bad Government, and that Sandwich was a bad man, we find it difficult to believe that he would devise so infamous a scheme, damaging to himself not less than to his victim.

There was a violent quarrel. Both Admirals demanded a Court-Martial and so lively was the excitement in London that the world of fashion migrated from St. James's to Portsmouth Hard. Keppel was acquitted with honours. Palliser was acquitted without them. The public had no doubt about the merits of the case, and London gave itself up to illuminations and rioting.

At the end of the year North had a passage of arms in Parliament with Governor Johnstone over Army Estimates and feathered his shaft with a resource of sarcasm that survives to this day. Having spoken of 'my honourable friend,' he corrected himself and substituted 'the honourable member.'

'The Americans,' he said, 'were suffering the most pressing calamities of war, domestic misery,

[1] *Last Journals*, ii. 318. [2] *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 360.
[3] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34416.

and political oppression of the usurped powers of Government. This would bring them back into the bosom of the parent state.'

Then, determined not to be only a half-hearted optimist, 'his lordship,' we are told, 'presented a pleasing view of the strength and resources of this country.'[1]

The year 1779 then brought no improvement. In March the Duke of Bolton declared that everything was at sea but our fleet. Walpole says he was assured by a sea captain that the recruits for the Navy were boys, old cripples, and the scum of the earth. If the French had actually effected a landing at Portsmouth or Plymouth, we read, they would have encountered but few obstacles to their further progress. There was a most disgraceful deficiency of arms and ammunition.[2] In the course of the summer (August 23rd) Government received secret intelligence from France of a project of invasion from St. Malo and Brest.[3] The Duke of Grafton had personal knowledge of an imminent descent on the part of the combined fleets.[4] Walpole told Lady Ossory that he had heard Lord North say at dinner on August 7th that he expected the French in a week. Sure enough they came. Before the end of the month the people of Devonshire beheld a hostile fleet lying unmolested off their shores. Several things com-

[1] *Parliamentary History.*
[2] *Life of Keppel*, by T. Keppel, ii. 244.
[3] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.
[4] *Autobiography*, 310.

bined to save the situation. The enemy wasted their opportunity. An easterly gale blew them out to sea: when this turned, Sir Charles Hardy, who had succeeded Keppel in command, took his chance. He had little more than half the strength of the allies, but he outmanœuvred them and covered the naked coast. Finally small-pox and putrid fever broke out amongst the enemy, and they were forced to get back into their own ports. 'I tremble at every letter from America,' wrote poor North to Eden in October. 'The situation in Europe is mended: the combined fleets have suffered exceedingly from sickness.'[1]

This lack of precaution can only be explained by the assumption that the Administration had collapsed and were not equal to meeting the calls upon their resource and energy. On May 17th, Lord Barrington, who had been succeeded at the War Office a year ago by Jenkinson, wrote to Lord Buckinghamshire of his late colleagues:

'I am told Lord North and Lord George Germain managed the debate so unfortunately, that even their warmest and best friends supported them with great reluctance and openly blamed their conduct. Happily for the Ministry the Opposition is so universally detested and feared, that they find a support in the nation, to which they are not entitled but from *comparison*.'[2]

This letter probably refers to the debate of May 13th—the last that had taken place—when

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34416. [2] Hist. MSS. Com., Lothian Papers.

Fox moved for a copy of the Court-Martial on Palliser.

Walpole says that in 1777 Government had announced an agreement with France and Spain for a reduction of armaments to the extent of eight ships each.[1] The offer seemed fallacious, he observes. France was responsible for it, believing that she would still be the strongest Power at sea. If England was lulled into security by this dangerous policy, the awakening was not long delayed. The ports and dockyards had been entirely neglected; and when the moment of danger came, so North told Thurlow,

> 'it was currently believed that there was neither powder nor match nor scoops nor rammers nor sponges for the ordnance, and that the carriages were so rotten that they broke down under the cannon as they were removed.'

The ships of the fleet had to supply such help as they could afford. 'Opposition will press for an enquiry,' said North, 'but I will endeavour to prevent it to the utmost of my power.'[2]

One man was strangely complacent; and that was the King:

> 'As to Lord Sandwich,' he wrote to Thurlow, 'whatever his private failings may be, I know no man so fit for his Department: he has now got out the finest fleet this country ever possessed.'[3]

Sandwich was a much-abused man and we have heard something of his private failings in connection

[1] *Last Journals*, ii. 113. [2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2232. [3] *Ibid.*

with Wilkes. Nobody feared to accuse him of gross misconduct. Sir Charles Pigot in the House of Commons declared that Sandwich had refused his application for employment, because he would not promise in return to use his influence at the India House on behalf of one of the First Lord's friends, who was under prosecution for having arrested and confined Lord Pigot, the Governor of Madras.[1] Such was the esteem in which his enemies held, or professed to hold him. The old Medmenham monk had not indeed become an ascetic after all. It is alleged that when the news of the Ushant fight arrived, the First Lord was nowhere to be found: he was away fishing with friends and ladies of pleasure at Newbury.[2] But Sandwich was not without defenders even in his own day. Walpole sneeringly admits his energy: 'his industry to carry a point,' he says, 'was so remarkable that the world mistook it for abilities.' Wraxall makes a handsome apology for him. He found nothing ready, or getting ready, when he came into office: he made great efforts and did succeed in repairing the dilapidated state of the navy: to his exertions were due the happier achievements of Rodney:[3] but he was unfortunate in his selection and management of officers. He had 'energy, industry, enlargement of mind and variety of talent,' says Wraxall.[4] And he had admirers amongst the public. The men of Bristol

[1] Wraxall, ii. 507. [2] Trevelyan, v. 186.

[3] For denial of this claim see Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 93, 189. [4] ii. 477.

were accustomed to form their own opinions and express them boldly; and they voted him the freedom of their city—as a reward for prosecuting Jack the Painter, was the jibe of Burke, who was already out of love with his constituents. And Sandwich was under no misapprehension as to how he stood with Parliament. As his term of office drew to a close he wrote to Robinson (December 13th, 1781):

'I am clear in my opinion that it is my duty to court an enquiry into naval affairs, unless'—he adds in a less heroic tone—'there is a party among Lord North's supposed friends who have formed connections adverse to me.'[1]

With regard to the land forces, North was bestirring himself. On June 21st, 1779, he brought in and carried a motion for doubling the militia. In spite of the dismal reports that he had lately had from Barrington upon the absence of military resources, he was ready to make a reassuring statement. The Opposition plainly charged the Government with treachery and corruption. Townshend began: and North at once challenged him to make specific accusations. Before he had done he made some personal confessions that are worth noting.

'He for one could with the most perfect consciousness of innocence lay his hand upon his heart and declare that he knew not to what the hon. gentleman alluded. . . . There were at present in the kingdom 71,000 land forces of whom 63,000

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

were effective men. This was a larger number than had ever been known to be within the Kingdom on any former occasion; and it was intended to double the number of the militia. . . . The business would not admit of delay. France and America were in confederacy, and Spain in arms against Great Britain. He could not say whether Spain had signed a treaty with America or not [Mr. Fox said across the House "The treaty between America and Spain is signed"]; there was therefore not a moment to be lost. . . . Mr. Sawbridge presently said in the course of his speech that he should insult the noble lord were he to declare that anything short of treachery, or something greater than incapacity, could have been the acting cause to goad the noble lord to pursue that ruinous course, which he had at last brought to so fatal an issue, after having been so often warned of the impolicy of the measures he was pursuing.

'Lord North, rising for the third time, apologized for speaking again; but something had dropped from the hon. gentleman who spoke last which rendered it necessary that he should not go out of the House without saying a word or two respecting it. The hon. gentleman had thought proper to reiterate the charge made upon him by another gentleman on the score of treachery and corruption; but neither of the hon. gentlemen had mentioned any one circumstance that tended in the smallest degree to substantiate the charge or bring it home to any individual member of administration. . . . The moment he heard the charge, it struck him as a most serious one: that if there really was such a wretch in the cabinet as a traitor, those counsels ought instantly to be purged of treachery and corruption . . . and the person . . . dragged forth to public infamy. With regard to what the hon. gentleman had been pleased to say

of him personally all he should reply was, that when it was thought necessary to examine his conduct, he was ready to enter into the examination and to answer for every piece of advice he had given his Majesty or any one measure that he had supported. He desired in the meantime that it might be recollected, he never had pretended to be the prime minister, and had only acted as one member of the cabinet: not that he said this by way of evasion: he meant to evade nothing but the charge of presumption of his being prime minister, a presumption which he had never assumed and which therefore he ought not to be charged with. He held himself answerable to his country . . . nor could he see any the least reason to dread an enquiry. . . . The hon. gentleman had attacked him on his activity to acquire reversions and emoluments. . . . He had been in a most laborious and very expensive office for twelve years without asking for a single emolument. . . . Last year his Majesty was graciously pleased . . . to present him with . . . the Cinque Ports. He accepted it: but it was well known that he refused to accept it with the lucrative salary which the noble person who held it before him received, and expressly at his own desire received the lower salary, which had been paid previous to the office having been bestowed on his predecessor. He really did not know what the income of it was exactly, because he had not enquired what it was, but he believed about 1000*l.* a year. . . . Another charge of rapaciousness was that he had procured a reversionship for the lives of two of his sons in the Customs. The charge was not true that he had sought the reversionship though it was true that he had accepted it. . . . It was the very same that had been given to Mr. Pelham. . . . It would be worth 1000*l.* a year. . . . The third benefit his family had received was a place . . . of so trifling

value that several of his predecessors thought it beneath acceptance. The place was worth 500*l.* a year and . . . his son had, with the consent of his brethren at the board, been appointed to it. . . . This was all. . . . He was ready to resign his wardenship of the Cinque Ports; and when he went out of office (which he assured the hon. gentleman he was and had long been as desirous of quitting as he could possibly be of having him dismissed) after his twelve years laborious service his family would rest in possession of 1500*l.* . . . the whole he was in possession of for . . . a pretty numerous family. [At these words his lordship struck his breast and burst out into a flood of tears, probably from the casual recollection that one of his sons lay dead at this moment. The House, touched at this circumstance, called for the question, but his lordship, recovering himself, desired leave to go on.] . . . Naked he came into the world, naked he would go out of it. He was not a rich man when he was first appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, he should not go out of his office a rich man. . . . He wished that gentlemen, instead of personality and invective, would unite in the service of the kingdom and join hand and heart in endeavouring to render the insidious efforts of the House of Bourbon against this country nugatory, and to punish her for her perfidy.'[1]

The son in question was Dudley, a child of two. North's vagueness about the salary of the Lord Wardenship suggests a lack of method in his domestic arrangements. In a letter dated June 7th, 1774, the King writes of this salary 'as you choose it should not exceed 1500*l.* a year': but all accounts agree in giving North's interest at

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

1000*l.* It will be seen later that when North did retire he had a better income than 1500*l.* a year.

It must not be supposed that Parliament was engaged upon the conduct of war, and the persecution of North, to the exclusion of all other business. In 1778 Savile's bill for the relief of Roman Catholics had been passed. Now Ireland was to have her turn.

North took an active interest in Irish affairs and attended to Irish government himself.[1] In 1778 he gave his blessing to the proposals of Nugent and Burke for relaxing the restrictions upon her trade. It was for gallantly defending these proposals that Burke fell out with his Bristol constituents. 'Bristol and Liverpool clamoured and made an outcry like a shorn hog.'[2] The Duke of Bridgewater and Lord Derby, who thought their properties and canals were going to be injuriously affected, joined in the chorus.[3] North gave way before the storm, but two years later he was able to carry larger concessions: whether on his voluntary motion, or by reason of the growing force of the public spirit of Ireland, is matter for debate. He undoubtedly thought that Irishmen were apt to be voracious and exacting. Of Hely-Hutchinson, father of the first Lord Donoughmore, he told the King that 'if England and Ireland were given to this man, he would solicit the Isle of Man for a potato garden.'

[1] *The End of the Irish Parliament*, J. R. Fisher, 91.
[2] *Ibid.* quoted, 115. [3] *Last Journals*, ii. 266.

In truth it was time that some concessions were made. Ireland had long been in the plight of the 'shorn hog.' Apart from rigid commercial restrictions, it was an established custom from the resources of Ireland to cut and come again, when pensions and rewards were required. The Queen of Denmark drew on the Irish exchequer for 3000*l.* a year. When Townshend quitted the Castle he settled on his wife's dresser a pension of 100*l.* a year from Irish funds. Walpole speaks of 8000*l.* a year being charged for pensions to English members of Parliament. Part of the settlement on the Duke of Gloucester's children was an Irish charge. When Rochford ceased to be Secretary of State in 1775, he took an Irish pension of 2500*l.* and asked the Lord-Lieutenant for some sinecure place for his butler, 'our old friend who has poured you out many a glass of good burgundy.' Shelburne held generous views on Irish questions. He visited the south-west parts and found the land sub-let until the actual occupier was 'little removed from brute creation. . . . I found a considerable tenant letting his land in ounces (*duodecima pars jugeri*).' Yet he justified the Irish pensions of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick and Sir E. Hawke on the ground that they had saved Ireland from invasion.[1] 'Ireland,' says Lord Morley, in connection with Burke, 'has furnished the chief ordeal, test, and standard of English statesmanship':[2] yet Burke took a pension of 300*l.* when it was offered

[1] *Life*, i. 355. [2] *Burke*, Morley, 22.

to him by Gerard Hamilton. The limit, however, could be reached. When a faithful politician, Jeremiah Dyson, was granted 500*l.* for life and for the lives of three sons to follow, the Irish Parliament rebelled and struck out the vote.

In 1773 had been introduced the Absentee Tax. North was anxious to pass it, but Opposition was too strong. Devonshire, Rockingham, Bessborough, Milton, and Ossory presented him with a protest. Chatham approved of the measure, and Shelburne, deferring to him, waived his personal interest and refused to sign. Rockingham's fine Tory sentiment on the occasion has been quoted elsewhere. He further pointed out that the King might, if motive were given, put them at the mercy of Government by issuing a writ of *ne exeat regno.* The peers made it their ground that they could serve Ireland better by watching her interests in London. Looking back now we should be inclined to say that their most reasonable objection was to be found in the difficulty of making many journeys to and fro. The Irish Parliament threw out the Bill by 106 to 20, either because the Viceroy received a hint that it was the easiest way out of a difficulty,[1] or because they were of opinion that any new taxes that might be imposed would in the end be extracted from the pockets of the tenants.[2] If we accept the explanation that this was North's way of saving his face with the English Parliament, we must recall what Wraxall said of him : 'Lord

[1] J. R. Fisher, 93. [2] *Life of Shelburne*, i. 460.

North, with whom not to be defeated constituted a sort of victory, and who generally contented himself with half triumphs.' Of this episode Sir George Trevelyan writes, 'The rich Whig proprietors were deeply moved; and on this occasion they showed no want of vigour and alacrity.' And it may be that inability to combine the desires and efforts of the Irish people in concerted action had been largely responsible for the afflictions they had had to bear. George III. once made a shrewd observation:

'I never knew one Scotchman speak ill of another unless he had reason for it; but I never knew one Irishman speak well of another unless he had reason for it.'

Crèvecour in *Quentin Durward* says:

'"It is strange, from lord to horseboy, how wonderfully these Scots stick by each other." "Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder," answered Lord Crawford.'

Thus it followed that the flourishing fortunes of Scotchmen had long ago made them objects of jealousy to the people of England, whilst Ireland remained an unhappy Cinderella.

North undoubtedly had a mind to do something for Ireland; and in this he finally succeeded in 1780. For once he had to meet no opposition from Fox, who was a consenting party—'without prejudice,' he was careful to add. Ireland was now allowed free export for her wool, and for glass and all glass manufactures.

Further, she was granted free trade with all British Colonies on the condition of equality of Customs. To have done so much for Ireland, in spite of opposition, and in the midst of so many and great troubles, was much to North's credit: yet it has to be admitted that even here his bad habits were apparent, and that he was never very punctual or brisk in his communications with Lord Buckinghamshire, the Lord-Lieutenant from 1777 to 1780. At the beginning all was well. On August 23rd, 1778, the Viceroy wrote to Germain:

'Lord North's conduct respecting my situation has been uniformly noble and liberal, nor can I in any instance trace those misrepresentations of fact which most probably must have reached him.'[1]

But this was not to endure unto the end. Buckinghamshire left Ireland an aggrieved man. On January 21st, 1780, Lord Macartney wrote to him: 'Lord North and Lord Hillsborough told me that they had fully answered the letters which you mentioned to me.'[2] Buckinghamshire was not to be satisfied. On October 5th he wrote to Germain:

'Lord North has not yet favoured me with a line in answer to my several letters at the beginning of last month which leaves me under the greatest perplexity.' On the 20th: 'My situation till Lord North favours me with a letter is most whimsically awkward.' On the 26th: 'Lord North's obdurate silence continues, and the whole

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.
[2] *Idem*, Lothian Papers.

proceeding can only be construed into either contempt or disapprobation.'[1] On November 2nd: 'Lord North seems determined upon no measure but that of expelling me with humiliation and disgrace from this kingdom.'[2]

Next day Mr. Corbett wrote to Buckinghamshire:

'I feel exceedingly for the very disagreeable situation your excellency must be in in not hearing from Lord North. He is now exceedingly ill.'

And on the 8th Sir John Irwine wrote:

'Lord North continues confined, so whatever business was in his hands there it will remain till he is able to go to St. James.'

And on December 20th: 'I understand Lord North will write to your Excellency.'[2]

Lord North out of office would not have a private secretary: he relied on the services of his daughters. But one would think that the combined efforts of Beau Brummel's father and the accomplished Montagu might have enabled the Prime Minister to keep open some sort of communication with his impatient colleague across the Channel.

North suffered the common fate of men in high office who are badly served by their staff. But he received an unsolicited tribute of praise from an Irish politician of note, Sir Lucius O'Brien, who wrote to Under-Secretary Knox on December 17th, 1778, of 'those two great friends

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.
[2] *Idem*, Lothian Papers.

to Ireland, Lord North and Lord George Germain.'[1] Here again, however, there was to be a falling away. In 1784 Lord Sydney wrote to the Duke of Rutland:

'I have received a long letter from Sir Lucius O'Brien complaining of Lord North's usage of him. I am waiting for some answer from Lord North, but I think Sir Lucius makes out a case of scandalous usage.'[2]

However gross may have been North's neglect, he was out of office then, and no answer could have supplied a remedy. But in the new Government O'Brien found more accommodating friends. In 1787 he was made a Privy Councillor and Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper in the High Court of Chancery.

In his budget speech of 1779, on March 1st, North had to admit that his taxes on houses and male servants had been disappointing: there had been wholesale evasion. His newest imposition was to be laid on post-chaises; and there was to be a surcharge of five per cent. on the net produce of the Customs and Excise. It was no easy matter to get his budgets through now. This year there were long and warm debates; and it was during one of these, on the 12th, that he explained away something he had said a month ago. On February 15th, when Lord Newhaven made a motion in the interests of Ireland, North had declared that no more concessions could be

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.
[2] *Idem*, Rutland Papers.

extended, or even considered. Now he boldly announced his forthcoming legislation. He was frequently on the defensive against Keppel's friends, who were persistent in attacking the Government in general and Sandwich in particular for their treatment of the Admiral. As an interlude he spoke in robust Tory strain on April 20th against a motion for relief to Protestant Dissenters. If such a measure were to pass, said he, then

'the Turk, the heathen, and the idolater, might by virtue of this act think themselves tolerated in propagating their tenets and overturning the established religion.'

For the rest there was little novelty in his speeches. In one debate we find him deprecating the discussion of military matters in the House of Commons: a Court-Martial was the proper tribunal for considering questions of that kind. On June 11th he said once more that there was nothing to be done until America should think proper to apply to this country for peace. To grant independence was quite impossible. On the 16th, when the manifesto of Spain was being considered, somebody reproached North for coming into the House with a smile on his face; and to this he replied with spirit:

'he did not know that he had worn any particular smile on entering the House; and if he did, a grave brow was not a look best suited to times of danger:—Englishmen were to feel like Englishmen and not be easily sunk down.'

During a debate on the proposal to double the militia on June 22nd Fox sought occasion to make some amiable overtures. In view of coming events it is necessary to notice that North rejected these peremptorily and at once. Again he repudiated the character of Prime Minister; and again admitted his perilous situation. He knew he must stand his trial for what he had done, he said; and with doleful iteration he protested that he hated office and wished he could get out.

In 1779 there were more attempts at Cabinet-making. At the beginning of the year Robinson told North that Governor Johnstone had called on him to say that he could bring in Fox, and that Grafton would follow with Camden and the Grenvilles; perhaps Shelburne also, who with Fox and 'their part of the Opposition were separated from Lord Rockingham on the business of Independency.'[1] This is not quite easy to follow; unless it be that in his eagerness to get into office[2] Fox was ready to throw over his nominal leader and principles and assume the no-independence attitude of Chatham's disciples. It was not until June 1780 that Shelburne confessed to Parliament that he had been 'a very Quixote' in hoping to maintain the dependency of America; and at this time Fox's friends did indeed entertain 'doubts of his firmness in resisting the overtures of the Court.'[3] The Duke of Richmond checked these

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.
[2] *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 353.
[3] *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, i. 212.

bolting tendencies.[1] In February the King consented to negotiations with Grafton and Camden. Grafton was half-hearted and said he must consult Rockingham and Richmond: and out of the conferences only one thing definite was accomplished—Shelburne agreed, in case of the formation of a new Government, to waive in Rockingham's favour his own claim to first place.

The Government all this time was in the melting-pot, but somehow contrived to keep its consistency. As early as March 1778 Germain had offered to resign, but he had been persuaded to stay. North's letter to Eden of June 14th should indicate that pressure came not from him. Presumably the King, who never ceased to interfere and so far as possible to control, kept him in his place. In the summer of 1778 even Sandwich was ready to retire.[2] The position was this: the King meant to keep North, Sandwich, and presumably Germain: the Opposition made an alliance conditional on the withdrawal of Sandwich and Germain; if not North himself. If North must indeed go, the King would prefer Weymouth for his successor. Next to Weymouth he put most faith in Thurlow. But Weymouth never succeeded in enlisting as recruits the opponents that he met; and Thurlow appears to have been a clumsy and rather reluctant diplomatic agent. No wonder, then, that overtures

[1] *Life of Fox*, Lord John Russell, i. 193.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 391.

went round and round without advancing. The Government was obviously in a condition of instability and unrest, and for some intimate history we are indebted to Under-Secretary Knox, who never ceased to be jealous of Eden. On June 1st, 1779, he records his reflections :

'Lord Suffolk . . . seemed resolved to make his fortunes. . . . But the powers of the Secretary of State were too limited for Eden's views. Lord North was his object. He took a house in Downing Street to be convenient to his lordship, and when Robinson was ill, he undertook the secret business. Robinson recovering . . . Eden was appointed a Lord of Trade. . . . He continued . . . to be the confidential friend and intimate of North and pander to his amours.'

Let this last sentence be ascribed to passing ill-humour, and let it be marked as the only insinuation of the kind that we meet with in all the current criticism and gossip that are concerned with North.

And on June 21st and 24th Knox has to record these communications made to him by Germain :

'This morning all the members of the Cabinet were summoned by a message in the King's own handwriting. . . . He sat down at the head of his library table and desired, for the first time since he became King, all ministers to sit down. He then began by saying Lord North had desired to know why they were summoned, but he had not thought fit to tell him, as he meant to tell it to them all together (Here Lord George Germain . . . thought they were going to be dismissed). . . . The King went on to say . . . that there was no one action

of his life that he could blame himself for, but his changing his ministers in 1765 and consenting to the repeal of the Stamp Act . . . to the repeal he imputed all the subsequent misfortunes. He declared to God he had never harboured a thought of injuring the Constitution or abridging his people's liberties in the smallest instance, nor had he suffered himself to be led by prejudice against any man to oppose his coming into office if he approved the principles he professed to act upon. . . . He considered himself as particularly obliged to Lord North for taking up Government when the Duke of Grafton deserted him, and expressed his thanks to Lord Sandwich for the respectable footing he had put the Navy upon, which, he said, had been let down too low after the peace of 1748, and not sufficiently provided for after the last. . . . It was his principle, and it was his resolution to part with his life rather than suffer his dominions to be dismembered. . . . He therefore expected firmness and support from his ministers. If they thought they wanted strength he was willing to enlarge the bottom of his Administration, but in all events he expected they would support him.

'June 24.

'Lord George had an opportunity of asking the King what he meant by references to Lord North, Lord Weymouth, and the Chancellor. . . . The King said it was no late business; that Lord North was often wishing to go out and at the time the Chancellor [Thurlow] came in he pressed very much for leave to quit; that he therefore gave the Chancellor leave to sound Lord Shelburne, but that he found his demands extravagant and his principles not to be trusted. If anything was now negotiating, he knew nothing of it, but whoever wished to go out he thought had better go, not stay. Lord George said he thought he would be dis-

tressed to fill Lord North's place. "So I should," answered the King, "for although he is not entirely to my mind, and there are many things about him I wish were changed, I don't know any who would do so well, and I have a great regard for him and very good opinion of him." '[1]

The King may well have felt exasperated at the fluctuations taking place before his eyes. Here is a specimen of current gossip, dated from Beaconsfield two months later, August 12th, 1779:

William Burke to the Duke of Portland.

'I have not been in town this week. The Divisions in the Ministry are so industriously propagated that I suppose it is the prelude to their re-uniting—it may perhaps amuse you to hear the confidential lamentations of a Prime Minister—take it in Lord North's own words, not ten days old, remember the resolution and consistency are Lord North's not mine—"I can't go on, indeed I won't, I am determined to resign, but why do I say determined to resign, when it is impossible for me to stay, treated as I am; there never were such people, they contradict and thwart me in every thing, it is impossible for me if I wished it ever so much, no deference, no common civility, no common councils or wish of union in any thing—they treat me in a way that no man ever was treated before, I don't know in the world what to do, if I wish ever so much to resign and give up business I can't, I am not my own master, I am tied to a stake and can't stir." There is a morsel pour servir à l'histoire, if your Grace has any friend inclined to write the comical humours of our Prime Minister, Lord North. I realy can't apologize for my long letter, this description of Prime

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.

Minister, resolved in the same breath to resign and also determined to keep his place, is payment enough for going through the dullness of one long letter.'[1]

But the end was not yet. Resignation was to be postponed. The bottom was not to be knocked out of Administration: the alternative of enlarging it was to be attempted once more.

On September 10th North wrote to Germain that he desired to bring in Stormont and Hillsborough to strengthen the Government; and to please Gower, he must find room for Carlisle. He proposes, therefore, to detach the Board of Trade from the Colonial Department and give the new office to Carlisle. He depends on Lord George's acquiescence. But Lord George, who has hitherto based his professions of a wish to retire on the ground of health, now changes his tone and complains that his services have not been properly recognised. He objects to the choice of Carlisle. His connection with the American Commission of 1778 has made him unpopular in the Colonies, and the arrangement will do harm: moreover, 'I must humbly submit that I feel it degrading to me.' On the 29th North writes genially to assure him that the King wishes him to say that the new arrangement is not in the least degree degrading to Lord George. He himself has wanted to resign; but the King will not consent. He is happy to think he will continue

[1] Welbeck Abbey Papers: unpublished.

to have Lord George's support, so he says. On October 1st Germain, by no means pacified, writes to ask whether the King has seen all the letters that have passed. North at once replies in the affirmative, and at the end of the month writes to say that Carlisle will 'kiss hands to-morrow if perfectly agreeable to Lord George.'[1]

The Government was, in fact, undergoing a gradual transformation. In 1778 the timid Barrington had resigned and had been succeeded by Jenkinson, Bute's old secretary, who was supposed to have inherited his chief's secret Court favour, in spite of emphatic denials.

In March 1779 died Suffolk, Secretary of State for the North. Weymouth for a time held the vacant office, together with his own department of the South; but in the autumn came a sudden shaking of the edifice. Weymouth and Gower, President of the Council, both Bedford men and originally stalwarts of the war party, determined to resign. They despaired of success. Gower told Parliament in the debate on the Address in November that no man of honour and conscience could remain in the Government and see such things pass as he had done: and North, in reporting this defection to the King, made the astounding confession that Gower had resisted his attempts at dissuasion with the greater ease inasmuch as he himself had held the same desperate convictions for the past three years.

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

The King now sent Thurlow to Shelburne with these instructions:

'He can assure a person [Shelburne] that Lord North wishes to form no part of the new arrangements and he can tell the person so as an inducement to come in. This ought to convince that person that I really mean a coalition of parties, not merely to draw him in to support the present Ministers' (December 11th, 1779).

On the 18th he writes again:

'Lord North having on the 1st of this month declared to me that he thought it advisable to make an attempt to form an Administration on a broad basis and that, in order to promote so desirable a measure he did not wish to retain his present office or to make a part of any new Ministry that may be formed . . .'

On the 24th he complains that having been induced to agree to a coalition by the urgency of Thurlow, Gower, and Weymouth, he has now to submit to the 'cold disdain' with which his overtures have been received by 'the person.' Nothing would satisfy the Opposition but a total change of measures and men: 'to obtain their support I must deliver up my Person my Principles and my Dominions into their hands.' To this he objects, as he thinks, with justification:

'I will obey the wish of my people . . . but . . . I am confident from what I learn it is not the wish of the people at large.'

From this 'formidable and desperate' Opposition it is his duty to protect the nation and

himself.[1] Thurlow's replies were apparently not composed without a good deal of time and thought. The purport of them is that he was not given sufficiently wide powers to admit of proposing acceptable terms. Apparently also his heart had never been in his mission. So the year ended without any result of so much going to and fro. Rockingham for one never believed that the King intended anything to come of it. To Augustus Keppel he wrote in November:

'I imagine the Duke of Grafton and C. Fox must now see either that the insinuation was to serve some purpose of creating jealousy somewhere, or that it is a full proof how very little those he told them to really knew or can dive into the intentions of his Majesty.'

Before the final collapse of negotiations, North had written the following letter to Thurlow:

'*Bushy*, *Nov.* 8. 79.

'. . . My wish and what I really believe would be the best measure at the present moment is that his Majesty would call to his assistance a part of the Opposition, if not the whole, and that he would make use of my resolution of not deserting him only for the purpose of forming a new administration and then let me depart. But the King cannot I believe make up a proper system at the present moment: at least he seems much bent on trying to go on with those of his servants who remain with him, and we must therefore I believe fill up our two vacancies [Weymouth and Gower] out of our present friends and supporters.'[2]

The King indeed went beyond North's expecta-

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2232. [2] *Ibid.*

tions and treated on the basis of a new head of Administration: but in the end North's forecast was proved to be right. Gower was succeeded by Bathurst: the vacant places of Suffolk and Weymouth were filled by Hillsborough and Stormont. And the old Minister continued to lead his forlorn hope.

And yet, in spite of so much evidence of disruption and decay, the Government made a brave show. In November 1779 the Address was carried by a majority of nearly 100—233 to 134. Little comfort that gave North. In September he had written to Robinson: 'My heart is oppressed with a thousand griefs and totally disables my head.'[1] On November 4th he wrote to Dartmouth:[2]

'I am in a fever with my situation. I have been kept in it by force. If the house falls about my ears, I cannot help it. All I can do is not to quit a falling house and to use every means in my power to sustain it as long as possible.'

His spirits were manifestly at a low ebb. When Government were being hard pressed upon the case of Lord Pigot, Gibbon wrote to Holroyd: 'Lord North seems to make a feeble stand for the pleasure of being in a minority.' Perhaps we can best learn what North wanted Parliament to think of his position and what, being an honest man, he believed to be the truth of the matter by quoting a speech of this year in which he made a general

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.
[2] Patshull House Papers: unpublished.

defence of the policy for which he and his Government were being attacked:

'If the hon. gentleman (Fox), which his speech would indicate, supposes me to be the first or sole minister, I do assure him he is mistaken. I know of no such minister, and do therefore hope the hon. gentleman will consider me in two lights; namely, as acting at the head of a very important department, where I acknowledge I am solely answerable for whatever is transacted, and as acting in concert with others in His Majesty's confidential councils.'

(After describing the situation in Europe):

'Such was the state and disposition of Europe when America, unjustly and without provocation, resisted the constitutional claims of this country, and refused to pay that obedience which it was bound to render upon every principle of justice; nay, I might go further and add upon every motive of interest and advantage. Under the circumstances I have described, we were obliged to enter into a contest with our rebellious subjects.[1] . . . I was always determined never to resign as long as His Majesty thought fit to accept my poor services, and till I could do it with honour. . . . My language has always been uniformly the same, never to resign till a fit person was found to succeed me. I have not heard that person yet pointed out (*sic*), nor do I know him. . . . There is nothing, at a proper time, I more ardently desire than a public trial; nor anything I less fear than public punishment. . . . Justice requires that I should be indulged with an opportunity of exculpating myself. I shall insist upon the exercise of that

[1] On one occasion, when North was rebuked for using this phrase, he said, 'Very well, then, I will call them the gentlemen in Opposition on the other side of the water.'

justice; I hope I shall not be refused. I shall and must be tried, be the event of the present measures what they may. . . . It is well known that I accepted my present situation with great reluctance; that I have remained in it much against my own good judgment and liking: that I feel in the same manner at the instant I am speaking; and when the period arrives that I can resign with honour to myself, and consistent with the duty I owe to my sovereign and my country, I shall quit my present office with singular satisfaction. . . . When I came into office my private fortune was not very considerable; and I can affirm, be it what it might then, whenever I quit my present situation, now or at any future period, I shall not be richer. . . .'

Of this speech Hazlitt is pleased to observe, 'it is a most masterly defence of himself. It is a model of its kind.'[1]

[1] Hazlitt's *British Senate*, ii. 196–202.

CHAPTER XIII

Resignation

NORTH'S temper was admittedly gentle and not prone to anger. It may be taken as evidence, therefore, of the strain upon his nerves that during one of the Keppel debates he became so violent that Fox moved to take down his words. Another day he fell foul of Speaker Norton. This was in March 1780, on Burke's motion to abolish the Board of Trade; and we are told that 'a long altercation now ensued consisting of a number of assertions and contradictions.' We might have reason for complaining that the House of Commons had sunk into a depraved condition if we were to read to-day of such a scene between our Speaker and our Prime Minister. In spite of strain upon his temper, however, North's sense of humour was not quenched. Somebody spoke of the exploits of 'one Arnold' in the field against us. North knew about this. 'One Arnold!' he said: 'it is a good thing there are not two.' But he had little inducement to be merry.

'There is another million asked and given on

a vote of credit,' wrote Walpole to Conway on June 5th, 1779, 'and Lord North has boasted of such mines for next year, that one would think he believed next year would never come.'

But next year did come; and the year after that: and North found it no easy matter to make both ends meet. We shall see presently that he was not very fortunate in the management of his loans, and had to submit to charges of extravagance that he was not prepared to deny without reserve. On March 6th, 1780, he opened his new budget with a statement about loans and lotteries, postponing his announcement of new taxes. Fox at once entered on a criticism, which was in its nature more political than financial, and which drew from Lord George Gordon the cheerful comment that Fox undoubtedly knew more about borrowing than North. It may be noted in passing that the wretched Gordon was one of the comic men of the House of Commons. In a debate of this spring, on the abolition of the Great Wardrobe, we are told that

'Lord George Gordon cut about him and concluded by saying he would have nothing to do with such an old clothes business, but would vote against it.' [1]

It is melancholy to reflect upon the amount of mischief that might have been avoided for him and for others if he had been content with his proper

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

place in politics, and not been seduced into grave engagements.

North, then, had to raise more money and he had recourse to new or increased taxes on wine, malt, spirits, exported coal, salt, stamps, and tea. And he had to fight hard to carry his scheme through Parliament. The days were dark indeed. 'Well here we are, *aris et focis*, and all at stake,' wrote Walpole to Conway in 1779. 'What can be the meaning? Unable to conquer America before she was assisted—scarce able to keep France at bay—are we a match for both and Spain too?' And the cry was still they come. The King had looked for military support from Catherine of Russia, but she now appeared (1780) with Sweden and Denmark to declare an armed neutrality, which meant indeed neutrality inasmuch as they were to do no fighting; but by their adoption of certain principles of maritime law, embarrassments and dangers were strewn in the way of British shipping. Frederick of Prussia would have liked to see them go further in the direction of hostilities. He was to be so far gratified that before the end of the year upon our own initiative we had gone to war with Holland.

It has been represented that we added this enemy to our list wantonly and for ignoble ends. Intercepted correspondence was invested with an authority it did not possess: we professed to see an imminent Dutch-American alliance where none was threatened, and made it a *casus belli* in order

to have warrant for preying upon the Dutch West Indies.[1] Had England been very strong and at peace, the Government might have been tempted into some such greedy and immoral enterprise. But England was sore beset. Her shores were already menaced. Her navy was inadequate to her needs. She would surely wish for no more beating at her door. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Government were sincere in their belief that Holland was about to follow the example of France and America. There was nothing inherently extravagant in such a surmise. North's Government were dazed by the multitude in array against them. They could not see the forest for the trees, and took every one in turn to be an object for hostilities immediate or remote. All North's language and conduct belie the imputation of aggressive purpose. He had far too much war and far too many foes on his hands already. It is much more probable that his Government blundered into this declaration of war because they assumed it to be inevitable and had arrived at a condition of recklessness when one enemy more or less made not much difference.

