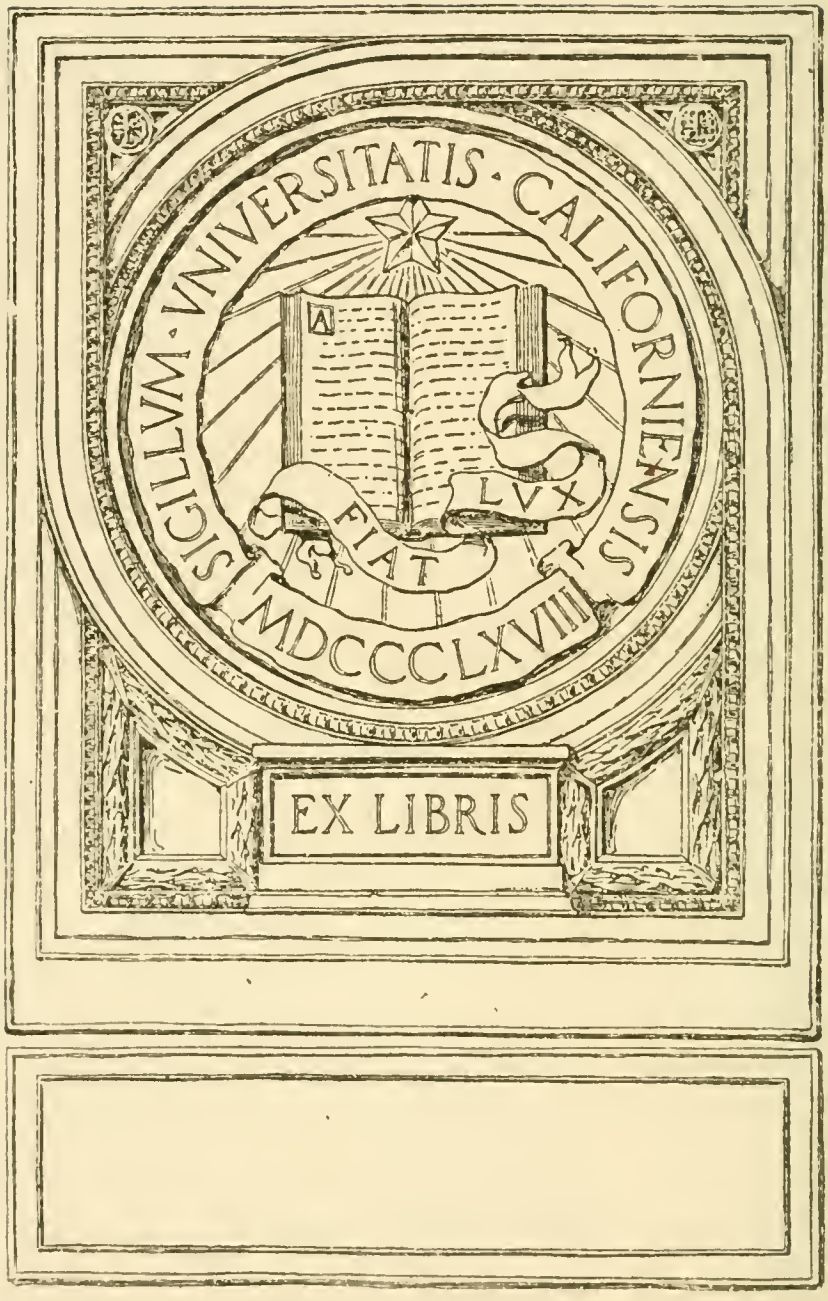
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SPENCER PERCEVAL

PHILIP TREHERNE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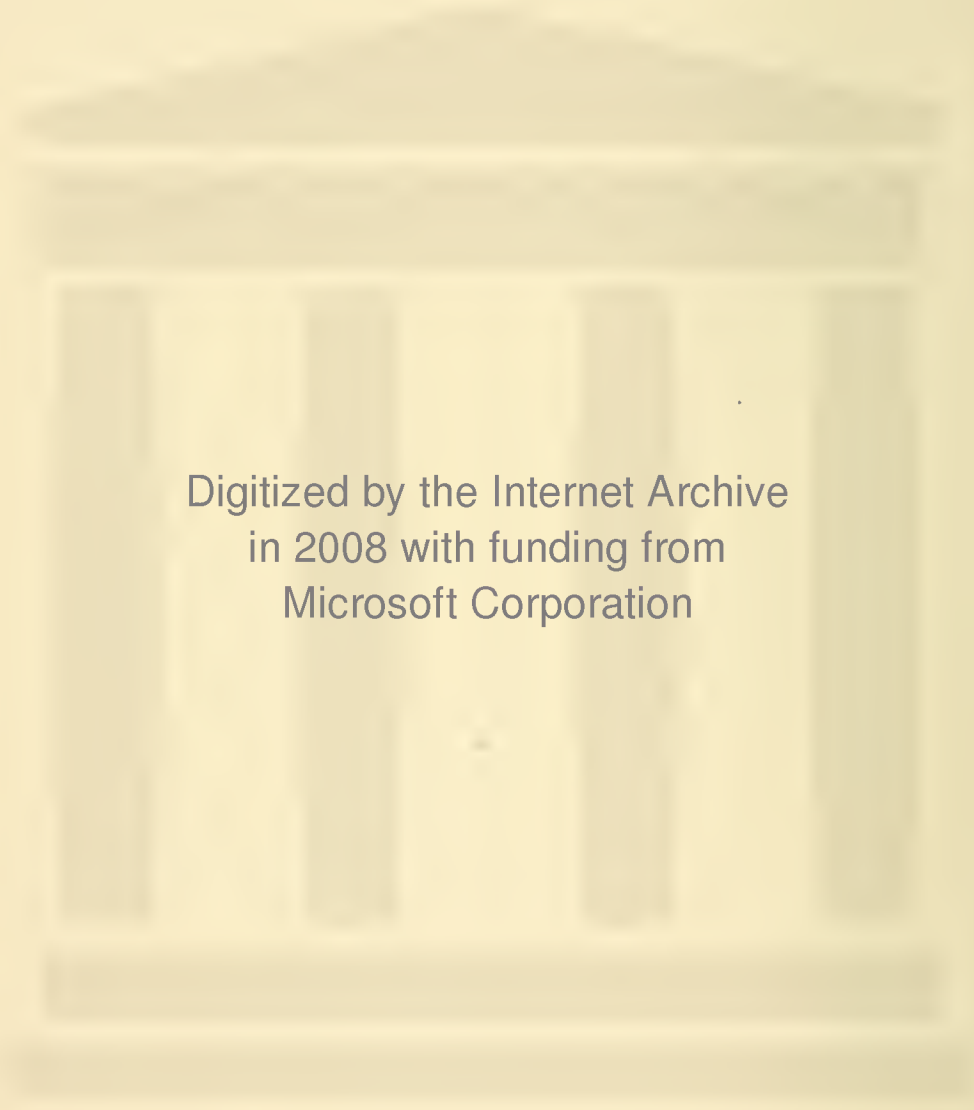