England was indeed being smothered with enemies. Only once do we hear a friendly word from across the seas. North's sons were paying a visit to Vienna, and his friend Keith, our Ambassador, wrote:

'This town is dullness itself, and the Court and all

[1] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 78.

the Ministers are absent—the Bourbon Feasts are Poison to English Lips, but we have still many friends in this country.'[1]

We hear little now of predictions that the Americans were at their last gasp. It would have been delusive encouragement, indeed ; but it is odd that those who had to carry on the war should not have relied more confidently on the fact that, if Englishmen were despondent, the Americans were little less dejected. Amongst some intercepted letters of April 1780 was one written by a despairer named Smith to his wife. 'Not a ray of hope remains to assure us of success': such was his message from the camp.[2] King George was perhaps the only man left in England who would still hear no talk of this kind at home :

> 'Before I will even hear of any man's readiness to come into office, I will expect to see it signed under his hand that he is resolved to keep the Empire entire.'

So he wrote in June 1779; and there is no evidence that he had changed his mind a year later. Walpole says that in June 1780 Conway showed him a letter from Germain offering terms. Conway was to form a Government: Sandwich and Germain were not to be disturbed—and this amounted to a guarantee of no surrender—but North, who had forfeited the King's confidence by his indolence and inactivity, was to go.[3] This assertion must be taken subject to the usual

[1] July 21st, 1779, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35517.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34417. [3] *Last Journals*, ii. 405.

discount. North was not permitted to be indolent and the repeated attacks on him in Parliament kept him in a constant state of activity, even irritability. On April 7th, 1780, Thomas Thoroton wrote to the Duke of Rutland:

'Tom Pitt's speech was very good indeed. He said he honoured Lord Norths private character, but he feared his proceedings as Minister must have broke in on his private comfort, when he considered the numbers of lives which had been lost, and the numberless miseries brought on individuals by his notorious mismanagement as Minister. This enraged Lord North to such a degree that he lost all temper.'[1]

Walpole rated Conway higher than any man, and would certainly have welcomed an arrangement that put him in the first place. If he had hope of such a consummation the wish was father to the thought. Nothing came of this project; and the King had written to North only a few days earlier:

'If Lord North will resolve with spirit to continue in his present employment . . . I shall be able to keep the present constitution of this country in its present lustre; but there is no means of letting Lord North retire from taking the lead in the House of Commons that will not probably end in evil.'

Walpole goes on that after the Conway scheme had failed, the King opened negotiations with Rockingham through North, who was to stay.

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.

This is true. Rockingham has put on record that amongst the King's conditions were that Sandwich was to remain at the Admiralty, or that, if he yielded on this point, Keppel at all events was not to go there. Fox, who appears to have flown out of Court favour as quickly, and much less unaccountably, than he had flown in, was not to be Secretary of State. Rockingham refused both conditions.[1] We have the King's intentions set down in a memorandum dated July 3rd, 1780 :[2]

'As to Mr. Fox, if any lucrative, not ministerial, office can be pointed out for him, provided he will support the measures of Government, I shall not object to the proposition. He never having had any principle can certainly act as his interests may guide him.'

He objects to Richmond for his

'unremitted personal ill conduct to me . . . though I hope I am not less forgiving than a Christian ought to be.'

The Duke of Portland, he says, 'is a man I should with pleasure see in my service.' Ireland, or a great Court office, he thinks would do for him ; not foreseeing that the Duke was shortly to be his Prime Minister.

Meanwhile there was set afloat a widespread onslaught upon extravagance and waste of public money. The King was aimed at. Petitions came from the provinces demanding enquiry and redress. On February 11th, 1780, Burke introduced an

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 421. [2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2232.

elaborate and searching scheme of economical reform. North could not offer this unqualified resistance. He praised the ingenuity of the mover, and the principles that he advanced—principles of which he declared himself to be as earnest an advocate as any man. The bill was read a second time: then impediments were discovered, and qualifications suggested. The clause which abolished the third Secretaryship of State was thrown out by a majority of seven only. The clause abolishing the Board of Trade was carried against Government by a majority of eight. The end of it all was that the amendments carried in Committee were so numerous, and so far emasculated the measure, that Burke gave it up in disgust, saying he no longer cared what became of it. Next year he brought in another bill, but North, emboldened by success, at once opposed and defeated it.

A day or two afterwards Barré made an attack, supporting and reinforcing Burke, and moved for a Committee of accounts. North accepted the principle, but put an end to Barré by bringing in a bill of his own, by which a Commission was created of men unconnected with Parliament. North was accused of trickery: it was averred that his Commission would only give him patronage and produce no result. However, he carried his proposal.

Next came Savile, February 15th, with a demand for a return of all pension-holders, and

office-holders by patent. The latter portion was not opposed; but the former drove North into a posture of stubborn resistance. He protested on behalf of those scions of noble and ancient houses whose narrow or fallen fortunes compelled them to rely on the emoluments of office, and whose affairs could not be exposed to public examination without prejudice to their rights and insult to their feelings. He urged that many pensions were really rewards for services rendered: that the remainder were not so considerable as to require investigation: that, even if they were, the money came from the Civil List and this was nobody's business but the King's. On a division he only won by a majority of two.

Now came the King's turn for direct attention. On April 6th Dunning moved that 'the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.' Dundas, the Lord Advocate, attempted a rescue. Dundas was a notable figure in politics. He had been in the House six years and had become an assiduous and useful ally. His character is variously judged. Brougham says:

> 'it is difficult to figure any one more calculated to win over those whom his mere power and station had failed to attach':

he was amiable, loyal, honest.[1] The King thought otherwise:

'The more I think of the conduct of the Advo-

[1] *Historical Sketches*, ii. 48.

cate of Scotland,' he wrote to North, 'the more I am incensed against him: more favours have been heaped on the shoulders of that man than ever were bestowed on any Scotch lawyer, and he seems studiously to embrace an opportunity to create difficulties; but men of tallents, when not accompanied with integrity, are pests instead of blessings to society.'

He was celebrated by a couplet in the *Rolliad:*

'Alike the Advocate of North and Wit,
The Friend of Shelburne and the guide of Pitt.'

Dundas was in fact catholic in his sympathies. Having made his position under North, he stayed in office with Rockingham and Shelburne; but when North came into the Coalition, he transferred his allegiance to Pitt, under whom he was to serve in high offices, until his star waned and his career ended under a cloud. It is fair to say that he won the affections of Pitt, who was not exuberant; and his fall drew from his chief tears, which the public had never seen before. He died Viscount Melville. It was he that moved an ingenious amendment to Dunning's motion. He proposed to insert the words 'it is now necessary to declare,' probably with a view to rescinding them at a convenient moment. Dunning accepted the amendment. The Government, however, persisted in opposing the motion; and it was carried against them by 233 to 215. So heavy was this blow to their credit, and so demoralised were they, that they allowed to pass unchallenged two consequent

motions demanding investigation into the disposal of the Civil List, and attention to the petitions that were coming from the counties. North protested and appealed, but did not dare to divide.

On April 10th Dunning carried a resolution requiring an annual return to be made to Parliament of public moneys paid to members. There was no division. He then moved for the exclusion from Parliament of certain small office-holders; and again North's opposition was sustained by a meagre majority of two. Three days later, however, he had better fortune with Mr. Crewe's bill for the disfranchising of all revenue officers. North preserved to these trusty henchmen their right to vote for his candidates.

On April 24th Dunning moved an address praying that there might be no dissolution until grievances had been redressed. It was probably considered a good cry on which to go to the country, and he hoped to bind those recruits who had enlisted under him on April 6th. Many no doubt had voted then with one eye upon dissatisfied constituents; but they went back to their old allegiance now, and North had a majority of fifty-one. Fox thundered, and there was a disorderly scene; but the Government were none the worse. On the 19th a motion to withhold supplies was thrown out by a smaller majority: but a week later, on report of Dunning's motion of April 10th, the Government rescinded it with a majority of forty-three. After this North was allowed a little

rest. Parliament was prorogued in July and dissolved in September.

There is no doubt that the demand for economical reform was genuine, widespread, and eager. It gave fine material to the Opposition leaders and great was the labour entailed on North to outwit or out-argue, with little assistance, the ingenuity and oratory of Burke, Fox, Dunning, and Barré. He cannot have been blind or indifferent to the weight of popular feeling by which these champions were supported. When Rockingham failed to come to terms with North in the summer, less attention had been paid to his conditions about America than to his stipulations in the matter of economical reform. These were understood to be so modest and half-hearted that they excited anger and astonishment. Walpole sneers at them as 'timid and insignificant' and says they could only be explained by Rockingham's determination that Burke's claims for office should not be damaged. Walpole, indeed, took matters so seriously that he told Lord Hertford that he thought 'a total change' could alone avert civil war. North's opposition was, in the circumstances, inevitable. He was not a reformer by profession; he had his hands full enough without adopting large and novel policies; and had it been otherwise, he would have had to reckon on trouble with the King. He was 'easy, good-natured, facing-both-ways Lord North,' who was always content to let well alone, and he was fully content to carry on

with one member of Parliament drawing a salary as the King's turnspit, and somebody else enjoying a stipend as a taster of rum. He was reconciled to these things, not because he was naturally dishonest, but because he was constitutionally passive. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer and his duty and interest alike required of him that he should insist on economy in the public departments: yet we read that he was himself responsible for an annual expenditure of 1300*l.* for stationery and 340*l.* for whipcord.[1] And this was the less excusable since we are aware that he was not even a punctual letter-writer and often gave offence by leaving his correspondents without an answer.[2] On the other hand it must not be assumed that North was really careless about expenditure or was a faithless trustee of public money. Sir John Dalrymple, writing to Germain from Lisbon on February 1st, 1780, speaks of 'knowing, as I doe, Lord North's parsimony of public treasure.'[3] It appears that the Chancellor could give a resolute refusal when he was confronted with what he deemed an improper demand on the Exchequer; it was not his habit to go in search of abuses for the pleasure of reforming them.

The assaults of all his enemies meanwhile failed to dislodge him at the general election of 1780. He was restored to power: and this was

[1] *William Pitt and the National Revival*, J. H. Rose, 132.
[2] *Last Journals*, i. 247.
[3] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

to some extent due to an outburst of violence, not far removed from anarchy, which would be likely to have a cooling and reactionary effect on the reforming spirit of the moment.

It will be remembered that in 1778 Parliament passed Sir George Savile's bill by which Roman Catholics were relieved of some of the most oppressive of the penalties and privations under which they lived. Priests were no longer to suffer perpetual imprisonment for saying mass. Estates entailed on Roman Catholics educated abroad were no longer to be forfeit to the nearest Protestant heir. Roman Catholics were no longer to be debarred from buying land. The measure passed into law with a general consent that might have betokened a sudden evaporation of religious prejudice. It applied to England only; but a similar provision for Scotland was promised. Next year there was a violent demonstration of hostility to this design in Scotland. A series of riots in Edinburgh and Glasgow intimidated Government to such good purpose that no attempt was made to carry out their intention.

Then it appeared that in England also there still burned the fiery passions of sectarian hatred and mistrust. The Protestant Association set out to procure the repeal of the Act of 1778. For their leader they chose Lord George Gordon, who had nothing to recommend him beyond the fact that he was a fanatic and the son of a duke. He

was without ability; not even an eminent speaker; and, as we have seen, something of a buffoon. His zeal was not of the kind to carry him joyfully to death; it was rather the crazy ardour of an unbalanced mind. But he was not entirely an impostor. With an original bias towards the rigid Protestants he generated within himself a transient and intense enthusiasm; even as in his subsequent adoption of Judaism, he encountered the preliminary ordeal with an unsparing fortitude worthy of the sublimest sincerity. He was not more than thirty years of age.

The Protestant Association resolved to present to Parliament a monster petition praying for repeal. On June 2nd, 1780, accordingly a great multitude advanced from St. George's Fields upon the two Houses of Parliament with Lord George at their head, and behind them and around them and amongst them all the turbulent and mischief-loving rabble of London. The Duke of Richmond was in the middle of a speech which gave a touch of horrid humour to the situation. He was pleading earnestly for annual parliaments and a comprehensive franchise. 'Trust the People,' was his text, and as he expounded it there came hurrying in one lord after another wounded, dishevelled, and amazed. The People whom they were being invited to trust were at that moment engaged in wrecking their carriages and assaulting their persons, as an inducement to fall in with popular opinion. Lord Mansfield, in whose Court a

Roman Catholic priest had recently been acquitted, was the object of their fiercest resentment. Neither his venerable age nor his sacred office could protect the Archbishop of Canterbury, who came to his rescue, from the fury of their malignant rage. Their lordships made little effort to protect their dignity. It may have been that Richmond had impregnated the atmosphere with democratic sentiment; but there was a reluctance to meet force with force. The constabulary at hand was insignificant, and wholly impotent; yet their lordships would not send for troops. There they remained, in not very honourable array, until they found an opportunity of stealing undetected to their homes.

The House of Commons fared little better. The petition was at once taken into consideration, and the mob outside kept up a running commentary of yells and menaces. The debate proceeded with the enemy at the gate in literal truth. Lord George Gordon made frequent dashes to some coign of vantage whence he could report progress; which he did with all the mischievous resources at his command, and no scrupulous attention to fact. He for one would have been safer with the furies outside than amongst his colleagues. Holroyd vowed that if he did not keep still he would move for his confinement in Newgate. A Gordon kinsman pledged his word that if the invaders forced an entrance, his sword should at once pass through the body, not of the first intruder, but of Lord George himself.

North showed more sense and promptitude than we are accustomed to ascribe to him, and more than had been exhibited in the Lords. He smuggled out a messenger to summon troops, and met the emergency of the moment by moving an adjournment until the 6th. This was carried by 192 to 7. A City alderman told with Gordon, and amongst their seven supporters was the redoubtable Sir James Lowther. Whatever motive may have prompted him, he at all events need not be suspected of physical fear. After considerable delay, the troops arrived, and the multitude decided to retire and seek their pleasure elsewhere. This was on June 2nd.

The House of Commons, for the moment, were released. When they met on the 6th they had far greater reason for apprehension and dismay. The mob was not bent on molesting them, but the town was in an uproar. Opposition had no thoughts of party moves: the peril was too great and immediate. Only Fox, we are told,

> 'still clung to party feeling, refusing to support Government, and proclaiming that society and its laws were dissolved by the vices and monstrous follies of the Administration.'[1]

It is only fair to say that it is elsewhere recorded that he was not behind Burke in denouncing the violence of the rioters which, he said, would disgrace us in the sight of Europe. But he did take the opportunity of attributing the present

[1] *Pictorial History*, v. 414.

calamities to the general incompetence and misgovernment of Lord North and his Cabinet.[1] The House passed a rather pusillanimous resolution that, after peace should be restored, they would consider any grievances that might be submitted to them ; and apparently considered that they had done all that was required or could be expected in the way of saving London from destruction.

When the mob retreated from the precincts of Parliament on Friday, June 2nd, they proceeded to make a demonstration in force and to burn down the chapels of the Sardinian and Bavarian Ministers. On Saturday there was a lull in the storm: on Sunday night it rose again: on Monday it gathered strength: on Tuesday it raged furiously: and on Wednesday, the 7th, it culminated in a devastating tempest. Many people were to blame for the lack of precaution that made this progress of disaster possible. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen were on the side of Lord George Gordon. Magistrates, fearful alike of instant vengeance from the mob, and ultimate repudiation by Government, could not be found to read the riot act. Troops were called out, but they were not allowed to fire. Militia were hurried up from the country. Not until Wednesday were the riot act read and bullets used. On Thursday the King summoned a Council and told them that if they would not act, he would. Fortified by the authority of the Attorney-

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

General, he made up for lost time. A battle raged in London, and by Friday the 9th the insurgents were silenced and dispersed. Sir George Savile rather tamely offered to conciliate the extreme Protestants by introducing a bill which rendered it illegal for a Roman Catholic to interfere in the education of a Protestant child. It passed the Commons, but this time it was the Lords' turn to show spirit. They threw it out.

North did not come out in the end with signal credit. He showed no personal cowardice, but no moral energy. He sent for a guard to protect his house; and whilst the besiegers were howling outside, he asked advice of the friends who were dining with him. 'What is your opinion of the remedy for this evil?' was his helpless enquiry of Sir John Macpherson. 'Effect a junction with Opposition,' was the reply. 'You talk as if the thing could be done,' was the nerveless rejoinder; 'but it is not possible.' Yet he did meet Fox and Sheridan next day or the day after at the Drury Lane theatre, so Wraxall says.[1] North, at such a moment, could crack a joke about St. John and his dangerous pistol: he could not take the law into his own hands and use force where no other remedy could avail.

No better account of the Gordon riots can be written than that which Dickens gave in *Barnaby Rudge*. In the form of fiction, it is based on authority and guided by insight. His narrative of

[1] i. 346.

the siege and destruction of Newgate is probably as accurate as history can be. His imaginary sacking of the Maypole Inn under the guidance of Hugh, illustrates the extent to which a religious agitation had degenerated into a debauch of plunder and destruction for mischief's sake. Wine cellars of private houses were raided. The premises of Langdale, the distiller, were wrecked, and men, women, and children drank themselves to frenzy and death. Mansfield's house with his rare library was burnt. When he rose in Parliament to justify the King's action, he confessed that he had not consulted any books : he had no books to consult. Dr. Johnson went out to see what was happening and found about a hundred ruffians in broad daylight demolishing the Old Bailey Sessions House, unmolested and at their leisure. Gibbon wrote to his stepmother on June 8th : 'Colonel Holroyd was all last night in Holborn among the flames with the Northumberland Militia and performed very bold and able service.' This officer was to a great extent responsible for saving the key to the position. There had been a horrid rumour that the militia could not be trusted ; but when an attack in force was made on the Bank of England, Holroyd's men bore the brunt of the fighting and averted what would have been the last and fatal calamity. Wraxall saw the worst of the tumult and wrote an account, not unworthy of comparison with Pepys's famous description of the fire of London.

When it was all over, Lord Amherst, Commander-in-Chief, returned the killed and wounded at 458,[1] which was assuredly an under-estimate. Wraxall says 700. After a prolonged sequence of most terrible tales, one is rather surprised at the comparatively small result. With so much shooting, delirious drinking, constant fires, and wholesale devastation, a larger casualty list might have been expected. And the record of retribution was certainly not excessive. Less than half the culprits brought to trial were sentenced to death, and of these about two-thirds were reprieved. Horace Walpole gives the number of those who suffered death as twenty-five. The *Annual Register* says nothing; but twenty to twenty-five is the general computation. Walpole accounts for nineteen; of whom he says two were young women: seventeen were youths under eighteen; three of these under fifteen. Lord George Gordon, who appears to have been terrified, if not horrified, at the result of his campaign, was arrested and confined until February 1781. At his trial he was defended by Erskine. Mansfield was not likely to feel much compassion for him, but the jury were merciful. They were of opinion that he attempted to check the tumult when it was too late, and had done nothing to render himself guilty of high treason: and he was acquitted.

It is worth noting that Sheridan's first success

[1] Lecky, iv. 323.

in Parliament was won by his speech attacking the Government for not passing a bill of indemnity for the employment of troops. It is also noteworthy that at one moment the mob had so far triumphed over law and order that even the servants of a Secretary of State were obliged to display the Protestant badge to enable them to appear with safety in the streets. Amongst the adventures of individuals, Lord Effingham's case is memorable for the sake of comic relief. He was a hearty opponent of the Government: he had refused to serve in America. It was alleged that he was seen, arrayed in lace and silk attire, leading on the rioters : that he had been slain, and his dead body had been flung into the Thames. No sooner had the consternation at his ignoble conduct and inglorious end subsided, than he reappeared in London Society. He had been in peaceful retreat in Yorkshire. It was pointed out that he was not often seen in fine clothes; but people were not willing to be dissuaded, and he continued to be looked on as one of Gordon's ringleaders. His father had earned immortality more deservedly by telling the King that if there were any defects in the coronation ceremony, at all events they should be corrected on the next occasion.

To sum up the impressions of the terrible week, Gibbon may be quoted :

'Our danger is at an end, but our disgrace will be lasting, and the month of June 1780 will ever be

marked by a dark and diabolical fanaticism, which I had supposed to be extinct, but which actually subsists in Great Britain perhaps beyond any other country in Europe.'[1]

This, then, was the sudden current which set back the tide of reforming zeal, and preserved North, at the general election, from the prospect of being swept from office.

The year was approaching that had in store the decisive military operation of the American war. And if ministers in Parliament were not insisting on the imminent collapse of the enemy and the inevitable triumph of British arms, it is clear enough that those who ought to have been best informed were now fortifying their spirits with such a faith. On March 7th, Lord George Germain wrote thus to Sir Henry Clinton :

'Indeed so very contemptible is the rebel force now in all parts and so vast is our superiority everywhere that no resistance on their part is to be apprehended that can materially obstruct the progress of the King's arms in the speedy suppression of the rebellion.'

Clinton himself was by no means despondent. He says in his 'narrative' that 'a visible languor to their cause began universally to prevail.'

'. . . I confess that the campaign of 1781 terminated very differently from what I once flattered myself it would.[2] . . . I am persuaded that had I been left to my own plans and a proper

[1] To Mrs. Gibbon, June 27th, 1780.
[2] *Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*, i. p. 9.

confidence had been earlier reposed in me, the campaign of 1781 would not probably have ended unfortunately.'[1]

On March 5th, 1781, he wrote to Cornwallis :

'Discontent runs high in Connecticut. In short, my Lord, there seems nothing wanting to give a mortal stab to the Rebellion but a proper re-inforcement and a permanent majority at sea.'[2]

Meanwhile he had learnt from an intercepted cypher letter passing between French officers that positively no more troops were to come from France and that those now in the field would probably be recalled :[3] her own affairs would make it impossible for her to continue her support if the war were to be protracted much longer. He therefore was in favour of inaction. So long as we could succeed in 'escaping affront,' time must inevitably bring us all we wanted. Nor was he without warrant. Washington was writing in the gloomiest language.

'Our present situation makes one of two things essential to us,' ran one of his letters to Franklin ; 'a peace, or the most vigorous aid of our allies, particularly in the article of money.'

In October Lord Hertford told Walpole that terms were still to be had. North was in favour of another attempt ; but, says Walpole, Sandwich and Germain urged the King not to yield, in order that they might not lose their places. Then came the disaster of Yorktown that was to North little

[1] *Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*, i. p. 43. [2] P. 342. [3] P. 43.

less conclusive than was the event of Austerlitz to Pitt. On November 19th he wrote to Robinson, 'My body and mind are feeble and unfit me for exertion and I shall not be able to go through the next session.'[1] But when the time came he contrived to show a tolerably bold front.

Parliament met on November 27th, and Fox moved an amendment to the Address, condemning the war. North might well have been tired of answering the attacks of Fox. Only once, it appears, on June 12th, had he been content to sit still and attempt no reply. Now there was new matter for a speech—even if it were interlaced with familiar arguments and protests. The Americans, he said, had no objection to submit to the authority of the Crown: what they did object to was dependence on Parliament. Upon Yorktown he spoke manfully and without any confession that 'it was all over.' In spite of the disaster, we must not lie down and die, said he. The hon. gentleman had threatened him with impeachment and the scaffold, but that should not deter him from the preservation of the rights and legislative authority of Parliament. The Americans must show a disposition for peace: then we should be ready enough to meet them.[2] Burke inveighed fiercely against this apologia. He used the famous phrase that the attempt to force our demands on the Americans was like trying to shear a wolf: we had

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

[2] All references to speeches in the following pages, unless otherwise specified, come from the *Parliamentary History*.

only succeeded in reducing 'the most flourishing Empire in the world to be one of the most compact, unenviable powers on the face of the globe.'

On December 12th there was a further debate on Sir James Lowther's motion to stop the war. North plaintively observed that he wished he could stop it: it gave him more trouble than anybody else: but it was a 'British war,' and must be conducted with British spirit. It was supremacy they stood out for; and this had no connection whatever with a desire for revenge. But for all his brave words he could not produce an impression of harmony and fixed purpose. Dundas, who seemed to think it time to be leaving the sinking ship, asked his chief, with obvious impropriety, to tell them what was the amount of truth in the rumours of dissension in the Cabinet. North made an indefinite reply. There would be no more marching of invading forces through the Colonies, he said, but there must be no relaxation of our hold upon the seaboard. Germain, on the contrary, was uncompromising. He boldly promised Parliament, 'Let the consequences be what it may, I will never put my hand to any instrument conceding independence to the Colonies.' Wraxall makes the significant observation that during this speech North left his colleague alone on the Treasury Bench and retired to a seat far behind. And still he was able to carry the Address with a majority of eighty-nine. Lowther he defeated by forty-one.

The year was not without a bright spot here and there on the dark surface. Gibraltar was relieved; and the garrison, under the gallant Eliott (Lord Heathfield), were enabled to prolong their defence in spite of all that Spain and France could do; and after a siege of nearly four years to see their enemies confounded and their precious charge inviolate. In Jersey, a French attack failed before the valour of a resistance led by Major Pierson, who won enduring honour at the cost of his life. But to set against this, the fleets of the enemy were again parading in the Channel without any British naval force at hand that could expel them. North had to raise another loan:

'For every 100*l.* subscribed he gave 150*l.* 3 °/₀ stock, reckoned at 58 per 100*l.*, 25*l.* 4 °/₀ stock reckoned at 70, and 1*l.* lottery ticket. He therefore in the first place gave 105*l.* 10*s.* for every 100*l.* He next gave an interest exceeding 5*l.* in perpetuity to every creditor . . . however the interest of money might fall in time of peace.'

There was to be no subsequent reduction of interest as had been the practice in the days of Walpole and Pelham.[1] A recent writer on Pitt, without acquitting him of extravagance, contrasts him favourably with North who, he says, had this year to give 150*l.* stock in the 3 per cent. and 25*l.* in the 4 per cent. for every 100*l.*: thus, to raise twelve millions cost him twenty-one millions, with interest on nine millions that was never touched

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 237. 58*l.* + 29*l.* + 17*l.* 10*s.* + 1*l.* = 105*l.* 10*s.*

by the Treasury.[1] The *Annual Register* records that

'of all the acts of the Minister during so long a government of public affairs scarcely any brought upon him so much severity of reprehension within doors, or perhaps so much censure without, as the loan of the present year. Twelve millions were borrowed upon terms so advantageous to the lenders that the price of the new stock rose at market from 9 to 11 per cent. above par.'[2]

Fox attacked, apparently, on the ground that it was too good a bargain for Government: it put profits of something like a million entirely at their disposal

'to be granted as douceurs to members of that House. . . . All the good to be hoped for from Burke's bill would have been futile in the presence of such jobbery as this.'

Rockingham in the Lords made out that the public would have to pay 1,200,000*l.* for borrowing twelve millions, and 'that at the extravagant and usurious interest of 5½ per cent.'[3] Mr. Lecky says that the loan

'was issued on such terms that the price rose from 9 to 11 per cent. above par and the country was thus compelled to pay nearly a million more than was necessary . . . a great part of it was distributed among the creatures of the ministry, who were thus gratified by an enormous though veiled bribe.'

[1] *Pitt and the National Revival*, J. H. Rose, 129. [2] P. 183.
[3] *Idem, passim.*

'He doubled the national debt, before too heavy to be endured,' wrote Bishop Watson; 'and let future generations rise up and call him—Blessed'[1]—though this, after all, is a condemnation of North's war policy rather than a criticism of his finance.

On March 12th Mr. Byng moved in Parliament to condemn the loan and demanded a list of the subscribers. North agreed to this much; but he refused to publish a list of the offers that had been received, or any of the correspondence that had passed. And now it was that he admitted that he had not foreseen that funds would rise as they did and that he might in fact have made a much better bargain. On the 26th he had to stand fire again: and again he admitted that he had made a bad bargain. But when he was charged with having sold stock in order to glut the market, he vigorously declared that it was false: 'it was a gross falsehood and he defied the hon. gentleman to prove it. (Here a great cry of Order, Order.)' As to the accusation of having dealt deceitfully with the distribution, he declared that it was usual to apply on these occasions to men who had money, and that it was not usual to publish lists of names. Upon the whole we have to confess that when North's praises as finance minister are sung, it will probably be found convenient to skip the passage of 1781. Nevertheless, he was supported in a division now by 137 to 106. As for his

[1] *Anecdotes of his Life*, ii. 253.

budget, he removed the exemptions enjoyed by certain articles, and added to the duties on tobacco and sugar.

Meanwhile North contrived to find time to attend to matters of purely personal interest and sometimes of no importance. In August of 1780 he had written to Robinson: 'I have made it a rule this summer to allow myself no pleasure nor dissipation, nor vacation whatever.' It was by reason of a self-denying ordinance of this kind that he found time to write such letters as he addressed a year later from Eton to William Eden, who was now Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Carlisle. His son Francis[1] has exceeded his furlough to attend the Queen's ball at Windsor: North hopes his Excellency will excuse him. Then follow eleven sides of paper with details of petty patronage and business of the Dublin Customs House:

> 'Notwithstanding the great aversion shown by both Houses of Parliament, I am afraid the length of this eternal war and the difficulty of devising new taxes will oblige me to propose in the next session an alteration with respect to Franking in England. The regulations for both countries will be most conveniently made at the same time.'

A little later he writes:

> 'When you hear of my voice having any voice

[1] Second son; 4th Earl (1761–1817). Retired from the Army as lieutenant-colonel. He wrote a play, 'The Kentish Baron,' which was acted.

(*sic*) in military promotion here, you may complain if you think I do not support you properly in Ireland.'[1]

Earlier in the year we find him presenting his compliments to Mr. Yorke and '. . . Mr. Johnson has been appointed to succeed Mr. Watts as Tidesman at Wisbech.'[2] To Lord Hardwicke he conveyed the King's permission for 'his passing in his carriage through all the gates into and out of the parks, except the Horse Guards.'[3] There is a legend of his meeting a similar application with the assurance, 'I can't do that; but I will make you an Irish peer if you like.' For this we can supply no reference. The story was told of Sir Robert Walpole,[4] and James I. said something of the same kind to his old nurse who begged him to make her son a gentleman. The Duke of Wellington said he always admired the 'expression attributed' to Charles II., that he could make a hundred noblemen but had not power to make a single gentleman.[5]

There is ample evidence of North's care in disposing of Crown patronage so as to conciliate as many of his supporters as possible. In this portion of his duties at all events he was not slothful. And he did not exclude from the scope of his good intentions the interests of his own family.

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34419. [2] *Ibid.* 35683. [3] *Ibid.* 3560.
[4] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 71.
[5] *Journal of Thomas Raikes*, iv. 310.

LORD NORTH TO LORD GUILFORD.

'*Downing Street, April* 25*th*, 1781.

'My Lord,—Lady North has informed you of the gracious intentions of His Majesty towards the Bishop of Worcester upon the death of the Bishop of Winchester, which, I believe, is not far distant. I own I was a little apprehensive of the Bishop of Lichfield and his claims, but the King intends to give him the See of Worcester and to appoint him Clerk of the Closet. We shall not I suppose be very unwilling to give him that part of the spoils of my Lord of Winchester. The King was, indeed, very gracious upon this point. Upon the first mention of the Bishop of Winchester's illness, he did not permit me to say a word in behalf of Brownlow, but recollecting, of his own accord, his former kind intentions, he told me that he destined Worcester for the Bishop of Winchester, if it would be agreeable to him to make the exchange. I ventured to assure his Majesty that the offer would be very acceptable, and hope that I shall not be disavow'd. Indeed, I have not, for a long time, been so well pleased with my situation as I was to-day, if it has contributed to this arrangement. Brownlow comes to the enjoyment of this dignity in the prime of his life, and I hope he will, by God's blessing, enjoy it long. He may be assured that his success has given me great comfort in a station which, for a good while past, has hardly afforded me any other.

'I ought to have been beforehand with your Lordship in my compliments upon your birthday, but, to say the truth, I really did not recollect the day till I was reminded of it by your Lordship's most kind congratulations. I feel deeply your very affectionate expressions, and this additional instance of your constant and unremitting goodness to me, which has been one of my principal

supports and comforts through life. Your partiality leads me to think that my conduct has been creditable to myself and beneficial to the Public. I own I am afraid it has been otherwise, but, if I have not done well in my situation, I can truly say it is a situation which I never sought, and I have been severely punished for all the harm I may have done by the increasing anxiety and uneasiness I have undergone.

'I am, with great respect, My Lord,

'Your most dutiful son,

'NORTH.'

Brownlow, it will be remembered, was the son of Lord Guilford by his second wife; and in contriving this promotion for his half-brother, North exhibited a capacity for diplomatic adroitness, if not an instinct of cunning, that must not be overlooked. The Archbishopric of York was vacant, and the King, as he knew well enough, had chosen his nominee. North with proper diffidence presumed to recommend his brother. The King was sorry that it was too late to consider this; but he would make up for it by bestowing the Winchester bishopric, when it should become vacant. Which is what North aimed at from the outset.[1] To set against this, however, we have Walpole's statement in December that North sought in vain to procure the appointment of Provost at Eton for his son's tutor, Dampier.

When Parliament met in February 1782, Lord George Germain announced his resignation. This

[1] Wraxall, iii. 147.

has been accounted for on various grounds: that he was sacrificed to save the Government from some portion of attack; that North tried to dissuade him; that North wanted to get rid of him as an obstinate colleague. Walpole says that during the holidays Dundas, the Lord Advocate, had insisted on the removal of Germain, and that the King reluctantly acceded to the demand: that Germain professed to have resigned already. Knowing, as we do, the temper of the King and his opinion of Dundas, it is not easy to accept this theory at all events. According to Walpole, again, when North finally brought himself to tell Germain that he must go, the answer was, 'You say I must go, my Lord. Very well: but pray why is your Lordship to stay?' To which North had no retort ready.

It need not be taken for granted that this was an indignant remonstrance. It was a reasonable question. It would seem illogical that Germain must go unless the war policy was to be abandoned, and North had not avowedly arrived at that resolution. But he was losing heart, and his uncompromising colleague worried and embarrassed him. We know at all events that in the debate upon Yorktown, North retired to the back benches when Germain was speaking for the Government. It is not inconsistent with the evidence to conclude that Germain perceived whither the current was running; that he saw surrender was inevitable; and as he was not pre-

pared to be a party to that, he made up his mind to escape.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be that North wanted Germain to go, but could not bring himself to take decisive measures. The King did not want him to go, but was ready to acquiesce, if only North would make up his mind. Germain was willing to go if he could have a peerage: meanwhile he complained, not without reason, that the Prime Minister was playing fast and loose with him. On December 26th, 1781, the King had written to North:

'46 min. pt. 8 a.m.

'Undoubtedly, if Sir Guy Carleton can be persuaded to go to America [as Commander-in-Chief] he is every way the best suited for the post. He and Lord G. Germain are incompatible. Lord George is certainly not unwilling to retire if he gets his object, which is a Peerage: no one can then say he is disgraced . . . and the appointment of Sir Guy Carleton . . . will appear without its being possible to be laid . . . to a change in my sentiments. . . . If Lord North agrees with me that, on the whole, it is best to gratify the wishes of Lord G. Germain . . . I desire he will immediately sound Mr. Jenkinson as to his succeeding him.'

On January 17th, 1782, he wrote again:

'. . . Lord North not having yet come to any decision concerning Lord G. Germain put me this day under much difficulty, he having put the question to me whether he was or was not to look on himself as Secretary of State and complained of Lord North's reception of Mr. Knox when sent to

ask him that question. . . . He spoke very candidly that if war was carried on with vigour, if steps were taken to strike a blow in the West Indies, he was ready to stay, and that separation with America was not adopted; but that he would never retract what he had said on that head.'

And on January 21st:

'. . . Undoubtedly the strange indecision on the subject of Lord G. Germain is not creditable and the more unpleasing to me, who wish ever to appear fair and open. . . . I shall only add that on one material point I shall ever coincide with Lord G. Germain, that is, against a separation from America, and that I shall never lose an opportunity of declaring that no consideration shall ever make me in the smallest degree an instrument in a measure that I am confident would annihilate the rank in which the British Empire stands among the European States, and would render my situation in this country below continuing an object to me.'

So much for the King. On January 20th North wrote to Germain from Sion Hill:

'I have just learnt with great surprise from Mr. Robinson that your lordship has been for two or three days past in constant expectation of hearing from me in consequence of orders which I am supposed to have received from the King and particularly that you understood the card sent on Friday to your lordship, desiring the honour of your company yesterday, to relate to the same business. My memory has for some years past been gradually growing so weak and has so often failed me that I durst not speak with the same confidence as I formerly did, but I give you my

word that I do not recollect having lately received any orders from his Majesty to confer with your lordship.' He adds that 'Yesterday's meeting was called at Sandwich's request, and was only in the order of official business.'

Finally we have the memorandum of Under-Secretary Knox which gives Germain's own version. Lord George had asked the King whether Carleton, with whom he was at enmity, was to succeed Clinton in America:

'His Majesty told him he could not yet tell him "for I really cannot get at the bottom of Lord North's intentions respecting America." . . . Lord George then told his Majesty that . . . he had come into office in the hope of being of service, and that if his Majesty found his going out would be of service, he was ready to take his leave. . . . I was desired to deliver a message to Lord North. . . . Lord North asked who told Lord G. Germain that he was thinking of . . . making any alteration in Administration. It was an alteration of measures not of men that was wanted. . . . Where was he to find taxes to produce 80,000*l*. He had engaged to the King and told the Cabinet last year he could support the war only one year more, and he had fulfilled his engagement and now he wished he was out. . . . I replied . . . take advantage of the disaster of the French fleet and your own superiority in the West Indies to ask France what she will have. You will do it with more dignity than you will next year if you can make no further exertion. He walked about the room and call'd for his post chaise which I took for a civil way of bidding me get out of the room and did so accordingly. On Thursday . . . the King received [Lord George] very kindly . . .