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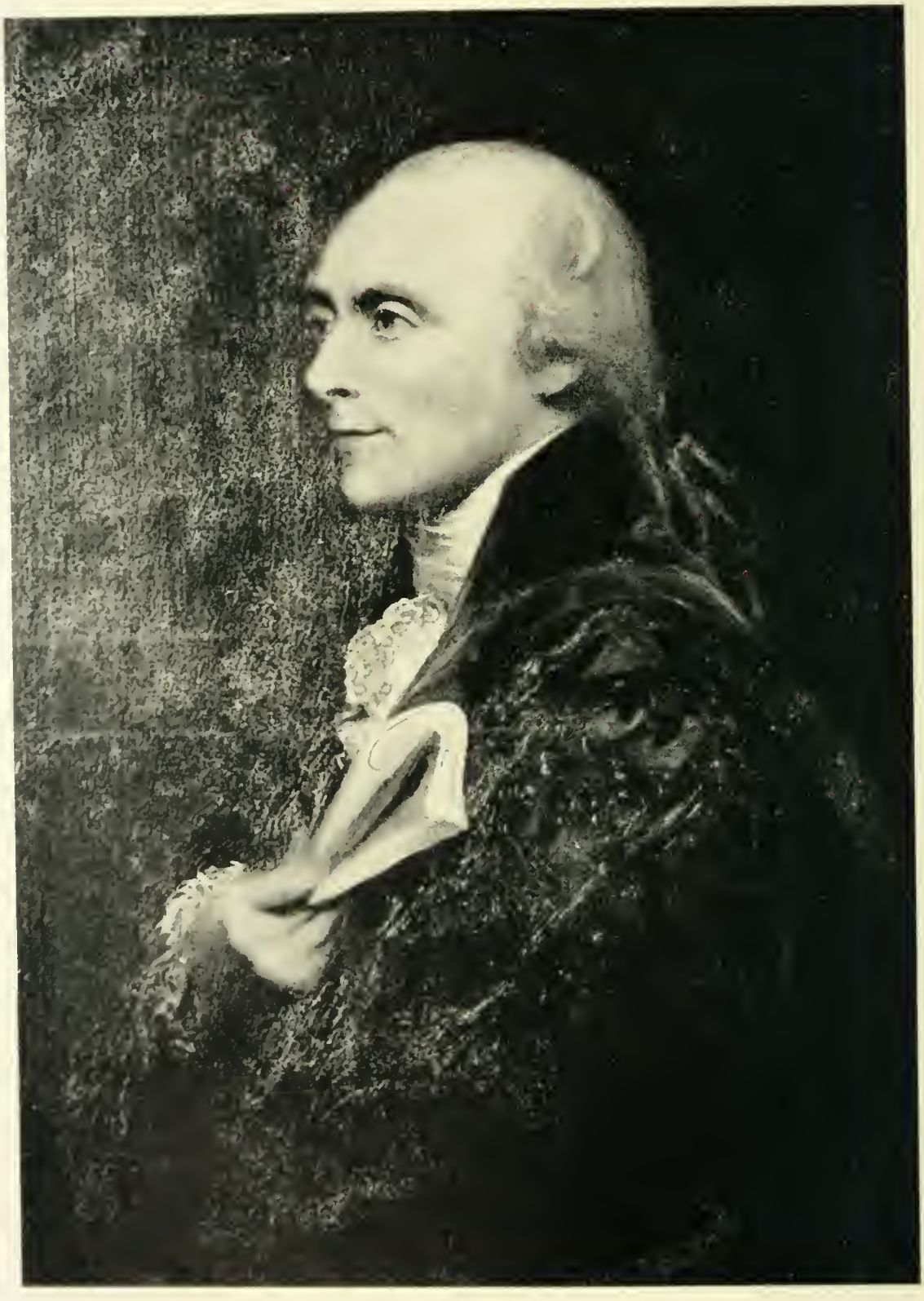

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SPENCER PERCEVAL

[A posthumous portrait by George Francis Joseph, A.R.A.]

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SPENCER PERCEVAL

By

PHILIP TREHERNE

AUTHOR OF "FROM VALET TO AMBASSADOR," ETC.

T. FISHER UNWIN

LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

1909

To

THE MEMORY

OF MY UNCLE,

CLIFTON PERCEVAL

PREFATORY NOTE

It has been urged in the course of after-dinner oratory, that lawyers have risen to high places in politics under Democratic Government, but Spencer Perceval cannot be included among the number.

There was no question of a Tory Democracy when "a champion of monarchical and ecclesiastical establishment" became First Lord of the Treasury; from the republican standpoint he was a reactionary, an upholder of Church and State, endowed with a tenacity of purpose that carried him from the Midland circuit, to the leadership of the Tory party.

During his boyhood the policy of George III. and his Ministers paved the way for the foundation of a most enlightened American

Democracy, an example to Europe and the outer world.

The Declaration of Independence was signed while Perceval was at Harrow. The French Revolution had come to pass before he entered Parliament.

Carlyle, in the "Latter-day Pamphlets," found the ideals, and the result of American Democracy, as unsatisfactory as the methods of Downing Street.

"My friend, brag not yet of our American cousins. Their quantity of cotton, dollars, industry, and resources I believe to be almost unspeakable; but I can by no means worship the like of these: what great human soul, what great thought, what great noble thing one could worship, or loyally admire, has yet been produced there? None: the American cousins have as yet done none of these things. . . . And so we leave them for the present, and cannot predict the success of Democracy on this side of the Atlantic from their example."

If the spirit of Democracy inclines to

favour the legal element in politics, Perceval may be taken as an exception to the rule; the lawyer who has risen to the leadership is comparatively rare in the history of Anglo-Saxon Parliaments. Perceval's political life differs in most respects from those of his contemporaries. He succeeded to the leadership of the Tory party upon the death of Pitt, and after six eventful years his tenure of office was cut short by the pistol of Bellingham.

The political paragraphist has drawn attention to the fact, that Perceval commenced his career at the Bar, and a hundred years elapsed before another barrister became First Lord of the Treasury.

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SPENCER PERCEVAL

I

EARLY YEARS

An eighteenth-century genealogist traced the descent of the Baronies of Luvel, Perceval, and Gournay, of the Norman house of Yvery. In "Anderson's History," published in 1742, there is a complete account of the Perceval branch from Ascelin, who received a grant of lands in Somersetshire after the Conquest, to John, second Earl of Egmont, and father of Spencer Perceval. The early part of this work contains the records of men who fought in the Crusades, and in the first invasion of Ireland.

Richard Perceval, a friend of Lord Burleigh's, was the first Parliamentarian, and sat for Richmond, in Yorkshire. He deciphered the despatches containing the first news of the Armada. His son, Sir Philip, was a distinguished statesman in the reign of Charles I. From the point of view of heredity, there was every reason for Spencer Perceval to enter Parliament. The Percevals had played a considerable part in the political life of the eighteenth century. His grandfather, the first Earl of Egmont, sat for the borough of Harwich, and was an active opponent of Sir Robert Walpole's, and received a certain amount of attention from the pen of Horace Walpole. He was the first President of Georgia, wrote many pamphlets, and it was to him that Anderson addressed the florid dedication at the beginning of the first volume of "The House of Yvery." Spencer Perceval's father entered the Irish Parliament in his twentieth year. He contested Harwich and Haslemere at a

later date without success, and was finally elected for the borough of Westminster in May 1741. A contemporary account of the Haslemere contest throws a light on the electioneering methods of Walpole and the now suburban resort, with its red brick villas, known as Haslemere.

Lord Perceval received an invitation from a "large majority of the electors of the Borough of Haslemere, in Surrey, who, in a very handsome and respectful Letter, desired his Lordship's presence there, previous to the future Election, assuring him of their attachment and service to that end. His Lordship complied with their Request, went down thither, and was declared a Candidate upon the Country's interest in opposition to General Oglethorpe and Peter Burrel, Esquire, Sub-governor of the South Sea Company, who were supported by the Minister.

"As it may be curious in future ages to know in what conditions this Nation stood at this period to the Freedom of Election

and the Insolence of Power, it may not be improper to mention here, that as soon as these two Gentlemen had come to this Determination, a Man in great Office sent a Gentleman to the Earl of Egmont to advise his Son to desist from his Pretensions in that Borough, for that the Minister desired him to understand that all his Endeavours should avail him nothing, for that he would open the Exchequer against him, and that if by this Means he could not defeat his Election, he would bring the Cause to the Bar of the House of Commons, and would have him voted out, though he should be returned by a Majority of fifty-nine out of sixty, of which number the Voters were then supposed to consist."

In spite of these threats Lord Perceval "continued an expensive and powerful Opposition for some months. But at length, perceiving that the Exchequer was a Force not to be contended with in a *Borough habituated to Corruption*," he decided to reserve his

energies for Westminster, leaving the corrupt sixty voters to the care of the Exchequer. In the session of 1748-1749 he became the most prominent leader of the House of Commons. He succeeded his father as Earl of Egmont, was created Lord Lovel and Holland in the peerage of England, and took his seat in the House of Lords. Lord Egmont disapproved of Chatham's foreign policy and refused office in 1767, declining to join any administration of which Chatham was a member. His dislike to the foreign policy of Chatham shows a strong contrast to his son Spencer's support of the younger Pitt. Lord Egmont was a firm believer in the power of the Lords as a legislative body. He is reported to have made on one occasion "a warm and able speech against riots and on the licentiousness of the people," and declared that "the Lords alone could save the country; their dictatorial power could, and had, authority to do it."

Overburdened by the cares of State, he was

rarely seen to smile, except when playing a game of chess. Lord Egmont had a desire to revive feudal tenure. A true lover of the past, he would have lived in the past if possible,—a paladin of the Middle Ages born into the political life of the eighteenth century. When building Enmore Castle, near Bridgewater, "he mounted it round, and prepared it to defend itself with cross-bows and arrows, against a time in which the fabric and the use of gunpowder shall be forgotten." In event of a revival of feudal tenure, he wished to fortify his stronghold in Somerset, on a scale worthy of his castle Lohort in Ireland: with its massive keep and walls ten feet thick. Lord Egmont wrote many successful pamphlets, was an able debater, and "gifted with great power of application and a large stock of learning." As First Lord of the Admiralty he was exceedingly popular at the dock-yards among the shipwrights; his birthday was celebrated at Deptford and Woolwich with acclamation.

He married twice, first, in 1736, Lady Katharine Cecil, a daughter of Lord Salisbury's, who bore him five sons and two daughters, whose descendants are extinct. He married secondly, in 1756, Katharine Compton, a daughter of Charles Compton and sister to Lord Northampton, created Baroness Arden in her own right, by whom he had three sons and four daughters. The sons were Charles, afterwards Lord Arden, and Spencer, born the 1st of November 1762 at his father's house in Audley Square, and Henry, who died at the age of seven. Spencer was a Compton name, and came into the family through the marriage of the first Lord Northampton with Sir John Spencer's daughter.

Perceval's childhood was spent at Charlton House, near Woolwich, which his father had taken, to be within easy reach of the dockyards. It was described at the time of Lord Egmont's tenancy as "a long Gothic structure, with four turrets on the top; it has a spacious

courtyard in the front, with two large Gothic piers to the gates, and on the outside of the wall is a long row of some of the oldest cypress trees in England." The house was built in the reign of James I.

Lord Egmont died when his son Spencer was ten years old; and shortly after the boy was sent to Harrow to enjoy all the advantages of a lengthy classical education. At that time Eton and Harrow received boys at an age, which in these days is generally associated with a thoroughly comfortable preparatory school. Nothing is known of his life at Harrow. His greatest friend was Dudley Ryder, a friendship which lasted throughout his life; from Harrow he went to Trinity, Cambridge, where he gained the English declamation prize, and took his degree in 1781. His mother died in 1783, and Lord Arden rented a house at Charlton, near the home of their boyhood, a place of pleasant associations for the brothers.

Spencer Perceval's prospects were by no

means brilliant. The time-honoured law of primogeniture, the fairy godmother of the eldest son, is apt to overlook the daughters and younger brothers, and a sense of proportion is lacking except in rare instances. Perceval chose the Bar as a profession. Born in the days of privilege he relied on his own efforts, and for some years the political road was closed to him.

The capitalist will cry that poverty is a spur to ambition, will air his views, and platitudinise in the Press upon the joys of starting life with the proverbial half-crown. Commercially speaking, the early half-crown is a triumphant matter, politically it is of no value. In the history of English politics Pitt shines as the solitary example of an early success in Parliament. The precocious Cabinet Minister who struts his time upon the stage is not as a rule a hero to posterity. In Spencer Perceval's case the law was a necessity, though his particular gifts would have secured him a high place in politics

at a comparatively early age, if he could have afforded the expense of an election. He experienced none of the advantages of an early political training in common with Pitt and Canning; the law developed his debating powers, and enabled him to hold his own with Fox when he first entered Parliament, and had won his spurs as an advocate. Spencer Perceval and his elder brother, Lord Arden, fell in love with two pretty Miss Wilsons, daughters of their neighbour, Sir Thomas Spencer Wilson, of Charlton House. Sir Thomas welcomed Lord Arden as a suitor gladly enough. In Spencer Perceval he saw a briefless barrister, and acted accordingly. Brains cannot always command success at the Bar, or provide the necessary marriage settlements. Sir Thomas, like the father of tradition, frowned upon the suit. If he could have foreseen in Perceval a future Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury, it is possible that he would have welcomed the younger

brother and accepted him as a son-in-law in the first instance. Human nature when brought into contact with marriage settlements will only recognise one argument: the lover's qualities are weighed in the romantic scale of stamp duty. But love in this instance triumphed over stamp duty; Spencer Perceval had made up his mind on the subject. Determination was the keynote of his life.

The lovers waited till 1790, when Miss Wilson came of age, and were married at East Grinstead, the bride dressed for the ceremony in her riding habit; they commenced housekeeping in lodgings over a carpet shop in Bedford Row. Considering the amount of family interest on both sides, it stands greatly to Perceval's credit that he succeeded entirely by his own skill as an advocate. It was an age of sinecures, and in the Plymley letters Sydney Smith wrote of Perceval's sinecure office at the mint, as if it realised a judge's salary at

least. Perceval succeeded George Selwyn as "Surveyor of the Meltings and Clerk of the Irons," and this important office brought in £123 per annum, and was performed by deputy.

The prosperous-sounding title of Surveyor of the Meltings conjures up visions of mint perquisites; but in reality it was the most harmless sinecure of them all. The year before Perceval received this surveyorship of untold wealth, he was appointed deputy Recorder of Northampton. His anonymous pamphlet, entitled "A Review of the Arguments in Favour of Continuance of Impeachment notwithstanding a Dissolution" (which dealt with the prolonged delay in the impeachment of Warren Hastings), attracted the notice of Pitt.

Perceval had already gained distinction as a barrister on the Midland circuit. He was counsel for the Crown in the Paine trial in 1792, and again in the Horne Tooke trial in 1794. He was made counsel to the

Admiralty Board, and it is a significant example of his progress, in the estimation of Pitt; that he received the offer of the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland while still a junior at the Bar. This offer, which from the point of view of personal ambition was a flattering one, he declined.

In the correspondence between Pitt and Spencer Perceval on the subject, it is evident that his first thoughts were for his family, and that he intended to continue his work at the Bar. He was unable to afford the luxury of a government appointment.

At the beginning of 1796 Perceval received his silk, and that year marks the commencement of his political career.

Lord Compton, who represented Northampton, went to the Lords on the death of his father in April of that year; and Perceval was selected as his successor for the borough.

He encountered no opposition in his first venture, but a dissolution took place immedi-

ately after, necessitating another election. There were two other candidates: Edward Bouverie, and Walcot representing the Whig interest. Perceval and Bouverie were returned. He entered the House of Commons on the threshold of a most stirring period of English history. The life-and-death struggle with France was fast approaching, and fortunately for the country the war party was in the ascendant, with Pitt at the height of his power, and the Opposition in a practically demoralised condition. The country at large felt no sympathy for the revolutionary theories of Fox. Pitt was essentially a peace Minister, but his brain was taxed to the utmost to raise the sinews of war. By the end of the century all the wealth of England was required in the long devastating fight with Napoleon. Pitt laid the foundation for the long rule of the "vile Tories" during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Whigs found no chance of fulfilling

election pledges, of reforming Parliament, and averting war in the Peninsula.

When Byron's Don Juan returned from his sentimental journey on the Continent, he found the Tories still in power, and exclaimed :

> "Nought's permanent among the human race
> Except the Whigs *not* getting into place."

THE LAST DECADE OF PITT

1796-1806

II

THE LAST DECADE OF PITT
1796-1806

In May 1797 Perceval made his first speech in the debate concerning the Mutiny of the Fleet, in the Channel and at the Nore, and gained the approbation of the House. In appearance he was of slight build, short and very pale—a striking contrast to the generous proportions and ruddy colouring of many of his contemporaries, whose rubicund faces glowed in every direction. Country squires, the port-wine-drinking, fox-hunting types of Rowlandson and Gilray, were strongly represented in Parliament. The medical faculty, whose knowledge of medicine centred on port, the great stimulant for oratory,

prescribed port for the debater, and port for the Member who dozed through the session. Pallor was the exception at the close of the eighteenth century; a pale face attracted the pen of Sydney Smith, and that accomplished wit and diner-out refers to Perceval as "the Sallow Surveyor of the Meltings," and "Sepulchral Spencer Perceval."

Sheridan, in a skit, draws attention to Perceval's physique:

> "I, the chance poet of an idle hour,
> With thee in verse will battle, when George Rose
> Shall hate employment and demand repose;
> When Trotter shall the prince of lies outfib,
> And Spencer Perceval shall challenge Cribb."

Cribb was at the time the champion prize-fighter of England.

The portraits of Spencer Perceval by Beechey and Joseph are posthumous, and consequently all sense of expression is lost. A portrait painted after death unavoidably resembles a coloured death mask. One portrait by Joseph bears a strong likeness to

the head of the "incorruptible Maximilian," and might easily pass for Robespierre; this portrait was painted from the death mask taken by Nollekens.