Lord George asked him plainly "Am I out?" "Out," replies the King, "what should make you suppose you were out?" . . . "Why then does not Lord North tell me what he intends?" . . . "He saw Knox," said the King. . . . "Yes . . . but instead of sending me an answer he called up his post chaise." Lord George then (said) . . . he was ready either to continue at all hazards or retire, as his Majesty thought proper. . . . The King answered, "Conduct like yours occasions a removal but to your own satisfaction." [Next day Lord North asked Lord George to call on him, but did not see him in private and said nothing] "Lord George came away in a monstrous passion and . . . immediately sat down to write to the King [to resign] . . . Robinson entreated him not to send the letter. . . . On Monday he received a very civil letter from Lord North. . . . On Tuesday Lord George went. . . . Lord North said it was impossible to continue the war: that America was lost. . . . Lord George offered to treat upon the *uti possidetis*, but that, Lord North said they would not accept; nothing but independence would do and that Lord George said would never be given by him, and therefore it such was his purpose, he must look out for another Secretary of State. . . . "And yet," says Lord North, "your being out of the way won't mend matters for the King is of the same opinion." . . . The King told [Lord George] that Lord North had spoken of the necessity of his going out because of his avowed principle of resisting treaty with America upon any footing but preservation of sovereignty. "If you mean by his going out," said the King, "to relinquish that principle, you must make other removes. . . . You must remove me." . . . Next day, as Lord North came out from the King, he said to Lord George: "My

Lord, your desire is the most proper and reasonable that can be, but the worst of it is, Jenkinson won't take your department." '[1]

Lord George decided to consider himself out.

This was on January 31st, 1782. The day before, Germain had written to North complaining that a week ago he had been promised a definite message for next day. Something must be done.

'I should think myself inexcusable if I did not in the strongest terms again beseech your lordship to dispose of me in that manner which may best answer your lordship's views for his Majesty's service and the public good.'[2]

He got no definite message after all; but he took the hint that was given, and accordingly informed Parliament that he was out. Opposition now turned their wrath upon Sandwich. His faults as First Lord were held up to execration more bitter even than the customary onslaughts upon North. He had visions of impeachment.

But for North the sands were running low and he knew it. He must have watched them with acquiescence; even impatience. His last pretence of hope had vanished. And it will be convenient here to give a month's diary of the House of Commons so that the sequence of events may be clear.

February 22nd.—Conway moved an address to the King praying him to stop the war. Rejected

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.
[2] *Idem*, Stopford Sackville Papers.

by one vote: 194 to 193. In this debate North was so much annoyed by the taunts of Barré that he pronounced his language to be 'uncivil, brutal, and insolent'; for which he was called to order. There was a long and unseemly wrangle, and in the end the Prime Minister was put to the indignity of a withdrawal and an apology.

February 27th.—Conway moved another resolution condemning the war. North demanded in his exasperation, should we withdraw our troops at once and make peace? And how could America make peace independently of France? This time the Government were beaten by nineteen. Conway's motion was carried by 234 to 215. An address was accordingly voted to the King; and a 'gracious reply' was returned in due course.

March 4th.—Conway moved an address to the King stating that the House of Commons would consider as his and their country's enemies all those who should advise a continuation of the war. Carried without a division. To this North's contribution was an assurance that

'so long as Parliament shall not think proper to remove me, either by a vote, or by wholly withdrawing from me their confidence, the hon. gentleman must excuse me if I determine to hold my situation.'[1]

March 5th.—The Attorney-General, on behalf of Government, introduced proposals for putting an end to the war. The best that North had to

[1] Wraxall, ii. 553.

say for a concession of so much importance was that he much doubted whether anything could be done; but that after the recent decisions of the House, he could not object to an attempt being made.

March 8th.—Lord John Cavendish moved that the war had cost 100,000,000*l.*, and that this was due to the want of foresight and ability of Ministers. Rejected by ten votes: 226 to 216.

March 15th.—Sir J. Rous moved a resolution of want of confidence. Rejected by nine votes: 236 to 227.

In the course of this debate North repeated his formula:

> 'I deny that the commencement [of the war] is any way to be attributed to his Majesty's present ministers. The stamp duty was repealed and the declaratory act passed before I was called to the Cabinet, though I voted for them both as a private member';[1]

which after all was an unconvincing apologia for his own contribution to the making of history. And he went on to throw out suggestions of a new coalition Government in which he would have no place.[2] Incidentally he was accused of having behaved treacherously to Germain; but there is no reason to doubt that he was ready to follow his noble friend out of office with a thankful heart.

Before the House rose Fox announced a similar resolution for the 20th in Lord Surrey's name.

[1] Wraxall, ii. 583. [2] *Pictorial History*, v. 481.

20th.—Lord Surrey rose to move. North interrupted with the announcement of his resignation, and therewith the end.

Conway, who led this victorious attack, had at least the merit of consistency. It was on his motion that the Stamp Act had been repealed in 1766. He afterwards remained in office under Grafton only on the understanding that he was free to vote against the Government as often as he liked. He foretold then that if we pushed the Americans to the point of quarrel, they would have the support of France and Spain. When war came, he compared the case of British officers on service to the employment of French officers at the massacre of St. Bartholomew. In spite of these very definite opinions he was ineffective and feeble. He gave 'some kind of faint and futile opposition to Charles Townshend's plan.'[1] Lord John Russell gives the vacillation of Conway as one of the immediate causes of the war.[2] Fox himself propounded the paradox that Conway had been as much to blame as any man for bringing on the war; yet no man had acted throughout with more upright intentions or more disinterested integrity. We hear of his virtues continually from Walpole. He certainly relied much on Walpole's advice, and as Walpole was often inconsistent and capricious, and generally spiteful, it follows that he was not instructed upon generous or sagacious principles. On July 24th, 1776, Walpole writes

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 54. [2] *Ibid.* 58.

to Mr. Cole that he has been to see 'General Conway, who has had a little attack of the paralytic kind'; but there is nothing in this to supply, on physical or intellectual grounds, a general excuse for infirmity of character. Nor should we hesitate to credit him with a reputation, by general consent, as an honest and well-meaning man, if we did not come across such a passage as this in a letter from Temple to W. W. Grenville of February 1783:

> 'General Conway has proposed to me a most abominable job; namely that I would let him sell his Clerkship in Hanaper to Captain Ormsby, which I have refused in civil but peremptory terms. This is truly a Conway.'[1]

His lack of political acumen is made manifest by Shelburne's confidence to Fox in later years, that Conway never perceived he had a casting vote between the Shelburne and Rockingham factions in the Cabinet of 1782.

Such was the man that threw the first stone of the volley that was to drive North out of office. North was longing for release, but he hovered and wavered until the last moment. On March 19th, however, he collected all his energy and for once took a momentous and binding resolution. He definitely tendered his resignation. The story goes that the King received it as he was leaving Windsor Castle to hunt. He put the paper into his pocket; said he would see his minister in London next day;

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

and rode off. Presently he turned to the Duke of Dorset and Lord Hinchinbrooke and blurted out, 'Lord North has sent me in his resignation, but I shall not accept it.' He must have known that this was an empty boast. It is true he had kept North in harness, despite his restiveness, for months and even years. He may have been unwilling to admit that his limit of exaction had been reached; but he could not have been blind to the writing on the wall, nor so obstinate as to misread it.

Next morning they met, and North stood his ground. 'Remember, my Lord, it is you who desert me, not I you.' North probably cared little which way it was so long as he was out. He hastened to the House eager to unburden his mind. Lord Surrey was there, ready with his motion, and he was not inclined to be interfered with. There was much confusion, with shouts of 'Order.' Then some one moved that Lord Surrey be heard. North jumped up to speak on the motion and got out what he had to say. It has been alleged that he intended to make a set oration becoming the occasion, but was prevented by the state of the House. A foreign gentleman who was there said the scene was more appropriate to a Polish Diet than an English House of Commons.[1] But North managed to say something. He pledged himself to the House that

'he would not run away . . . he should remain to be found as much as ever, and would not on any

[1] *Diary of Spencer Stanhope, M.P. for Hull.*

account avoid any enquiry that might be thought necessary with regard to him.'

Having thus eased his mind of the heavy and detested burden that he had borne so long, he turned, in the lightness of his heart, to crack a couple of jokes. 'Come home and dine,' he said to one friend, 'and get the credit of having dined with a fallen minister on the day of his dismissal.' A long debate was expected and members had sent their carriages away. North, knowing better, had kept his. As he entered it with a friend or two, he turned to his disconsolate neighbours and said, 'I protest, gentlemen, this is the first time in my life I ever derived any personal advantage from being in the secret.' One who dined with him that night related that 'no man ever showed more calmness, cheerfulness, and serenity. The temper of his whole family was the same.'[1] And so he left office with a laugh and a light heart.

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 277.

CHAPTER XIV

The Rockingham Administration

NORTH, then, was out of office and his troubles were ended for a while. Such compassion as one may have felt for him ought now to be transferred to the King's account. It is true that his Majesty was not unprepared for the event. As early as March 11th he had reopened negotiations with Rockingham[1] through Thurlow. Rockingham gave as his conditions, independence for America, for to this principle he had reverted; and no reserved veto; an Establishment Bill; a great part of the Contractors Bill; Customs House and Excise Bill; peace in general; economy in every branch. He further made the significant observation that he hoped the King's proposal of an Administration on a broad bottom did not mean the retention of ministers who had been objectionable. It seems that Thurlow again proved himself to be a clumsy or a half-hearted ambassador. Rockingham complained that his views were never properly represented to the King and that he was given no assurance of his master's confidence. This, perhaps, was not altogether Thurlow's fault:

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 452, *sq.*

that confidence did not in fact exist. Thurlow, moreover, was not in love with Rockingham's programme. Negotiations were broken off on March 18th.

The King meanwhile kept up an agitated correspondence with North. On March 17th he wrote:

> 'I am resolved not to throw myself into the hands of Opposition at all events, and certainly if things go as they seem to tend, know what my conscience as well as honour dictates, as the only way left for me.'

On the 19th he wrote again:

> 'After having yesterday in the most solemn manner assured you that my sentiments of honour will not permit me to send for any of the leaders of Opposition and personally treat with them, I could not but be hurt at your letter of last night. Till I have heard what the Chancellor has done, from his own mouth, I shall not take any step; and if you resign before I have decided what I will do, you will certainly for ever forfeit my regard.'

One may safely believe that North's hold upon the King's regard was already precarious. Lord John Russell declares that

> 'the King never felt any attachment to Lord North, and from the moment he ceased to be a convenient tool, his easy, benevolent good-nature provoked a master who was fretting with pride, anger, and resentment.'[1]

This is surely untrue. The King was well aware

[1] *Life of Fox*, ii. 5.

of North's dilatory and temporising habits. He was often angry with him. Now he was savage and resentful. North said of him that although on former occasions he had commanded his temper, he was no longer able to restrain it. But he had been, and still was, fond of the man. If he ever had a friend it was North; and until the coalition with Fox over-strained his indulgence, he was able to write without hypocrisy as he did on March 27th: 'I ever did and ever shall look on you as a friend as well as a faithful servant.'

And he was not without justification when he grew impatient. After he had been forced to yield and accept Rockingham as his minister, he wrote to North (April 18th) to complain that the account books of the Secret Service had only been made up to April 5th, 1780:

> '. . . As for the immense expense of the general election, it has quite surprised me; the sum is at least double of what was expended any other general election since I came to the throne, and by the fate of last month proves most uselessly. . . . I am sorry to see there has been such a strange waste of money.'

North was undoubtedly neglectful and careless in matters where sharp attention was required; but he was not incorrigibly idle. Perhaps he deserved Eden's rebuke for being too much occupied with trifles. Of this lighter form of industry there is evidence enough, sometimes rather comical. On March 8th, in the thick of the

crisis, he was able to write to Lord Carlisle in Dublin of

'our very busy state. . . . I am to open to-morrow taxes for the sum of 800,000*l.* and upwards. Notwithstanding the hurry of my present situation I could not hear of the death of the Bishop of Clogher without taking the liberty of reminding your Excellency of the Bishop of Raphoe, whom I had the honour of mentioning to your Excellency. . . .'[1]

At the same time he is involved in a correspondence with Lord Pelham about the office of Distributor of Stamps at Lewes. He is charged with having given the nomination to Robinson, who, as things go now, would in fact have had the appointment at his own disposal as Secretary to the Treasury.

'What must Lord Pelham's friends at Lewes think of this treatment?' writes the unhappy Lord, 'or how can Lord Pelham expect them to support Government after this strong preference, if Lord North gives way to Mr. Robinson.'

In another letter he dolefully insists:

'I shall not be able to show my face again in the town of Lewes as a supporter of Government if you give way on this occasion to Mr. Robinson.'

In a third letter he says he has applied to Mr. Robinson for a boatman's place at sea. Very likely compliance with this request pacified him, for North now writes begging him to get the votes of certain reverend gentlemen in the neighbourhood for a Government candidate at Cambridge.[2]

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34418. [2] *Ibid.* 33090.

Until the last moment the King hoped against hope. We have seen that as late as March 19th he protested against North's resignation, at all events until he should have made arrangements for the future. But he was still in search of a successor when North ceased to be minister. He turned to Shelburne, who was certainly not lacking in ambition or enterprise, but felt that he had no sufficient following to give a prospect of success. Moreover, he was bound by his engagement of 1779 to waive his claim to the Treasury in favour of Rockingham, in the event of their coming into office together. For every reason he had better bide his time. Lord Gower was sent for; but he had no heart for the attempt, and he declined at once. The King, determined not to receive Rockingham into his presence, now sent Shelburne to deal with him. 'You can stand without me, but I could not without you,' was Shelburne's candid admission to his rival. The difficulties that arose were not insuperable and the new Government was formed within a week. On March 27th North wrote to the Privy Seal (Dartmouth) requesting him to

'attend at St. James this morning before the Levée to deliver up the Privy Seal which will I believe be put immediately into the hands of the Duke of Grafton.'

On the same day Bathurst, Lord President of the Council, received two letters; one from North

similar to this: another from the King, who wrote:

'The conduct of the House of Commons, not either my inclination, or perhaps what I must think the real interest of my Kingdom, obliges me to the mortifying step of seeing my whole ministry, except the Lord Chancellor, removed.'

Bathurst is therefore to summon the Privy Council.[1]

These formalities having been duly performed, North himself moved to the Opposition benches where, we are told, his presence seemed as unnatural as that of a fish is supposed to be outside its proper element. He had taken his place there for life apparently, Walpole wrote; and yielding to instinctive liking for the individual, now that he was no longer obnoxious as a politician, he declares that North was 'the most popular man in England even after his fall'—a popularity only destroyed by the coalition; so he was to write next year.[2]

North certainly did not fall without a comforter or friend. Keith from Vienna wrote to him as follows:

'*Vienna, April* 13, 1782.

'Your superior abilities and unsullied integrity deserved that success that fortune has denied, and you are perhaps the only Minister to whom, upon his quitting the helm, an honest man may say, without the fear of offending, what I now add, that I hope your noble and patriotic feelings will find in a constant series of national successes and

[1] Cirencester House Papers, unpublished.
[2] Letters, viii. 347; ix. 114.

prosperity under the new Administration the best and most solid comfort that a mind like yours can enjoy.'[1]

And his spirits were not unduly dashed. When the names of the new ministers were published, he declared that he had been accused often enough of duplicity and bad faith, but he had never been guilty of such a falsehood as was to be found in the *Gazette*; it announced that his Majesty had been *pleased* to appoint them. And he was not stripped of all his influence. Elizabeth, Countess Cornwallis, wrote to her son William on April 2nd:

'Lord North is well off: he has the Cinque Ports for life made up to him 4000*l.* a year, and this likewise gives him the bringing in of four Members of Parliament.'[2]

So that he could now exercise the privilege of borough patronage which he had hitherto turned to account by means of others. And his future action was soon the subject of speculation amongst politicians. On July 6th Knox wrote to Sackville:

'I have a whisper that Lord North has promised to support the new arrangement upon the principle of withstanding the demand of independency.'[3]

Yet he was by no means free from care. He was not indifferent to the grudges and resentment, and the serious thoughts of vengeance, that were

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35525.
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., Wykeham Martin Papers.
[3] *Idem*, Stopford Sackville Papers.

lurking or avowed amongst his opponents. Alderman Sawbridge and Lord Surrey gave notices of motion attacking him and Robinson: this alarmed him. In a letter to Lord Hardwicke he appeals for the help of all faithful followers: 'I shall be in great danger unless supported by my friends,' he writes.[1] And we shall see that this conviction, which took deep and abiding root in his mind, was to betray him into the disastrous alliance of next year.

The new Government were not solidly united. Fox foresaw that there was to be one party belonging to the King, the other to the Public.[2] Of the former were Shelburne, Thurlow, Grafton, Camden, and Dunning: of the latter, Rockingham, Richmond, Fox, John Cavendish, and Keppel; with Conway in the position of independent arbiter, of which, according to Shelburne, he was never conscious. Before they had been in office three months, Fox was complaining that Shelburne was as much a King's man as ever North had been.[3] It is not difficult to tell which faction King George was likely to prefer. Under pressure he had been forced to accept from Rockingham conditions that he hated. Only in the case of household appointments had he succeeded in making any resistance.

'I have to the last fought for individuals, but the number I have saved, except my bed chamber, is incredibly few,' he wrote to North on March 27th:

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35424. [2] *Life*, Lord J. Russell, i. 283.
[3] *Grafton Memoirs*.

'even the Duke of Montrose [Governor to the Prince of Wales] was strongly run at.'

The opening of the rift in the Cabinet was due to Dunning. He was Shelburne's man and Shelburne meant to provide for him. He was to have a fat pension; but having scruples about taking public money and doing nothing to earn it, he had aspired to be Lord Chancellor.[1] Here, however, the King had carried his point and Thurlow remained upon the Woolsack. Dunning had to be content with the Duchy of Lancaster; but at Shelburne's instigation he was created Lord Ashburton. Rockingham resolved that this would never do, and demanded of the King an immediate peerage for some one of his own naming. Having nobody particular in mind, he produced the ex-Speaker, Sir Fletcher Norton, who, to the surprise of himself and everybody else, suddenly became Lord Grantley.

The new Government damaged their reputation at the outset. They had preached economy in opposition: it had been included in the conditions upon which Rockingham took office: Burke, the high priest of the faith, sat now upon the Treasury bench: yet one of their first acts was to bestow a pension of 4000*l.* a year for life on Dunning, and another of 2000*l.* on Barré. Both these men were of the Shelburne faction; and a third friend of his had to be provided for. Lord Barrington was got out of the Post Office with a

[1] *Life of Shelburne*, Fitzmaurice, ii. 89.

pension of 2000*l.* a year, so that a place might be found for Lord Tankerville.[1] And these charges were created at a moment when, according to Cavendish, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, 100,000,000*l.* was the debt incurred through the American war—when, according to later computation, the liability was nearer 115,000,000*l.*[2]

It may be said that Rockingham was not responsible. Shelburne was to blame. Rockingham objected on personal as well as on financial grounds; but his colleague was too much for him. The jealousy between the two men was acute. Shelburne, although he had not accepted the post of first minister in form, was determined to be nothing less in fact. Rockingham not unnaturally resented this. On April 5th the King wrote to Thurlow that Rockingham had been to him with the object of getting all the patronage into his own hands to the exclusion of Shelburne: Shelburne, in turn, had expressed his uneasiness lest the King should accede to this importunity and reduce him to the status of a Secretary of State acting under Rockingham.

> 'I have, therefore, drawn up the enclosed rough draft,' says the King, 'which it has been my object to render equally civil to both and leave the further discussion to themselves.'[3]

Rockingham had at all events obtained personal access to the King, and in the month of May

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 384. [2] *Political History*, x. 280.
[3] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2232.

favoured him with a memorandum on the situation which was in effect a House of Lords oration against the late Government. This was certainly not the way to remove his master's prejudice.

The outstanding feature in the record of this ministry was discord: against this there was little solid achievement to be placed. Let it, then, be set down to their credit that, in spite of their profligate generosity to their friends, they succeeded in making some regulations for the restriction of Civil List pensions and sinecure offices: also that they gave effect to their intentions of excluding Government contractors from Parliament and of disfranchising revenue officers.

In presenting some account of Charles Fox an outline was given of his share in the conduct of business, and Rodney's case was quoted. Rodney had won his famous victory on April 12th, when the Government was a fortnight old. He had dealt de Grasse a deadly blow at St. Lucia, captured his flagship, and saved Jamaica. Before the news reached London he had been superseded. Honourable recognition was not denied him; but he was not restored to his command. The public were ill content, and made the admiral their hero. When he came home he learnt of his popularity from an innkeeper at Bristol, who refused payment of his bill: 'Your lordship forgets that you paid it beforehand on the twelfth of April.' Here was a current of sentiment running sharply counter to the Government. In small matters there was the

episode of the reinstatement by Burke of the two clerks who had lately been dismissed from his office for fraud.

In the matter of Ireland they were not fortunate. The American war had denuded Ireland of her military establishment. There had arisen a self-appointed garrison of volunteers, who passed by rapid stages from a defensive to an offensive force. Instead of taking orders from the Government, they began to dictate them. Catching the infection of revolt from America, they set up in 1780 a demand for independence. When Rockingham's Government came in, they were not prepared to resist, but they made their concessions clumsily. On February 22nd Grattan had moved in favour of absolute independence: yet the Irish Government contrived to carry an amendment for postponing a decision.[1] On April 8th Eden moved in the English House of Commons to repeal the Act of 6 George I. by which Great Britain assumed the right to legislate for Ireland. Carlisle was still Lord-Lieutenant, and Eden was his Chief Secretary: his action was therefore startling. It certainly startled Fox, who protested against such reckless and improper haste, and defeated the motion. But he was not to be allowed much respite. The Duke of Portland went over a week later to replace Carlisle in Dublin and, in spite of his intentions of repression, he had to report that on April 16th Grattan had

[1] *End of the Irish Parliament*, J. R. Fisher, 123.

carried unanimously an address praying for independence. On May 17th Fox, in an uncompromising Home Rule speech,[1] moved to repeal the Act of George I.; to give up the appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords; the restrictive authority of the Privy Council; and the Mutiny Act.[2] This he called 'establishing the connection between this kingdom and the kingdom of Ireland upon a solid and permanent basis.' According to Wraxall, this repetition of the surrender already made to America, coming as it did before the consoling news of Rodney's victory had been received, was a consummation much less to be desired: 'perhaps this day may be esteemed the point of our lowest depression as a nation between 1775 and 1783,' says he.[3]

It cannot be disputed that the action of Government was a surrender to the forces of agitation. They found they could not make effective resistance. Fox doubtless made the best of a bad business when he chose the inspiring theme of Ireland's rights and the redress of grievances; but this was an impromptu performance. Ireland had not figured in the list of Rockingham's proposals. Fox could only talk of suddenness and indecent haste when Eden presented Grattan's case to the House of Commons. He very soon learnt from Portland that something must be done, and done quickly.

[1] *Life*, Lord John Russell, i. 294.
[2] *End of the Irish Parliament*, 129. [3] iii. 94.

The winners, like good tacticians, did not rest content with half a victory. They followed the yielding enemy at once. If Grattan had been satisfied, there was Flood ready to usurp the lead; and with him was no moderation. The extreme party professed to fear that what Parliament had done, Parliament might undo. They demanded 'a full, complete, absolute, and perpetual surrender of British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland.' Next year Shelburne's Government passed a measure confirming the principle of complete renunciation. Temple had succeeded Portland as Lord-Lieutenant. He began by attempting to get control of Irish parties by diplomatic adroitness; but he was speedily reduced to urging on his Government the necessity for speedy concession.[1] He made the best cover that he could for his retreat. He wrote that 'the account must be considered closed in 1782,' and that the new bill was 'simply a confirmation of the settlement of 1782.' He deprecated further concession:[2] but there was, in truth, no further concession to make. No wonder poor King George complained to North in November 1783, 'Now Ireland is in fact disunited from this kingdom . . . the sad measures that have been adopted.'

Fox could plume himself on having been the first to give 'justice to Ireland'; but he was by no means as bold and plain-spoken about Ireland as

[1] *End of the Irish Parliament*, 143.
[2] Buckingham's *Memoirs of Courts and Cabinets of George III.*, i. 266–7.

he was wont to be in the case of America or France. In a long letter to Northington, the Lord-Lieutenant, of November 1st, 1783, he used the obscure sentence :

'You know the history of the bill [of last year] and the stage in which it was when we came in, otherwise I am sure that it never would have passed—at least I am sure it would not without the strongest opposition from the Duke of Portland and me.'

One is puzzled by the speculation as to what stage he means and what he would have opposed. He opposed Eden's proposal of repeal: then he moved and carried it. One is inclined to infer that the policy of the late Government had been inadequate and that he and Portland must have gone further; yet he now writes to Northington insisting on the necessity of curbing the arrogance of the volunteers; of refusing to consider further concessions to Ireland; and to regard the legislation of 1782 as a final settlement.

As to the policy preceding 1782: we know that North made a successful attempt in 1780 to remove some of the restrictions and impediments from which Irish trade was suffering: but we may take it that North was a convinced unionist. In November 1781 Eden had written to him that in Dublin they were 'an unarmed government of an armed people . . . like Daniel in the Den of Lions.'[1] North in his reply puts a limit on the favours he is ready to confer on Ireland:

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34418.

'Since I have been at the head of the Treasury I have given various advantages to the Irish Government which they never enjoyed before. Besides abstaining from ever granting an Irish Pension for a British Ministerial purpose I have given up to Ireland two Commissioners of the Revenue and one Vice-Treasurer. . . . But when it was proposed to come upon the King's *British* Revenue for the expenses of the Government of Ireland, I own I thought it most dangerous to pass the line. . . . Lord Macartney told Robinson that in Lord Townshend's time they continued to obtain in a private manner such small supplies as were necessary for the ordinary conduct of Government, and yet of such a nature as could not properly be divulged.'[1]

His views upon Irish independence are plainly set out in his speech of August 21st, 1785, on Pitt's abortive scheme for commercial intercourse between the two islands:

'So there is an end of this famous Commercial Treaty! I am glad of it, as I am sure it would not have been the foundation of cordiality, but the source of much mischief to both Kingdoms. I am sorry, however, to perceive that there prevails a most violent, discontented, wrong-headed spirit in Ireland: that they still (*sic*) under the dominion of certain mischievous words such as *Independence, Constitutional Rights*, &c., words of precious estimation when rightly applied, but which seem to set the whole Irish Nation in a ferment. . . . Those who are possessed of the present weight in Ireland appear to be more jealous of the power and intentions of Great Britain than sensible how necessary it is for their own security and welfare

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34418.

to unite and connect the two Kingdoms by closer ties.'

We have anticipated events so as to obtain some idea of the progress of Irish politics. Let us now go back and follow the fortunes of Rockingham's Cabinet. They were emphatically pledged to retrenchment and reform and, as we have seen, they carried enough legislation to justify them in claiming to have kept their word. But their first and most obvious mission was to come to terms with America and contrive a general peace. The third, or Colonial, Secretaryship of State was abolished. The old division of North and South was not revived: Fox became Foreign Secretary; Shelburne, Home Secretary, with charge of the Colonies.

Fox lost no time in adopting the policy which he had designed for putting pressure on France. He aimed at detaching Holland from the alliance; and at the same time making friends with the armed neutrality of the Northern Powers, by frankly accepting their principles of maritime law. Holland was to be accommodated: Russia and Prussia were to be conciliated. Out of this ingenious device came nothing; and Paris was made the scene of direct negotiation. And if there was rivalry between Rockingham and Shelburne, it was of no account in comparison with the jealousy that existed between Shelburne and Fox. It must be understood that Fox, as Foreign Secretary, was entitled to deal with all foreign

belligerent Powers. Shelburne, as Home and Colonial Secretary, had to do with the American Colonies unless and until they should be recognised as independent States. Much, therefore, depended upon how and when independence was to be conceded, and when American negotiations were to pass consequently out of the hands of Shelburne and into the hands of Fox. Franklin was an old friend of Shelburne's. Before the change of Government, a friend of both in Paris had suggested that the American agent should open communications, and he presently brought over a letter for Shelburne, who had meanwhile come into office. Shelburne at once sent over a friend of his own, Oswald, on a private mission. Oswald met Franklin on April 12th, 1782, and a long conversation followed. Franklin made the daring stipulation that terms of peace should include the surrender of Canada. Out of Canadian crown rents compensation might be provided for Americans, who had suffered for their loyalty to King George. On the other hand it was suggested that England should promise compensation for all damage done to American property during the operations of war. These were to be offered as on England's own initiative and to be welcomed as what we call 'graceful concessions.'[1]

Oswald came home with Franklin's own memorandum of this conversation, and a letter. Shelburne read the memorandum ; gave it back to

[1] Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, ii. 123.

Oswald to be restored to Franklin; and held his tongue. The letter he laid before the Cabinet, who agreed on April 23rd that Oswald should be entrusted with a definite commission to negotiate for a general peace through Franklin. At the same time Fox was authorised to send an envoy of his own, Thomas Grenville,[1] to enter into similar relations with Vergennes, the French minister. Shelburne admitted in a letter to Franklin (April 28th) that negotiations with France were no part of his business. That did not prevent Fox from complaining of his interference in matters outside his province and of his 'duplicity of conduct.' It is not surprising to find Grenville writing to Fox, 'I cannot fight a daily battle with Mr. Oswald and his secretary'; or Fox telling Grenville that he and his friends, Rockingham and Richmond, are 'as full of indignation as one might reasonably expect honest men to be.' It was believed, with every probability of truth, that Franklin was playing off one envoy against the other.

The problem upon which the Cabinet were divided was the moment and method to be chosen for recognising American independence. Fox would have it immediate and unconditional; partly on principle; partly in order to have the management of the entire negotiation in his own hands. Shelburne and his portion of the Cabinet preferred to reserve the final concession as some-

[1] Brother of Temple and W. W. Grenville.

thing to bargain with in the discussion of terms Shelburne had by this time abandoned the Chatham paradox that America must be conciliated without any grant of independence. In March 1778 he had spoken upon North's conciliation proposals thus: 'The moment that the independence of America is agreed to by our Government, the sun of Britain is set': if ever this surrender should be made, he hoped the House would call for justice on those who had been the occasion of it. He was now prepared to incur this responsibility, and only hesitated in his choice of opportunity. His biographer makes no unreasonable claim when he says that Shelburne converted the King. Independence was to be the dreadful price offered to America for peace, wrote George III. on May 25th, 1782. Shelburne, according to Fox, had become as much a King's man as North had ever been. Undoubtedly the King looked on him as a buffer between himself and the Rockingham faction, if not actually his ally in opposition to them. He would have been more than human if he had not felt a secret satisfaction in seeing the minister, whom he had been reluctantly forced to accept, enduring some of the agonies that can encompass alike the Treasury and the Throne. George was too good a patriot to contemplate for a moment a scheme for injuring his Government at the cost of his country's good: but he believed with all the strength of his stubborn conviction that his minister was going to

do his country harm, and in Shelburne he reposed such hope and faith as he could retain. It was averred by Sheridan and others that the King was purposely encouraging dissension in his Cabinet.[1] If so, it was because he thought the Shelburne faction represented the less disastrous policy and principles. If, after all, Shelburne assured him that the game was lost, and independence was no longer to be resisted, he must have felt that there was no quarter left in which he could find further cover or defence: Shelburne was the best of a bad lot.

It is not clear why Shelburne kept from Fox and the Cabinet all knowledge of Franklin's private memorandum. He could not be bound by any honourable understanding in such a matter. He was certainly not disposed to accept Franklin's terms. He would not hear of the surrender of Canada: he was at present determined to secure protection for American loyalists without such heroic conditions.

The bill by which the King was to be authorised to make peace did not pass the House of Commons until May 30th. Shelburne was therefore within his rights when he dealt with American affairs. But if his reticence was justifiable, it was neither politic nor, in the end, advantageous. Grenville, Fox's envoy, may have been an inexperienced diplomatist, but he knew his limitations and was careful. Shelburne's man, Oswald, appears to

[1] Buckingham's *Memoirs*, i. 37.

have lacked the most elementary knowledge and instinct appropriate to his mission. He candidly told Franklin that the Government knew they were at the mercy of America and must make peace on any terms.[1] He offered no objection to the suggested surrender of Canada.[2] Finally he blurted out the whole story to Grenville, who at once reported it to Fox; adding, which may or may not have been the case, that the secret which had been withheld from the Cabinet, had been shared with the King. Franklin, he pointed out, would naturally make the most of the openings given him by Oswald: Grenville's own position was undermined: he urged the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam to supersede both his dreadful colleague and himself.[3] This communication of course heated ten times the fire of Fox's indignation. He rejected the proposal to appoint Fitzwilliam: that would not prevent Shelburne from intriguing: Grenville must remain to act for Fox, and at all events keep him informed of the enemy's movements.

A rupture could not long be postponed. On May 23rd the Cabinet agreed to negotiate direct with the Americans on the basis of independence. On the 30th the bill giving the King authority to act received the royal assent. Fox claimed that the colonies had now passed under his control: nor was his pretence unreason-

[1] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 139. [2] Lecky, v. 153.
[3] June 10th, 1782. *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 312.

able. Vergennes was bent upon making the French and American causes one and indivisible. It was manifest that the Americans would claim to be recognised as an independent nation before they would consider terms. There was good reason for ending the present dual control, and placing the negotiations under the authority of one department. On June 30th Fox brought on a crisis. He moved in the Cabinet that independence should be granted even without any preliminaries of peace, and without any conditions whatever. He was supported by Richmond, Cavendish, and Keppel: six voted with Shelburne; and Fox announced his intention of resigning.

It will be observed that Fox had not the support of Rockingham. Rockingham was not there. At the moment he lay dying, and next day, July 1st, he was dead. Within a week, Shelburne was Prime Minister and Fox was no longer in office.

It cannot be said that Fox comes out of this ordeal with conspicuous credit. He had made no way at all towards bringing the European allies into the sphere of accommodation. As for America, he could only recommend the crude principle of total surrender. Shelburne thought otherwise. If he must yield, he would do so on the least damaging conditions. He was in no hurry. He perceived that there was room for a wedge to be driven in between the French and the Americans, and before inviting them to fling themselves

together into his arms, he would see whether he could not make something of a bargain in a bad case. *Divide et impera* was his maxim. Fox may have had an honest desire to be personally responsible for concluding the peace, for which he had clamoured so vehemently: but that was no excuse for dangerous impetuosity. And if his impetuosity was dangerous in its political aspect, it now reacted disastrously on his private fortunes. It was no doubt very wrong that Shelburne should have been his opponent rather than his ally; but the fact being so, it remains that Shelburne outmanœuvred him in tactics and outvoted him in council. Fox was beaten and he left the field in the possession of the enemy. It was a mortal wound to his career. It is true he was back in office next year, but not without loss of reputation and not with prospect of enduring strength. It may be said that he could never get on with Shelburne; but that is to admit that he could not get the better of Shelburne. It may be said that he could never have served harmoniously with Pitt; but that is to allow that he could not hold his own with Pitt. And it has been recorded that he was not accompanied in his resignation by the preponderating element of the Cabinet. The result of it all was that Fox had tried conclusions with Shelburne and had failed. He had tested his own power, political and personal, and found it wanting. He did not demolish the Government: he condemned himself to opposition for practically all the

rest of his days: and he made way for a new rival who was to soar straightway into assured pre-eminence. It was a melancholy collapse.[1]

It is recorded on the authority of Fitzpatrick that Fox was prepared to stay if Cavendish were made Secretary of State: but Cavendish was reluctant, and Fox was not whole-hearted, and there was no serious attempt to repair the breach. Shelburne had no hesitation now in becoming first minister, and the King had no hesitation in appointing him. From the Cabinet there came a protest redolent of latter-day Liberalism. It was contended that the King should have waited for advice, and permitted the Government to choose their own leader. Grafton complained that 'the recommendation should have come from His Majesty's servants in council.' He had a further substantial grievance in the appointment of Bishop Barrington instead of Bishop Hinchcliffe to the see of Salisbury.[2] But Shelburne was in the winning vein and carried all before him. Thomas Townshend and Grantham succeeded Shelburne and Fox as Secretaries of State. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, in place of Cavendish, came William Pitt—and Shelburne's Cabinet was complete.

[1] *Life of Fox*, Lord J. Russell, i. 323. [2] *Memoirs*, 325.

CHAPTER XV

The Shelburne Administration

LORD BEACONSFIELD described Shelburne as 'one of the suppressed characters of English history.'[1] Having taken pains to study his career, he arrived at the conclusion that he was 'the ablest and most accomplished statesman of the eighteenth century.' He believed that Shelburne had imbibed much of his political sagacity from the teachings of his father-in-law, Carteret; but here he was wrong: Shelburne married Carteret's daughter after her father's death. The two men only met once; and then Shelburne was a boy.[2] Walter Bagehot, amongst his characters,[3] sums up Shelburne thus:

> 'A politician who it is not difficult to describe, but whom it is difficult really to understand . . . a "reputed thief" . . . every one always said he was dishonest, but no particular act of dishonesty has ever been brought against him.'

Horace Walpole said his falsehood was so constant and notorious that it was his profession rather than his instrument. Grafton tells of Shelburne's desire to work in harmony with him and Camden:

[1] *Sybil,* chapter iii. [2] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne,* i. 13.
[3] *Biographical Studies.*

'But he soon found that our views were with the public, while his own were too much directed to personal ambition.' [1]

W. W. Grenville wrote to Lord Temple :

'Either Lord Shelburne is (not a dissembler, but) the most abandoned and direct liar on the face of the earth, or he is deceived himself too grossly to be imagined, or the whole world besides is deceived.' [2]

After the peace of 1763, Shelburne had been accused of treachery by Henry Fox. Fox wanted to keep the Paymastership and have a peerage as well. Shelburne let the King understand that a peerage would induce Fox to resign his office. It was a mean squabble. Bute described it as a pious fraud on Shelburne's part : 'I can see the fraud plainly enough,' said Fox, 'but where is the piety ?' One need not waste too much sympathy on Henry Fox ; but his son naturally took his part, and came later into political alliance with Shelburne with a hostile bias.