Lord Holland wrote:

"It is singular that his features, with the exception of a winning smile when he pleased, so much resembled those of Robespierre, that the portraits of that bloody fanatic of democracy might pass for those of our English champion of monarchical and ecclesitical establishments."

It is the exception for a Prime Minister to evade the portrait painter during his lifetime: marble memorials and lifeless paintings convey little but the empty shell.

From the very commencement his policy was characterised by a steadfast support of the war. The Government had acted with extreme moderation in their foreign policy regarding France; Fox readily adopted the doctrine of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and the Rights of Man. The Leaders of the

Opposition determined to patch up a peace at any price and prevent a continuance of the war. Whenever Fox saw an opportunity of hampering the Government, he appeared and made use of melodramatic language; a revolutionary spirit hung over the Opposition. A scheme for Parliamentary reform was introduced by Grey, who had already made one attempt to bring the same measure before the House in 1793; it comprised the enfranchisement of copy holders and lease holders of a certain value, and the constitution of household suffrage in boroughs. Sweeping reforms were not acceptable at the close of the eighteenth century. It would have been impossible for a statesman during the reign of George III. to play the reformer, to try and effect sudden changes in the existing order of things, even for party purposes. Considering his father Lord Egmont's views on feudal tenure and the spirit of the age, it is not surprising that Spencer Perceval was opposed to these reform

measures. Men of that day had seen and realised the effect of French Socialism, and any progressive movement heralded the same state of affairs in England.

In December 1797 Pitt proposed his scheme for trebling the assessed taxes. It was arranged to raise the yield of assessed taxes from £2,700,000 to £8,000,000 a year, and it was to fall as lightly as possible on the poorer class of tax-payers. In the cause of a great national issue both rich and poor accept the burden of heavy taxation. It became evident to the nation at large that such a sacrifice was necessary for the country; the struggle with France required our utmost resources, and the tax-payers saw some return for their money. It was an age of great leaders both on land and sea, an age of decisive victories.

"But what am I to say of heaven-born Pitt, the son of Chatham?" wrote Carlyle. "England sent forth her fleets and armies; her money into every country: money as if the

heaven-born Chancellor had got a Fortunatus purse: as if this island had become a volcanic fountain of gold, or a new terrestrial sun capable of radiating mere guineas."

In spite of this expenditure, Pitt was able to consider the claims of the poorer tax-payers in 1797. Such forethought is not generally attributed to a Tory leader, who lived in those unregenerate days.

In theory the protector of the down-trodden tax-payer would naturally be a labour agitator, or a serio-comic socialist armed to the teeth with promises—for election time.

Fox returned from a temporary exile to oppose the Bill, having been urged to do so by his constituents. The principal supporters of the Opposition were loud in their denunciations of Pitt's scheme, but it was welcomed by a large majority. Perceval intended to reply to Fox on this occasion, but no opportunity occurred, however, until the third reading of the Bill on the 3rd January 1798. In the first part of his speech he dealt with

Sir Francis Burdett and the conduct of the war with France, then he proceeded to reply to Fox and his appeal for reform.

"The right honourable gentleman," said Perceval, "is fertile in explanation when any phrase that he has adopted seems to be rather too strong and hard for the public ear, too highly seasoned for the public taste; and perhaps this ingenuity and adroitness may be exercised on this very phrase. Perhaps we may hear that a reform of the whole system means an alteration only in some of its parts, that a radical reform meddles only with the branches and the trunk, and has no concern with the roots; that a fundamental reform leaves the foundations entirely untouched. But, sir, put it for the moment that it is capable of this innocent interpretation, the mischief and danger of this ambiguous expression . . . arises from this — that it is capable of, and most easily offers, an interpretation of a very different description, and — let the right honourable

gentleman explain away the meaning of it as much as he can—every reformer in the country, be his plan ever so wild, let it reach to whatever extent of revolutionary violence and subversion—will find in these words of the right honourable gentleman countenance for his opinions."

Perceval's reply to Fox made a considerable impression, and established his reputation as a Parliamentary debater. The most valuable evidence concerning the speech in question is contained in Pitt's letter to Lord Mornington (afterwards Lord Wellesley), written 26th January from Wimbledon, giving an account of the political situation and his appreciation of Perceval's speech :

" You will hear, I trust, from various other correspondents who have more leisure, a much fuller history of all that has been passing since you left us than I can pretend to give you. But I think you will like to hear from me, even if it is only to tell you as to myself, that in spite of six weeks more of fatigue

and anxiety than have attended almost any other Parliamentary campaign, I am greatly better than you left me, and, I trust, equal to fighting the battle as long as it may be necessary. Our great measure of the assessed taxes was for some time in great danger of failing, less from any real difficulty or any genuine dislike to it, than from the impression of local and partial clamour, and from the effect of a very great degree of panic which infected too many of those who are generally most free from it. It became necessary to show that *at all risks* I was determined to persevere in it; and by these means alone I believe it was carried. Opposition, I think, added to the odium and disgrace of their secession by returning from it on this occasion, and by the whole of their conduct and language upon it. Our last debate (to my great joy) produced a speech from Perceval which was in all respects the best I ever heard; and was an attack upon Fox pointed and galling enough to have drawn forth one of Grattan's

warmest encomiums. It certainly sent him home very sick to his supper. Since this effort we have heard nothing of him, but from the celebration of his birthday two days ago, in which the two most distinguished traits were a speech from the Duke of Norfolk, which I think even the Crown lawyers will hardly prove to be much short of treason, and a public profession from Horne Tooke of reconciliation and coalition with Fox with which I think you will be delighted. On the whole, the view taken now by the whole of what calls itself the Opposition (with the exception of Grey and Whitbread, whom we neither see nor hear of), and especially by Fox, is a complete and undisguised avowal of the most desperate systems ever acted upon, and I think it seems to be understood and felt as it ought, both in Parliament and in the country. The two great objects of our attention and exertion now are to endeavour to raise spirit enough in the country to contribute voluntarily for

the expense of the war, such a sum as, in addition to the assessed taxes, may bring our loan within moderate shape, and next to be prepared both by land and sea for the invasion; which I have little doubt will be attempted in the course of the year, though the latter is much the easier work of the two."

The letter continues on the subject of the projected invasion, and political situation in Europe, and, towards the end, mentions the King's intention of contributing one-third of his privy purse to the war fund, and that the Ministers in power "had decided to subscribe an ample fifth of their incomes."

Five months after Pitt had written this letter, his duel with Tierney took place. Perceval's friend Ryder was his second; and on being questioned as to a probable successor in case of his death, Pitt mentioned Perceval, as being the most capable opponent of Fox on the Government side.

No higher testimony than this letter of

Pitt's would be required to show the exact qualifications of Perceval as a supporter of the Government and a distinguished debater; the letter explains Pitt's reply to his second before the duel, and the reference to Perceval on that occasion. It is easy enough to bring forward the opinions of Perceval's intimate friends, the favourable critics of his private and public life, but the appreciation of Pitt, with whom he was never intimate, is of higher value; taking into consideration the short space of time that Perceval had been in Parliament.

Fox reappeared in the House on the outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1798, a reflection of the prevailing revolutionary spirit which caused considerable embarrassment at the time. Ireland was only too eager to adopt French revolutionary principles adapted to Irish requirements. Eloquent Irish patriots stirred the country in every direction, and Fox deprecated all coercive measures and regarded the rebellion with

equanimity. He realised that another opportunity had arrived for hampering those in office; Perceval again distinguished himself by his eloquence in the debates.

In the same year he was appointed Solicitor-General to the Queen, and Solicitor to the Board of Ordinance. There is not the slightest doubt that if Perceval had been able in the first instance to accept Pitt's offer of the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland, his leadership of the Tories would have come at an earlier date. As long as Fox led the Opposition it was necessary to have some one capable of opposing him in debate; Perceval, however, was obliged to rely absolutely upon his income at the Bar, which was steadily increasing.

War clouds still hung on the political horizon. There were rumours of invasion, but Buonaparte in 1799 wrote to the King on the subject of peace. The Foreign Office replied suggesting that the most favourable guarantee for a possible peace would be the

Bourbon restoration. The First Consul made another overture through Talleyrand, and again his proposals were rejected by the Government. Perceval observed in a speech: "If this First Consul of the Republic is known to Europe for anything besides his military successes, it is his breach of faith."

At the time Perceval, in common with many others, saw in "this First Consul" an adventurer whose rapid rise to fame would result in a speedy downfall. Austerlitz and Jena were yet to come, and the long struggle in the Peninsula.

It was a fashion with some biographers and historians who compiled histories for the use of schools, to place the successors of Pitt in as an unfavourable light as possible. Perceval has been accused of intolerance on the Catholic question, in addition to his opposition to Parliamentary Reform and otherwise saddled with the sins of the Tories. The question of the Catholic claims was a more serious matter to Perceval than a mere

party cry. Those who have read Creighton's "History of the Papacy" will understand the reason for the strong opposition in England to Roman Catholic priestcraft.

Owing to the French Revolution many refugees came to England, and the religious Orders (as in recent times) sought shelter in some of the large towns, and founded monasteries which became educational centres. Sir H. Mildmay brought in a Bill to regulate the societies established in England; Perceval at this time expressed himself in favour of moderate measures.

"It was the spirit of the Catholic persuasion to make as many converts as possible. He would not see the hair of a man's head injured on account of his religious opinions; but that did not compel him to think that Catholics were the best subjects for the country."

His attitude at a later date was interpreted by Sydney Smith in the description of a fight between a frigate and a pirate ship.

"How do you think the captain (whom

we will call Perceval) acts? Does he call all hands on deck and talk to them of king, country, glory, sweethearts, gin, French prisons, wooden shoes, old England and hearts of oak, till they give three cheers, rush to their guns, and after a tremendous conflict succeed in beating off the enemy? Not a syllable of all this: this is not the manner in which the honourable commander goes to work. The first thing he does is to secure twenty or thirty of his prime sailors who happen to be Catholics, to clap them in irons, and set over them a guard of as many Protestants. Having taken this admirable method of defending himself against his infidel opponents, he goes upon deck, reminds the sailors in a very bitter harangue that they are of different religions, exhorts the Episcopal gunner not to trust to the Presbyterian quarter-master, issues positive orders that the Catholics should be fired at upon the first appearance of discontent; rushes through blood and brains examining his men in the

Catechism and Thirty-nine Articles, and positively forbids every one to sponge or ram, who has not taken the Sacrament according to the Church of England. . . ."

It was the Catholic question in connection with the Irish Union, that caused the retirement of Pitt after the Government of 1796 had been over five years in power. Pitt's letter to the King, stating that he and his colleagues considered that Roman Catholics should be admitted to sit in Parliament, and hold public offices, was unacceptable to George III. The King held strong views on the subject. All the obstinacy of his nature, his reverence for the Coronation oath, made him unapproachable as far as Catholic emancipation was concerned. The King wrote and implored Pitt to continue in office; but refused absolutely to make any concessions on this subject, and Pitt resigned in consequence.

It was typical of the age that one of the greatest statesmen England has ever

known, was obliged to resign on account of the King's views on the Catholic disabilities. During the Union debates Perceval showed a more liberal-minded policy in the Catholic question, than at a later period, when his opinion was undoubtedly influenced by his brother-in-law, Lord Redesdale, who, as Chancellor of Ireland, had considerable knowledge of the Irish Catholics. The question of Catholic emancipation was the means of wrecking more than one government: Papal doctrines found no favour with the country at large. The tradition of Catholic supremacy still lingered, and the unfortunate example of priest-ridden Ireland, remained an object-lesson in the eyes of Lord Redesdale.

Upon the resignation of Pitt the King sent for Addington. Owing to the King's illness there was considerable delay in forming a Cabinet. The King selected Addington as a safe substitute for Pitt. His religious views, his political opinions, made him a

very suitable Minister for the King; but Addington found himself in a difficult position. Castlereagh and Canning resigned with Pitt, and refused office with Addington.

Perceval received the post of Solicitor-General in the new ministry. Like Coke of Norfolk, he avoided knighthood. As law officer of the Crown he was liable to receive the honour, owing to a rule of George III., to which only one exception had been made in the case of Lord Kenyon. Perceval, as a peer's son, received permission to refuse the dignity of knighthood, from which there would have been otherwise no escape. In April 1802 he succeeded Law as Attorney-General. During the Addington administration Perceval as Crown Prosecutor was engaged in two important trials, those of Colonel Despard for high treason, and Jean Peltier for a libel upon Buonaparte. Despard, with other conspirators, hatched a plot to assassinate the King on his way to the opening of Parliament. This trial was chiefly

remarkable for the appearance of Nelson as a witness, who came forward to give evidence for the defence. Despard had served with him in former days. "We went," said Nelson, "to the Spanish Main together." Nelson's testimony had no effect on the jury: Despard was found guilty of high treason, and suffered the death penalty.

In the Peltier trial Perceval was required to prosecute a Frenchman for libelling Buonaparte. These libels occurred in two numbers of the *Ambigu*, and the Government was obliged to take notice of them, and prosecute Jean Peltier as the author. Peltier wrote that his acquittal would be tantamount to a declaration of war, and at this time the Government hoped for peace. The jury returned a verdict of guilty without leaving the box; but Peltier escaped punishment, and war recommenced shortly after, in 1803. Buonaparte sent spies to England to pave the way for the proposed invasion, to make soundings of the harbours

and surveys of fortifications. These spies came under the guise of promoting a commercial *entente cordiale.* It has been assumed by alarmists that a foreign power could surprise our fleet and land an army on the east coast with comparative ease. At the beginning of last century a sudden surprise was out of the question. Buonaparte designed to conquer England by means of a flotilla of boats, and 100,000 men, to divide the British fleet and concentrate the whole French navy in the Channel; but his plans were delayed by the death of the Admiral whom he had chosen to conduct operations. The Government received information that the day for the intended invasion was fixed; but the day came, and the romantic scheme was unavoidably postponed.

The French military demonstrations at Boulogne resulted in a volunteer enrolment in England of 380,000 men. Pitt, Addington, Perceval, and Erskine all took a leading part in this movement; Perceval himself joined

the Light Horse Volunteers. Voluntary service in a country where conscription is avoided, is the only means of resisting invasion; and history repeats itself in the adverse criticisms of the Volunteers. Windham, who opposed Pitt's military schemes on principle, never failed to attack the volunteer movement; without being in a position to offer any likely solution of the question. The would-be expert on military matters, the critic who spends his time reviling successive army schemes, leads an easy-going existence. It is a simple matter to sneer at and criticise voluntary service. On one occasion Perceval replied to Windham as follows:

"The right honourable gentleman has taken all his ideas of the Volunteers from the corps which he himself commanded — the Felbrigge Volunteers. That corps in itself enacted everything which the right honourable gentleman has been accustomed to condemn. Of all the corps that subsisted

in the county of Norfolk this was the only one in which the commander had taken the title of Colonel. There were seventy-three privates, but no staff, no field officer, no captain, no subaltern, no drummer, and only two serjeants."

Windham, who predicted a successful career for Perceval in 1786 when he first met him, had now the opportunity of encountering him in debate.

The Addington ministry remained in office till 1804. In after years Addington (who was raised to the peerage under the title of Lord Sidmouth) explained to Lord Holland more than once, that the chief reason for his retirement was the state of the King's health. If he had remained in office he might have been obliged to face the combination of Pitt, Fox, and Grenville, which would appear a more plausible motive for retirement than a recurrence of the King's illness.

On the retirement of Addington, Pitt proposed to include Fox in his new ministry.

The former antagonists had been drawn together by the course of events, by the estrangement of Pitt and Addington, and by the crying need for a strong Cabinet. A coalition of Pitt, Fox, and Lord Grenville might have been possible if there had been no George III. to reckon with. He refused to hear of Fox, in spite of Fox's *rapprochement* with Pitt: the Roman Catholic scare remained fixed in the King's mind, and his suspicions of a Minister who was a friend of the Prince of Wales.

Perceval had now reached a critical point in his career. On the death of Lord Alvanley he was offered a peerage, and the Chief Justiceship of the Common Pleas. Fox wrote at the time, on hearing of Lord Alvanley's death:

"Some people fancy that he will be succeeded by Erskine. Not I. If the King should be well enough to appoint a successor, it will be Perceval."

This offer of the Chief Justiceship, which

Lord Redesdale described as a "highly respectable retreat," was not accepted by Perceval.

Pitt required his services as one of the most accomplished debaters in the House. An opponent wrote of him at the time:

"His dexterity in any great or personal conflict, his excellent language, always purely but unaffectedly English, nor ever chargeable with incorrect taste, his attention continually awake, and his spirit ever dauntless, gained him the greatest reputation as a great and powerful debater."