Shelburne was commonly known as Malagrida. A contemporary squib had compared him to the Spanish Jesuit. 'I never could conceive the reason why they call you Malagrida,' said Oliver Goldsmith one day, 'for Malagrida was a very good sort of man.'

There is no denying, then, that he was neither liked nor trusted by men. And he was not always successful with women. The Princess Dowager

[1] *Memoirs*, 319. [2] December 15th, 1782.

said he was the only person in the world more guilty of habitual deception than Lord Holland. After his first wife's death he became engaged to Miss Molesworth; but she 'found that she had such an antipathy to him' that she threw him over. However, he found another lady willing to console him in Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick, and it is only right to say that, as far as we can judge from Lord Fitzmaurice's biography, in domestic life he was amiable enough. The allegation that he made money in the City out of his official knowledge of peace negotiations in 1782, may be dismissed with those which were usually made on such occasions against one person or another.

Shelburne was encouraged to enter public life by Bute; but it was not until 1763 that he held his first office as President of the Board of Trade under Grenville. He was dissatisfied with his powers here, and complained that the Secretary of State interfered too much in colonial affairs. When the overtures to Chatham in August failed, he resigned. He now attached himself to Chatham: refused with him to join Rockingham in 1765: and under him became Secretary of State in 1766. His wishes were at once attended to, and now colonial business was placed entirely in his hands.[1]

Shelburne throughout was a friend of the Americans. He disliked and opposed all proposals of taxation: he thought the necessary revenue

[1] The Life by Lord Fitzmaurice is the principal authority throughout this account of Shelburne.

could be obtained from quit-rents on Government lands. He objected to the punishment of rioters in 1767; and only consented on the ground that one colony might suffer for all, and be a warning and restraint to its neighbours. He disapproved of the Mutiny Act. He welcomed the reply of the Assembly of Virginia to Lord North's proposals in 1774 with as much sympathy and joy as ever Fox lavished on a success of the enemy's forces in the field. He adhered, however, to the doctrine that independence must never be conceded, so long as Chatham lived to preserve it. He wrote to Chatham in 1774 that with conciliatory treatment the Americans would be anxious to return to submission; and this faith he professed to hold until 1782.

He was also on the side of Wilkes. Alone in the Cabinet he opposed his expulsion from Parliament in 1768. He was at issue with Grafton, who called upon Chatham to dismiss him. Chatham stood by his friend; but in October Shelburne resigned, and remained in opposition until 1782. Grafton wrote that in 1774 'we became good political friends and remained so with the exception of a few immaterial squabbles to the end of his life': but the story of 1782–3 does not convey the impression of very sincere love and affection.

Shelburne's biographer admits that his manner was artificial and insincere. He was so gushing a flatterer that he assured Madame du Deffand, who was eighty-two and blind, that he should return to

Paris on purpose to see her. And she believed him. Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse wrote of him:

'. . . il est simple, naturel . . . il a de l'esprit, de la chaleur, de l'élévation. . . . Il me rappeloit un peu les deux hommes du monde que j'ai aimés, et pour qui je voudrois vivre ou mourir':

from which we may infer that he did not lack the art of imposing on women, outside his own country at all events. It may be noted, by the way, that Walpole considered it a test of loyalty to the older lady that her friends should hold no terms with the insidious protégée. He begged Conway and Gray in his letters not to visit her. Shelburne apparently had no scruples in the matter.

Shelburne was not a coward. Like most of his contemporaries he was confronted with a duel, and he did not flinch. A politician named Fullarton accused him in 1780 of holding traitorous correspondence with Franklin. Shelburne retaliated by calling him a *commis*, alleging that he had been made a colonel of militia by illegitimate means. They met; and Shelburne was wounded.

Shelburne was a consistent Liberal as far as his circumstances and his generation made that possible. He was in fact something of a 'philosophical Radical.' He could act so far on sentiment that he protested against the employment of troops in the Gordon riots. His house was spared by the mob, and he was accused of being in league with the rioters. He was much given to reflection, and produced maxims, of which many reveal the

democratic direction of his views. He perceived that Government and people were in a constant condition of flux; the tendency he believed to be towards making Governments weaker and giving added power to the people. He had a poor opinion of the House of Commons:

'as knowledge is spread and the representatives have become corrupted, it has ceased to impose and has no longer the same confidence with the people. . . . It is public opinion which decides what the House of Commons must obey.'

He disapproved of primogeniture. He was a Home Ruler born out of time: 'God never intended one country to govern another,' he said, 'but that each should govern itself.' He hated war. If kings wanted to fight, let them fight duels: they had different interests; but the people throughout the world had but one interest, if properly understood: so that he was something of a Socialist as well. He would suppress all alehouses except for bonâ-fide travellers: but he would regale the people with a holiday once a year, music and divers entertainments included.

With all this he was extremely practical. His rules for account keeping and estate management are rigid. Every man should keep his own accounts: if an agent must be employed, there should be a second to act as a check upon him. Almsgiving and charity were an obligation upon affluence. Having received nothing but 'treachery and abuse' from one to whom he had lent large sums, he deprecated this form of benevolence.

Withal he had the natural instincts of an aristocrat. No gentleman is a match for a tradesman, is one of his maxims: he ceases to be a gentleman when he is. He is prepared to justify the exaction of high rents on the ground that the landlord can do more good with the money than any one else on the estate; and here he lets slip a lurking contempt for the people whose growing influence he detects:

'The hoggish farmer grudges bread to every one around him, and while the manufacturer abounds in wealth (from the upstart master who finds himself possessed of a fortune, for which he was not educated, and consequently considers it only as a means of insolence, down to the wretched weaver, who knows no other use of high wages except to be idle two or three days a week, or to ruin his constitution and that of his family by debauchery and spirits), the agricultural poor are dying through want, the prey of every disorder which results from poverty, filth, cold and hunger, with laws intended for their relief, but so ill-adapted to the present state of things and so shamefully executed that they only serve to multiply their numbers, to lower the few feelings they have left and to stifle every exertion on their part.'

The most admirable habit of Shelburne's private life was his cultivation of the acquaintance of men of intellect and learning. Hume, Price, Priestley, Bentham, Romilly, Adam Smith, the Abbé Morellet; these were a few of his favourite guests at Bowood; and Sir John Long, whom Bentham described, either in jealousy or contempt,

as 'a little stiff-rumped fellow who knew nothing except persons.' Franklin had been his friend in happier times. There seems to have been no patronising on the one side nor sycophancy on the other in these connections. Shelburne liked good company and found what he wanted here. His unconventional taste brought its inconveniences at times. When the French Convention voted the dubious honour of citizenship to Bentham and Priestley, it was forthwith put about that Shelburne was as deeply sunk in Jacobinism as they were. In return for this he could boast of Bentham's testimony that he was the only minister who did not fear the people. And in one case, at all events, his friendship was purely altruistic and generous: Ingenhousz, a Dutch physician, was very ill and proposed taking himself off to die at home. Shelburne insisted on his staying to die in comfort at Bowood: which he did.

In later days there were occasions when Shelburne's name was concerned in the rearrangements of Government. Fox was prepared to serve with him again; his conduct had entitled him to be considered and consulted, 'however impossible I may feel it really to confide in him.' But his official life ended in 1783.

Most difficult to explain is his neglect at the hands of Pitt. He had given Pitt the opportunity of flying full-fledged into the highest rank. Next year when Pitt took office he had nothing to offer Shelburne. It may be urged that Shel-

burne's unpopularity was so great that Pitt could not penalise himself in a hazardous enterprise with this dead weight. This was the official excuse. He clearly had not loved his chief. He said, when he became First Lord, that whatever sins he might commit as minister, he had made full expiation in advance by serving for nearly a year under Lord Shelburne.[1] But he did an ungrateful deed ungraciously. It was at Rutland's instigation that Pitt recommended Shelburne for a step in the peerage: 'For office I put him out of the question,' said Rutland frankly; 'but surely something should be done.' Shelburne observed that he could have made himself a marquis if he had chosen to do it; but he accepted the offer. Then Pitt carried through the formalities in such a dilatory and perfunctory manner that what little virtue might have remained was turned to offence. Finally when Shelburne's son, Lord Wycombe, first addressed the House of Commons, Pitt attacked him 'with a fury little creditable to his head or his heart,' in the opinion of Lord Holland. Pitt was an austere man; but he was not brutal: also he was reserved and not apt to proclaim his feelings; and one cannot help thinking that there must have been some passage in his relations with Shelburne, unknown to history, which in his judgment for ever absolved him from the obligations of loyalty and gratitude.

Lord Beaconsfield held the opinion that Boling-

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 326.

broke, Shelburne, and the younger Pitt were the three greatest of English statesmen:[1] and this in his years of matured judgment. One does not lightly flout such an authority; but one wonders where he found the material for the construction of this theory. Setting aside the other two, we look in vain for a list of achievements that would entitle Shelburne to so high a prominence. Did such exist, he would surely not be the 'suppressed character' he is. He had great abilities and something of a statesman's outlook. He contemplated the future and was not a mere opportunist; but he was too much of a visionary and philosopher to be a successful politician. He had more statecraft than Fox in 1782, but he was not a really masterful Prime Minister. In comparison of intellect he was superior to the ministers who held, or aspired to, first place between the retirement of Chatham in 1768 and the advent of his son in 1783; but there was some fatal defect of character. He was not a leader of men; and personal unpopularity was not compensated by any instinctive confidence dispersed amongst the people. He could get rid of Fox: he could not dominate the younger Pitt. He reached his highest when he was Chatham's Chief of the Staff: as an independent commander he failed. He had not the controlling force of Chatham; the native geniality and ease of North; the bland integrity of Rockingham. He was

[1] *Sybil.*

adroit enough to overcome the prejudice of King George; but he never succeeded in winning the affection or the support of his fellow-countrymen; and that is why his natural advantages failed to secure him any abiding reputation in political history.

William Pitt, it is true, was destitute of the art of popularity. In a small and intimate circle he retained for many years a boyish gaiety that he concealed from the rest of the world, as a young girl conceals the first access of romantic passion. At the Wimbledon villa of Dundas there was some pleasant and innocent fooling, known amongst the revellers as 'foining,' which reveals a soft and human side of Pitt's character, not often visible. He never let the House of Commons know it, but he had the sense of humour without which no man can deal successfully with his fellow-creatures; and he said at least three things that can still be quoted with admiration. Later years brought such a procession of anxieties and cares that even amongst his cherished intimates he could show none of the cheerful complacency that North always kept in reserve. For the rest; Pitt, perhaps because he was conscious that his youth required a special cloak of gravity, cultivated and exhibited a frigid dignity that we should designate by the monosyllable, prig. He was not without his weakness of the flesh. Originally by reason of a delicate constitution, afterwards, no doubt, from habit and inclination, he

did much damage to his health and reputation by incessant and excessive addiction to port wine. But in other respects he was exemplary: he did not gamble: he found no temptation in women. His life was as seemly as that of his opponent Fox was graceless. Very few men could have outlived his deliberate announcement in Parliament, made when he was little more than a new member, that he would never accept any office below the first rank. Walpole records that

'the moment he sat down he was aware of his folly and said he could bite his tongue out for what he had uttered.'

But he could afford to boast. In 1782 he refused the place of Vice-Treasurer for Ireland under Rockingham in March. In July he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer under Shelburne. In December 1783 he became Prime Minister, having been two years in Parliament, and twenty-three on the face of this earth.

Disraeli said of Peel that he was not the greatest of statesmen, or orators, or party leaders, but he was the greatest Member of Parliament that ever lived. Pitt's place in history depends upon events subsequent to the period within our scope, and cannot be fully estimated here. But it may be said that whether he was or was not a very great finance minister, was or was not a very faulty foreign minister, he was perhaps the greatest public servant that ever lived. He was born and brought up for the public service; he lived for it and died for it.

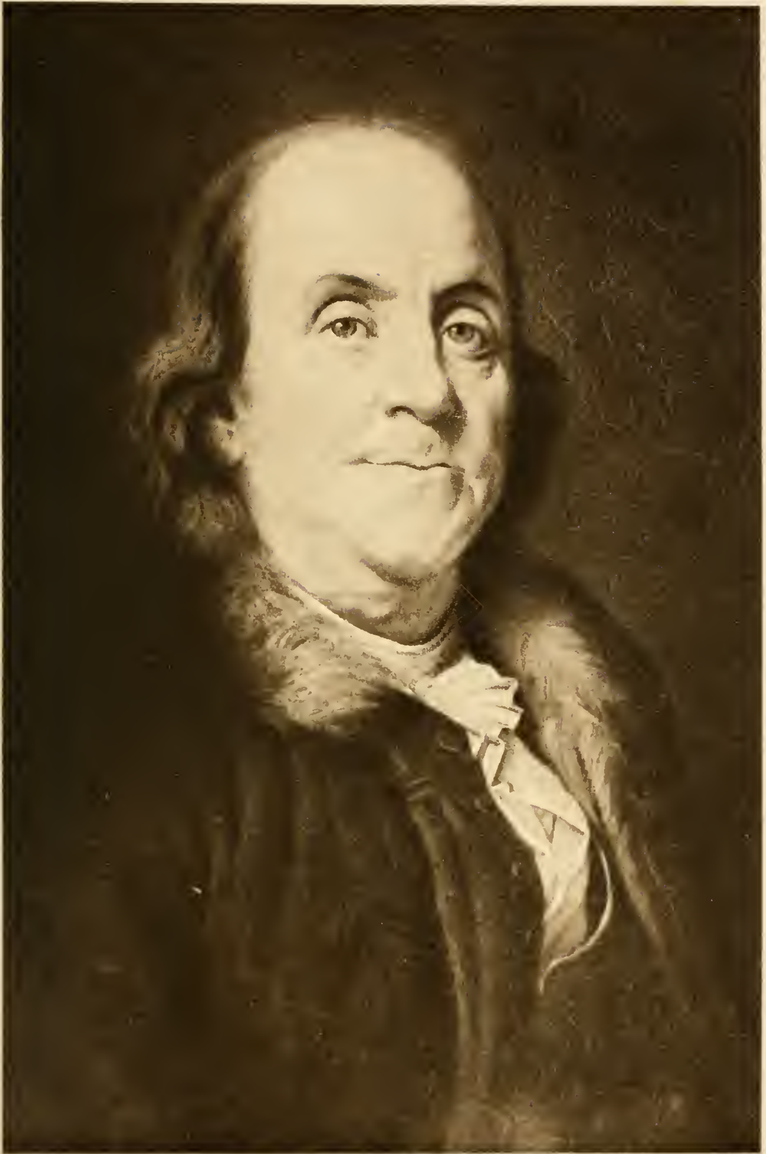
He had no other interest or habit; no distractions; in no other character can posterity think of him. He had no apprenticeship to serve. We have seen that he felt in Fox's powers the wand of the charmer. Fox was no less quick to recognise the genius of the man who was to be the greatest obstacle in his path. When he was told that this young man would be one of the first men in the House of Commons, he replied at once, 'He is so already.' 'He is not a chip of the old block,' said Burke; 'he is the old block itself.' Pitt was destined to deal with situations more desperate even than those which baffled North. He had none of his father's truculent spirit, though he was not behind his father in courage when a struggle had to be maintained. He claimed to the end of his life that he was a Whig, but he had at heart a conservative love of calm. It was the wish that prompted the thought when he assured Burke, during the tempest of the French Revolution, 'Depend upon it we shall go on as we are till the day of judgment.' It was the same clinging to the hope of order and tranquillity that betrayed him into the famous false prophecy of June 1792, a few months before the beginning of the drawn-out war that was to break his health and his heart, and in the end to kill him:

'I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose, when I am naming fifteen years, that I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach, and which

may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment.'

He was finance minister before all things, and a finance minister does not love turbulent times. On the other hand he had Liberal instincts. If he failed in his efforts as a Reformer, and if in 1804 he consented to say no more about Catholic emancipation, at all events he was honest in his profession of both principles, and only forsook them under pressure of difficulties and considerations which it was impossible to ignore or avoid. In 1792, it is true, he opposed Grey's motion for Reform, but this was due to the Association of the Friends of the People, who were also the friends of the French Revolution; and Pitt on his Conservative side held that this tainted the proposal and rendered the moment inopportune.

Pitt was a purist in economy—theoretically at all events. In 1784 he astonished the politicians by declining to appropriate the vacant Clerkship of the Pells; he had no private fortune, and it was according to tradition that he should take advantage of such an opportunity. He gave it to Barré instead and thereby extinguished a pension. But in practice he was not without reproach. In 1788 he disdainfully refused the offer of a large sum to be



Benjamin Franklin.

Painted by Duplessis.

presented to him by a body of admiring subscribers. But in 1801 he accepted from his friends 12,000*l.*; and so little did he succeed in practising what he preached, that at his death his affairs became a charge upon the tax-payers' money to the extent of 40,000*l.* Fox, with all the warmth of human sympathy, eagerly supported this vote in Parliament. He could not pardon the man, but he could be indulgent to the debtor.

In this hurried outline we may find some idea of the young minister who now stood at Shelburne's right hand. His career in its main incidents did not overlap the official life of North; but North had already felt Pitt's weapon in his side. 'There is no doubt that the fall of North's ministry was brought about by his untiring eloquence,' says a careful and informed biographer.[1] His share in the overthrow is generally recognised: 'William Pitt . . . had indisputably contributed to the overthrow of Lord North,'[2] is a sample of the conclusion of students or compilers of history. It is no doubt a just conclusion: but one may believe that North took more heed of Pitt after July 1782 than he had ever done before. We shall see why presently.

Shelburne's Government existed only to conclude a general peace, and this was the sum of their achievements. It was Shelburne's policy, as we have seen, to improve England's position by

[1] *William Pitt*, by Charles Whibley.
[2] *Pictorial History*, v. 482.

insinuating himself between the allies and dealing with them separately. It was part of the agreement between France and America that neither should make peace without the other; but there was no great difficulty in effecting a division.

Acting as Commissioners with Franklin were Adams and Jay: Laurens, the fourth, had not arrived. It was discovered that Vergennes was manœuvring to put France in the most favourable position, and to prevent America from gaining unlimited advantage. Adams and Jay, in their wrath, were eager to depart from their instructions and outmanœuvre Vergennes. Franklin had scruples; but he was open to persuasion; and this persuasion the British Commissioners, Fitzherbert and Oswald, brought to bear successfully. In the last week of November 1782 provisional articles of peace were signed in Paris. America gave up her demand for Canada. England was constrained to desert the loyalists. They were left to the fate of those who take the chances of war and lose. The most that could be done for them was to get an assurance that the various States should be 'recommended' to make restitution to the late British subjects who had suffered penalties for bearing arms for England. Independence was of course recognised. To make the best of appearances, a preamble declared that the document must form part of any treaty to be made with France; but Vergennes was gravely affronted and protested against this breach of faith. Franklin

admitted some trifling neglect of formality, but averred that no important principle was infringed.

It remained now to make terms with France and Spain. Shelburne had won a diplomatic move in the game. His agreement with America was a point in his favour. In the terms that were considered, and ultimately reached, the one of greatest interest had to do with Gibraltar. The King of Spain staked all his hopes and aspirations on the recapture of the fortress; for three years and a half a siege had been pressed with the utmost ferocity and perseverance, and withstood with equal valour and resolution. The Spaniards had sufficient reason to count on ultimate success. But in September 1782 the failure of a great assault directed by the Duke de Crillon, assisted by a skilful engineer, D'Arçon, disappointed them of the final triumph on which they counted. In October Howe succeeded in bringing to the garrison the relief that was so urgently needed: and Eliott still held out.

It comes as a surprise to readers of our generation that the suggestion of surrender was not always abhorrent to Englishmen of the eighteenth century. George I. had been willing to effect an exchange, and plenty of his and of his son's ministers had been of the same mind. The defiant Chatham, even the steadfast George III., had declared in favour of letting Gibraltar go upon terms.[1] Shelburne now was ready to give it up in

[1] *George II. and his Ministers*, by the author, 210–212.

exchange for Porto Rico and West Florida; and the King did not object—though the minister was careful to add that he did not think the nation would permit anything of the kind.[1] Grafton gave a grudging consent, provided Trinidad was included, and the Cabinet were not prepared to dissolve upon it. Wraxall, writing as a man of the world, says:

'If peace cannot otherwise be obtained, such a sacrifice may become necessary . . . [but only] for an equivalent of the highest importance.'

Even as late as the reign of William IV. the idea was not extinct. The King at one moment was seized with a fear lest the third Marquess of Lansdowne might be meditating a concession approved by his father, and he took the precaution of letting Lord Grey know that he would never give his consent.[2] It has already been recorded that North and Fox were both with those who opposed the suggestion of sacrifice: but candour obliges us to confess that in December 1782 North betrayed a sudden unsoundness on this principle. The speech will be given presently; and it will be seen that for the moment he was more intent upon the fate of the American loyalists than the possession of a Mediterranean fortress.

Terms with France were not arrived at in a moment; but Shelburne was satisfied that the French meant to have peace, and he was not

[1] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 179.
[2] *Memorials of a Long Life* (Lord Broughton), v. 238.

going to treat without reserve.[1] He had the American agreement in his pocket: Howe had saved the situation at Gibraltar. And Louis XVI. persuaded the Spanish King to recognise his failure, and to be content with what he could get. The acquisition of Minorca and of East Florida, added to West Florida, which Spain already held, met the case; and in due season Eliott was informed that he was free from further molestation.

To France, England gave up Tobago and St. Lucia; but she recovered Dominica, after a sharp contest, and retained other possessions. In Africa and in India certain territories were granted or restored to France; and a grievance of long standing was removed—one in truth which she had found it easier to evade than England had found it to enforce—by the abrogation of the clause in the Treaty of Utrecht, which provided for the removal of the fortifications of Dunkirk. Certain fishing rights in Newfoundland waters were confirmed. On January 20th, 1783, the preliminary articles of a general peace as between France, Spain, America, and Great Britain were signed in Paris. Holland was not included, but accommodation with her followed as a matter of course. The first intimation that peace was made, came to the public in a curious way. The gentlemen of Louis XVI. heard his Majesty, as he climbed into bed, humming the air of an indelicate song that had won enduring popularity when France made

[1] Fitzmaurice, ii. 208.

peace with her enemies in 1735: and forthwith the newspaper editors were given their cue.[1]

The definitive treaties were not signed until September 1783, after the change of Government; but, allowance made for finishing touches, it was Shelburne's peace, and incidentally it follows that Pitt's first great administrative act was consent to the surrender of British dominion on the continent where his father's triumphs had won empire for his Sovereign and glory for himself. Shelburne believed the French intended to come to terms, and to that extent he allowed himself to bargain; but he knew that whatever happened he was not prepared to carry on the war, and he was glad enough to come away with tolerable conditions. He confessed to the House of Lords in February that England had to make peace because she could fight no more. But he had fallen very far short of satisfying the public, and he had failed to retain the loyal attachment of his colleagues. His Government was obviously doomed.

North all this time had been in political eclipse. He was out of the turmoil and he was in no hurry to get back again. When his friend Eden startled Fox with his motion on Ireland soon after the change of Government, North gave no sign of encouragement or support. He attended the House of Commons from force of habit, but he seldom spoke. Wraxall says that he was under so deep a cloud, oppressed by the loss of the

[1] *Recollections of Baron de Frénilly*, 28.

American colonies and consequently of his own popularity, that 'he could not immediately emerge. . . . Ever since the 20th of March he seemed to have remained in a sort of stupor.'[1] He did in fact make an effort on behalf of Rodney, but not, it would appear, with confusion to his enemies. Fox wrote to Thomas Grenville:

'Lord North made such a figure to support the motion [of censure] as made even his enemies pity him; he showed such a desire to support the motion, without daring to do it, as was perfectly ridiculous.'[2]

When Pitt moved his Reform resolution:

'though [North] attended the discussion and opposed all innovation yet, to the surprise of his friends, he took no active part in the debate.'[3]

A change was soon to come. In December, Wraxall had to say:

'Lord North never appeared to me during the whole time that I sat in the House of Commons, whether he was in or out of office, in a more dignified and elevated point of view. . . .'

The reason for this we shall discover presently.

North was evidently emerging from under the cloud. We have heard of Knox's story, after Rockingham's death, that North was to support Shelburne on the basis of no independence. He was manifestly wrong about the conditions; but it is not improbable that there were rumours that North was somehow to be attached. In 1813 Lord Glenbervie had this story to tell:

[1] iii. 82, 100. [2] Buckingham's *Memoirs*, i. 33. [3] Wraxall, iii. 82.

'About the time Lord Lansdowne's Administration was formed, Pitt, Rose and Tom Orde (his two Secretaries of the Treasury) were to dine with him. He had come from an audience after the levée, and coming into the room where they were waiting, he took off his sword with great eagerness, flung it on the table, and said, "Well, I have been to the king and he has promised to write to such and such persons, and among them to Lord North, requiring him on the ground of gratitude to support our Administration. I suppose he will do so. But if he do not" (raising his voice and acting as if he were going to do what he was going to say) "By God, I will tear his bowels out." Rose says Orde turned as pale as a sheet.'[1]

In the autumn North was certainly a force to be reckoned with. On November 26th, Germain, now Lord Sackville, wrote to General Irwin, 'Lord North is courted by all parties, but I do not hear that he has promised his support to either.'[2] North was not inclined to attack Shelburne and his Government as he had himself been attacked. He was even disposed to give them a chance: but there were impediments to prompt and effective understanding. He was not resolved to turn a deaf ear to friendly overtures, but his countenance, if it were given, would come at best as from a candid friend. Eden was fond of telling a story of how North had to listen to a sermon on the text, 'All this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate'; and how he muttered, 'I suppose Mordecai the Jew

[1] *Journals*, 211.
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

means Malagrida the Jesuit.' Like all favourite stories this one has a pedigree. It is begotten of another that tells how the same text used by Dr. Dempster in 1760 was immediately applied to Bute.[1] But it is safe to say that North preferred Shelburne's policy of wariness and reserve to the headlong prodigality of Fox. He was not inclined to make a grovelling surrender to the Americans. He protested indignantly against the sacrifice of the loyalists. He told the King in February 1783 that he had no objection to make to the conditions made with France and Spain, but he was indignant with the American treaty. In September 1782 he wrote to Auckland concerning the letter addressed by Sir Guy Carleton and Digby, the General and Admiral in America, to Congress, of the 'scorn and contempt' with which it had been treated: it was 'precipitate, impolitick, cruelly neglectful of our American friends; unlikely to produce peace or anything else but disgrace':

'By the act of last session the King was certainly empowered to *treat*, but this letter appears to me voluntary, unconditional, and no part of any treaty at all. Mr. Fox's proposal in the Cabinet was, as I understood, to apply to Parliament for a recognition of American Independency, but this letter of Sir Guy and the Admiral looks very like Ministerial recognition without the interference of Parliament.'[2]

He was, indeed, prepared to support the Govern-

[1] *Bute*, by Lovat Fraser, 24.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34419.

ment in further resistance rather than see them forced to sue for a disgraceful peace. To Lord Lisburne he wrote on November 19th, 1782, explaining that for the present he held aloof from party connections:

'but as I cannot consistently with my principles engage in faction, or consistently with my former professions refuse my assistance in carrying on the war, I intend to give my voice for the necessary supplies and oppose whatever tends to render Government unable to contend with its present difficulties; but I am equally determined to resist altering, or as it is called amending, the representative body of electors or, in one word, the existing constitution; and my voice will certainly go against everything which looks like change.'[1]

From which we gather that he had shed no portion of his Toryism yet.

On November 4th he wrote a letter to the King which shows that they were still on more or less confidential terms. North says that he has been gathering the opinions of his friends who formerly gave him their assistance as minister; they are disposed to support Government in the present critical situation, he says in the same spirit, but are equally averse from any innovation to be introduced into the Constitution. 'They will come up for the session; but as it begins so soon after Christmas, probably not until after the holidays'[2]—from which conclusion we infer that the nature of county members altereth not from one generation to another. In this letter North refers

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2136. [2] Donne, ii. 433.

to a previous one written from Derbyshire. During the summer he had been occupying the time, which was now at his own disposal, by paying some visits in the country. Loughborough was his companion and in a way his Boswell; but with a difference. Loughborough was in constant communication with Eden, to whom he was related by marriage. On August 18th he sent an account of a picnic, and reported that Lord North was 'just as undecided in a party of pleasure as he is in any other party.' On the 24th he describes an enthusiastic reception at Manchester, and makes the candid observation that his friend and leader had been more accustomed to have his carriage broken than drawn by the mob. But the correspondence had to do with matters of greater moment than picnics and processions. Loughborough knew no scruples and saw no impediments when advantage pointed to a new political alliance. He had already set his heart on the bold enterprise of bringing North and Fox together—an alliance unsurpassed in our annals for violation of all the probabilities and proprieties of political life, and unredeemed by the merit of success. This we shall now have to describe.

We have said that Shelburne's Government was doomed. The first to go was Keppel on January 24th, 1783. Carlisle followed within a fortnight. Shelburne filled this vacancy by giving the Privy Seal to Rutland, without a word to his colleagues. Grafton was indignant at this autocratic spirit, and

announced his intention of resigning. Camden tried to dissuade him, but added that he himself intended to retire in three months' time. Richmond and Temple were restive. Only Pitt seemed prepared to stand firmly by his chief.

Shelburne cast about in all directions for support. He sent Dundas to North. The terms proposed appear not to have been flattering. North was to recommend his friends to come into office 'with a marked exclusion of Lord North himself.'[1] Probably Shelburne was aware of his own unpopularity and felt that North's name would not act as a sedative upon the public; or he may have been selfishly jealous of North's habit of leadership. North's answer was indefinite. He would not join in a vote of censure, but he could not support Government if they asked for a vote of confidence. Dr. Rose says he 'coolly repulsed' the envoy.[2]

Pitt meanwhile was sent, with the King's consent, to sound Fox. Fox stipulated that, if he joined, Shelburne should resign the leadership. The story goes that Pitt pompously replied, 'I did not come here to betray Lord Shelburne,' and that the two men never met in private again. Dundas now threw another bait to catch North. With discreet indiscretion he told Adam a story in confidence, with the conviction that it would be repeated at once; as indeed it was. He professed to have

[1] *Life of Fox*, Russell, i. 346.
[2] *Pitt and the National Revival*, 117.

it from Shelburne that North's only hope was to come to the rescue at once. If he and his friends would support the Peace, the Government would survive. Pitt was still unwilling to serve with North personally; but this prejudice no doubt could be overcome in time. The inevitable alternative was a coalition of Pitt and Fox under Portland; Shelburne would retire, and North would be left without allies, and very soon, no doubt, without followers. According to Gibbon, North's party at this time consisted of 120; the Fox contingent of 90. Shelburne could reckon on 140; so that he could be happy with either alliance.[1] North's strength was indeed variously estimated. In the division of February 11th, 1783, W. W. Grenville gave him credit for a strength of 160 or 170 out of the majority of 224.[2] Loughborough, writing to Eden, says (August 22nd, 1782), 'Lord North could on very easy terms answer for thirty or forty, quite as personal friends and followers'; but a few days later he goes on:

> 'Lord North's party consists of some respectable friends who are attached to him from honour and inclination, a great many others who build their own fortunes upon his, and another description of men who think he will be a bulwark against any inroads upon the Constitution.'[3]

Whatever may have been the exact value of North's alliance, Dundas's diplomacy had the effect

[1] *Pitt and the National Revival*, Rose, 115.
[2] Buckingham's *Memoirs*.
[3] Lord Auckland's *Journal*, 29, 43.

of losing it. His menace decided North to throw in his lot with Fox. Contrary to his implied promise to Dundas, he voted with his new friends for the censure of the Peace; and there was an end of Shelburne and his Government.

CHAPTER XVI

The Coalition

'England does not love coalitions.'—*Lord Beaconsfield, House of Commons, 3rd December*, 1852.

'The most profligate and ungrateful coalition that ever was made in this kingdom.'—*George III.*

[Of the Treaty of Utrecht] 'It was to the Tories what the coalition between Lord North and Fox was to the Whigs, a principal operating cause in excluding them from office during fifty years.'—*Walter Bagehot* (*Biographical Studies*).

'Mr. Pitt joining the war party in 1793 . . . was a far worse offence than Lord North's.'—*Lord Brougham* (*Historical Sketches*).

A YOUNG politician looking round for a leader in the latter part of 1782 would probably have devoted his attention to three men. Lord Shelburne was in possession. He had secured the first place in the Whig Government: he was not yet fifty: his abilities were beyond dispute. His hold upon his colleagues might be insecure: nevertheless, he was no man of straw to be immediately ignored.

There was Fox, ambitious, restless; whose most notable ministerial achievements had been his resignations; but powerful and popular, and sure to be heard of again.

And there was Pitt, son of Chatham; a morning star amongst politicians. Shelburne and Fox could both lay claim to a band of followers. Pitt had none; but these would surely come in time.

North, too, had followers, numerous and apparently faithful; but the young politician might have been pardoned if he reckoned without North. After twelve years of severe struggle, North had retired crestfallen. The war policy which had clung to him like Fate, whether he loathed it or was still partly fascinated by it, had ended in abject failure. He was only fifty; but his career was obviously in eclipse, if not extinguished. He was avowedly weary and disgusted; and, as Walpole said, he had taken his place on the Opposition side as if he were seated there for life. A young politician, especially a young man in a hurry, could not well have perceived in him a vigorous and inspiring chief, who would soon be dispensing places and patronage again. Sackville might tell Irwin that North was being courted by all parties, but it would have required a sanguine imagination to count on North's speedy return to the Treasury. Shelburne, with Pitt's support, might be able to go on. Fox might supplant them both: or he might come back into office after Peace was got out of the way. Again, Pitt might create a new combination out of the *disjecta membra* of a quarrelsome and jealous party. The one thing that the new member could never have anticipated was an alliance between North and his most pronounced

and implacable adversary, Fox. Yet this was what was coming to pass.

The first suggestion of such a possibility comes from Loughborough within a fortnight of Rockingham's death and Fox's resignation. To Loughborough a sudden and unexpected change of political allegiance was no more a cause for astonishment than a similar change in the weather. On July 14th, 1782, he wrote to Eden:

> 'The first thing is to reconcile Lord North and Fox. . . . The first, you know, is irreconcilable to no man; the second will feel his ancient resentment totally absorbed in his more recent hostility, which I think he has no other probable means of gratifying.'[1]

He was very likely justified in counting on a condition of resentment and impatience, so far as Fox was concerned; but there was no symptom of activity about North. North was resting, as actors say. He was in no hurry to take a new engagement. We have seen that in November he told Lord Lisburne he considered himself as standing aloof from all parties and prepared for the moment to help Shelburne to carry on the government of the country. And it was not altogether for Fox to forgive and forget. North was so good-natured that he could put up with as much abuse as most men. There is a well-known story of a day in 1777 when Fox had made a ferocious attack on Germain. As he passed out of the House North

[1] Lord Auckland's *Journal*, i. 9.

said to him, 'Charles, I am glad you did not fall on me to-day, for you was in full feather.' It is a known and admired custom of English politics that opponents can fight hard in the House of Commons without destroying the amenities of private intercourse. But there is a limit even to this practice; and things may be said in public conflict which must be resented in private by any self-respecting man. Let us see what kind of language Fox had used in attacking Lord North. On one occasion he

'declared with much emphasis his opinion of the minister to be such that he should deem it unsafe to be alone with him in a room.'[1]

And here are some specimens of House of Commons language collected in a volume entitled *The Beauties of Fox, North, and Burke . . . Printed for J. Stockdale*, 1784:

'January 26, 1775. Mr. Fox observed that it would readily be believed that his private resentments had not affected his public conduct when he might have long since justly charged him (Lord North) with the most unexampled treachery and falsehood.'

'November 6, 1778. Mr. Fox said the noble Lord in the blue ribbon . . . in the very moment of additional calamities goes into the cabinet and advises his Sovereign to bestow on him a most lucrative vacant place, the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. And why? Because in another year, the Crown might have nothing left to give, if his Lordship continues to govern.'

[1] Lord Brougham's *Sketches*, i. 71.

'March 8, 1779. Mr. Fox said the Minister acted under the dominion of the grossest and dullest ignorance . . . or from sinister, concealed, and corrupt motives.'

'May 5. Mr. Fox said he believed in his conscience that it would have been a happy day for his country that the noble Lord in the blue ribbon had never been born.'

'May 13. Mr. Fox . . . to see a lump of deformity and disease (looking at Lord North), of folly and wickedness, of ignorance and temerity, smitten with pride, immediately breaks all measures of patience; it being hardly conceivable that so much pride, vice, and folly could exist in the same animal.'

'June 22. Mr. Fox said, What! Enter into an alliance with those very ministers who had betrayed their country. . . . Gentlemen must have foregone their principles and have given up their honour before they could have approached the threshold of an alliance so abominable, so scandalous, and so disgraceful.'

'March 26, 1781. Mr. Fox said the noble Lord had made a corrupt bargain with an evil design.'

'May 8. Mr. Fox said it was evident that the Minister was equally mistrusted and despised, not only by the people at large, but, what was more, by all the first characters in the two military professions, the navy and the army.'

'May 30. Mr. Fox said . . . it had no doubt been the study of the Minister to tell his friends that their payment like his own bread depended on the American war.'

'June 21. Mr. Fox said . . . he used the word *impudently* because he knew no other word in the English language that so properly expressed his sense of the noble Lord's conduct.'

'February 19, 1782. Mr. Fox said, the Minister

had found out . . . that lowering all men to his own baseness was the only means of keeping the people in humour with each other.'