Pitt chose as negotiator in his overtures Lord Harrowby, whose friendship with Perceval dated from their school days. He was the Dudley Ryder who acted as Pitt's second in the Tierney duel. Perceval agreed to accept office under three conditions. Firstly, that Mr Fox was to have nothing to do with the Government. Secondly, that there was to be no criminatory retrospect on Addington's government. Thirdly, that there was to be no support of the Catholic question. These

three conditions were practically foregone conclusions, and Perceval decided to serve as Attorney-General in the new Government. The former ministry, in spite of the absence of Pitt, had gained a certain amount of popularity in the country, owing to the peace negotiations of 1802. Addington had tried at one time to induce Pitt to join the ministry, offering to serve under him, and finally proposed that Pitt should become Prime Minister. But these overtures led to nothing, and a temporary estrangement took place between Pitt and his friend. Addington without Pitt was in a hopeless position.

"Ministers were opposed by a factious league of Pittites, Foxites, Grenvilles, and Windhams, and only defended by two lawyers, Mr Perceval in the House of Commons and Lord Eldon in the Lords. Nothing could exceed the zeal or spirit of the battle which both, especially Mr Perceval, made in defence of the citadel."

Fox towards the end of his political career threw aside party feeling and joined issues with Pitt on the subject of the war. He realised the mistake of his policy in the past. The French revolutionary spirit had died out of him.

The battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson occurred in October 1805, the battle of Austerlitz in December 1805, and the death of Pitt in January 1806. Four great historical events within a short space of time.

Such decisive battles as Trafalgar and Austerlitz happening within three months of each other will be remembered as the greatest achievements on land and sea of the nineteenth century. If naval disarmament comes to pass in the twentieth century on the recommendation of a Socialist programme, it is to be hoped that the *Victory* will be preserved in Portsmouth Harbour, and not broken up for firewood—as a petty economy.

It is difficult in these days to realise the tremendous significance of England's struggle

from the commencement of the nineteenth century until the fall of Napoleon at Waterloo. Weak, submissive governments, a lack of competent leaders, would have been sufficient to alter the successive history of our national prosperity. A modern politician will inform his audience that we have reached perfection in the matter of government, and sneers at the days of Pitt with less natural eloquence than a stump orator shrieking himself hoarse under the shadow of the Marble Arch. Pitt left a legacy to England which resulted in the purse-proud security of the Victorian era, and the growth of an Imperialism, which well might require a second Pitt to preserve it unscathed. The alternate joy and sorrow of statesmanship are to be found in the last ministry of Pitt: his delight at the result of Trafalgar, turned to gall by the news of Austerlitz; worn out by continued labours in the service of his country, his last days shadowed by the impending impeachment of

his friend, Lord Melville. His policy (though he died in doubt, racked with fears for the future) had been a policy of patriotism. Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four, he was a worthy successor to Chatham, a prodigy in every sense of the word.

He was Perceval's senior by three years at Cambridge, and First Lord of the Treasury before Perceval held a brief. It was due to Pitt that his qualities received recognition. Pitt recognised in the author of the pamphlet concerning the impeachment of Warren Hastings a man likely to be of service to the party. From the death of Pitt, until the hour of his assassination, Perceval was the leading Tory Minister. He was one of the few followers of Pitt who subscribed towards the sum raised to pay the debts of the deceased Minister. A man of moderate fortune, with a large family to provide for, Perceval offered a thousand pounds. Throughout his life he was the soul of generosity,

and his conduct compares well with that of the Bishop of Lincoln, who pressed for the repayment of a loan he had made to Pitt—a loan of three years standing—and at Pitt's decease he demanded payment in full.

"ALL THE TALENTS." 1806-1807

III

"ALL THE TALENTS." 1806-1807

A FRESH election at Cambridge became necessary by the death of Pitt, and Perceval was urged to stand, but he decided to remain at Northampton. The death of Pitt seriously affected the organisation of the Government. Lord Grenville, aided by Fox, endeavoured to make his cabinet representative in every sense of the word by including men whose opinions in the past had been diametrically opposed. Perceval's leadership of the Tories in 1806 was not unexpected, as Canning refused to serve under Castlereagh or Hawkesbury; and when Rose proposed Perceval and Yorke, he accepted the suggestion with equanimity.

There is no doubt that at this time Perceval was anxious to continue his career in the law as a matter of necessity; but force of circumstance ruled otherwise, and political advancement followed in due course. The case of Miss Seymour and the investigation into the conduct of the Princess of Wales occurred during the session of 1806. Miss Seymour was an orphan. Her parents died when she was a child, and entrusted her temporarily to the care of Mrs Fitzherbert. The Seymours considered it unadvisable that she should remain with Mrs Fitzherbert, and already in February 1805 the Master in Chancery reported in favour of the executors, Lord Euston and Lord Henry Seymour. Mrs Fitzherbert, supported by the Prince of Wales, took the case to the Court of Appeal, but Lord Eldon confirmed the judgment of the Master in Chancery. The executors put forward the following reasons in support of their claims as guardians:

1. Because their propinquity of blood

gave them a decided preference over Mrs Fitzherbert.

2. Because the child's father by implication wished it—that is, he appointed them guardians of his other children.

3. Because Mrs Fitzherbert was a complete stranger in blood despite the friendship and affection which existed between her and the child's parents.

4. Because of the conversation between the Prince of Wales and Lady Horatia when it was alleged she confided her child to the Prince's guardianship, had been misunderstood by His Royal Highness.

5. Because of the religion of Mrs Fitzherbert. This, the executors declared, constituted a positive and insurmountable objection to her.

The case went to the House of Lords in June, and there was a public canvass for the peers votes. Perceval was one of the counsel for the guardians, and, according to Brougham, boldly denied that "any guarantee

given of payment for the Prince's conduct could be available, first, because there was no reason to believe that he would keep his promise; and, second, because if he did, he was insolvent." His Royal Highness on hearing this is reported to have exclaimed to Sir Samuel Romilly, with a volley of "most offensive personal abuse, and an oath which cannot be recited, that he felt as if he could jump on Perceval and stamp out his life with his feet."

This dire threat conjures up a fearful vision of the First Gentleman of Europe jumping with all the force of his considerable bodily substance on Perceval, and providing yet another cartoon for Gilray.

Finally, when brought to the House of Lords it was arranged that Lord Hertford should be nominal guardian, and he proposed that Mrs Fitzherbert might continue to be a mother to his niece, acting as his deputy, an arrangement which caused much annoyance to the Seymours.

Needless to say, the Prince of Wales hated Perceval, the legal adviser and advocate to the Princess. He was retained for her defence during the so-called "Delicate Investigation." Owing to Sir John and Lady Douglas's charge against the Princess of having given birth to a child, a commission was appointed to enquire into the case, and acquitted her, but judged her "guilty of grossly indelicate conduct." Whereupon the Princess addressed her famous letter (written by Perceval) to the King. This letter filled 155 octavo pages of "*The* Book." J. W. Ward (the first Earl of Dudley), writing on the subject to "Ivy" after Perceval's death, referred to the letter.

"Have you seen '*The* Book'? It contains nothing more in the indecent and scandalous line than what you have already seen in the papers, so you need not be afraid to engage in perusal of it. In every respect it is most worthy to be read, both as a document relating to an important transaction which

it is impossible to understand fully without the aid of it, and as a model of acute argument and eloquent composition. In that point it is quite a study for lawyers. I had always a high opinion of Perceval's talents, and he spoke English like a man who could write well, with a purity, simplicity, and Anglicism, of which, for some time before his death, scarce another example was left in the House. But it was impossible to know how good a writer he would turn out; and indeed one had seen from the deplorable failure of Mr Fox that a genius of the highest order may be quite unable to put twenty sentences together upon paper even decently."

Lord Dudley's criticisms of Perceval are of high value among those of his political contemporaries. He was Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1827-1828; and though he never fulfilled the expectations of men who predicted a brilliant public career for him, his letters convey the keen observation of a born critic. Lord Dudley's last years were shadowed by insanity, and, like Whitbread

and Lord Castlereagh, he died by his own hand.