'March 4. Mr. Fox said, from the moment when he should make any terms with one of them, he would rest satisfied to be called the most infamous of mankind. He could not for an instant think of a coalition with men who, in every public and private transaction, as ministers, had shown themselves void of every principle of honour or honesty.'

'Lord North said he was entitled to say just as much of the Hon. Gentleman; and thinking of him as he did, he was determined never to act with him as a negotiator.'

This was as far as Lord North could go in the direction of retaliation. In October 1775 the following dialogue took place, and it must be admitted that in the matter of ingenuity and originality, North did not have the best of it.

'Mr. Fox said Lord North . . . had reason to triumph. Lord Chatham, the King of Prussia, nay Alexander the Great, never gained as much territory as the noble Lord has lost in one campaign—he has lost a whole continent. Lord North said he held the pity and contempt of the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Fox) in equal indifference.'

North was admittedly a powerful debater and he was certainly not without the resources of invective. He would go so far as to say (in 1778) that if Fox had not spoken treason, he had gone very near it: but upon the whole it may be said that he never attempted to give as good as he got and return insult for insult. Throughout these debates there

ran, as we shall see presently, a stream of threats of impeachment and the block. And in July, after Rockingham's death, Fox made it part of his charge against Shelburne that he was capable of allying himself with 'those men whom that House had precipitated from their seats.'[1] Such was the low opinion he professed to entertain of Lord Shelburne and Lord North. Meanwhile Loughborough was giving Fox credit for a willingness to do the deed himself, and was eager to encourage him.

Eden was less sanguine, though he presumably had as much reason for wishing to see North back in office. On July 24th he wrote to Loughborough, 'I think . . . that it is as yet too soon to form any system,' and complained that North is as irresolute as ever; a mixture of reserves and jealousies.

The secret working of Fox's mind is not easy for us to perceive. To his friends he is said to have been all candour. In this passage of history his heart is not laid bare for our perusal. We must judge his conduct by his motives, and it is important that we should try to ascertain what these were.

On August 22nd, 1782, Eden wrote to Loughborough that Charles Fox had desired Storer to tell Lord North that 'he always spoke with respect of his Lordship.' This had led to a further conversation in which Charles professed his willingness to allow Lord North to have 'a good office, but by

[1] Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 158.

no means in any superintending situation': this he said was impossible:

> 'I wish,' was Eden's comment, 'to see Lord North before his mind is poisoned by people who are too eager to hurry him into office.'

On the 25th Loughborough replied that Lord North 'held Fox's proposal in great derision, and justly.' On September 3rd Eden had changed his mind and advanced towards Loughborough's position:

> 'The game is certainly in Lord North's hands if he would play his cards like any other man so circumstanced; but all the old irresolutions, procrastinations, quiescences, and lazinesses, will operate more than ever.'

And his censure finds justification in North's letter to him of September 6th:

> 'Neither my inclination nor conscience will permit me to undertake any difficult office in such arduous times as these when the public may suffer irreparable danger by my inefficiency.'

It is easy to believe that North was indignant at Fox's proposal. He must have known well enough that throughout the negotiations of late years Fox had always stipulated for the exclusion of himself, Sandwich, and Germain, as the three most exceptionable.[1] Now he was to be tolerated in a minor place for the sake of the votes he could bring with him. In spite of Fox's protestation of friendly feelings, seeing that the war was over, it

[1] *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 371.

was clear enough that he shrank from contact with North. Wraxall records later in the year that 'North and Fox appeared to be reciprocally animated by hostile sentiments.' As late as February next year Fox owned to Grafton that 'he felt the greatest objections to joining Lord North and his friends: yet perhaps it was the best that could be lasting.'[1]

To set against this we have Gibbon's assertion:

> 'I may assert with some degree of assurance, that in their political conflict those great antagonists had never felt any personal animosity to each other, that their reconciliation was easy and sincere, and that their friendship has never been clouded by the shadow of suspicion or jealousy.'

And Gibbon knew both men well; even intimately. That their political principles were incompatible we shall have to show presently; but it must be permitted to say here that one is tempted to doubt Gibbon's discernment. If North bore no grudge against Fox, then he was of all men most long-suffering and full of Christian forgiveness. If Fox had never regarded North with feelings of fury and contempt, then his public speeches for seven years past were those of a mountebank.

In December 1782 Fox moved for papers concerning the provisional peace with America. North voted with the Government, who had a majority of 219 to 46. The King liked the peace

[1] *Autobiography*, 355.

policy little enough, but he was aware that there was no way of escape left. He would have preferred a coalition of Shelburne and North as the best solution of a bad business.[1] It would probably tend to give him back his old authority, to some extent at all events. It would save him from undiluted Whig domination. It was clear that Shelburne could not carry on without an alliance. Fox had refused to join him. He disliked Shelburne personally and saw no strength in him as a colleague. He was shy of Pitt and could not help feeling that they were not destined to run in double harness. He might win back his old friends in time, but he was in a hurry and could not wait. He did not want to join Shelburne: the King did not want him to join Shelburne. On the other hand he was eager to get back into office. And he was powerless alone. His motive, therefore, becomes obvious. He must reconcile himself to an alliance with North, or to prolonged exclusion from office. There was no alternative.

North, we have seen, was hastened into accommodation by the insinuation of an imminent coalition of Shelburne and Fox. It may be thought that he fell into a trap and stupidly carried his wares to the wrong market. But it is probably nearer the truth to give him credit for deliberate purpose, wise or foolish, and to look for his motive accordingly.

The motive ascribed here to Lord North is the

[1] Wraxall, iii. 245.

instinct of self-preservation. He was seriously and fearfully alarmed at the prospect of impeachment and the block; and he believed that complete security lay only in close co-operation with the men who were his sworn and determined foes. A century and a half had passed since Strafford had perished on the scaffold for his political sins, and a hundred years since Russell and Sydney had suffered for what was really the same offence. But within the memory of man Walpole had been sent to the Tower, and Bolingbroke into exile. Walpole's case was not serious and little more than a passing thrust in party conflict; but Bolingbroke had 'understood that his blood was to have been the cement of a new alliance between the moderate Tories and the Whigs.'[1] The shadow of impeachment still hung as a menace and a terror in the background of public life. Warren Hastings was to have an ample experience in a few years to come. Nearly a quarter of a century afterwards Dundas was to go through the perilous ordeal. The headsman's axe, it is true, was no longer in frequent use; but to contemplate its reappearance was not a fantastic illusion, and if Lord North exaggerated his danger, he was not entirely without provocation. This is the kind of language that had been held by Fox and Burke in the House of Commons:

'February 10th, 1777. Mr. Fox said, the Minister is credulous in the extreme, because he is

[1] *Biographical Studies*, Walter Bagehot, 203.

fearful; and he is fearful from a consciousness of crime.'

'April 16th, 1777. Mr. Fox predicted a day of reckoning, when probably the Minister would be brought to the punishment he deserved.'

'June 16th, 1779. Mr. Burke said, Sir, I could make a motion: the impeachment of the Minister would be a very proper one.'

'November 27th, 1781. Mr. Burke said that a day of reckoning would come, and whenever that day came, he should be able, by impeachment, to bring upon the heads of the authors of our calamities the punishment they deserved.'

'November 27th, 1781. Mr. Fox said . . . he trusted that by the aroused indignation and vengeance of an undone people (Ministers) must hear of them (public calamities) again at the tribunal of justice, and expiate them on the public scaffold.'

Wraxall believed that 'North by joining Fox escaped serious risk of impeachment.'[1] Again: 'If North had not resigned, public indignation and the violence of Opposition would have brought him to the block.'[2] North thought so too. In November 1781, after Yorktown, he stoutly maintained in Parliament that although the war had been 'unfortunate, it had not been conceived in injustice';

'and should I hereafter, as I am menaced, mount the scaffold in consequence of the part that I have performed in its prosecution, I shall still continue to maintain that it was founded in right and dictated by necessity.'

It is true that he had Shelburne to reckon

[1] iii. 311. [2] ii. 610.

with. In March 1782 Shelburne had actually proposed in the Cabinet that North's impeachment should be an item of the Government programme.[1] But North probably feared him less than he feared the terrible Fox. Moreover, before the final decision was taken, Shelburne had shown a disposition to relent. His overtures had not been made in person, nor very urgently; but he had so far disarmed himself that he had offered an alliance. He could not talk of impeachment now without stultifying his own conduct. But Shelburne was not the only man who had held such language. As far back as 1770 Wilkes had proposed the impeachment of North at a meeting in Westminster, and was only beaten because Sawbridge, believing that he would be able to secure an acquittal, preferred a petition to the Crown for his dismissal.[2] In the same year the Duke of Richmond had said in the House of Lords that if ministers were forced into war they stood it at the hazard of their heads.[3] Sir George Trevelyan has noted two wagers: one in 1773 of five hundred guineas to ten that none of the Cabinet were beheaded by that day three years: the other in 1777, of fifty pounds that Lord North died by the hand of justice before President Hancock. We meet with the same language in family histories. In February 1776 William Stanhope wrote to Walter Spencer Stanhope:

[1] Fitzmaurice, ii. 104.
[2] *Pictorial History*, v. 104. [3] *Ibid.* 105.

'I beg it as a favour you will not be so bitter against Lord North. I am told in your speech before Christmas you were for impeaching him.'[1]

It may be claimed, then, that we do not go too far when we say that North really believed that he stood in serious risk of paying for his failure with his head. The practice of execution, it is admitted, was in disuse; but its revival was not by any means an impossible contingency. Even fifty years later there survived the language and thought of impeachment and the axe. A lady, not long dead, has told how a report was current during the Reform troubles that Lord Grey and Lord Brougham were going to be taken to the Tower:

'My brother and I walked miles from Scotsbridge in order to see them leave Watford, whence for some reason we concluded they would start for the Tower, devoutly hoping that when once they were there they would be beheaded.'[2]

In North's day such a fate might be predicted for a statesman in adversity without any extreme violation of common sense, and without yielding to the nursery notions of a young girl.

We have already traced the fortunes of Shelburne's Government to its fall. We must now go back, at the risk of recapitulation, and follow more closely the plots and counterplots that ended in the formation of the Coalition Ministry. The

[1] *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, ii. 24, 40.
[2] *Links with the Past*, Mrs. Charles Bagot, 6.

assumption on which we account for the result has already been stated and, right or wrong, upon that we shall proceed. But in order that no contrary evidence may be wilfully ignored, we begin by recalling that even before the days of the Rockingham Government, North and Fox had interrupted their battles to exchange a glance or a word suggestive of accommodation. In 1778 North had been willing to enlist Opposition into his Government: Fox had not been averse from hearing conditions, but he stipulated that North himself must go. On June 22nd, 1779, during a debate on the Militia Bill, Fox had suddenly assumed an amicable tone: but North, so far from responding, had repelled his advance at once. In March 1782, when the Government was in its death-agony, something in the nature of a compromise was attempted. On the 4th of the month Fox had made the most rabid of all his attacks, and North had replied, less passionately, but with no less profession of hostility. On the 6th Fox made this candid confession:

> 'It was the desire of those with whom he had the honour to act to form an Administration on the broadest basis . . . he had said only that he could form no connection with the present Cabinet: that he should be infamous if he did. . . . He would proscribe no men . . . but the five or six men who were now the confidential advisers of His Majesty.'

On the 15th North, with undoubted sincerity, said, 'I will not form any obstacle to a coalition in

which I shall have no share or place.' Fox jumped at this admission and replied, with much less obvious sincerity:

> 'I do assure the noble Lord that in all I have stated I meant not to press on him, to goad him, or to run him down. . . . I ask pardon of the noble L^{d} if I have offended him—for I meant it not—'

a protestation that must have taxed his own gravity and the patience of North. In April he was back in his customary humour, for during the debate upon pensions, introduced by Sawbridge, he attacked North in person and exclaimed that a man who had ruined his country did not deserve a pension. He was in office now, sanguine and, as he might flatter himself, secure. But he was certainly less fierce with North; whether from a sense of official decorum, or from benevolence begotten of success, cannot be decided. When North, emerging from his mood of silence, took part in the debates on Rodney, Fox 'civilly accepted' his suggestion that thanks should be extended to all flag-officers. North refrained from supporting a motion of censure lest it should lead to conflict and loss of discipline in the fleet; but he condemned the rash conduct of Government. Fox sharply retorted that if he thought so, he should move for their dismissal. But the impression left on the mind of the vigilant Wraxall was that there had been none of the old asperity and that a first exchange of civilities had passed between the two gladiators.

Beyond this we cannot go. We hear no more of civilities or dismissal of old prejudices until the message of August sent through Storer.[1] It may be said that this disarmed Fox for the future as Shelburne had been disarmed. But Shelburne's overtures had been made as Minister, and were consequently far more formal and solid than Fox's tentative and hypothetical enquiries, which could always be explained away or repudiated. Fox was not yet compromised as Shelburne was compromised. Fox was out of office, and absorbed in calculations on his chances of getting back. Now therefore he had some reason for being civil to everybody; always excepting Shelburne himself. The Government was not without an appearance of strength. Pitt was there. Gower, himself amongst the possible Prime Ministers, had not joined, but he had written to wish success to Shelburne. Fox's own friends had not followed when he resigned. If, then, he cast enquiring eyes at North, we need not jump at the conclusion that he was now, or ever had been, secretly and truly drawn towards him by ties of sympathy and esteem.

During the autumn months the busybodies were making great play with Lord North's name, and bewailing his tardiness in adopting their schemes. Eden went so far in his anger as to say that he was haunted by the old proverb that it is impossible to make a silk purse of a sow's ear.[2]

[1] See p. 205. [2] To Loughborough, September 3rd, 1782.

But North for once might be pardoned if he was irresolute: he had a momentous decision to make. To join Shelburne might be fatal: to join Fox required the most robust moral courage. To make matters worse, Loughborough and Eden urged the latter, whilst Jenkinson, Dundas, and Robinson pressed the former alternative; and the nimble Rigby, having declared for Fox in July, appears to have succeeded in standing well with all advocates alike in view of possible contingencies. At the last moment he carried a message from Shelburne to North, who replied, 'I cannot meet Lord Shelburne now. It is too late.'[1] Loughborough became anxious and eager. When he could not get hold of North himself he poured out his hopes and fears to Eden. In undated letters written between December 1782 and February 1783 he insists on it that Lord North may decide upon the merit of the Peace and the fate of the Ministry; but if he neglects his opportunity he will not in a month's time have any influence left. Again he has seen Lord North and found him reserved; but, says he, 'I know his plan. He will not connect himself with Fox, but means finally to support Lord Shelburne.' In a third letter he argues that in this unhappy event, North would have to bear the odium of an unpopular peace on the top of the blame he had incurred for an unsuccessful war.[2]

Parliament met on December 5th, 1782, and

[1] *Life of Pitt*, Stanhope, i. 96.
[2] Lord Auckland's *Journal, passim.*

the King's Speech announced the recognition of American Independence. North spoke at length, but avoided taking up any firm and fixed position.

'He had not,' he said, 'the most distant intention to oppose the Address. . . . With respect to the independency of America . . . he was not sanguine enough to hope a conclusion of the war on terms consistent with the future dependency of the Colonies, but at the same time he could not think with Mr. Fox that a recognition of their independence should be made without an equivalent. . . . He also differed extremely with that hon. gentleman with respect to the heartfelt regret expressed by the Sovereign on this unhappy dismemberment of the Empire. America was not only one of the brightest jewels of the Crown, but the most important possession of the Commerce of this country, and the royal sorrow was not the ebullition of personal grief for private suffering . . . he felt sure that his majesty felt himself much less interested in this sacrifice than his people.

'In regard to the cession of Gibraltar he would not go so far as to assert that the fortress ought in no possible case to be given up. If peace could no otherwise be obtained, he would not positively say that such a sacrifice ought not to be made, but . . . the price should be a large one. He believed there were few things in the possession of Spain that could form an adequate compensation for the loss of Gibraltar; she might indeed give territory infinitely more extensive, and of more intrinsic value, but could she give any other impenetrable fortress? . . . Mr. Fox, he said, had always represented the state of our naval power as wretched and alarming; now he claimed credit for Rodney's victory on behalf of the present Government: yet the victory had been won within a

month of the change of Government. . . . He wished to detract from . . . no man, but . . . he would say to the present naval Alexander: "True you have conquered, but you have conquered with Philip's troops." . . . If we had tied ourselves down to certain terms tending towards a peace with America, he hoped something had been done to prevent our having granted more than we obtained, or given away what we should find we ought not to have parted with. . . . Above all things he trusted that in the provisional agreement with America care had been taken to provide an asylum for the loyal and unhappy people who, in all this long struggle had continued faithful to their Sovereign and had consequently . . . been driven from their fortunes.'[1]

On December 18th there was further debate upon the grant of independence and the conclusion of peace: North again disappointed those of his friends who wished to see him take a strong fighting line. He said:

'He was averse to the proposed interference with Ministers in the negociation for peace. They were responsible for the terms they should make: and if the House interfered with them they might plead that as an excuse for a bad peace.'[2]

The preliminaries were still unsettled, and on the 23rd Parliament adjourned for one month. When it met again, the crisis had come. Ministers were resigning; Shelburne made the unprofitable advances which have already been described; and North made up his mind. In the words of the Duke of Grafton,

[1] *Parliamentary History.* [2] *Ibid.*

'we saw with astonishment approaches made and friendships at last declared between the great oppugner of the American war and the Minister to whom he had imputed every evil under which the country groaned.'[1]

Until the last moment the issue must have been in doubt. On February 6th, 1783, W. W. Grenville wrote to his brother Temple, 'Townshend . . . saw no reason for proscribing all Lord North's people from office, but he should not like to see them in Government.'[2] This should imply that North was to bring numbers and be content with only subordinate appointments for his men. On the 11th Temple replied:

'I believe that Lord Shelburne cannot stand alone. I know the King will not hear of Fox, and I think that neither his Majesty nor Lord North will venture to reunite the old opposition by restoring all as they stood in March. The solution therefore is plain; that Lord North and his friends will have a share of office, and will have, either avowedly or not, a share of Government.'

On February 16th he wrote again: 'I as little like Lord Shelburne and North, as I do North and Fox . . .' and on February 20th:

'I have received the enclosed from Lord Shelburne. It is worth observing upon several accounts; first it implies, but does not assert the junction with Lord North, which he plainly does not dare to avow.'[3]

Next day Orde could still write to Shelburne

[1] *Autobiography*, 353. [2] Buckingham's *Memoirs*, i. 143.
[3] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

that North was much under the influence of Lord Guilford, who, in turn, was under the influence of the King, and that no irrevocable step had been taken. But it may be laid down that on February 14th the coalition of North and Fox had become an accomplished fact.

'On Friday, the 14th of February, at two o'clock,' says Lord John Russell, 'Mr. Fox and Lord North met at the house of Lord North's son, George North.' The men to whom this consummation was principally due were, he says, Eden, Adam, and George North on the one side, and Lord John Townshend on the other. Townshend in 1830 told the story to Lord Holland and spoke only of Eden, Adam, and himself. Loughborough has disappeared. On the other hand Eden's son, who edited his Correspondence and Journal, says: 'There is no doubt, in this instance, that the chief agent in effecting the Coalition was Lord Loughborough.' If so, he was destined to be grievously disappointed of his reward. Wraxall and Stanhope[1] add Fitzpatrick as a negotiator for Fox; but if this were so, his heart was not much in his work, and he was soon admitting that mischief had come of it.

One might suppose that at this meeting North and Fox were tempted to exchange a smile like the Augurs of Rome. It was making a heavy demand on the patience of the public to ask them to look upon this sudden transformation as some-

[1] *Life of Pitt.*

thing natural and proper. And the contracting parties must have felt the audacity of their search for common ground of policy.

Apart from the overshadowing element of conflict upon American matters, there were fundamental principles of discord. North was a Tory and a King's man, who loved authority and hated change. Fox had become a Whig with Radical leanings, who had never been on terms with the King, and who was wont to hit out at privilege in whatever form it might make its appearance. He now undertook to leave alone economical reform, but insisted that the King must no longer be his own minister. North yielded here. He said he disliked Government by departments and had always desired to abolish the system, but had lacked vigour and resolution. There should be one man, or a Cabinet, to direct every measure—which was strange doctrine in his mouth who had always denied the existence of a Prime Minister. The King must be treated with every attention and respect, but must be content with the semblance of power. And here perhaps he spoke in vivid recollection of his own long thraldom. On the very considerable question of Parliamentary Reform they agreed to differ. And upon these conditions they concluded their offensive alliance against the Peace.

On Monday, February 17th, 1783, Government moved an address of thanks to the Crown upon the Peace. Lord John Cavendish produced an

amendment declaring that it required further consideration. Fox and North spoke and voted with him. Fox took the opportunity of explaining that since the war was at an end, the sole cause of enmity between him and the noble lord was ended too. Then he went on :

'I never had reason to say of the noble lord in the blue ribbon that he practised any of those little subterfuges, tricks, and stratagems which I found in others—any of those behindhand and paltry manœuvres which destroy confidence between human beings and degrade the character of the statesman and the man'—

which was perhaps as impudent a perversion of truth as any that was ever uttered in Parliament, not excepting Disraeli's denial of having asked Peel for office. North was not prepared for such a declaration as this and made no echo. But on the 21st, when Cavendish moved a vote of censure on the Peace, North was ready to play his part. Pitt, who had spoken badly[1] on the 17th and had drawn from Sheridan the famous 'Angry boy' retort, condemned the Coalition now in his stateliest periods :

'If, however, the baneful alliance is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnized, I know a just and lawful impediment, and in the name of public safety I here forbid the Banns.'

North made no attempt to screen his awkward position by a display of passion and indignation.

[1] Stanhope's *Life*, i. 96.

On February 17th he had spoken at great length and in great detail, but his tone cannot have been pitched in the truly heroic note. We read that he was stopped by the intrusion into the House of a barking dog. When this animal had been removed, Lord North observed that he had been interrupted by a new speaker; 'but as his argument is concluded, I will resume mine.' Upon which the House 'broke into the loudest fit of laughter.'[1] So now on the 21st he used the language rather of defence than of attack. Following Sir Cecil Wray, he said:

'Several of the speakers have addressed much of their invectives against me and those with whom I acted. A great deal has been thrown out on my supposed criminality and those imaginary artifices to which it is alleged I owe my safety. The last speaker . . . did me the honour to single me out as the object of his thunder: and it is no small presumption of my innocence that I could hear him thunder without being dismayed, and even listened to his thunder with a mixture of astonishment and delight. But I must beg that hon. gentleman . . . to observe that I never abandoned in a single instance either my character, my connexion, or my political principles; that I have ever been ready, fairly and honourably, to meet the most scrupulous enquiry into the minutest action of my life. . . . I am under no apprehension of either incurring censure or deserving punishment.'[2]

Whilst he complained of the unsatisfactory terms of the treaty of peace, he made no attempt to denounce it as Fox had denounced him of old,

[1] *Parliamentary History.* [2] *Ibid.*

and Pitt was denouncing him now. And then he went on to return Fox's lead in the payment of compliments:

> 'Notwithstanding the asperity with which he frequently treated me as well as my measures, I do not recollect his ever charging me with the direct want of integrity. I know his temper to be warm, but he is of a generous nature, open, sincere, and manly'—

a statement which implies either an amazing lapse of memory or a wilful violation of truth.

North indeed was well advised in making the best appearance he could, and affecting an easy, and even joyous, temper: but if Walpole is to be believed he was very far from tranquillity of mind. He was afraid of Shelburne, whose intellectual contempt had vexed him far more than Fox's noisy diatribes:[1] and what must Shelburne be thinking of him now? And in the House of Commons he could not always display the happy serenity of the *mens conscia recti.* When in the course of debate Thomas Pitt compared his conduct to the recent case of a man who had endeavoured to get his brother-in-law assassinated and, finding him not dead, had torn off the plaister; and put it that North, having inflicted the wounds of war, was now intent on tearing off the plaister of peace; then, says Walpole, 'Lord North betrayed the utmost anguish at their taunts.'[2]

On February 17th, Daniel Pulteney wrote to

[1] *Last Journals,* ii. 522. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 588.

the Duchess of Rutland, 'Fox and Lord North have been laughed at for their alliance by almost every speaker.'[1] Those laugh loudest, however, who laugh last: on the evening of this day the Government were beaten by 16; on the 21st by 17: and on the 24th Shelburne resigned. He was disposed to persevere and carry on his government in spite of his losses; but Camden, as the candid friend, had to advise him that 'personal dislike was too great for him to attempt to stem it.'

The question naturally presents itself, even if North and Fox could eat their words and reverse their action so brazenly, how was it that their followers showed no disposition to revolt and refuse to go with them? The answer is that there were desertions, but there was no general mutiny. Plenty of country squires who had steadfastly voted with North against Fox for years, displayed neither resentment nor dismay, so far as one can learn. They faced about and marched into the enemy's camp with the same complacency as the peers of a later generation used to exhibit when the Duke of Wellington ordered a countermarch. Those who were still with Fox were not likely to desert him now.

Yet the coalition was not formed without censure and protest. Here are a few illustrations. Mr. Powys, an independent Whig, said in the House of Commons that

'A monstrous coalition had taken place between

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.

a noble lord and an illustrious commoner—the lofty asserter of the prerogative had joined in an alliance with the worshipper of the majesty of the people.'

Mr. Walter Stanhope, a Yorkshire member, twitted Burke with defending a coalition after saying he had the impeachment of North ready drawn in his pocket. Mr. Hill, member for Shropshire, compared the coalition to an alliance between Herod and Pontius Pilate. Sir Charles Turner, Fox's friend, declared that Fox had lost much of his popularity by his action. Sir W. Dolben, a supporter of North, lamented in similar language the conduct of his leader; and Governor Johnstone later averred that it had unquestionably shaken North in the estimation of many of his friends. Sir Cecil Wray, who was presently to stand against Fox at Westminster, was so far dissatisfied that he vowed he would never support a coalition government of which North was a member. Even Fitzpatrick, who has been mentioned as one of the agents in the arrangement, wrote to Lord Ossory after the victory of the 17th: 'What hurt us infinitely more than the general propensity to peace was the apparent junction with Lord North.'

Meanwhile North's old officials were in distress. As early as February 1st, 1783, Robinson wrote to North reproaching him for threatening opposition to the Peace:

'If you and Mr. Fox should overturn the present

administration and form one, your heart will tell you it could not be permanent or pleasant. . . . To have any bargain made would surely not do you honour.'[1]

Jenkinson agreed with Robinson, and wrote at different times:

'Much the majority of mankind pity the King, detest the Coalition and abuse Lord North beyond anything you can conceive.' . . . 'I am mistaken if the present owner of Bushy can reflect on his conduct with any satisfaction, and this is proved by the pains they are forced to take to keep up his spirits.'[2]

Again: the King had told him at the levée that Fox had made a great many friends during the summer and North had lost many, and that if he was now to go into opposition he would carry only his own family.[3]

We are furnished with the opinions of an interested spectator of what was passing through the letters written by Lord Temple, the Lord-Lieutenant, to his brother, W. W. Grenville, before, during, and after the formation of the new Government:

'*March* 1, 1783.

'I have argued in my former letters upon the probable junction of Lord Shelburne and Lord North, and for various reasons I looked upon it as certain, and still think it will be the ultimate arrangement, unless Lord North is strong enough to fight the game singly. However, in the present moment it is out of the question; and although

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

you might have collected from my letters a disposition to such an arrangement, leaving always ad referendum, the question of *acting* under it, yet the probable arrangement of Lord North and Mr. Fox is of a very different complexion; and . . . I am prepared with my decision, and that decision is to resign as soon as the new ministry composed of Mr. Fox and Lord North is notified to me. . . . It cannot be Lord North's intention to retire upon emolument, with an actual majority in favour of whichever party he supports; and I should have a better opinion of his good faith, if he battled more eagerly for power in the early moments of the coalition. But as things are now arranged, he means either now or hereafter, to kick away these few additional steps to the ladder by which he mounts; and to speak sincerely, I protest to Heaven I would sooner support Lord North first and sole minister than such a coalition whose weakness is too palpable, as it does not seem to me to stand upon one inch of public ground and to revolt every feeling that can do honour to human nature. . . .'

'*March* 28, *Dublin.*

' . . . a coalition of all the Powers (under Thurlow), of the Scotch, of the Jenkinson, the Ellis, and that description of Kings friends which, if supported by draughts from the three contending parties under the general wish of any administration rather than none, might slip into employment and leave Lord North to his new allies. This is the only solution to . . . a Government independent of Pitt.'

'*April* 2.

'Pitt had failed him (the King): to North he is implacable: he can look only to one object and that is a coalition of all the King's friends under

Lord Thurlow and the Bedfords. Such an arrangement would draw off many from Lord North. Looking at . . . the unprincipled manœuvre of Fox and Lord North I own that I should feel an eager wish to support any arrangement which could combat this combination. As to remaining in this employment under them no consideration should tempt me.'

'*April* 29.

'I have by this night's mail received my recall without one civil expression but an opinion of Lord North that it is not surprising that the King hears of my resignation with concern.'[1]

On April 17th, 1783, Mr. Conolly wrote as follows to Lord Buckinghamshire. Of Lord Melbourne's share in the negotiations, history takes no notice. The *Dictionary of National Biography* tells us only that he was 'a silent follower of Lord North':

'I asked [Lord Temple] the other day whether he would have thought himself bound to resign if Lord Melbourne had succeeded in his flirtation with Lord North before Christmas and had brought him in. To this I could get no reply, though it is evident to every one that the separation of the Whigs upon my Lord Rockingham's death created the necessity of a Coalition between two of the three contending parties.'[2]

Lord John Russell wastes no time in trying to justify the Coalition, and throws up his client's case.[3]

The Coalition then was denounced, and to a

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers. [2] *Idem*, Lothian Papers.
[3] *Life of Fox*, i. 349.

considerable extent it was unsupported. According to Gibbon, Fox and North together ought to have had 210 votes to the 140 of Shelburne. Their majorities in February were under twenty. But they were majorities that served their purpose.

From February 24th to April 2nd, 1783, the King and country were left without a Government, and it almost passes the wit of man to record without confusion the comings and goings, the invitations and refusals, the demands and denials, that followed fast on one another. We have the contemporary journals, which need not be infallibly correct, and are indeed contradictory. We have modern versions. We have records of what the King said respectively to Lord Ashburton and W. W. Grenville; but even George III. in his excitement and impatience may have given his narratives a twist to suit his temper. This appears to be a fair summary of what happened. Shelburne resigned on February 24th, 1783. The King at once sent for Pitt, who was ready to carry on the Government, but found on enquiry that he could not hope for adequate support. In spite of the King's urgency, he refused. This he reports to his mother and Dundas.[1] On March 3rd the King sent for North, who paraded his new principle of restricting the royal prerogative, by insisting that it should lie with the ministers-elect to nominate to the head of the Treasury. The King of course objected and dis-

[1] Stanhope's *Life*, i. 106–8.

missed him; but next day he sent for him again and urged him to form a Government. North refused and asked for the Treasury on behalf of the Duke of Portland. This was evidently at the instigation of Fox and was intolerable to the King. On the same day North wrote this letter, which proves at all events that it was quite understood that Fox could not be excluded. It also suggests that Portland at present was a difficult obstacle. Eden was busy behind the scenes, for the draft of this letter is in his handwriting:

'*March* 4 (1783), 2 *p.m.*

'Lord N. has the honour to inform his Majesty that pursuant of His Maj^ys commands He communicated to Mr. Fox His Majesty (*sic*) wishes that Mr. Foxe (*sic*) and His Friends would assist in forming the new Administration in which it would be His Majesty's Desire that they should accept of great Honourable and efficient offices. Ld North added that it was His Majesty's Intention that the office of first Lord of the Treasury should be filled by some Peer not at the Head of any Party. Mr. Foxe in the name of His Friends informed Lord North that they could not make Part of any Administration unless the D. of Portland sh^d be at the Head of the Treas^y.

'Communicated to Mr. Foxe previous to its being sent.'[1]

The King then sent for Gower and Thomas Pitt; and perhaps Temple, but there is some doubt whether he was summoned so early. The King told Grenville that he had already tried all the

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34419.

Cabinet and that 'none had spirit to stand forth.' On March 7th he wrote to Thurlow:

> 'I shall certainly still attempt to find whether there is any man willing at this crisis to stand by the Crown against a desperate faction into whose hands I will never throw myself.'[1]

Neither in this letter, nor in others to Thurlow, is there any abuse of North; but W. W. Grenville says that on the 17th the King spoke of him 'in terms of strong resentment and disgust'; and to Temple a few days later he wrote bitterly of 'that *grateful* Lord North.' North was indeed in an obstinately unaccommodating mood. He was determined not to come to the rescue on his own account: his lot was cast with Fox; and he was going to stand by him in asking for Portland. How soon the King gave way on this point is not at all clear. Grafton says that Portland was sent for on the 20th. Grafton himself now advised Fox that a junction with North was the only solution. Meanwhile there was friction between Portland and North about Stormont, to whom North had taken on himself to make an offer of place. Portland was indignant, and volunteered to form a Government without North. On the 23rd the quarrel was made up; but it broke out again and needed further assuaging.

The King told Ashburton on the 9th of March that he had sent for North first—apparently to scold and reproach him. Since then he had had

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2232.

nothing to do with him. On the 26th he told Ashburton that he had had a species of negotiation with North and Portland: that North was dissatisfied and wanted to withdraw. The King desired to keep the Chancellor, whom Fox expressly vetoed, demanding at the same time a larger share of Cabinet nominations. On the 30th the King said that he had tried all his resources again, including Temple. It is certain that he made another urgent appeal to North to save him from the men he hated. And if Grafton was not misinformed, Pitt was again sent for and again tempted to take his chance; but was dissuaded by the cautious Camden. General Cuningham had written to Lord Temple on February 25th:

'I have this instant heard Lord North say he believed Mr. Pitt was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer and I know a variety of circumstances to confirm it.'[1]

A month later, March 27th, W. W. Grenville wrote to Temple:

'Since the negotiations with the Coalition broke off, the Government has been repeatedly and most eagerly pressed on Pitt, who has however yesterday once more firmly declined it.'

Dundas was swayed by corresponding hopes and misgivings.[2] It does not appear that the King attempted an heroic combination of Fox, North, and Pitt. To none of the three would the union have

[1] Buckingham, *Memoirs*. [2] Stanhope: *Life of Pitt*, i. 112.

been congenial or even tolerable. Lord Stanhope says :

'An anxious wish had been felt to include Mr. Pitt in these Cabinet arrangements . . . but Mr. Pitt would not listen to such overtures, nor consent to take any part in a combination of which he strongly disapproved.'

After his speech of February 21st he could hardly take any other line. Moreover he made no secret of his belief that a coalition of North and Fox could not continue long. Then would come his opportunity. He could afford to wait.

On one point the King and North were agreed. They both wanted to keep Thurlow ; whereas Fox insisted on putting the Great Seal in commission. As soon as Shelburne resigned, Bathurst had written to the King to offer his services. He had apparently a restless nature and was fond of moving on. He had resigned the Lord Chancellor's office in 1778 : now he was for coming back again. The King's answer is significant : he thanks Bathurst for his goodness, but Thurlow 'has not the smallest intention of retiring.'[1]

At all events, poor Loughborough found all his labour vain. He was not to reach the goal of his desire. In an undated letter he writes to Eden :

'Burke called on me and told me that the only obstacle to an entire arrangement was Lord North's attachment to the Chancellor. I would not do so unchristian an act as to assist him with any means

[1] Cirencester House Papers, unpublished.

of overcoming that pious and charitable scruple of Lord North's, but it would be a singular event in politics, and prove most strongly the advantage of insolence, brutality, and treachery, if a hopeful arrangement in other respects should fail from Lord North's affection to the *beaux yeux* of the Chancellor.'

In reading of Loughborough one is vaguely reminded at times of the restless and ambitious nature of Brougham. The exclusion of the one now is fairly matched by the other's loss, when Melbourne put the Great Seal in commission in 1835.

To end an involved story it may be added that the King was beaten in all directions. On April 1st he was obliged to accept an Administration with Portland at its head, and with Fox and North as Secretaries of State ; without Thurlow, and with the Great Seal in commission. On the same day he wrote to Temple confessing his

'uneasiness of mind at having been thwarted in every attempt to keep the administration of public affairs out of the hands of the most unprincipled coalition the annals of this or any other nation can equal.'

It was a complete triumph for Fox. He had brought the King, who hated him, to his knees, and he had contrived to make North his catspaw in grasping one concession after another. The King has been criticised for ingratitude and caprice in turning against North. His resentment at this

time is quoted as evidence that he never really cared for him and only showed him favour so long as he found him a malleable agent of his will. This is not fair. The King found all that he held precious and sacred slipping out of his hands. The ministers he wanted would not serve him; those that he loathed were being forced upon him. The personal authority, on which his principle of sovereignty was based, was to be avowedly and defiantly taken away; and one of the prime agents in the transaction was the old familiar friend whom he believed, with ample reason, shared his views, and could always be relied upon as a devoted and obedient servant and ally.

Before going further it is worth observing what the Duke of Portland, head of the Coalition, came to think of coalitions in later days. In 1794 there was a prospect of the 'Opposition or Whig Party' making common cause with Pitt. To relax the ties of party and surrender avowed principles seemed to him then a mischievous blunder, and this he deprecated in language that can be adapted without much difficulty to the alliance of North and Fox. He wrote to Windham on January 11th, 1794:

'As long as they preserve this title to public esteem, so long will they have it in their power either as Individuals or as Party men to give very great assistance and strength to Government by the avowed sanction and support to measures which Ministers may have formed, in their private situations; they can give energy to measures which

want force . . . they can in many cases counteract popular prejudices and engage and insure popular favour, from the confidence they possess from the supposition of any jealousy or suspicion attaching to them, they can give the tone to the public mind. . . . But let them accede to the present Administration, let them take office under Mr. Pitt, and from that moment their weight, their consideration, their very names are lost.'[1]

[1] *The Windham Papers*, i. 205.

CHAPTER XVII

The Fall of the Coalition

THE interval between February 24th and April 2nd, 1783, had been barren, so far as legislation was concerned; but it had been lively enough in respect of party politics. Pitt had remained Chancellor of the Exchequer, not officially head of a Government, yet official leader of the House of Commons. He did not resign until March 31st.

The new Cabinet was conveniently small. Fox, Portland, Keppel, and John Cavendish represented one wing; North, Stormont (Lord President), and Carlisle (Privy Seal), the other; although Burke told Lee, the Solicitor-General, that 'Fox thinks the latter a sure friend.'[1] North was Home Secretary; Fox took the Foreign Office. Cavendish and Keppel went back to their old quarters at the Treasury and Admiralty.

They had this advantage at all events: all that could be said in derogation of the Coalition had been said long ago. On March 24th Mr. Coke had moved a resolution in the House of Commons representing that it was to the detriment of the

[1] *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 124, and see Vol. I., p. 364.

public that no Government should be forthcoming, and praying the King to provide one. On the 31st Lord Surrey brought in another of similar purport. In the *Parliamentary History* there are columns of recrimination and defence of the action of North and Fox. In the course of the first debate Fox took occasion to declare upon his honour that out of the past five weeks there had not been twenty-four hours' delay on account of disputes within the Coalition. The implication was that all the waste of time must be ascribed to the King. There is evidence to show that there had been bickering and some divergence of purpose amongst the contracting parties; but one may well believe that Fox was, with a generous interpretation, to be believed. He and his friends wanted to get into office: the King wanted to keep them out. It follows, then, that they would endeavour to make the least of difficulties: he, without doubt, did all he could to baffle and confound them. In a report of the debate of March 31st we read:

'Lord North said that notwithstanding the severe reflections cast on the Coalition it would be found that neither party had given up their sentiments, yet they could act together for the public good. The Hon. Mr. Fox and himself undoubtedly agreed on many great points. . . . Mr. Fox said, that if none were to be admitted to take part in the Administration but those whose political sentiments never disagreed, it would be difficult, indeed, to form an Administration. Mr. Burke said he had been blamed for joining the Coalition, but he . . . should have it in his power to convince

those people who railed so bitterly against it, that they were entirely wrong.'

If the House contained any members who had reverence for political consistency, their sense of propriety must have been shocked indeed.

We may say at once that North's return to office in 1783 involved his retirement from active political life. This should appear to be a paradox; but it is no great exaggeration. Fox was the predominant partner. North was literally and by metaphor the sleeping partner. North was Home Secretary, but Fox administered the Home Office as well as his own. India and Ireland were both in North's department; yet Fox brought in the famous India Bill, and he corresponded personally with the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. There was the less excuse for this inasmuch as North knew more about both these problems than did Fox. His India Act of 1773 is one of his achievements as a Minister for which he has been most generally commended. Within the last year he had received from Sir Elijah Impey a testimony to the personal concern that he had shown for Indian affairs and India officials:

'It was to your favour that I owed my first appointment to my office, and it is to your justice in not suffering me to be condemned unheard that I owe my present continuance in it.'[1]

In 1778–80 he had given much attention to Irish affairs. However, Fox was disposed to be

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 16260 (14 Feb. 1782).

sole minister and only left alone the uncongenial subject of finance. Wraxall says that North 'jested at his own decline and showed the same cheerful complacency, ready wit, and unaffected good-humour.' Elsewhere he says that North scarcely occupied second place.

North undoubtedly corresponded with the Prime Minister. Some surviving letters show that he had not dismissed from his mind all care for the progress of events, either at home or abroad. But in no quarter, where evidence of his activity might be supposed to exist, do we find any indication that he was reluctant to 'occupy second place.' It can easily be believed that he confined himself to those affairs of patronage in which he had always taken interest, and was content to be the politician rather than the statesman.

This attitude of humility and submission may surely be claimed as evidence of the motive already ascribed to North. It was manifestly not ambition, nor desire for work, that made him eager for office. For eight years Fox had smitten him on the one cheek day by day. North now turned to him the other, and was content to play a subordinate and undignified part under the man whom he had dismissed from office in 1774, and who had been the bane of his existence ever since. It is not unreasonable, then, to assert that North only endured the indignity of alliance because it was to be preferred to the peril of hostility.

There was, indeed, a rumour that North was

to seek repose in the House of Lords. When Pitt brought in his Reform resolutions on May 7th, 1783, he twitted him with staying where he was for the express purpose of opposing the motion. North replied with considerable asperity that Pitt had no right to impute this or any other motive. And it is probably the truth that he thought upon the whole the House of Commons was his safest place. Some time later he declared that he would not go to the House of Lords: he would remain in this assembly for the purpose of defending his character and honour as often as he might be attacked.[1] He heeded little enough what was said of his junction with Fox; but the threat of impeachment had got on to his nerves, and he did not wish to be out of the way if any unlucky change of fortune should revive old accusations.

Upon Pitt's Reform motion, North and Fox exercised their right to differ; and within five weeks of taking office, the two Secretaries of State were seen stoutly opposing one another on the Treasury Bench. The main object of Pitt's scheme was to suppress bribery, disfranchise corrupt boroughs, and give additional members to the counties and to London. It may be noted in passing that Thomas Pitt proposed in the debate to give two members to the Bank of England. North spoke at great length and with undoubted sincerity. It is noteworthy that Hazlitt chose this

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

speech for inclusion in his *British Senate*—presumably because he considered it one of North's best or most characteristic. It is redolent of full-blown Toryism. He denied the existence of a demand for reform, and set himself to prove that the volume of petitions was insignificant both in quantity and quality.

'(He) considered the mere touching of so venerable a fabric as the Constitution, though for the purpose of amending it, to be a matter of dread and apprehension. . . . He would not vote for the addition of a hundred knights, nor for fifty, nor for one. . . . Innovation, like the gravity of a weight in sinking, once begun, would carry all before it. Destruction and ruin would ensue. . . . The addition of members for the counties . . . would give a decided superiority to the landed interests over the commercial. It would tarnish the beauty of the House of Commons which . . . preserves a due poise between the great interests of the Empire; the landed, the commercial, and the monied. They were not the deputies but the representatives of the people. . . . It was Parliament that made him a Minister . . . and they had pulled him down. He had been the creature of their opinion and their power: his political career was of consequence a proof of their independence.'[1]

The American war, he argued, had been the people's war. They had supported it throughout: when they grew weary, then perforce it was brought to an end:

'Had the Constitution been so disordered as

[1] Hazlitt's *British Senate*, ii. 338–340.

the reformers would persuade us that it is, how comes it to this, that the voice of the people prevailed against the influence of the Crown?'

This was his conclusion of the whole matter; it was an issue between 'the few reformers or the contented multitude': and if he had wavered and temporised all his life, certainly he was emphatic and determined enough in choosing his side now. The motion was thrown out by 293 to 149.

A generation to whom reform was little more than a speculative theory could behold Cabinet dissensions on this question without abhorrence; but the lack of solidity in the basis on which Ministers stood was presently made manifest. On June 2nd Pitt introduced a measure for the Reform of Abuses in Public Offices, by which he hoped to save 40,000*l.* a year of public money. No echoing cry for economical reform came from the Treasury Bench, on which sat Fox and Burke. The Bill was not openly opposed, but care was taken that it should be summarily dealt with in the House of Lords. North's colleagues spared him the embarrassment of having to give ostentatious approval of a principle which hitherto they had made part of their system of attack on himself; but it was not therefore an inoffensive debate so far as he was concerned. Pitt quoted the former extravagant expenditure in North's own office. This was his reply:

'I had given the most positive direction that no stationery ware should be delivered for my use

without the express order of my private secretary. If, therefore, any fraud has been committed, it must have been by a breach of that direction. I assure the House that I will make a most rigorous enquiry into this business, and if I find delinquency, I will leave nothing in my power undone to bring the delinquents to punishment. As to coals and candles, I found when I was placed at the head of the Treasury that my predecessors had been supplied with those articles at the expense of the public and that it was according to an old and established custom. But I declined to avail myself of this custom and I have supplied my house with coals and candles at my own expense'—

which was wholly creditable as an apologia; but it involved the sacrifice of his private secretary, and to this expedient no Minister should ever have recourse.

It would be interesting to know whether harmony really prevailed amongst the new allies. It is evident that there were some who thought otherwise. A curious and significant proof of this is given in a letter written by Lord Altamont to Lord Buckinghamshire on June 6th, 1783. He desired the Order of St. Patrick, and was anxious to enlist the support of Lord North. According to him, to be a follower of Lord North was an offence in the eyes of Lord North's leader:

'The stigma thrown upon my nearest friends by the Duke of Portland avowedly for their support of Lord North's administration gives me a claim upon his Lordship.'[1]

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Lothian Papers.

Fox, however, was writing that he believed the Administration was gaining in strength and credit. They had done little enough to entitle them to either. Fox himself, when he stood for re-election on taking office, had been refused a hearing by the electors of Westminster, to whom he had hitherto been something of an idol. It may be that Ministers were able to forget old differences and more recent rivalries, and meet in Council at their ease; but even if it be a fact that they found accommodation less difficult of attainment than was to be expected, there is no evidence to show that they were acquiring any character for usefulness or virtue. It was not in fact a strong Government. Fox had been determined to get into office, and to be in command when he got there. And he had succeeded. He thrust North into the background, and got nothing from him but the votes of his friends and the discredit of his company. The only other colleague who could and did afford some help was Cavendish. Burke was outside the Cabinet and was undoubtedly losing credit with the House of Commons. The *Parliamentary History* records that one night when he rose to speak there was such an exodus of members that he sat down again and refused to proceed. It is certain that neither in the Palace nor amongst Opposition was there any apprehension lest the prospects of the Administration should turn out to be brighter and more enduring than had been anticipated. These letters indicate

that it was believed they might collapse at any moment:

W. Pitt to Earl Temple.

'*July* 22, 1783.

'Lord Thurlow . . . told me he had been at the levée the day before . . . the King had not altered his sentiments with regard to the present Ministry . . . the King had no insight into the means of forming a government; that his directly turning out his Ministers was different from their resigning or being pressed in Parliament; and that the King had gone through the worst in the struggle which ended in bringing them in.'

Temple to Pitt.

'*July* 21 (31?).

'. . . I would not in conversation with Lord Thurlow admit of any merit from this perseverance as partial or flattering to us; and still less would I give Lord Thurlow any clue by which his Majesty is to have an insight into a future Ministry. If this is to be a negociation, let it be avowed; and in whatever manner it is conveyed, the answer in generals may return by the same channel. But the particulars can be only settled personally with the King; and you sufficiently remember what passed between Lord Shelburne and Lord Rockingham in March 1782 not to be very cautious upon anything which may give that light which must be the consequence and not the cause of a negociation.'[1]

The King's prejudice was not diminished by the action of Government in the case of the Prince

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

of Wales. The Prince had come of age and his establishment had to be considered. He was already sufficiently out of favour with his father by reason of his avowed partisanship. He was a Fox man, and Fox now proposed for him an allowance of 100,000*l.* a year. North and Cavendish thought this excessive, but Fox was master. The King was unwilling enough to see his son independent; to see him so lavishly provided for, and that at the hands of one whom he detested, was more than he could endure. He offered half this sum, out of his Civil List. The struggle was sharp, and for a moment the dismissal of the Government was looked for. But the Prince for once showed discretion. He agreed to a compromise, and accepted 50,000*l.* from the Civil List, the Duchy of Cornwall revenues, estimated at 12,000*l.*, and a vote of 60,000*l.* for outfit.

In September, Fox had the satisfaction of announcing that the last formalities connected with the Peace had been completed. He had in fact done very little to entitle him to credit. Beyond some verbal and defining amendments it was Shelburne's peace; but he could at all events celebrate the consummation of the desire which he had undeniably professed, all the while that he was denouncing as the evil genius that obstructed him the man who now sat submissive at his side. The preamble of this Treaty is worth noticing. There is something droll in the description of the high contracting parties. If King George was reduced

to the surrender of everything else, at least he had the best of it in official designation. But the sentiment embodied does credit to the author, whoever he may have been:

'It having pleased the divine Providence to dispose the hearts of the most serene and most potent Prince George III, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain France and Ireland, defender of the faith, Duke of Brunswick and Lunenburg, arch-treasurer and prince elector of the holy Roman Empire &c and of the United States of America, to forget all past misunderstandings and differences that have unhappily interrupted the good correspondence and friendship which they mutually desire to restore, and to establish such a beneficial and satisfactory intercourse between the two countries upon the ground of reciprocal advantages and mutual convenience as may promote and secure both perpetual peace and harmony . . .'

But the *magnum opus* of Fox's Government was to be the India Bill. In the preparation of this Burke took an important part:[1] his passionate imagination was already inflamed by what he deemed the iniquities of Indian Administration: but Fox adopted full responsibility and assumed personal control. Lord North, who ought to have been minister in charge, was ostensibly ignored. There were in fact two bills. The first laid down regulations for administration in India. The second dealt with government in London. In effect the Court of Directors and Proprietors were to be superseded by a supreme Council, to be

[1] *Life of Pitt*, Stanhope, i. 137.

nominated for four years by Parliament; that is to say by Government. After that, the nomination was to pass to the King. There was to be a body of assistant directors; but it was upon the nomination of the original council of seven that the fortunes of the measure turned.

The proposals were roundly attacked, moreover, because they involved a violation of the Company's Charter. But the Company had invited interference. In 1782 the House of Commons had voted the recall of Warren Hastings amongst other things. The Court of Directors had obediently issued the necessary order: but the Court of Proprietors had deliberately defied the authority of Parliament and reversed the decision.[1] Fox was not to blame for taking notice of this symptom of disorder in the administration of India; but he was prepared for opposition. To Northington he wrote that his scheme would be 'vigorous and hazardous'; and he was not disappointed. Grenville protested against the violation of the most solemn charters and of all the ties that bind man to man. This objection was not disposed of by the answer of Lee, the Attorney-General. Lee was a sound party man and author of the Johnsonian aphorism that one should never speak well of a political enemy. 'What,' asked he, in course of the debates, 'is a Charter? Only a skin of parchment with a seal of wax dangling at one end of it.' Such an

[1] Lecky, v. 229, 230.

argument was not likely to escape the notice of such a debater as Pitt; such a champion of privilege as Jenkinson; or such acute legal minds as those of Erskine and the future Lord Eldon, who had lately entered Parliament.

But the main attack was directed against the appropriation by Government of patronage for party purposes and in transgression of constitutional limits. Lord Thurlow declared that if the bill were to pass, the King would in fact take the diadem from his own head and place it on the head of Mr. Fox.

It is not easy to account for the exaggeration of this charge; or, to speak more exactly, to understand how it was possible to pass it off upon the public. Fox only claimed power to nominate for four years. After that it was into the King's own hands that the right would pass. North had adopted something like the same principle in 1773. Yet Fox was accused of looking beyond his own term of office; of attaching a royal prerogative to his own party in perpetuity. Such, indeed, had been the admitted object of Stanhope's Peerage Bill of 1717. By that frustrated endeavour, the Whig predominance in the House of Lords was to be guaranteed against reversal by subsequent creations. Whatever may have been the faults of the India Bill, it cannot be said with truth that it contained any grotesque pretension to unlimited and ultimate control by Fox and his friends.

However, that was the interpretation put upon

it by his adversaries and on those grounds it was contested. Lord North scented danger. How soon he was consulted, or whether he was consulted at all, is nowhere made apparent; but on the day of introduction, November 18th, he wrote to warn his colleague:

> 'The influence of the Crown, and influence of party against Crown and people, are two of the many topics that will be urged against your plan. The latter of the two objections will not be sounded so high and loudly in the House of Commons, but it may be one of the most fatal objections to your measure.'

It was not against the added influence of the Crown that hostility was principally directed. Shelburne, indeed, wrote that if the Bill became law, 'the Crown would gain all the influence of India and of the Company at home'; but he further observed that at any time Government might pass an Act transferring the powers of the Commissioners to the Secretary of State; and it was upon the threatened appropriation of power by the party now in office that the attention of the critics was riveted. It can hardly be said that this objection was not 'sounded high and loudly' in the House of Commons: otherwise, in his examination of his colleague's scheme, North displayed admirable judgment and foresight. He spoke without great display in the debate on the second reading (November 27th). On going into Committee on December 1st we are told that

'Lord North left the House in a state of indisposition about midnight.' Fox made a very long and vigorous speech and took the opportunity of proclaiming once more the propriety and value of the Coalition Government:

'The calamitous situation of this country required an administration whose stability would give it a tone of firmness with foreign nations and promise some hope of restoring the faded glories of the country. Such an administration could not be formed without some junction of parties; and if former differences were to be an insurmountable barrier to the union, no chance of salvation remained for the country, as it is well known that four public men could not be found who had not at one time or other taken opposite sides in politics. The great cause of difference between us and the noble lord in the blue ribbon no longer existed; his personal character stood high; and thinking it safer to trust him than those who had before deceived us, we preferred to unite with the noble lord.'[1]

The seven Commissioners put in nomination were Lords Fitzwilliam and Lewisham, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Sir Henry Fletcher, Frederick Montagu, Robert Gregory, and George North—all steadfast supporters of the Coalition. Lord North was obviously considered in the selection of his son and of Lewisham. Such were Fox's terms: and in spite of the vigorous persistence of the Opposition, he carried them safely through the House of Commons. His majorities were usually above

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

two to one, and on December 8th the third reading was carried by 208 to 102. Next day the Bill was sent to the House of Lords.

On December 11th Lord Temple obtained an interview with the King, and when he emerged from the palace he had in his pocket a card inscribed with this royal message:

> 'His Majesty allowed Earl Temple to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend but would be considered by him as an enemy; and that if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose.'

The consequence was inevitable. North's friends in the Lords were likewise King's men. They were less under his personal influence than those who sat with him in the other House. They flew to Temple like a flock of starlings, and on December 17th the Bill was thrown out on the second reading by 95 to 76 votes. It is noteworthy that Lord Stormont, Lord President of the Council, voted against the Government. He was regarded as of the North contingent in the Cabinet; but he showed that he was a King's man before anything else. And it does not appear that his contumelious behaviour was visited by so much as a reprimand from his chiefs.

Meanwhile, the Temple manœuvre was a matter of common knowledge and common gossip, and on this same day, the 17th, Mr. Baker moved in the House of Commons that it was a high

crime and misdemeanour and a breach of privilege to report any opinion of the King to influence votes: also that the House should resolve itself into Committee to consider the state of the nation on the following Monday.[1] Pitt opposed him with energy. Fox, of course, supported him: and North forsook his old master without any of his usual hesitation:

'His Lordship said he had heard much in his time of secret influence. He never saw anything like it: otherwise he should undoubtedly have relinquished his situation. But this rumour, which had merited such a marked reprobation, had all the appearance of it. . . . His Lordship contended for the propriety and necessity of the motion, and this he did the more especially, as he had been charged, on former occasions, with indifference to the Constitution.'[2]

Next day Mr. Atkinson wrote to John Robinson this flattering tale:

'Lord North was again great in debate last night. I prophesy that that man's powers will revive in Opposition. What a constitution of character this is!'

In the House of Commons Mr. Baker had a majority of 153 to 80. The Lords, as we have seen, threw out the India Bill. Both these divisions took place on December 17th.[3]

December 18th was *dies non*: nothing happened. North retired to bed at his usual hour. At one

[1] *Parliamentary History.* [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

o'clock in the morning[1] he was disturbed by a message that some one wished to see him on a matter of urgent importance. He answered that anybody who wished to see him must see Lady North as well: let the man come in. There entered a messenger who had to desire the Minister to return his seal before noon through the medium of his Under-Secretary. Another envoy was in search of Fox, whom he probably found sitting up and talking, if not playing. He too received the peremptory and humiliating command. In the course of the morning the seals were duly delivered. Temple took possession of both and, as Secretary of State, wrote letters of dismissal to the other Ministers. North was determined to show that loss of office did not extinguish the ardent feelings that had been engendered in his bosom by the Coalition. On December 22nd Erskine moved a resolution praying the King not to dissolve Parliament. Somebody spoke of Fox as the Secretary of State. He was no longer entitled to that designation, said North,

'but I will call him by a name which I trust will ever belong to him; a name which it is my pride to boast of since I knew him best; I will henceforth call him my right hon. friend. . . . Our intimate connexion was founded in principle of honour; when the great points on which we differed were no more, we thought we might act together with cordiality and without inconsistency. We were not mistaken: we tried the experiment

[1] *Annual Register.*

and it succeeded; no meanness, no dishonour, no jealousy discovered itself: all was inviolable adherence to honour and good faith on one part; all was confidence on the other. No mean concessions were made on either side. . . . It was said on a former day that a starling ought to be placed in this House and taught to speak the words "Coalition! Coalition! cursed Coalition." Now for my part I think that while there is in this House an hon. gentleman who never fails, let what will be the subject of debate, to take an opportunity to curse the Coalition, there will be no occasion for the starling; and while he continues to speak by rote, and without any fixed ideas, I think what he says will make just as much impression as if the starling himself were to utter these words. (Here the House fell into a violent fit of laughter.)'[1]

The Coalition Government, then, had run its short course; and Fox and North, with little glory gained, were once more in opposition. It was startling evidence of the unpopularity of the late Ministry, that amongst those who sent to the King addresses of thanks for dismissing them were the people of Banbury—North's own constituency.

On December 19th Pepper Arden moved for a new writ for an election at Appleby in the room of William Pitt, who had accepted the combined offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The new minister was between twenty-four and twenty-five years of age. He made no pretence of having a party at his back. He could display none of the advantages

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

upon which political leaders must rely to give substance to ability or ambition. The members of the Coalition professed to regard his appointment as a farce: but it was by no means a crazy project, as they were speedily to learn. Pitt formed a solid Government in respect of character and talent, if not homogeneous in principles. Thurlow went back to the Woolsack. Gower was Lord President, Howe became First Lord of the Admiralty: Sydney and Carmarthen were Secretaries of State. Rutland was Privy Seal, and in 1784 went to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant. He was barely thirty, and his correspondence with his young chief is remarkable reading. Outside the Cabinet were the progressive Richmond and the adaptable Dundas, North's old lieutenant. Temple accepted a Secretaryship of State, but resigned after forty-eight hours. His motive is not certainly known: by some it has been alleged that he refused to serve unless there were an immediate dissolution. It is also said that he rebelled on the more personal and less elevated ground that Pitt either could not or would not get him a dukedom. Camden and Grafton declined office. Pitt's reason for not attempting to enlist Shelburne has already been considered; and it has been represented that Pitt did not love Shelburne and was glad to get rid of him on any terms. The official explanation was confided by Sydney to Orde, who passed it on:

'He lamented, however, the effect and absolute influence of prejudice, which at this moment

prevented the applications which might otherwise have been made to you. He said that it was in vain to combat it. The prevalence of it would by degrees diminish and die away, but that at present it would not be much more alarming to many to bring Lord Bute forward. He touched also upon another ground of apprehension which affected some people, that your Lordship's known principle was to be absolute; and that you was to absorb all power, and others were to act only as your puppets.'

Pitt's position, then, was this. He had accepted office after barely three years' experience of Parliament: he had indeed formed a respectable Government, but he had not secured the assistance of such trained politicians as Grafton and Camden, and he risked the open enmity of the adroit and eager Shelburne. He had no majority in the House of Commons. Against him were arrayed the relentless Fox, the practised North, the irrepressible Burke, and the unbridled Sheridan. Never did a young man deliberately put himself against such odds in politics: possibly not in war. It was an enterprise as daring and successful as Clive himself could boast. Some formal and necessary business was disposed of, and Parliament adjourned from December 26th to January 12th, 1784.

The principal point of conflict between Pitt and Fox is not easy to explain. They agreed in not desiring an immediate dissolution. Fox based his objection on the ground that in the circumstances it would be unconstitutional and an abuse

of the prerogative: but it is not improper to suggest that he had a more practical and personal motive. He wanted to get back into power and to turn Pitt out. He may have thought it advantageous to leave him there for a while in confident hope that he would sink with discredit. He may have been conscious of the present unpopularity of the Coalition, and have feared the result of an appeal to the people now; may have aimed, therefore, at beating Pitt quickly and recovering his own former position with his majority intact. Whatever the true explanation may be, he protested against a dissolution.

Pitt, on his side, had no intention of dissolving. He knew the Coalition were unpopular, but he thought they might become more unpopular still. There were ample signs that their reputation in the constituencies was evil: he would give that ill repute time to scatter and sink deep. Meanwhile he would offer an alternative that he fancied he could make attractive.

The biographer of Fox admits that he made a grave tactical blunder in his attack on Pitt's position. Instead of concentrating on the Minister he kept up a constant skirmish with the Sovereign. Instead of setting out to protest and to prove that Pitt was not supported by Parliament and the country, he was content to cry out against the King for having placed him in office. He did not even make use of the opening that Temple's irregular interference had given him. He only nagged

at Temple's master for having stretched the prerogative too far. Thus it came about that Pitt who, to his dying day, declared himself a Whig, was the apologist of the Crown and prerogative; whilst North, who had grown to middle age as a staunch Court protector, was abetting Fox in preaching the popular and democratic faith.[1]

North was not afraid of his new part and spoke up manfully. To Lord Lisburne he wrote on January 4th, 1784, of

> 'the bold attempt of [the new Government] to undertake the management of public affairs in defiance of the great majority of the House of Commons. It is certainly one of the most extraordinary scenes that we have beheld in our time and it appears improbable that we shall ever have a permanent government, unless the Crown can agree in the choice of an administration with the representatives of the people.'

He goes on to say that if he has ever been suspected of a want of friendly disposition, the true explanation must be sought in want of power. And he begs Lisburne to come and help them in Parliament and bring as many of his friends as possible.[2]

There is an obvious flaw in the argument of Fox and North. If it were necessary and right that the chosen of the people should be in office, what better test could there be than a general election: and this was what they were specially

[1] *Life of Fox*, by Lord John Russell, ii. 54.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2136.

determined to avoid. If they were sure of their hold on the country, let Pitt dissolve Parliament: the Coalition would come back triumphant, and the King would be compelled to give way. But Fox would have none of this, and North was the echo of Fox. One is forced to the conclusion that in spite of the savage battles they had fought, and the occasional sensitiveness of North to fierce personal onslaught, he had actually come under 'the wand of the charmer,' and was fascinated into a state of admiring acquiescence. He had no longer any apparent motive for exertion. He was reduced to an insignificant part in which he had to yield precedence to his old subaltern and opponent after having been undisputed leader for twelve years over him and against him. He cannot have aimed at regaining his supremacy. And if he had feared the enmity of Fox, he had certainly done enough during the past year to make himself secure against that. Nevertheless he was taking manifest pains to show that he was ready to go all lengths with his colleague.

When Parliament reassembled on January 12th, 1784, Fox led off with a motion to go into Committee on the State of the Nation, and this was carried by thirty-nine. He then moved two resolutions designed to embarrass Government in their financial arrangements, and a third to postpone the Mutiny Bill until February 23rd. His object was to prevent Pitt from dissolving and getting together a new Parliament in time to pass

this measure before the appointed day, March 25th. These resolutions were carried without a division. Next came Lord Surrey with two motions; that the Administration ought to possess the confidence of the House of Commons, and that the change of Government had been preceded by rumours of an abuse of the King's name. An amendment was moved by Government that the Speaker do now leave the Chair; and they were beaten by fifty-four. A formal Address to the King was carried.

Undeterred by these reverses, and undaunted by the fate of Fox, or perhaps profiting by his experience, Pitt now produced an India Bill. Its most important provision was for the establishment of a Board of Control in England with power to veto nominations and order prosecution of officers and servants of the Company. No patronage was to lie with these officers, and they were consequently not liable to the obloquy that had been directed against Fox's Commissioners. Fox at once brought all his artillery to bear against these proposals; but he refrained from trying an assault, and the first reading was given without a division.

On January 16th Lord Charles Spencer moved again that the position of the Ministry was unconstitutional; and again Pitt was beaten—by twenty-one. The debate was remarkable for the plea put forward by several county members of repute that a union of Pitt and Fox was the most desirable

solution of the difficulty. Fox was not going to repudiate the suggestion, but he meant to destroy the India Bill first. On the 23rd it came on for second reading and was thrown out by a majority of eight. Then the Opposition demanded of Pitt what he meant to do : he refused to say, and some stormy scenes kept the House of Commons in a state of tension.

On January 26th there was a meeting at the St. Albans Tavern. Mr. Grosvenor, who had advocated a union of parties in the House of Commons, was in the chair, and the company pledged themselves to attempt to bring the leaders together. They prospered so far as to find no refusal on the part of Pitt, who was prepared to communicate with the Duke of Portland. But here came the first hitch. The Duke, speaking of course for Fox, insisted on Pitt's resignation as a basis upon which to negotiate. Pitt at once refused.

Mr. Grosvenor was not to be discouraged, and on February 2nd he moved in the House of Commons that the interests of the country required the formation of an extended and united Ministry. Pitt raised no objection on principle, and there was no division. Then Coke of Norfolk, Fox's friend, moved that the existence of the present Ministry was an impediment in the way of any such arrangement. Government were beaten by nineteen.

Meanwhile negotiations were carried on in a desultory and half-hearted way. Pitt for some reason hated North. His biographer says that his

refusal to serve with him was based 'entirely on public grounds.'[1] It is true that he had fought North resolutely and done his best to get him out of office. But so had Fox. Pitt no doubt regarded North's conduct in joining the Coalition with disgust; but Fox was no less guilty, and he was not refusing to make terms with Fox. North and Chatham had been colleagues, and it is not apparent that Pitt had any reason to complain of treachery or disloyalty on North's part towards his father; unless we can so interpret North's willingness to succeed Townshend as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1767, when Townshend had grievously offended Chatham. Whatever the reason for proscription, North was aware of it, and knew that it was insuperable; although he had gone so far on the road towards conciliation as to send a message through Dundas, during the crisis of March–April 1783, that if Pitt formed a Government he would refrain from opposition. So, at all events, Dundas said.[2] North now declared that he was quite willing to retire, and would on no account 'stand in the way of so great and necessary a measure' as the proposed alliance. For this he has been praised as an honourable and unselfish patriot. It is likely enough that he was only too thankful to get an opening to escape with credit. He could still follow at Fox's heels, which seemed to satisfy his inclination; and he would be troubled no more with the labour and cares of office.

[1] Stanhope's *Life*, i. 188. [2] *Pitt*, J. H. Rose, 125.

However, no self-sacrifice was to be required of him. Fox himself professed to be shocked at the suggestion:

> 'there was no person who would blame such a conduct more than he should, because he knew that such a conduct would take away a great and principal means by which a strong, vigorous, and effectual Government could alone be formed in this country.'

Fox went so far as to feel his way towards a compromise upon India. He would agree to a measure that let drop the obnoxious patronage proposals, so long as the control should be kept in England and should be vested for a specified term of years. But meanwhile a running fight was kept up in Parliament, and during one engagement Fox made an adroit defence of the Coalition. He reminded the House of the attack made by Pitt's father upon the alliance of his own father with Newcastle in 1755. Chatham had compared this picturesquely, wittily, and, as he pretended, without premeditation, to the union of the sluggish and turbulent waters of the Saône and the Rhone. He was not afraid to repeat the image, said Fox, for he was prepared to call attention to the volume of the tide as it poured down below the point of junction: there it had become a 'broad, great, and most powerful stream, flowing with the useful velocity that does not injure, but adorns and benefits the country through which it passes.'

And still the Coalition bore down the Govern-

ment by force of votes. On February 18th Fox moved to postpone Supply, and had a majority of nine—a narrow margin, but enough to cripple Administration. On the 20th he moved an Address to the King, supplementing a motion by Powys, praying for the formation of a united and efficient Government. No resistance was offered, and it was even ordered that it should be carried to the foot of the Throne by the members of the House. The King returned a sufficiently ingenious and evasive reply. On March 1st Fox moved another and stronger Address, and carried it by twelve. The King's reply this time was to refer to his previous answer. And now it should seem that attempts at union were at an end. The final obstacle had been encountered in Pitt's demand for 'equal' terms as the principle of arrangement; Portland would go no further than 'equitable.' On February 29th Pitt wrote to Powys:

'On this idea Mr. Pitt has not attempted to define in what manner the principle of *equality* should be applied to all the particulars of arrangement, nor discuss by what precise mode it may be best carried into effect; but he is so convinced that it is impossible to form any union except on that principle, that it would be in vain to proceed, if there is any objection to its being stated in the outset that the object for which his Majesty calls on the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt to confer, is the formation of a new administration on a wide basis, and on a fair and *equal* footing.'

Portland's brief did not authorise him to go

further in accommodation; and there was an end of Mr. Grosvenor's praiseworthy endeavour.

On March 8th Fox brought forward another representation to the King, more formidable and elaborate than those that had gone before. After a mighty combat the motion was carried; but it was carried by a single vote. Suddenly the spirit seemed to die out of the hearts of Opposition. They either could not or would not fight any more. Next day the Mutiny Bill came on. The Government moved to continue it for the usual period of one year. The Opposition left their favourite weapon untouched, and allowed the motion to pass without resistance. Pitt followed up his victory: he got his Supply voted without further difficulty. And now he saw that his moment had come.

On March 24th the King announced the immediate dissolution of Parliament. A comic interlude was provided here. Early that morning some thieves had made their way into Thurlow's house and walked off with the Great Seal—and the machinery of dissolution was brought to a standstill. However, Pitt set the gravers to work instantly, and by next day, March 25th, the necessary formalities were completed and the General Election had come.

Before going further we must look back and examine a little more closely North's part in the transactions of the past weeks. In order to preserve continuity, the narrative has been allowed to proceed with few interruptions.

North was not trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Whether he really desired to remain in the movement, or whether he was secretly eager to have done with it altogether, he certainly made no attempt to keep in touch with his old friends. On January 27th, 1784, he wrote to his former lieutenant, beginning 'Sir,' instead of 'Dear Robinson,' as of old: he would not receive any civility from the present Treasury or from him personally:

'You say you had to choose between being my friend and my enemy, and you have chosen the latter course. Your option has necessarily determined mine.'[1]

Enough has been said of the passing of the King's favour into wrath. We shall see in a moment that North was taking no pains to recover his master's good opinion; and it may be believed that besides the migration into the camp of the enemy, there were other reasons why he was not likely to be forgiven. George III. was still entangled in the confused and unsettled accounts of the Secret Service money. On August 10th, 1784, he wrote to Robinson about the business transacted between North and Drummond the banker in 1782, which appears to have been left in much the same state as the affairs of which complaint was made in some letters already quoted. The King was puzzled and vexed, but he meant to have his balances properly adjusted: although he has both

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

public and private reasons to be displeased with Lord North, he says, he does not wish conduct so shameful to be known further than to prevent Mr. Drummond's being a loser.[1]

After the Christmas adjournment North came back in an energetic mood. The index of the *Parliamentary History* shows that next to Pitt and Fox he was the most frequent speaker in the House of Commons. On January 12th, 1784, he took a conspicuous part in the debate on Fox's motion for a Committee on the State of the Nation. With respect to the secret influence under which he was supposed formerly to have acted, he said, he would repeat it that he never felt it during the twelve years he had been in office. He never found any opposition about the Court to the measures that he pressed; but it by no means followed from this that no such influence had really existed: for if he had not found his measures thwarted, it might have been because they were relished by the secret advisers. There might have been a mine under his house; and though it was not blown up for twelve years, it was no proof that the mine was not there. . . . Secret influence, which might formerly have been problematical, was now openly avowed. A peer of Parliament (Temple) had given secret advice and gloried in it. A peer or privy councillor had no doubt the right to offer advice, but if he did so, he must accept the responsibility of office. The

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

prerogative of the Crown to dissolve Parliament was unquestionable, but the prerogative could receive efficacy only from the support and confidence of Parliament: without these it would be a scarecrow prerogative, and without these the King would be nobody. When the prerogative was supported by the confidence of the nation it made the King the greatest prince in the world. He was accused of wishing to blockade the throne. . . . Let those who insult the confidence of Parliament and the public by opposing the Sovereign's inclination to their own, whose Government, being a Ministry of secret influence, is unknown to the Constitution, answer to the people for rendering a King of Great Britain nobody:

'. . . We only wish to recover his dignity: by reviving the spirit of the Constitution, and bringing back every prerogative of the Crown to an open responsible and noble exertion, our only real and ostensible object is to make our master somebody.'

Pitt in his reply spoke of mean and hypocritical conduct, and turning fiercely upon North exclaimed, 'if any former ministers take the charge to themselves, let them feel the sting.' North evidently did feel the sting.

'His Lordship explained his conduct,' we are told, 'and having cleared himself, desired to give back the words meanness and hypocrisy. They might belong to him [Mr. Pitt]: he would have nothing to do with them.'[1]

On February 27th there was another debate on

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

the King's answer to the Address of the 20th, and North made another considerable speech. He wished that this Parliament might not be soon dissolved, he said, for this as well as for other reasons, that the people of England might have time to make themselves acquainted with the nature of the contest in which their representatives were at present engaged with the prerogative of the Crown: when they did understand it, they would support their representatives. . . . He had been reminded that amongst the Addresses to the Crown, hostile to his own party, came one from Banbury: he was happy to say that he had ascertained that not one of his constituents had signed it. . . . Threats and promises of honours and emoluments had been used to ease the majority of many of the members who supported it. . . . He advocated union though, by the bye, if no union were effected he would have some chance of getting into office again: he would take himself out of the way if union could not otherwise be obtained, for he knew that union alone could be the salvation of the country.[1]

The friends of Lord North would not choose these speeches as illustrations of his nobility of mind or his steadfastness in statesmanship. They would serve rather for evidence that in taking part with Fox he put himself in an untenable position, and did grave damage to his character and reputation.