Perceval as counsel saw much of the grotesque side of human nature, much of the unconscious humour of the great human comedy such as the respectable Member of Parliament who was co-respondent in a divorce action. Perceval, as his counsel, questioned him before the case whether he knew of any compromising situation which the other side could make use of. "Nothing at all, I assure you," was the reply. "There was indeed one occasion when I was found locked up in a cupboard in a lady's bedroom. But that is nothing. *Ladies, you know, are always locking one up in cupboards.*"

An edition of five thousand copies of "*The* Book" was printed, but no distribution took place owing to the resignation of the Grenville ministry. Some few copies, however, found their way into the world, and were reclaimed by the Government at a fancy price, varying from £500 to £1,500 per copy. In view of the

absurd accusation that Perceval accepted the Chancellorship on account of the suppression of "*The* Book," it is as well to consider his statement to Lady Anne Hamilton concerning the Princess during the investigation. "I am decidedly friendly to the Princess of Wales, because I am well satisfied and assured that Her Royal Highness is a much-injured lady. I am also convinced that her mother-in-law had conceived an inveterate dislike to her before she arrived in this country, on account of the objections preferred by the Prince against any connection except that which His Royal Highness had already formed. From these unhappy circumstances I am obliged to believe that the sufferings of Her Highness are unmerited on her part, and very much increased by the dictatorial behaviour of Her Majesty."

Perceval never changed his views with regard to the Princess. "I do not think the Princess guilty," he declared. "And I am fully satisfied in my own mind that if

there had not existed ungenerous intentions on the part of the Royal Family the affair would have long since sunk into silence. There is a gaiety and levity about Her Royal Highness which is not usual with English ladies generally; but with all the exterior frivolity of the Princess, when she chooses to be lively, I would prefer her infinitely to the professedly modest and apparently reserved of the sex in high life. I believe the Princess to be playful and incautiously witty in her deportment, but I prefer that to secret intrigue and infamous practices."

Brougham referred to Perceval's defence of the Princess in flattering terms:

"Mr Pitt was one of the Princess's earliest defenders and friends in this country. He died in 1806, and but a few weeks after the first enquiry into the conduct of Her Royal Highness began; he left her a legacy to Mr Perceval, her firm, dauntless, and most able advocate; and no sooner had the hand of an assassin laid Mr Perceval low, than

she felt the calamity of his death in the renewal of the attacks which his gallantry, his skill, and his invariable constancy had discomfited."

When the news of Perceval's death reached the Princess, she exclaimed: "I have lost my best friend; I do not know where to look for another." It was no easy matter to be legal adviser to the Princess: no one knew that better than Brougham. Her life was a blend of tragedy and farce. She had the inclinations of a female litigant, without the necessary qualifications for the successful plaintiff - in - person. She was dependent throughout her married life upon her legal advisers.

Fox died on the 21st October 1806, after a long illness, and Lord Grenville turned his attention to the Tories and approached Perceval. Canning had refused to join the Government. Now that Fox was dead, Lord Grenville hoped to secure Perceval through Lord Ellenborough, but he met with a

refusal. Then he determined on a dissolution, feeling confident of a majority at the election. Perceval was returned again for Northampton without opposition, and the Talents ministry triumphed at the polls. Fox had commenced peace negotiations with France before his death, but they fell through, and England proclaimed the coast line held by France and her allies from Dantzic to Trieste, to be in a state of blockade. Napoleon replied by excluding British commerce from the Continent, with a view to ruining our manufacturers.

Decrees from Milan and Berlin ordered the seizure of all British exports, and vessels which touched at any British port. Napoleon intended to destroy the sea trade of Great Britain, and assist America as far as lay in his power. The Grenville ministry issued Orders in Council in January 1807, by which neutral vessels sailing to foreign ports subject to blockade were obliged, on pain of confiscation, to touch previously at some British

port. The history of the Orders in Council, designed as a counterblast to France, has been thoroughly thrashed out by latter-day experts. Few allow they were necessary evils. The demon of retaliation, the protective ogre, must be held responsible for the Orders in Council. Philanthropical Free Traders have never encountered a Napoleon.

Judging by statistics, it would seem that the destructive qualities of the Orders were not perceptible till the year 1811 and the final breach with the United States. From an abstract point of view the measure was impossible. But neither the Orders in Council, nor the Abolition of the Slave Trade, brought about the dismissal of the Grenville Cabinet. Lord Howick's Bill to enable Catholics to serve in the Army and Navy in England, as well as in Ireland, roused all the fears of George III. The Catholic phantom appeared and wrecked another government. The King required absolute obedience to his wishes from successive

ministries regarding Catholic Emancipation. One historical expert asserted that the Abolition of the Slave Trade was equally responsible for the Grenville dismissal. But this measure, which Perceval warmly supported, was passed, in spite of the opposition of certain Tories, and the slave owners of Liverpool, on 23rd February 1807. Catholic emancipation, and no other reason, brought about the fall of the Government, which ceased to exist before the King's assent was given to the Bill (in its complete form) for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER. 1807-1809

IV

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER
1807-1809

Upon the dismissal of the Grenville ministry the coalition of "Talents" came to an end, and the King sent for the Duke of Portland, who had been Prime Minister in 1783, after Lord Shelburne. Owing to his advanced age and failing health, the Duke's position was merely nominal; but he undertook to form a government, a ministry which contained three future Prime Ministers: Perceval, Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Lord Liverpool), and Canning. The latter was appointed Foreign Secretary. Perceval became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Hawkesbury Home

Secretary, and Lord Castlereagh Secretary at War.

Perceval hesitated before accepting the Chancellorship. His income at the Bar had rapidly increased, and the salary of the Chancellor of the Exchequer a hundred years ago would seem insignificant in the twentieth century to a Labour Cabinet Minister—a difference of nearly £4,000 per annum. It would have been absolutely impossible for Perceval in his position to have thrown away an income at the Bar for Parliament, if the Duke of Portland had not persuaded him to accept in addition the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster for life. The Opposition snatched at the chance of a debate upon the subject. Perceval's acceptance of the double office was a heart-rending matter to the Whigs. Parliament met on the 8th April 1807. The Government majority was, however, inconsiderable, and on the 30th April Parliament was dissolved by proclamation. The Ministers

recognised the favourable moment to appeal to the country, the Catholic question was sufficient to win an election. Any form of concession to the Catholics was viewed with disfavour throughout the length and breadth of England. Many prominent Whigs lost their seats, and the Government gained a decisive victory.

During the session of 1807 Perceval was much worried by his wife's illness, and domestic cares had their effect on his work in Parliament: his speeches deteriorated. Throughout his political career, he invariably spoke with greater effect when in a minority, or fighting against odds. While opposing the Catholic claims, Perceval strongly supported the cause of the poorer clergy of the Church of England. The Clergy Non-Residence Bill of 1801 was intended to relieve the clergy from the laws dating from Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. They were compelled to live in their parishes, and forbidden to practise any trade. They were not allowed to buy,

or sell, or strike a bargain. A clergyman buying a pig or a cow, became liable to a fine three times the value of the animal. This state of things encouraged blackmailers to spy upon the clergy with the intention of getting a share of the penalty.

The Non-Residence Bill was framed to allow the clergy to lead the lives of ordinary landed proprietors, and to reside beyond their parish boundaries with the bishop's consent. Perceval was of the opinion that a clergyman should live in his own parish and pay some attention to the parishioners. His sympathies were extended to the poorer clergy, to men capable of renunciation who worked among the poor and received small earthly reward. A wealthy parson might be in possession of several preferments with underpaid curates to act as deputy shepherds, while he led a sporting and Rabelaisian existence, drinking, playing at the country gentleman, shooting and hunting in the lucid intervals. The parish was a negli-

gible quantity: everything could be done by deputy in the days of Port, Plurality, and Non-Residence. It was the period of galloping parsons, who rode round at full speed to conduct services at various churches. An efficient galloper could conduct three services on one Sunday, and drink his port with the best of them.

Perceval's interest in Church Reform aroused the wrath of Sydney Smith.

"A diner-out, a wit, and a popular preacher, I was suddenly caught up by the Archbishop of York and transported to my living in Yorkshire, where there had not been a resident clergyman for a hundred and fifty years. Fresh from London, and not knowing a turnip from a carrot, I was compelled to farm 300 acres, and without capital to build a parsonage house."

It was in 1808 that Edward Vernon, Archbishop of York, took advantage of the Clergy Residence Bill, and drew the Reverend Sydney Smith's attention to his living at

Foston-le-Clay, and the famous wit retired to his St Helena in the dreary depths of Yorkshire. Unwittingly, Perceval had made an eloquent response to the successive attacks upon his Roman Catholic policy by Peter Plymley.