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

He began by declaring that in his day there was no secret influence at Court—so far as he knew. He then admitted that it very likely was there, although he knew it not; which was an insult to the King, an insinuation of treachery against old friends and colleagues; and a feeble confession that he had very likely been nothing but a catspaw all the time. He then lays down some sound constitutional principles, which he proceeds to wrap up in a cloud of words. His argument seems to be this: without the support of Parliament, the King is nobody. There is a Government in office through the secret influence of the Crown: they make him a nobody: nevertheless it is because the King has arrogated to himself an excess of power and authority that they are in office. We wish to cancel that authority and so make him somebody; in fact a great Prince: but in protesting against the King's abuse of authority, we are not attacking the King.

It is a delicate task to lay down constitutional law. Writers are apt to judge of it as they like or dislike King George. Mr. Lecky condemns him unsparingly.[1] On the other hand the biographers of Pitt and Fox[2] agree in the opinion that to appoint ministers and dissolve Parliament were within the undoubted prerogative of the King. Lord John Russell goes so far as to admit that 'on popular as well as on prerogative grounds Mr. Pitt was on this occasion the true champion of

[1] v. 253. [2] Stanhope's *Life*, i. 180; Russell's *Life*, ii. 53-54.

the Constitution.' It is true that the dismissal of the late Ministry had been an abrupt, if not an arbitrary act: but it was a fact that their principal measure had been defeated in the House of Lords and that their position was consequently embarrassing. That the bill had been thrown out by the influence of the King was of course a grave and material charge in circulation. It would amount, if it were proved, to a breach of privilege, if not a violation of the Constitution. Even then, it remained that the peers had in fact supported the King against the Government. The Coalition Ministry were admittedly exposed to criticism and disapproval. If the King chose to dismiss them, he may have taken too much upon himself; but it was not an act without its equal in history. His son did as much fifty years later.

North begins his second speech with a protest against dissolution because he wishes the electors to learn the truth. What better way than go amongst them and tell them all about it? Then he betrays the scarecrow state of the constituencies, as he would call it, by vowing that of all the eager politicians of Banbury, who signed the address to the King, not one was a constituent, which presumably means a voter. And in passing we must confess that it is not easy to appraise the value of these addresses. Quality and quantity of signatures have to be considered. Old Sarum was not behindhand, and Wraxall observes that 'one solitary farmhouse did not omit to offer its tribute

of loyalty to the Crown.' The signatures of the Banbury protest have not been preserved. Lord North proceeds to charge his opponent with bribery, which was not to adopt a lofty or original spirit of debate. Finally he makes the humble confession that his only chance of returning to office is to be left in uninterrupted communion with his present allies. In a wider and higher sphere he knows his presence will not be endured.

We cannot avoid the conclusion that North's manners had been corrupted by communications which he never ought to have held. He was forced into a position where he was uncomfortable and constrained. In order to be in the fashion he was obliged to attack the King, to whom he was by habit and instinct attached. He had to pose as the determined champion of public and popular rights, which was a part for which his past had ill qualified him. And finding his brief unfamiliar, and not yet properly digested, he could do no better than tell the Prime Minister that he was a cheat.

We prefer the Lord North of five years back, in the throes of perplexity, anxiety, and disappointment, stoutly defending a policy which, doomed as it was to failure, he had undertaken and pursued in the honest conviction that there was no alternative way of safeguarding the integrity and welfare of the nation committed to his care: this figure we prefer, even in defeat and discredit, to the Lord North attitudinising and platitudinising

in the character of the demagogue, and the inexorable censor of tyrannical kings and usurping favourites. The former, not the latter, is the real Lord North.

North had so deliberately and contentedly taken a place inferior to Fox that it is not to be believed that there had been no corresponding loss of influence. It is significant that rumours of his departure to the House of Lords were continually repeated. As early as May 1784 we have found Pitt accusing him of remaining in the House of Commons only for the purpose of opposing Reform. North then protested against the imputation of motive. Now in the new year he is still declaring that he has no wish to be 'kicked upstairs'[1]—a phrase, by the way, which ought to be put to his credit.

Lord Brougham has said that the consequence of the Coalition to North was 'a total loss of Court and popular favour.' North never had been a popular character outside the House of Commons because he had never sought popularity; but it is certain that he had some admirers and disciples. During the heavy fighting in the early weeks of 1784 excited politicians who had no seats in Parliament and no platforms where they might find utterance, found plentiful relief in the circulation of pamphlets. Amongst these one may be found which, if it was not, indeed, a paid production, may be fairly given as proof that he was not

[1] *Parliamentary History*, January 16th, 1785.

without honour. It is entitled 'The Source of Evil, or the system displayed: addressed to the gentry, yeomanry, freeholders, and electors of England, by a Freeholder.' One passage runs thus:

'Lord North against whom so many artifices are employed to prejudice and inflame you, disdained to act the part which Mr. Pitt, whom you are directed to reverence, is at this moment acting. He had prosecuted the American war, and continued in Administration, because he had been encouraged to prosecute the one and continue in the other, by a decided majority of your Representatives. The instant the same majority appeared as decided in their condemnation, he put an end to his Administration, as a measure which he knew would of course put an end to the war.'

North's faith in his constituents at Banbury was so far justified that he had no difficulty in securing re-election. It was otherwise with Fox. He was opposed by Lord Hood and Sir Cecil Wray. Hood's position was never in doubt. The second place was the object of a famous struggle. On the twenty-third day Sir Cecil Wray was in front; but when the poll closed after the forty days' limit, Fox had a majority of 236. Sir Cecil Wray demanded a scrutiny, and the High Bailiff, who was of his party, gave the order. His action was indignantly resented. It was his duty, so said Fox and his friends, to make his return. He had no more to do with the election. If there were any objection to be heard, the proper tribunal was a

Committee in accordance with Grenville's Act. However, the scrutiny went on. Fox was not kept out of Parliament, because he had been elected for Orkney, and on June 8th, 1784, he made a vehement protest against his treatment. He was to be put to an expense of 18,000*l.* at least, he said. Pitt assumed an unbending position. He made it an occasion for personal and party warfare. He was severe on Fox, and the motion to consider the question was thrown out by 195 to 117. When Parliament met in 1785, it appeared that after eight months little or no progress had been made, and the matter was again brought before Parliament. Pitt was as rigid as ever. But his followers were not prepared to make so much party capital out of such a questionable cause, and they fell away. When he opposed motions made on behalf of Fox, his majority fell by degrees until it was no more than nine. It is little to the credit of his generosity, or of his Parliamentary instinct, that in spite of this he persevered. On March 3rd he was beaten by 38. Then an immediate return was ordered, and Hood and Fox were allowed to take their seats in triumph.

But this was the only triumph Fox was to enjoy. He and North had insisted on it that Pitt had no right to be in office because he was only the puppet of the King and not the elect of the nation. Now the nation had spoken, and their verdict had been for the King and Pitt, not for Fox and North. Upwards of a hundred Coalition

members lost their seats, and Pitt was as safely and firmly established in power as a Minister could be. There he was to remain, with a short interval, for the remainder of his life; and until the end of that life, twenty-two years later, Fox was destined to languish in Opposition, and finally to become a Minister once more under the imminent shadow of his own death.[1]

As for North, so far as the student of history is concerned with him, there is no more tale to tell.

[1] It is worth while noting here the following story told by Lord Broughton in his *Recollections of a Long Life* (iii. 248): 'Just after W. Pitt's first speech, Charles Fox was talking to him and complimenting him at the bar of the House of Commons. General Grant, an old M.P., overheard him and said, "Aye, aye, I should not wonder if I lived to see you opposed to one another as I saw your fathers before you." Pitt replied, "Then General, you must live to the age of Methuselah."' Lord Broughton was told this by Lord Holland.

CHAPTER XVIII

In Opposition

'LORD NORTH has not the talents for the leader of a party out of office.'

'Lord North would lose his credit and his friends by any concession that would throw the Government into Fox's hands.'

So wrote Loughborough to Eden in July 1782 and in January 1783. North was now in opposition, and presumably still leader of a party. And he had unquestionably thrown the Government, so far as it lay in his power, into the hands of Fox. If Loughborough's judgment was reliable, there was every reason, then, in the existing circumstances, to look for the evaporation of North.

It has been said that with the expulsion of the Coalition Government, and North's loss of office, there comes an end of his career so far as historical study is concerned. And this is not untrue. His claim to attention rests on the two episodes of his tenure of office from 1770 to 1782, and his share in the Coalition of 1783. These periods have now been examined and an attempt has been made to describe and to appraise his conduct. The History

of England can henceforth be written without taking him into account. But so far as personal narrative is concerned, his work was by no means finished. In the early days of the new Parliament he was one of the most frequent speakers. He was always ready to uphold the cause of Fox in the Westminster Election debates. That he had submitted himself to Fox without reserve and attached himself to his triumphal car, in such sense as Fox can be said to have triumphed, is made sufficiently clear by Wraxall. The Prince of Wales gave a party at Carlton House to celebrate his friend's apparent victory over Wray, and we are told that

> 'Lord North dressed, like every other individual invited, in his new livery of blue and buff, beheld himself surrounded by those very persons who, scarcely fifteen months earlier, affected to regard him as an object of national execration, deserving capital punishment.'

And this in spite of the King's known disapproval of his son's politics and political friends.

During the session North spoke upon such a variety of subjects as Reform, the Newfoundland Trade Bill, Repeal of the Cotton Tax, India, Ireland, the Army, the Dockyards, Warren Hastings, and the Test and Corporation Acts. It is curious to observe that he took no part in the discussion on the Budget. His incursion into the field of finance appears to have taken the form of guerilla operations. On February 17th, 1784, Lord

Sydney, Secretary of State, wrote to the Duke of Rutland, 'That beast Lord North adds to the beauties of his character by threatening to stop supplies.'[1]

It is also to be noted that he was in good spirits. He had the enviable reputation of an acknowledged wit, and the *Parliamentary History* punctually records the success of all his pleasantries. On May 24th, 1784, he spoke on the Westminster Petition and argued that a scrutiny might indeed be ordered, but it must terminate on or before the day when the writ became returnable. He told of an Oxfordshire election in which the Sheriff did grant a scrutiny; but when the day arrived for the return of the writ, he closed the scrutiny, and, in order to be on the safe side, declared all three members to be duly elected. On June 3rd Thomas Orde wrote to the Duke of Rutland bewailing the long debates on the Westminster Election to which they had to submit, 'from the shameful tricks practised by Lord North and Fox to try to make it a popular subject and to tire out the independent members.'[2]

On the 16th of June North took part with great energy in the debate upon Alderman Sawbridge's motion for Reform. His argument was of the purest Toryism. Would sending members be any advantage to the towns? he demanded. Then he borrowed from Burke's famous address to the electors of Bristol: members were returned

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers. [2] *Ibid.*

to Parliament to act as trustees for the whole kingdom. The member for Banbury, or the member for Old Sarum, was member for all England. It was an unconstitutional principle that a member should act for and on the advice of his own constituents alone. He then, we are told, traced the Constitution from the earliest days and went on to a dissertation on the Constitutions of Germany, Portugal, and France. Haunted and followed, as he always was, by the spectre of the American war, he turned aside to repudiate the charge that it lay on his shoulders as a personal responsibility. It was the country's war, and no extension of the franchise could have made it more so. But if his accusers would have it that he alone was to blame,

'let them come forward with a charge. I am ready to meet it. I call for it: nay, Sir, I demand it as a right. There can be no reason for withholding it now. If I was protected before, I am not protected now.'

Several of his former friends were on the side of Pitt. They had his confidence of old: they could inform against him if they would.[1]

Sir Edward Astley, who followed, said that he was not in the habit of paying compliments to the noble Lord. He associated himself with the charge of which complaint was made, but he must confess that he had never heard the noble Lord make a more able speech in his life. The motion

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

was lost by 199 to 125, and the tellers against were North and Eden—from which we may infer that they were now on friendly terms. Next day Orde wrote to the Duke of Rutland: 'I hear Lord North made one of his very best speeches upon this question.'[1]

On July 2nd, during a speech on Indian affairs, North contrived to review afresh his position with regard to the American war and its consequences. On this topic he was always wide awake, and he seemed to find it difficult to keep away from it. Other subjects of importance he found less stimulating. Pitt brought in another India Bill and found a solution of the problem in the establishment of a Board of Control, which endured until the Government of India passed into the hands of the Crown in 1858. North spoke more than once in Committee; but not without an effort. On July 21st he admitted that it would not have been a great wonder if, from the infirmity usually ascribed to him, he had sunk under the heat of the weather and had fallen asleep. He was too short-sighted—and here we meet with an early indication of the calamity that was to come down on him—to be able to see whether those on the bench opposite had been asleep or awake. In a later speech he compared the post-dating provisions of the bill to the case of Doctor Hensey, who had been convicted of high treason, and who had implored the Attorney-General to give him a

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.

respite to attend to his spiritual and worldly affairs. The Attorney in his tenderness had allowed him to name his own day of execution ; which the doctor postponed so far, that he eventually contrived to escape altogether. 'His Lordship was obliged to stop for some time while the House laughed at his story.'[1]

Next year, when Parliament met on January 25th, 1785, North was ready for work. In the debate on the Address he called attention to a circular that had been sent out by a clergyman named Wyvil, not without notice given, but without permission received, averring that Pitt was pledged to renew his efforts for the reform of Parliament. This roused North's spirit and he lost no time in promising opposition. A day or two later when Pitt moved a call of the House to take into consideration certain important matters, North returned to the attack and told a story which we are assured 'excited a general laugh'; but which we may be content to leave in the frigid pages of the *Parliamentary History*. It lacks vitality.

It may be observed in passing that the time-table of Parliament was now revised. The new session began with the new year instead of in the autumn as heretofore ; and this practice has been usual unto our day. It was not to be a time for rest and reflection. A number of momentous and controversial questions were to be considered, and in most of these North took a personal interest.

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

Burke was gradually raising the winds which he was to hurl in tempest on the head of Warren Hastings. On February 17th, 1785, he brought on a debate, and North felt himself obliged to explain his position. He reminded the House that he was responsible for the appointment of Warren Hastings as Governor-General under his Regulating Act of 1773. Upon the charges in connection with the Rohilla war (1774), he had no defence to offer. This was the bargain by which Hastings, in consideration of a large payment, had hired out the Company's troops to the Nawab of Oude for the purpose of subduing the Rohillas, whose possessions he coveted. According to Macaulay this transaction was infinitely more to be blamed than the loan of German troops during our American war.[1] North was of the same opinion, and held no brief for Hastings. He went on to recall that in 1777 the Court of Directors had accepted the resignation of the Governor-General; but that they had been overruled by the Court of Proprietors, who had retained him in their service.

On this North had to remark that the situation was difficult. We were then apparently drifting into war with France. Hastings might have been guilty of irregular and even indefensible conduct; but he was a strong man; and in case of trouble he would have been the most desirable officer to have on the spot. Consequently he had been disposed to acquiesce in his retention. If this were incon-

[1] *Essays:* Warren Hastings.

sistency, at least it was no worse than the inconsistency of those who now proposed to condemn Hastings and in the same breath acknowledged his long and meritorious services.

On April 15th Pitt moved to introduce his Reform Bill, and it was not to be expected that North could endure this in silence. He contrived as usual to bring in the American war, by way of exordium; then, coming to business, he proceeded to argue that the great towns were indifferent; they did not wish for the franchise. Where were their appeals? 'What horrid sound of silence doth assail my ear?' he asked, presumably misquoting Dryden:[1] if people in general had been really eager for the vote, there would have been a far more formidable exhibition of feeling. He inveighed against the

'chimæras that entered the brains of visionaries and speculatists, who were not, he verily believed, aware of the serious mischiefs they had employed themselves about. All the idea of the necessity of a Reform was the mere vapour of a dream, the shadow of a shade; an empty whim, a fanciful nothing.'

Again he told with Eden against the motion, which was thrown out by 248 to 174.

Pitt was proposing to readjust the commercial relations between Great Britain and Ireland. North had himself carried measures to this end:

[1] 'A horrid stillness first invades the ear,
And in that silence we the tempest hear.'
Astræa Redux.

he was now to realise that comparisons are odious. Already on February 22nd he had made some observations, in the course of which he had found fault with many of Pitt's principles and intentions, ending with this rather startling pronouncement—that Pitt's method of making out that the Irish were to support the naval forces of the Empire was still more extraordinary than all that had gone before ; Ireland was too poor to afford anything of the kind. Now, on May 12th, Pitt retaliated with such strictures upon the former policy of North as to provoke a reply that clearly indicates a loss of temper. The right hon. gentleman rarely rose without attacking him and treating him with a degree of marked contempt ; to both of which he was most heartily welcome : but he would just remind the right hon. gentleman that it somewhat discredited his argument upon any question and discredited the question itself, for the mover of it rather to content himself with endeavouring to recommend it to the House by abuse of what others had done on the same subject than to rest it on its own merits.

'There are some men, Mr. Gilbert, who seem to be organized for slander ; there are some men who, by the peculiar temperament of their nature, find gratification in invective, and so eager are they for the enjoyment of their lust, that they go about to seek for blemishes, in order to expose them ; and in the pursuit of their game they will sometimes pretend to find them where they are not.'

A week later Daniel Pulteney wrote to the Duke of Rutland: 'Lord North made a dull speech of two hours.'

Pitt was not the only man who regarded North's opposition as factious and unseemly. On February 21st Lord Sydney wrote to the Duke of Rutland:

'I am sorry to add that every possible endeavour is made by Mr. Fox, Lord North, Lord Stormont and their adherents to render this measure unpopular, and when I consider how easy it is to alarm many different bodies of people for their own immediate interests I would not be surprised to find that they have some success.'[1]

And on March 2nd the Earl of Mornington, afterwards first Marquess Wellesley, wrote from Dublin to W. W. Grenville:

'I find also (by the paper) that Lord North has said he sees no occasion for any adjustment of commerce with Ireland. Now it is a little comical that when his Lordship was Secretary of State, and Ireland within his department, the Attorney-General, Yelverton, should have solemnly assured the House that a final commercial adjustment was in contemplation of Government, and should actually have deferred a committee, which was moved for an inquiry upon the subject of the Navigation Act, on that very ground that a full settlement was under consideration. . . . Nothing can equal the universal indignation which has arisen against Fox, Lord North, and Eden.'[2]

After this North became silent. His eyesight

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.
[2] *Idem*, Dropmore Papers.

was failing. It was no longer doubtful that he was to be totally blind, and he may well have sunk under a sense of mental and physical depression. In the month of June he wrote to Eden from Bushey that he was unwilling to come to the House; but he would do so if Eden urged him. He objects to Pitt pushing forward his Irish policy: 'It will be a gross and wanton indecency to proceed in the dog days upon a most important matter.' This letter is worth noticing for two reasons: it shows that North and Eden were still on terms of confidence and amity: also that Parliamentary life was a far simpler matter than it is in our days of unceasing labour.

Following close upon this, in the Auckland Papers,[1] is a fragment of a letter without date or signature, headed 'Windsor Castle.' Oddly enough it appears to be in North's handwriting, which cannot well be the case. It may, however, reasonably be ascribed to this period:

'Lord North & the Bushy family dined with us at our Tower yesterday. He was not quite so well or so cheerful as when we last saw him, but, alas, there are many things that weigh upon his good heart.'

It does not appear that North ever allowed money matters to worry him very much. Wraxall has told us that he seemed serenely contented with his subordinate position in the Coalition. None of his speeches suggest a sense of jealousy or shame.

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34420.

We have accepted the theory that he was really captivated by the mysterious fascination of Fox, and hugged his chains. It is, however, to be believed that in hours of lassitude and loneliness he pondered over his decline and his desertion of his master, who in truth had tried him sorely, but to whom he was not less surely attached by principles and by habit of mind, and for whom he cherished in his heart a personal loyalty and affection that endured unto the end. Before his clouded eyes there may have floated a vision of the King's most trusted and favoured minister and friend, masquerading at the house of his master's reprobate son, in the harlequin livery of the least trusted and least favoured of his master's servants, whom the Prince delighted to honour, partly because he knew that it annoyed his father. No man could review recent changes of conduct and language so sharp and sudden as those that North had gone through, with entire freedom from misgiving: and a twinge of conscience might well have brought him to dinner at the Windsor tower without his usual appetite and flow of conversation. Moreover, the approach of blindness is often accompanied by a sense of misery which a totally blind man is wonderfully and mercifully spared. And North was now at the transition stage.

He had not indeed so far lost his interest in politics as to neglect them altogether. Occasional letters are to be found[1] in which he writes, partly,

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS.

perhaps, from force of habit, to beg his friends to be in their places to resist the Duke of Richmond's plan of fortifications; or to support Sir Gilbert Elliot on the Berwick Election; or for other purposes. In all these letters he speaks of the necessity of keeping his personal friends together. But during the session of 1786 his name only appears in the list of speakers once.

On June 1st the Rohilla charges against Hastings were again debated. North repeated his speech of February 17th, 1785, in substance; but with a variation. He had always condemned the Rohilla campaign, he said, and he fully expected that Hastings would resign under the displeasure of the Court of Directors. That was one reason why he did not insist on his recall: which is hardly consistent with his former statement that he thought it prudent to leave the Governor where he was in view of threatened war with France. Wraxall describes the debate:

'Yet, as Lord North attended in his place and took his seat next to Burke, it was evident that he intended to support the charge. Such a conduct seemed . . . liable to the imputation of inconsistency . . . Lord North became in fact the mark at which the principal blows were aimed, not only from the Treasury Bench, but from other quarters. "What opinion," exclaimed Powys, "must this assembly form of a minister who could not have been ignorant that Mr. Hastings was accused by the members of the Supreme Council, his colleagues, with the whole culpability of the Rohilla war, and yet continued to maintain him in his

high position?"[1] The Earl of Mornington . . . as well as the Master of the Rolls, attacked Lord North with great asperity. . . . Under the accumulated load of censure, Lord North rose repeatedly in exculpation or explanation of his conduct, which he justified on plausible, if not on solid grounds. He protested that he had ever condemned the Rohilla war, and had made every effort, as soon as the intelligence reached him, to procure . . . the recall of Hastings: efforts which were rendered abortive by the Court of Governors. Satisfactory as these reasons might, however, be esteemed, Lord North did not trust to their solidity. He withdrew before the question was put from the Chair.'

After this we hear nothing of North until February 2nd, 1787, when he writes to Lord Lisburne that he hopes to come up for the debates on the Begums of Oude and the Commercial Treaty [with France] and that he intends to take part in 'some of the debates, which will probably be amusing in the discussion as they will certainly be interesting in the result.' His spirits appear to be reviving as his vision fails. Next day Eden had a letter from Woodfall in which was this piece of gossip:

'Lord North at a late dinner at the Duke of Portland's, when the conversation turned on the promotion of Mr. Jenkinson to a peerage, said, "Aye, they can't go on without more of my friends; I suppose, when any question of State arises in the House of Lords, and Lord Carmarthen and Lord Sydney are looked to, or called upon, they will both arise, and like the two mutes in the 'Mourning Bride,' point to Lord Hawkesbury."'

[1] See page 13.

North's old colleague Jenkinson had been made Lord Hawkesbury in August of the previous year. The allusion to the mutes in Congreve's tragedy has its point in the notorious reluctance of the two Secretaries of State to take part in debate.

North by this time was a blind man. In the following month, on March 28th, Beaufoy moved to relieve Dissenters from the restrictions of the Test and Corporation Acts, and Wraxall, in his account of the debate, says this:

> 'Lord North resisted in a speech, which, though much more concise than Beaufoy's, made not a less deep impression on his hearers; an impression augmented by his personal appearance, deprived of sight, and led in by his son, Colonel North. The Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . did not omit to pay Lord North the highest compliments on the ability which he had displayed. They were, I believe, the first spontaneous recognitions of that nobleman's talents and principles which had fallen from the minister's lips since he came into office. Fox took the contrary side; remarking that however he might of late have been charged with the odium of coalition, it would not be imputable to him on that evening. . . . Religion did not form a proper test for political institutions.'

North's argument against the proposal followed these lines:

> 'If there remains anything,' said he, 'which can operate as a burden on any man's conscience, in the name of Heaven, let it be done away with; but let not the admitting of persons of particular persuasions into the offices of State be confounded with the restriction of conscience':

The impediment was a constitutional fact which all men must recognise and accept: as well might a man, not possessed of a forty-shilling freehold, profess that it was a usurpation of right to withhold from him the franchise. It was true that France had a Protestant at the head of the Army and of the Navy; that Prussia employed Catholics; but there they had arbitrary rulers, who could promote and degrade at pleasure: the King of England was a constitutional monarch, who was himself liable to the provisions of the Test Act—'the great bulwark of the Constitution to which we owed those inestimable blessings of freedom which we now happily enjoyed.' North then set out upon a scholarly review of the history of the act:

'If James II. had succeeded in repealing it,'[1] he declared, 'tyranny would have stolen silently and rapidly on until it had been so deeply rooted as to render all endeavours against it in vain. Universal toleration was securely established; but let them be upon their guard against any innovation on the Church: the Constitution was always in danger when the Church was deprived of its rights.'

Of this speech Daniel Pulteney wrote to the Duke of Rutland: 'Lord North, though very infirm and more than half-blind, spoke long and ably against their claims.'

[1] 'Yet still James continued to grant commissions to unqualified persons; and speedily it was announced that he was determined to be no longer bound by the Test Act, but that, if Parliament proved refractory, he would not the less have his own way' (Macaulay's *History of England*, ii. 265).

On April 10th, 1787, Eden had this report from Storer:

'I saw Lord North before he went to Walmer; he is grown very thin and is all but blind—he could not distinguish the colour of the wine.'

And on the 15th he heard from Lord Sheffield:

'I have been very uneasy about Lord North's eyes. . . . His nerves were much agitated and shaken by his exertions on the Test Act. He did not sleep at all the subsequent night, but he is now pretty much the same as he was before that service. His eyes are very weak—a melancholy consideration at his time of life.'

All qualification of the state of blindness is removed by a second letter from Sheffield on May 10th:

'He has no hopes; he says he has no expectation but of darkness. He held up his hand and said he could not see it. He was, however, pleasant, and with his usual ability took up the subjects of the day. . . . There is some consolation in his not being able to see the melancholy aspects of his family around him.'

On June 22nd Storer wrote to Eden: 'Lord North is going to Tunbridge; but, alas! I am afraid with no prospect of ever recovering his eyesight.'

It was very likely during this visit that North said a witty thing that is deservedly remembered. He met an old House of Commons antagonist in Barré, upon whom had fallen the same affliction. 'Ah, Colonel Barré,' said North, 'I am persuaded

there are not two men living who would be more happy to see each other.'

On July 10th a political opponent, the Duke of Rutland, wrote to the Duchess: 'Lord North's situation is very melancholy. I pity him much.'[1]

The condition of Lord North is probably best described by his daughter, Lady Charlotte Lindsay, in the letter that she wrote for Lord Brougham in 1839:

'In the year 1787 Lord North's sight began rapidly to fail him and in the course of a few months he became totally blind, in consequence of a palsy of the optic nerve. His nerves had always been very excitable, and it is probable that the anxiety of mind which he suffered during the unsuccessful contest with America, still more than his necessary application to writing, brought on this calamity, which he bore with the most admirable patience and resignation; nor did it affect his general cheerfulness in society. But the privation of all power of dissipating his mind by outward objects or of solitary occupation (*sic*) could not fail to produce at times extreme depression of spirits, especially as the malady proceeded from the disordered state of his nerves. These fits of depression seldom occurred, except during sleepless nights, when my Mother used to read to him, until he was amused out of them, or put to sleep. In the evenings, in Grosvenor Square our house was the resort of the best company that London afforded at that time. Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, Mr. Sheridan, occasionally; and Lord Stormont, Lord John Townshend, Mr. Windham, Sir James Erskine:[2] afterwards Lord

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.

[2] 6th Baronet of Alva. His mother was Loughborough's sister.

Rosslyn, his uncle, then Lord Loughborough, habitually frequented our drawing-room: these with various young men and women, his children's friends, and whist-playing ladies for my mother, completed the society. My father always liked the company of young people, especially of young women who were sensible and lively; and we used to accuse him of often rejoicing when his old political friends left his side and were succeeded by some lively young female. Lord North, when he was out of office, had no private secretary; even after he became blind, his daughters, particularly the two elder, read to him by turns, wrote his letters, led him in his walks, and were his constant companions.'

One hesitates to accept the statement that his nerves had always been very excitable. A daughter need not be the most competent observer of symptoms of this kind. Habitual irresolution may be a sign of a weak nervous system; but there is little evidence that North was what we regard as a man of highly-strung nerves. He was often angry: no man of any character at all could have endured the manifold attacks that were made upon his public actions and his personal honour at all times and from all sources without exhibiting resentment; but there is a general agreement amongst those who watched his career that he was by nature placid, indolent, easy in his temper, and prone rather to tranquillity and slumber than to restless and irritable activity.

One notices, not without regret, that North's change of sides had alienated all his old political

friends. Not one of the men who had stood by him through the fiery ordeal of the war came to see him now. Not even Dartmouth, his oldest and most intimate friend, his half-brother.[1] Loughborough was there, who had been a junior colleague; but Loughborough had had no love for him a few years ago. Setting aside his Cabinet colleagues, where was Eden? Did Robinson never try to sweep away recent asperities and recover the close communion of old days? Was it to be left to Fox and Burke and the rest of them, who had been his most savage adversaries in the noontide of his working day, to be his cronies and counsellors now that the end drew near?

Even those who were most shocked at his apostasy might have forgiven him much in these days of his adversity. It is true that having become accustomed, if not reconciled, to his stricken plight he presently engaged with astonishing vigour in the warfare of parties; but for the present he was a passive politician, and might have drawn forth the sympathy and forgiveness of every right-minded man. Walpole had said plenty of hard things of North, but this is how he wrote of him to Lady Ossory on October 4th, 1787:

'Lord North's spirits, good-humour, wit, sense, drollery, are as perfect as ever—the unremitting attention of Lady North and his children most touching. Mr. North leads him about, Miss North sits constantly by him, carves meat, watches

[1] He lived until 1801.

his every motion, scarce puts a bit into her own lips; and if one cannot help commending her, she colours with modesty and sorrow till the tears gush into her eyes. If ever loss of sight could be compensated, it is by so affectionate a family.'

We get another pleasant glimpse of North in his private life from Gibbon, who has this passage in his autobiography:

'The house in London which I frequented with most pleasure and assiduity was that of Lord North. After the loss of power and of sight, he was still happy in himself and his friends; and my public tribute of gratitude and esteem could no longer be suspected of any interested motive.'

Speaking again of Necker, who was in retreat in 1790, he says: 'How different from the careless cheerfulness with which our friend Lord North supported his fall.' When we come to form our judgment upon the career and character of Lord North these testimonies should be set clearly against the less pleasing aspects and incidents, and should be credited to him as a large asset.

On November 2nd, 1787, Sheffield wrote to Eden that he has had a long letter from North who is 'captivated with the Requêtte au Roi [a pamphlet by M. de Calonne]. He was to have met me at Bath, but the death of his father will, I fear, prevent it.' Which was a premature announcement and without warrant. North was, in fact, out of action for the time. He was absent from Parliament. He declined on account of his blindness to

be one of the managers of the trial of Warren Hastings: a refusal which deprives us of the opportunity of judging him by the highest standard of British oratory. Possibly his heart was not in the agitation for impeachment; but he gave no sign of disapproval. So little was North in the public eye, meanwhile, that Wraxall forgot him, and had to write thus in the early part of 1788:

'It is long since I have mentioned even the name of Lord North. His augmenting infirmities, particularly his loss of sight, incapacitated him, without great inconvenience, from attending as a Member of Parliament.'

North had not given up all pretence of being leader of a party. In his letters to Lord Lisburne, as we have seen, he constantly spoke of keeping his friends together; but there can be little doubt that by this time his following had dwindled into insignificance. Nor could it well be otherwise. He had surrendered all initiative and authority to Fox. He had divested himself of the signs and tokens of leadership. He was now compelled to retire from the field. It has been said that by this time his party could muster no greater strength than seventeen all told. The company of whom his daughter tells, gives no indication of even a faithful few of the old legion who had stood by him through many an adverse hour.

It is worth observing that a calculation of the

voting forces in the House on May 1st, 1788, arrived at this result:[1]

King's men, under any minister	185
Personal followers of Pitt	52
Followers of Dundas, Lansdowne, Lonsdale, and East India party	43
Personal followers of Fox	138
Remnant (*sic*) of Lord North's personal followers	17
Independent	108
Absent or neutral	14

It was from a distance that a cheering tribute of devotion was to come. In this year, 1788, a Mr. Vernon of Jamaica, departing this life, bequeathed to North the sum of 2000*l.* 'He might have left him more,' was Storer's comment.

And now there came the passage in history which was to arouse the fiercest party contentions and incidentally to draw North back into the fray. The King's insanity became so strongly pronounced that it was no longer possible to delay making provision for a Regency. The Prince of Wales was the friend of Fox; and Fox put forth eager hands to seize the prize of office that he saw coming once more within his reach. Without hesitation, or attempt at disguise, he set up his case: with no less determination did Pitt withstand him. The contention turned on this: had the Prince an inherent right to sovereignty; or was it the duty of Parliament to make such

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., P. V. Smith Papers.

provision as they thought proper? The opposing arguments may be compressed into two passages. Said Fox:

'In his firm opinion, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had as clear, as express a right to assume the reins of government and exercise the power of sovereignty during the continuance of the illness and incapacity with which it had pleased God to afflict his Majesty, as in the case of his Majesty having undergone a natural and perfect demise.'

When Pitt heard this uncompromising profession of faith, he slapped his leg and muttered, 'I'll unwhig the gentleman for the rest of his life.' In his reply he put the contrary principle thus:

'In the case of the interruption of the personal exercise of the royal authority without any lawful provision having been made for carrying on the government, it belonged to the other branches of the Legislature, on the part of the nation at large—the body they represented—to provide according to their discretion for the temporary exercise of the royal authority in the name and on behalf of the Sovereign in such manner as they should think requisite; and that, unless by their decision, the Prince of Wales had no more right (speaking of strict right) to assume the government than any other individual subject of the country.'

North threw himself into the conflict with an energy not to be expected from a blind man, approaching sixty, and by this time fallen out of the Parliamentary habit. In the course of

the debate of December 16th, 1788, he laid it down that Parliament without the Sovereign in being was no Parliament. And there is this curious point to observe: throughout the debates it was assumed that the three estates of the realm were the King, Lords, and Commons. Now, the three estates of the realm are the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons: but upon this false principle the arguments were based, and by it North was guided. The House of Commons, he said, at the present moment, had no title to do anything. Let them restore the third estate: then they could proceed to business: 'Could that House which had not the power in their present character to receive a petition for a turnpike bill proceed to legislate?' He moved that the chairman do report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Wraxall was not greatly impressed:

'Lord North,' he says, 'after having scarcely been seen within the walls of the House during the two last sessions, was now led down, blind and infirm, to express his perfect confidence in all Fox's opinions. Seated near his former colleague, he rose at an early hour of the evening and delivered himself with his accustomed ability; though without a rag of that humour which used to illuminate his most ordinary efforts.'

But Sheffield wrote to Eden that 'Lord North spoke very ably,' and Sir John Eden that 'Lord North in a most able speech moved the previous question.'

On December 22nd North made another speech:

'What was the man of straw which they were now going to create?' he asked: 'a thing formed with their own breath and to give a colour to a measure to which he would be bold to say the history of this country did not afford a parallel.'

He produced the case of William III. as a precedent for granting unrestricted powers:

'Why then do we not follow that precedent, and by addressing the Prince of Wales to take upon him the regency, during the indisposition of his royal father, save ourselves and our posterity from the horrid principle of virtually declaring that an act of legislation may be exercised by the Lords and Commons at a time when the third estate is incomplete? . . . The Prince of Wales by his moderation and the forbearance of his conduct on this occasion had eminently distinguished himself and in a peculiar degree become entitled to the confidence and affection of the House.'[1]

On January 5th, 1789, North jumped up to defend Dr. Warren, whose name had been received with disfavour. Warren took a gloomy view of the King's prospects; and North, in protecting the doctor's character from insult, on personal grounds, was incidentally upholding the opinion that he and his friends desired to have pronounced. Again on the 16th he protested against the proposal of Government to 'appoint a person to the regal office and to separate from that office the royal authority.' On this occasion he went to ancient Rome for

[1] *Parliamentary History.*

illustration of his argument: by the Commonwealth's departure from the established principles of the Roman Constitution, such was his conclusion, the Constitution of Rome was undermined.

On February 2nd there was a debate upon the conduct of Government in issuing Letters Patent under the Great Seal for the opening of Parliament. It was necessary to find some form in accordance with which Parliament should be constitutionally empowered to pass an act. North had fault to find with this expedient:

> 'The learned gentleman (the Master of the Rolls),' he said, 'had completely lost sight of the favourite precedent of the reign of Henry VI., for when the whole of the Royal power was given to the regents, or to the regents and Council, it never entered into the head of any man that those who gave the power had by that act dethroned the King.'

He then spoke of the letter which had been received from the Prince of Wales,[1] in which the conditional regency was accepted under protest: this document, he said, had given

> 'heartfelt satisfaction. The measures which had hitherto been pursued by the Chancellor of the Exchequer were, in his humble opinion, wholly unnecessary unless the object of them was to spread

[1] This famous State Paper was composed by Burke (Lecky, v. 438; Morley: *Burke*, 198; Stanhope: *Life of Pitt*, ii. 18). Sheridan, Loughborough, and Gilbert Elliot have all been given credit for part authorship. It is not unlikely that they were allowed to see the document; it is not probable that their suggested alterations were extensively adopted.

an alarm through the nation and make the people entertain fears for which there was no shadow of ground.'

Of these two performances Wraxall writes (January 16th):

'Lord North and Sheridan both attacked the minister; the former with the arms of reason, exemplified and illustrated by appeals to history.'

'(February 2) Lord North who, notwithstanding his want of sight, performed an active part throughout all the debates during the course of the King's malady, warmly attacked the minister on this occasion.'

On February 7th he 'warmly attacked' the minister again and moved amendments. Pitt was so far exasperated by these indefatigable onsets that North in his reply had to complain, or to confess, that he had been severely reprimanded. Nevertheless he was impenitent. Three days later the debate turned on the constitution of the Queen's Council. North moved to include the Royal Dukes. He divided first on the name of the Duke of York and was beaten by forty-eight. The other princes met with similar rebuff.

On February 13th the Regency Bill passed the Commons and went to the Lords. The Coalition might be pardoned for seeing visions of Cabinet offices close before their eyes. Meetings were held and places were allotted. North, in spite of his recent activity, so Wraxall says (February 19th), 'declined being of the Cabinet'; a decision which his blindness was obviously sufficient to explain.

But there was a sad awakening in store for the dreamers. The King showed undoubted symptoms of recovery. The Lords never passed the bill. To make a long story short, Parliament was opened by Commission on March 10th, and it was announced that the Sovereign had resumed his constitutional functions.

It cannot be pretended that during this anxious period North had stood forth as the champion and protector of King George. He had sided avowedly and actively with the friends of King George's son, which was tantamount, sad as the admission is, to being in the camp of the enemy. And here we seem to have good evidence that his political actions were the result of accident or compulsion, and were not the spontaneous outcome of his secret inclination. It was partly due to North that the first signs of the King's recovery were detected. One day, early in February, Greville, an equerry, and Dr. Willis were talking near the King's bed. Greville observed that North had made frequent enquiries for the patient. To their surprise the King quietly interrupted, 'Has he? Where did he make them? At St. James's, or here (Kew)?' Then he went on, 'Lord North is a good man; unlike the others. He is a good man.' Wraxall writes, 'an early and deep-rooted affection for his old master survived in his bosom.' No doubt. That is in keeping with what we have said here. But had his conduct given proof of his fidelity? If the King had known of the opposition

that North had offered to his ministers, who claimed to be safeguarding his sovereign rights, would he still have spoken tenderly of 'a good man; unlike the others'?

On May 8th Beaufoy renewed his motion for relief of Dissenters from the provisions of the Test Act. North made a speech that was in effect a repetition of what he had said in the debate of March 28th, 1787. There was an adverse majority of twenty in a small House. North voted against the motion and his son George told. And so, with a parting protest against the principle of expansion and change; siding, as in old days he boasted that he always had taken sides, against popular proposals; blind old North was led through the division lobby for the last time. He had been accustomed to find himself voting with the majority there, year after year, when numbers concealed many lurking symptoms of defeat; later on, he had experienced an abrupt change of company, in which he must have felt uneasily conscious that his wandering footsteps had been watched by many good men with sorrow and reproach. Now, at all events, he was keeping faith with his old traditions and true convictions, and his passing was the passing of a steadfast Tory. Next time we meet the familiar name of Lord North in the pages of the *Parliamentary History* we are reading of George, the son.

Lord Guilford died on August 4th, 1790, and North came into his kingdom. On September 28th

Storer, who was staying at Wroxton, wrote to Auckland:

'I cannot speak very highly of Lord Guilford's spirits; whether it was owing to the remembrance of his youth passed there that he seemed peculiarly melancholy, or only on account of some accidental nervousness, I cannot tell, but he was very far from being cheerful. He is become very rich, and I believe has as many houses as Cicero ever had.'

He had in fact succeeded to Wroxton, Waldershare, Kirtling, and Sizencote.[1] He lived at Bushey; and his wife still had the Somersetshire property.

It is something different from inquisitive gossip that tempts one to ask what were really Lord North's private means. There is no doubt that during all these years he had been, for one in his position, a poor man. Sir John Irwine's statement in 1777 that his family were starving was undoubtedly an exaggeration: but it is likely enough that his wife had gone through anxious times, even if he had succeeded in preserving a placid mind. His daughter, in her letter to Lord Brougham, says that he left office poorer than when he entered in, and that

'his income would have scantily provided for the education and maintenance of his six children, and for the support of his habitual though unostentatious hospitality,' but for the office of Lord Warden. 'His circumstances, by this means, became adequate to his wishes, as he had no expensive tastes or love of splendour; but he was thoroughly liberal, and had great enjoyment of

[1] Also spelt Seizencote, Sizencot, and Sezincot.

social intercourse, which even in those days was not to be had without expense.'

It has been related how Robinson brought the state of North's affairs to the King's notice in 1777. He told a doleful tale; Lord Guilford was doing very little for his son; North's estate, together with his wife's, was not

'very productive . . . not above 2500*l.* per annum and not near so much nett to him. . . . Mr. Robinson believes . . . he owes near 10,000*l.* Mr. Robinson has urged Lord North to state his situation to your Majesty, but from Lord North's delicacy and natural reservedness, he could never succeed.'

North's great-grandson writes:

'The Prime Minister's father being alive during all the time he held office, he received no income from the North estates, his sole private income being derived from property belonging to his wife and a small estate of his own settled on him at the time of his marriage, which were reckoned to have brought in 1500*l.* a year. Affectionate father as he was, Lord Guilford made his son no allowance. Letters show that in the early days he was obliged to have recourse to his father for small sums for election expenses, but it was as a loan and not as a gift that these advances were always made, and they were always scrupulously repaid.'[1]

So much for the 'very great fortune' which Walpole said that North had married. In 1777 George III. came to the rescue, as we have seen, with an offer of any sum up to 20,000*l.*[2] It must

[1] *North American Review, cit.* [2] P. 48.

be assumed that this was to be a free gift. There is no evidence of repayment, such as Lord Guilford required. But if the King's intention was gracious, the consequence was unfortunate. North never drew the full amount; and when he left office, the King called upon him for a general settlement on strict business principles.[1]

In 1778 his official emoluments had amounted to 12,000*l.* a year, according to Lord Fitzmaurice;[2] but this calculation appears to be based on the mistaken assumption that he was drawing 5000*l.* a year as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.[3] In any case he certainly ought not to have 'starved.' Walpole talks of his emoluments from the Crown, and says 'these were not extortionate, if he had not been so futile, and extorted them by threats of resignation.' He adds that when he retired in 1782 he took a pension of 4000*l.* a year:

> 'I have said that the new Ministers either would not or could not pass so much as a censure on their very criminal predecessors. They were more passive still for they endured rewards to be heaped on two of the most guilty. Lord North retired with a pension of 4000*l.* a year, and Robinson, Secretary of the Treasury, who from Lord North's indolence was a principal agent in all business, of another 1000*l.*'[4]

This means, if it means anything, that the pension was a Parliamentary grant, and had nothing to do with a similar amount which, by the King's favour,

[1] Vol. i. p. 125. [2] Shelburne, ii. 29.
[3] See Donne, ii. 195; Stanhope, vii. 356.
[4] *Last Journals*, ii. 301, 536.

North was to draw as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. But Walpole is surely wrong again. North was attacked in Parliament for granting Robinson his 1000*l.* after he had technically ceased to be minister. Incidentally he was blamed for making it twice the amount granted to Sir Grey Cooper, the other Secretary to the Treasury, who only received 500*l.* On April 26th, 1782, he defended his conduct in the House of Commons. He did not dispute the facts, and he explained and justified the raising of his own salary as Lord Warden from 1000*l.* to 4000*l.* It had been reduced at his own request in 1778 ; it was now restored by the King's own act. But nothing was said by anybody about another and additional pension of 4000*l.* To this income of 4000*l.* a year must be added something between 1500*l.* and 2000*l.* a year derived from his wife's property and his own. Even if his father made him no allowance, he ought now to have possessed over 5000*l.* a year ; which, according to Shelburne, was sufficient to enable any 'man of high rank, who looked into his own affairs, to have all that he ought to have and appear with advantage.' His family of three sons and three daughters should not have been an overwhelming charge upon him. He had the house at Bushey rent free. He was never accused of domestic extravagance. In fact his reputation as a host does not appear to have stood very high. On December 28th, 1785, for example, Mr. Hobart wrote to the Duke of Rutland : 'I am to dine with Lord North : I fear

the meal will be but scanty.'[1] One is driven, then, to the conclusion that his chronic state of embarrassment was due to the fact that he did not 'look into his own affairs.'

Now at all events he was free from these troubles. Walpole notes that he came into all his father's property, and to all that Lady Rockingham had brought to the family. Her contribution was represented by Waldershare in Kent. It does not appear that Lord Guilford had any interest in the Bloomsbury property with its Guilford Street.[2] North Lodge, Westminster, probably served the Prime Minister as a convenient lodging to save the journey to and from Bushey, and would be the equivalent of a modern flat. It would not represent valuable town property. We must be content with the knowledge that Lord Guilford was a rich man, and that when he died his son had no reason to complain of the estate upon which he entered.

We may account for Lady North's property as follows. She was heiress of her grandfather, George Speke, of Dillington and Whitelackington. His brother was William Speke, of Jordans, still in the possession of the family. Of the Jordans branch there is a legend of something said at North, perhaps better than anything ever said by him. The Reverend William, grandson of this William, once had an opportunity of preaching before the Minister, and chose for his text, 'Pro-

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland Papers.

[2] The North family had property in the neighbourhood in the sixteenth century: apparently not later than 1565.

motion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor yet from the South.' He was not to be disappointed. North for once was wide awake: so was his sense of humour. He presented him to the living of Ilminster; and obtained from the King the presentation to Curry Mallet. The happy pluralist ended his days as Prebendary of Wells and of Bristol Cathedrals.[1]

Lady North's fortune at the time was stated to be 4000*l.* a year[2]—an exaggeration, we must assume. More than one of North's earlier letters are dated from Dillington, and his journeys into Somersetshire are alluded to in the King's correspondence. After he became Prime Minister, he was too busy to go so far: Bushey was a more convenient home. Nevertheless the property was retained until his death, when we are told 'the property at Ilminster was thrown upon the market.'[3] The 'eventual' buyer was John Hanning, whose direct descendant, Colonel Vaughan Lee, owns it now. Why the Norths did not sell when they were in need of money one cannot tell. Lady Guilford lived on till 1797, but she had no scruples in parting with her property as soon as her husband was dead. It may be that North liked to 'possess as many houses as Cicero.'

Wroxton evidently had little attraction for the new lord. Before the end of the year he was back

[1] *The Minster of the Ile*, by J. Street, M.A., 255. [2] *Ibid.* 253.
[3] *Ibid.* 264.

at Bushey, apparently in better spirits, for we find Walpole writing to Miss Berry:

'I have dined to-night at Bushy with the Guilfords, where were only the two daughters, Mr. Storer, and Sir Henry Englefield, who performed *en professeur* at a game I thought was Turkish, but which sounds Moorish; he calls it bandalore . . . as you only wanted to be told some name, no matter what, as one does about a new face: "Who is that?" One cares not whether the reply is Thompson or Johnson.'

Storer, who is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as having been 'intimate with North,' was evidently his most regular companion amongst politicians. Sir Henry Englefield, over and beyond his accomplishments as a drawing-room entertainer, was celebrated for his antiquarian researches and his scientific publications. But upon the whole North's spirits seem to have failed: 'If an old and unfortunate friend of yours still holds a place in your kind remembrance . . .,' he wrote to his former correspondent, Sir Robert Keith, at Vienna.[1]

The new Lord Guilford spoke only three times in the House of Lords, and curiously enough his first two incursions into debate were provoked by discussions upon foreign affairs, concerning which he had always preserved silence so far as he could. The Empress Catherine had for the past two years been pressing hard upon Turkey. In 1788 she had secured the alliance of the Emperor Joseph,

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35343.

though without profitable results. Then Gustavus III. of Sweden made a diversion by taking the field against Russia. Russia parried by stirring up the Danes against Sweden. Pitt's policy sought to maintain the balance of power by making treaties with Prussia and Holland, and preserving Sweden from destruction. In 1789 Russia was pursuing a triumphant career in her attack on Turkey, now aided with better effect by the Emperor Joseph. Next year Joseph died, and was succeeded by Leopold. Prussia offered a treaty of alliance to Turkey. After vicissitudes which need not be elaborated, a conference was held at Reichenbach. The Emperor Leopold renounced the Russian alliance: Gustavus made peace with Russia. The net result of this was that Catherine found herself in a position to resume her persecution of Turkey. Pitt now announced the preparation of a naval force, known as the Russian Armament, with which he proposed to curb the aspirations of the Empress; but so fierce was the resistance offered by Fox and his friends, that he was obliged to hold his hand. In hot haste he sent to warn Prussia of the compulsion that withheld him. Prussia felt constrained to adopt a similar course, and Turkey was left to make the best terms she could with Russia at Jassy: January 9th, 1792.

The line of argument pursued by the Opposition was that we had nothing to gain and much to lose by fighting Russia. They assumed the character

of Russophiles; and now it was that Adair paid his mysterious visit to St. Petersburg. It has always been alleged, but never proved, that he went either at the instigation or with the connivance of Fox, to undermine the position of Pitt's envoy Fawkener.[1] The charge of complicity against Fox we are willing to dismiss. It is enough for our purpose to know that his obvious desire would be to thwart Pitt's policy everywhere and anyhow: and that in his Parliamentary campaign he was supported by North.

On April 1st, 1791, during a debate on the Prussian alliance, the Duke of Leeds, upon the question of the responsibility of Government for executive action, taxed North with having habitually avoided liability on behalf of his Government by shifting the burden on to the shoulders of Parliament. This called up North, and we are told that

'the whole of the noble Earl's speech was accurate, clear, interesting, and eloquent; and from the particular attention with which it was listened to, seemed to have a great effect on the House.'[2]

He discoursed upon the theory of executive power, from historical precedent, and as concerning the direction of military operations. His conclusion was that he was by no means satisfied with the conduct of the Government and demanded further

[1] Fox is said to have corresponded with Adair in cypher (*Life*, Lord John Russell, ii. 208). If so, he very likely turned out the old code he had used in his communications with Burgoyne during the American war.

[2] *Parliamentary History.*

information. On February 20th, 1792, he spoke on the Russian Armament, adopting the language of Fox, without his animation. On March 6th he made his last appearance in a debate upon the proposal to repeal certain taxes; and the occasion is remarkable as evidence of North's consistency. It will be observed that he repeated the principles upon which he laid most stress in his budget speech of 1769. He may have had an intuition that this was to be his last word. There is certainly a valedictory note that is not without pathos. Also there is a tone of courage and manliness which leaves a happy impression, and enables us to take leave of him in the world of politics not without admiration and respect. The speech receives the unusual compliment of a farewell footnote in the pages of the *Parliamentary History*. This is what he said:

'The grounds upon which he disapproved of the proposed reduction of taxes were that he conceived the situation of the country to be such that there could be no object so beneficial to its interests as the reduction of the national debt, to which reduction the surplus of our revenue should be applied in preference to any other object. As to the amount of this debt, he did not view it with the terror that seemed to be felt in general. He did not think so much of the size of it at present as of the danger of its growing greater and at last becoming too great for us to bear. . . . We were at this time far from being in a desperate state, or in a state in which we ought to despond. . . . Notwithstanding all the taxes imposed on the people of this country, still, what they had left

for their own comfort was much more than the people of this country had one hundred years ago. He believed that the resources of this country were still great, and that if called upon to exert herself she would be found adequate to such exertion. He never thought there was the least reason to despair on account of the finances of the country. He had often said before, and he was of the same opinion now, that there never was a moment when a man of tolerable nerves should apprehend any danger from the failure of the resources of this country. . . . If called on, he was confident the country would bear a great deal more than had been already imposed on it. What was the result of these opinions? Not that we should reduce our present taxes, but that we should bear them in order that we might apply the surplus for the reduction of the national debt: in order that twenty years hence we might be able to face the calamity of war without being burdened by fresh taxes, which would be the case if, during the interval, we applied our surplus to the reduction of the national debt. He had the misfortune when in office, and afterwards when out of it, to maintain upon the subject of finance a doctrine that was very unpopular. He was now too old to change his opinion. . . . He was taught that popularity was at an end for him and he gave his opinion totally without feeling anything upon that point. He had known the effect of it formerly and had withstood it. He had received a lesson upon that subject in a manner too plain to be misunderstood and too severe to be forgotten.'

CHAPTER XIX

Earl of Guilford

IT is interesting to know that Pitt, in spite of his steady refusal to serve with North, was not so far prejudiced as to ignore his merits and abilities and to regard him as outside the pale. In May 1792 he wrote to Auckland that he contemplated summoning a Privy Council to consider what preparations should be made to meet the peril of invasion. To this meeting he intended to invite men of prominence outside his Government, and he mentioned the Duke of Portland, Lord Guilford, and Lord Fitzwilliam.[1] It would be still more interesting to know whether North attended and, if so, what happened. It is not likely that he carried a spirit of eagerness into the council chamber. He had, indeed, spoken effectively in Parliament three months earlier. But within another three months his days were to be numbered, and he was already preparing for the end.

'In 1792,' says his daughter,[2] 'his health began to decline: he lost his sleep and his appetite; his legs swelled, and symptoms of dropsy were ap-

[1] Lord Auckland's *Journal*. [2] To Lord Brougham, *cit.*

parent. At last, after a peculiarly uneasy night, he questioned his friend and physician, Dr. Warren, begging him not to conceal the truth: the result was that Dr. Warren owned that water had formed upon the chest, that he could not live many days, and that a few hours might put a period to his existence. He received this news not only with firmness and pious resignation, but it in no way altered the serenity and cheerfulness of his manners; and from that hour, during the remaining ten days of his life, he had no return of depression of spirits. The first step he took, when aware of his immediate danger, was to desire that Mr. John Robinson and Lord Auckland might be sent for; they were the only two of his political friends whose desertion had hurt and offended him, and he wished before his death to shake hands cordially and to forgive them. They attended the summons, of course, and the reconciliation was effected.'

Once more we must take leave to question Lady Charlotte Lindsay's accuracy. Auckland was at the Hague and could not, therefore, have attended. Let us hope that Robinson did. To be candid, we must confess some doubt as to North's title to pronounce forgiveness. Robinson had worked for him loyally and laboriously in old days, often under a depressing sense of ingratitude and neglect—whether warranted or baseless matters not. He disapproved of the Coalition and could no longer follow his old chief. We know that on one occasion, at all events, North wrote him a curt and harsh letter of reproach, as though he had to resent an act of treachery. In these circumstances, reconciliation, for the sake of old friendship, was

much to be desired: pardon was surely an inappropriate word.

The case of Auckland was different. As far back as 1780 Eden had been indignant and sulky because he considered the offer of the post of Chief Secretary inadequate to his deserts. But North had shown an ample spirit of conciliation,[1] and harmony was restored. North did not support Eden when he attacked Fox in 1782; he had not yet recovered from the stunning events that attended his retreat from office. On March 23rd, 1784, on the eve of the dissolution, Eden attacked Pitt, under whom he had not yet enlisted; then North did support him. Eden had taken a large share in forming the Coalition. More than once he and North were tellers in the Opposition lobby after the fall of the Coalition Ministry, and within a very short time of Eden's junction with Pitt. In the last chapter it was shown that until then he was in confidential communication with North, and afterwards received frequent news of him from Storer, who evidently believed that his correspondent was sympathetic. Eden, however, was by this time a thorough Pitt man.

In 1786 he had joined the Board of Trade, and was sent to negotiate a commercial treaty with France. Pitt was so well satisfied that close intimacy and future employment were the fruits of this adventure. In 1789 Eden was made Lord Auckland.

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34417.

Eden was, in fact, so restless and ambitious that he could never have been content out of office. In spite of his transfer of allegiance to Pitt, he was prepared to serve under Addington in 1801, with the result that Pitt had no further need of his services three years later. In 1806 he was back again in the Government of All the Talents. This may have betrayed a lack of consistent principle; but North was surely the last of men to be shocked at a change of political association; and since he was no longer in office or likely to be in office, it is difficult to see why he should hold Auckland guilty of treachery. But it is clear enough that he did.

Auckland received North's letter at the Hague, whence he wrote to Lord Grenville[1] on July 27th, 1792:

'I have just received a most kind and affecting message from poor Lord Guilford in the handwriting of Lady Catherine Douglas.[2] I fear from the turn of the expressions that he feels himself going.'[3]

Five days earlier Grenville had received another letter which showed that death was looked for as coming certainly and soon. There is in this a token of the frigid and practical temper of Pitt's mind, and an absence of that delicacy of which he speaks:

'I imagine out of delicacy to Lord Guilford

[1] W. W. Grenville was created Lord Grenville in 1790
[2] Lady Glenbervie. [3] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

there must be some caution in giving opinions about his successor: but I think it will clearly be best to give a decided support to the Duke of Portland when the vacancy happens, and there can be no harm in informing your correspondent beforehand. The King gave me full authority to offer the Duke of Portland the blue ribbon and expressed great readiness to show any marks of distinction to the respectable part of the party, provided it was not accompanied with too much power.'[1]

Pitt might have waited a fortnight before disposing of the dying man's Garter. On August 5th North was dead. Pitt could give away his blue ribbon then; he could profit in his own person, as he did, by succeeding to the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. All that mattered to North was the character and reputation which he could bequeath to posterity, and which it has been the humble desire of the present writer to examine and display.

That North did not die unlamented is easily proved. Outside his own family there were men who truly mourned him. On the 9th of August Lord Sheffield wrote to Auckland:

'I am delighted with the circumstance of a kind and affectionate message from our poor friend through Lady Catherine. It might have been expected from him because he was the best man I have known. I am almost curious to know of what date it is. It seems from your letter to be about the time the four physicians declared he could not

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

live above a fortnight. He knew it, and he continued calm and amiable to the last, and said he was thankful that he had a little time to settle his affairs, and to comfort those about him; he sometimes said, "While there is life there is hope."'

That he clung to life for its own sake may well be doubted. His bodily afflictions were too many and too great to leave it any savour of sweetness. Moreover his heart was heavy, and he rejoiced that he would not live to see the upheaval in France that he foresaw with certainty and with dismay.

Next day Storer wrote to the Hague:

'I feel peculiarly unfortunate, more so than others, in losing those to whom I have been attached. On last Sunday morning, a little before seven, this event happened, and the last words that he uttered were that he felt no pain, nor had he suffered any. It will be a great loss to Lady Guilford and his daughters, but his death will be a loss to various people in a greater or less degree. . . . I saw him and conversed with him last Thursday night, *i.e.*, preceding his death, and the last words he said to me were "God bless you!" uttered in such a tone as if he never expected to see me again. The benediction still sounds in my ears; one's heart must have been of steel not to have been touched with his situation.'

Storer's devotion was personal: he had no exaggerated notions of North's influence in public life. 'Lord Guilford is irrecoverably gone,' he had written to Auckland on July 27th: 'what change his death will make in politics, or if it will make any, I cannot foresee.'

The exigencies and strain of political life are

an unsparing solvent of personal ties and early attachments. Contrary tendencies, rival ambitions, mutual dissatisfaction; sincere convictions and worthy desires; jealousy, obstinacy, and prejudice—all these forces are latent, and the turning and uncertainty of the road may at any moment bring them into view. Then separation comes, and lasting estrangement; if not recrimination and savage resentment. Thus it must not be written down in condemnation of a man that he lost by the way those companions with whom he set out in the buoyancy of youth, or sought after in his maturer days. That is not the safest test of a man's true and natural self.

If you would have a right estimate of a man, ascertain how he is looked upon in his own household. Judged by this ordeal, Lord North has little to fear. His wife's lack of beauty never deprived her of his faithful affection. In the course of a tolerably diligent search for information about North, only one insinuation of loose living has been encountered; and that comes in such a form that it may be explained as passing malice, or dismissed as a careless figure of speech. 'I am sure there never was a more happy union than theirs during the thirty-six years that it lasted,' wrote his daughter. Lady North, she said, was not a stupid woman. She delighted in her husband's conversation, and apparently could hold her own as the talk went round. She attempted no interference in public business: but she did

deprecate North's coalition with Fox, because she was certain it would destroy his popularity.

North did not gamble: he did not drink. He was a man of refined and cultivated intellect. He was not a profound scholar; but he had not forgotten his classics. He was not a great man of letters; but he talked much of books, and one of his favourite recreations was to listen to his eldest daughter reading Shakespeare. He told a story well, and had plenty of resources for amusing his company. He was something of a linguist; spoke French easily and knew German; and he was fond of entertaining foreigners: but his greatest happiness was found in his Sunday parties at Bushey, where none but his family and intimate friends were admitted. He suffered fools gladly and never allowed his children to call people bores. He was the 'companion and intimate friend of his elder sons and daughters and the merry, entertaining playfellow of his little girl.'[1] So considerate was he in his treatment of servants, that one worthless drunken groom was distinguished as 'the man that puts papa in a passion.' This is his daughter's conclusion of the whole matter:

'His character in private life was, I believe, as faultless as that of any human being can be; and those actions of his public life which appear to have been the most questionable, proceeded, I am entirely convinced, from what one must own was a weakness, though not an unamiable one, and

[1] Lady Charlotte Lindsay, *cit.*

which followed him through his life, the want of power to resist those he loved.'

Of North's relations with his sons not much evidence is forthcoming; none certainly to show that there was ever any discord. From the first he had been fondly attentive to the progress of his son George. In the middle of a political letter to his father in 1767 he writes:

'I send you another letter which has just come into my hands and which gives me as much pleasure as Mr. Conway's. You will see it is perfectly well spelt and written, though it is the first attempt of the author to write to any of us upon single lines.'

In another letter he says:

'The only promotions I have heard of since my last are Mr. Nugent created Viscount Clare in the Kingdom of Ireland [1767], and Mr. George North advanced to the second form.'

George North certainly bore no grudge against Fox for his many tirades against his father. He was amongst the foremost in promoting the Coalition. A few months after North had left the House of Commons, George, in his stead, was attacking the foreign policy of Pitt. Unhappily the father did not live to hear his son's praises sung as time went on. 'Lord Guilford, decidedly influenced by and attached to Fox, opened the battery in a determined but gentlemanlike manner': so wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury to Auckland in January 1793. A year later Fox told

Lord Holland that 'in the House of Lords, Lord Guilford has raised himself very high in all people's opinions.' One could wish that North had been allowed to know of his son's progress in time to solace his afflictions.

Francis, the second son and fourth earl, was a soldier and the author of a play that was acted, but he took little part in public life. Frederick, the next brother, whose ugliness has been recorded, was more enterprising. He travelled much in Greece, joined the Greek Church, and became 'Chancellor of the University of the Ionian Islands, and Knight Grand Cross of the Ionian Order.' He was at various times M.P. for Banbury, Comptroller of the Customs in London, and Governor of Ceylon. In 1795 he was private secretary to Sir Gilbert Elliot during his short Governorship of Jamaica. 'My life at this moment would be intolerable if it were not for Fred North,' wrote the Chief, adding praises of Fred's diplomatic ability.[1] None of these sons left a male heir, and the earldom descended through Brownlow, the Bishop, son of the second marriage.

The eldest daughter, Catherine, married Sylvester Douglas, created Lord Glenbervie, and was lady-in-waiting to the unhappy Princess of Wales. Glenbervie said of his father-in-law that 'in all the abundance of his wit, he was never known to say a thing that could give pain.'[2] The second daughter, Anne, married in 1798, as his third wife, Gibbon's

[1] *The Windham Papers*, i. 304. [2] *Glenbervie Journals*, 55.

friend Holroyd, Lord Sheffield. Charlotte married Colonel the Hon. John Lindsay.

For the sake of clearness it may be explained again that George, third earl, married twice and left three daughters: Maria, who married the second Marquis of Bute and died in 1841; Susan; and Georgiana, who died in 1835. At the father's death, the Barony of North fell into abeyance between these three daughters. On the death of Lady Bute in 1841, the title vested in Susan as sole survivor.[1] She became Baroness North; married Colonel Doyle; and was mother of the present peer.

It is on the domestic side that we contemplate Lord North with the greatest satisfaction; and in this aspect of his life and character, if for no other reason, we should write him down as a good man; what we call a good fellow; one we should like to have known.

If we are called upon for a prompt judgment on North as a statesman, it is less easy and agreeable to give an opinion. North was not fortunate in his career. The conspicuous part of it, that upon which the verdict will depend, was so much occupied by the American war, that all other considerations are apt to be ignored. It was under his auspices that we went into the war: under his auspices it ran its inglorious course: and under his auspices it ended in lamentable failure. That is

[1] See *Burke's Peerage*. Colonel Doyle assumed the name of North.

about as much as most people can tell you of Lord North. He is usually disparaged and dismissed as the man who lost the Colonies. But it was not he that began meddling with the Colonies. When he became Prime Minister, he found a red-hot quarrel to deal with. The Stamp Act had been passed and, perforce, repealed. Townshend had deliberately imposed his taxes. For a long time to come Franklin and Washington could go on declaring that nobody desired independence; but by the time North became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1767; still more, by the time he became Prime Minister in 1770; that was the demand to be met. The spirit of 'independency' had come into existence before he ever sat at a Cabinet Council; it was a living impulse, a spreading force, inevitable and irresistible in its consequences.[1] He had not called up this genius of revolt: he only had to lay it—if he could. He had not sown the wind: but he had to reap the whirlwind.

History has dealt with North unsparingly. If only Chatham had been in his place! Such is the common cry. Had Chatham been in office from 1770 to his death in 1778 it is not too rash to suggest that he would have suffered a most melancholy loss of credit. Chatham expounded an illogical and impossible principle. 'The Americans are right to resist and to demand their freedom: I admire their independent spirit and I am their friend. But here I vow and declare that I will

[1] Evidence of this has been offered in the chapter on the American war.

never consent to their independence.' That was, in effect, what Chatham repeatedly said ; but long before his impressive periods were silenced for ever, independence was, beyond prevarication, the one thing the Americans insisted on, and the only thing they really cared about. It was useless for North to attempt to solve his difficulties with fine phrases : he had to deal with hard facts. He had either to let the Colonies go without trying to coerce them ; or to try to coerce them—and lose them after all. There was no middle way of preserving for any considerable time the authority of the British Crown.

Looking back over the experience of nearly a century and a half we cannot fail to perceive that in no circumstances could America have remained for ever a group of British Colonies. That there existed at the time a strong element of loyalty to the connection nobody will deny. But no immunity from taxation could have averted the coming day when diversity of interest, if not mere multiplication of numbers, must have led to the establishment of a separate nation. North might have been wise enough to foresee that social and economic forces would inevitably produce that consummation. He might have followed the line of least resistance. He might have supported Grafton, instead of opposing him, on May 1st, 1769, when it was proposed to retract all pretence, and revoke all acts of taxation. Or, later, when he became Prime Minister, he might have conceded

everything without a fight. It would have been a cheaper and less painful process; but it would have led to separation none the less, and North, in the eyes of posterity, would still have been the man who let the Colonies go. There would have been nominal sovereignty for another generation or so, and it would have been left to Pitt or Portland or Liverpool to make the formal renunciation: but if the Americans had won an unqualified victory in the battle of taxation, that would have dated the loss of British dominion as surely as the surrenders of Saratoga and York Town.

It may be asked, why could not North surrender the claim to tax, and anticipate history by founding an American Dominion such as now exists in Canada? The answer is that if he had conceived such an idea he would have fared no better. It is to require of him a prescience and sagacity not often given unto man, without any guarantee of success. To most of the politicians and statesmen of that age sovereignty and the right to tax were synonymous. Without any obligation to pay taxes to the Crown, the Colonies would no longer be subject to the Crown. If North had yielded to those who advised the removal of the tea tax, he would assuredly have been accused afterwards of making the Colonies independent. And what men thought of independence we know. America would have claimed her independence none the less, and how would North then have fared at the hands of Chatham

and his friends, whose political ideal was an America at once dependent and independent?

Not to insist too much on Chatham, let us hear Shelburne, who would deal tenderly with America. It will be remembered that the Americans objected to the Mutiny Act because it involved the principle of making them pay:

> 'The enforcing of the Mutiny Act will I am afraid create a general dissatisfaction . . . yet if Great Britain does not in some shape put forth her dignity on this occasion, she may end by losing all credit and reverence in America and lose likewise her power there. . . .'[1]

Yet Shelburne had elsewhere insisted on 'the free and unimpaired exercise' of America's right to grant her own money.[2] This is one example, and one will suffice, of the dilemma with which North was confronted. How was he to satisfy people who expected him to maintain England's dignity and power, and yet give way on principles of the first importance?

Only we, who are wise after the event, can see clearly that the American Colonies were already adrift, and by no human agency could have been permanently tethered to these shores. North might have given them a parting heave; he might have made a futile resistance. He chose the latter alternative; and because it failed, he has had to pay the inevitable penalty of failure and suffer condemnation. We put up no defence on the

[1] Fitzmaurice, i. 318. [2] *Ibid.* i. 474.

plea that he was compelled. He takes the responsibility for what he did. Nobody can justly say that he went out of his way to make mischief and seek destruction. He was confronted with a problem which cannot be exactly matched in the record of any other Prime Minister: and because it was unique and insoluble it has burdened his reputation for all time.

But there were two Lord Norths—the Prime Minister of the American war, and the member of the Coalition. In the latter character we do not desire, and he does not deserve, that an elaborate apology should be attempted.

Other ministers, indeed, of that day and this have incurred similar reproach. Lord Brougham says of North:

'The American war is the great blot upon his fame; for his share in the Coalition was only exceptionable on account of the bitterness with which his adversaries had so long abused him; and if they could submit to the fellowship of one upon whom they had heaped such unmeasured abuse, they seemed to recant, or even to confess that the opinions which they had previously professed of him they had not really entertained.'

He goes on in his slapdash way to argue that North's political life was less open to censure than Pitt's. North, he maintains, carried on the war against his own conscience: but he did it reluctantly and was eager to escape. Pitt, the advocate of peace, adopted a war policy in 1793 with the sole object of retaining undivided power. He sacri-

ficed the cause of the Catholics for office; and for the sake of office he turned his back upon Reform.[1] No change of company or suppression of principle, on the part of North, we infer, can be accounted more blameworthy than that.

In 1792 Pitt made overtures to Fox. In 1794 he actually recruited from his old opponents and brought in Portland himself. Upon this Buckingham wrote to Grenville deprecating association with Fox: 'I have seen nothing which leads me to imagine a Coalition (for it is as completely so as Lord North's ever was) will be particularly recommended by the revival of a third Secretary of State.'[2]

It will be seen, then, that the blameless Pitt has been accused of conduct as questionable as anything of which North is held guilty. None the less we cannot but regret the Coalition. North behaved like a man who, unnerved and embittered by a luckless love affair, precipitates himself into an unfortunate marriage. It is true that apparently it turned out better than one would have expected, and that he was happily in love this time. But he lost caste. He was not in his proper sphere. He had to adapt his manners to the new company he kept. He had to efface the memory of what he had once been and what, with his natural instincts in play, he would always have been. For the rest of his life he was in a false position and his con-

[1] *Historical Sketches:* Lord North.
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore Papers.

stant efforts to show that he was at ease jar uncomfortably.

Unluckily there was little affinity between Pitt and North. One was cold and rigid: the other was genial and pliant. Pitt would have nothing to do with North. The accommodation that was denied him here was freely given him by Fox. Pitt was a Reformer, and North was not. But for that matter so was Fox. Pitt had financial instinct; so had North. In this respect at all events his sympathies should have been with Pitt. In Pitt's Government were representatives or reflections of North's old colleagues. He had served under Pitt's father. Only the American troubles had estranged him from that connection. Gower and Thurlow and Dundas were all in office. He had surely more in common with this combination of men than he could possibly have with a faction headed by Fox and Burke.

Nothing that North did after 1783 can be set in the balance for good against any evil that he may have done between 1770 and 1782; and one cannot but feel that if it were not given him to come back into office with greater consistency and dignity, it would have been far better that he should have shared the fate of Shelburne and been elbowed out of political life altogether. North deserved a better fate. He was a good man, and, with all his limitations, he must be measured with the first-class men. But there are many men of undoubted ability who set their hands to the

plough in vain, and see those whom they know to be their inferiors reaping the harvest of success. Such men we call unlucky, and unlucky is perhaps the best epithet we can find to sum up Lord North's career.

That we do this in no hostile or contemptuous spirit, it is needless to avow. It was with the desire and intention of speaking kindly that Burke wrote of him as follows:

'I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of Lord North. He was a man of admirable parts, of general knowledge, of a versatile understanding, fitted for every sort of business; of infinite wit and pleasantry; of a delightful temper, and with a mind most perfectly disinterested. But it would be only to degrade myself by a weak adulation and not to honour the memory of a great man to deny that he wanted something of the vigilance and spirit of command that the times required.'[1]

And that we may part from North in all charity and loving-kindness we gratefully borrow the testimony of Gibbon:

'Were I ambitious of any other patron than the public, I would inscribe this book to a Statesman who, in a long, a stormy, and, at length, an unfortunate administration, had many political opponents, almost without a personal enemy; who had retained, in his fall from power, many faithful and disinterested friends; and who, under the pressure of severe infirmity, enjoys the lively vigour of his mind, and the felicity of his incomparable temper.'[2]

[1] *Letter to a Noble Lord.*
[2] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. vii., Preface.

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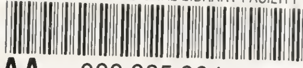
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