To Sydney Smith's credit, he bore the change philosophically and worked at Foston for twenty years. He became an exemplar of clerical self-denial, and determined "not to smite the partridge." He declared that the clergy who smote partridges did more harm to the cause of religion than the arguments of Voltaire and Rousseau. The port-drinking priest who dreamed of partridge shooting in those dull Yorkshire surroundings had little in common with the author of the Plymley letters. It shows the irony of circumstance that Sydney Smith, who, in the character of a Whig lampoonist, attacked Perceval and Canning with all the fervour of a partisan, should have suffered temporary banishment from Perceval's measure

for Church Reform. The Curates' Stipendiary Bill was not passed until after Perceval's death, but he had set the wheels working. When he brought in a Bill to prevent the exportation to France of cotton-wool and quinine, it was passed by a large majority.

Sydney Smith wrote: "In the midst of this unparalleled anxiety we are told that the continent is to be reconquered by the want of rhubarb and plums."

The year 1808 saw the prelude in Portugal to the Peninsular war. The Government sent Sir Arthur Wellesley with an army of 15,000 men to Portugal. He had held the post of Secretary for Ireland in the Portland ministry. He won the battle of Vimiera, and the French were forced to surrender at the Convention of Cintra on 21st August 1808. The British army was unable to pursue the advantage gained at Vimiera on 21st August owing to an insufficient supply of artillery and cavalry. Wellesley was hampered at Vimiera and the Convention by the stupidity

of Sir Hugh Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, his seniors, who prevented him from cutting the French connection with Lisbon and crushing them completely. Upon the recall of Wellesley and the two eminent tacticians, the Government ordered Sir John Moore to advance with 25,000 men and assist the Spanish troops in the valley of the Ebro. Few generals ever experienced such an ordeal. It was urged that Moore required at least 60,000 men, but Lord Castlereagh was unable to realise the necessity of strengthening Moore's force. He was left to face Napoleon and an army of nearly 400,000 men. The declaration of war with Austria caused Napoleon to leave Spain and the command to Soult. Then followed Moore's retreat to Corunna, and his death in the hour of victory on 16th January 1809.

When Wellesley returned to Portugal (for the second time) to take command in April 1809, he found the English army stationed above Lisbon, and from that date the great

struggle in the Peninsula commenced, a war which crippled the power of Napoleon and had far-reaching effects. In spite of all party obstacles and the outcry of political pessimists, the ministry determined to carry on the war in the Peninsula; and it is to the credit of a Tory Government that the greatest military achievement of the British army in the nineteenth century was carried through. A determined Cabinet has often triumphed over the petty considerations of party, and the Tories during the Peninsular campaign had a decisive majority. The Opposition and their friends contented themselves with grumbling at a reckless war policy, prophesying disaster for the army and the Government, little knowing that the Whigs would be kept out of office for many years after the close of the Peninsular war. It is fortunate for the country that in all serious matters the peace-at-any-price politician and theoretical faddist is taken by the people at his true worth; he is never allowed to damage

his country for long. The policy of the jack-in-office is too transparent to endure.

In the early part of the year an enquiry was held on the subject of the sale of military appointments by the Duke of York's mistress, Mrs Clarke. The Duke resigned his position in consequence. Perceval on this occasion made one of his most successful speeches; according to Whitbread: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer has surpassed himself. I can with truth say that in my opinion a better speech has never been delivered by a living Member of the House of Commons." The publicity of the Clarke case and the traffic in public offices resulted in a demand for further enquiries. The country realised that Mrs Clarke was not the only person who trafficked in this manner. Suspicion was in the air. Mrs Clarke's case gave an impetus to investigation in every direction. A committee was appointed to enquire into the existence of corrupt practices in the East India Company. Lord Folkestone tried to

obtain a similar committee to examine abuses in the Army and State departments. In May, a Mr Madocks, a follower of Wardle and Sir Francis Burdett, brought a charge against Lord Castlereagh and Perceval; in which he accused them both of procuring the election of Mr Quintin Dick. The accusation against the Chancellor of the Exchequer was so vaguely worded that Tierney decided to abandon the charge, as far as Perceval was concerned. The motion was finally rejected by a majority of 225.

Perceval's attitude with regard to Parliamentary reform was the attitude of the Tory party. The Duke of Portland and Perceval filled the Treasury benches with their own followers, and they followed the precedent of Pitt and Addington, Grenville and Fox. Whig and Tory rejoiced in nomination boroughs, and it is impossible to criticise any one Minister on this account. In every Empire, in every Republic, current abuses have always existed. Official waste of public money is not a thing of the past. It is

more reasonable to approve a ministry that supported the Peninsular war, than to moan over all the abuses and nomination boroughs of the unreformed Parliament. Though unreformed and old-fashioned according to the modern requirements, the House of Commons contained men who were statesmen, who built up the fabric of English prosperity; the debates were conducted in an orderly manner.

In May 1809 Perceval proposed his first budget. He estimated the supplies at £47,588,074, the ways and means at £47,718,052. £11,000,000 of this amount was provided by a new loan raised on more favourable terms than hitherto. No fresh tax was imposed, and the Budget met with the approval of all parties, with the exception of one item which was criticised by the Opposition. A committee during the former session decided against State lotteries, and Perceval expected a sum of £300,000 from this source. This contribution to the revenue

had been encouraged by all his predecessors—a crumb of comfort in the shape of indirect taxation. The country was in urgent need of money, and England had not reached a highly satisfactory condition of self-complacency and death duties. The Exchequer was obliged to derive assistance from State lotteries—a form of revenue calculated to distress the Opposition for the time being. In spite of Whig criticisms the lottery estimate was allowed to remain.

The three most active members of the Portland ministry were Perceval, Canning, and Lord Castlereagh. Canning commenced his political life at an early age under Pitt, and showed signs of the old Parliamentary hand in his methods of dealing with Lord Castlereagh. He came into conflict with the latter on the subject of the conduct of the war in Spain—Canning's influence in political affairs had been apparent in 1804—and played a part in the estrangement of Pitt and Addington. He had refused to

serve under Lord Castlereagh in 1806. His ambitious temperament was dissatisfied with the post of Foreign Minister, and he determined to oust the Secretary at War. After much secret negotiation he extracted a promise from the Prime Minister that Lord Castlereagh should be relieved of his office, and the Duke declared in case of a refusal on Lord Castlereagh's part that he would resign himself. Canning strongly disapproved of the Walcheren expedition, and matters came to a crisis between him and the Secretary at War. Lord Castlereagh at last realised the intrigue that was being carried on against him, and after searching enquiries during a Cabinet meeting, from which Canning was an absentee, learned the true state of the case from Lord Camden. Mutual recrimination resulted in a duel on 22nd September, in which Canning was wounded in the thigh, and a coat button turned a bullet which would have killed Lord Castlereagh. They resigned their posts

in the ministry, and the Duke of Portland followed suit. He had merely been a figure-head; old age and illness prevented him from holding any real leadership and from acting as arbitrator. He was unequal to such a serious situation. Gilray's cartoon of the Ministers gathered round a punch bowl —a drowsy council—gives an idea of the Duke's position at the time, with Canning indulging in ambitious day-dreams. Canning had written to Perceval on 31st August 1809, three weeks before the duel, a letter in which he gave his views in the vent of a "voluntary resignation of the Duke of Portland."

"In that confidence, then, of which you have set me the example, I have no difficulty in stating to you that I should not agree in thinking such a frame of government as that which I rather collect from your letters you might be induced to approve, either satisfactory or expedient.

"I have for some time been convinced—

and every month's experience tends to confirm that conviction more and more—that a *Minister*, and that Minister in the *House of Commons*, is indispensable to the well carrying on of the King's government in these times. . . . I, of course, cannot mean to pretend to disguise either from you or from myself that the choice of such a Minister, in the present administration, would be to be made between us two. I am not so presumptuous as to expect that you would acquiesce in that choice falling on me. On the other hand, I hope and trust that you will not consider it as any want of esteem and kindness on my part towards you personally (the which, I do assure you, nothing could be more entirely foreign to my real feelings) if I should not think it possible to remain in office under the change which would necessarily be produced in my situation, by the appointment of a first Minister in the House of Commons—even in your person."

Perceval replied to Canning immediately from Downing Street, and commenced his

letter by agreeing with Canning on the necessity for a Prime Minister in the House of Commons, and that the choice lay between Canning and himself among the Ministers in the Portland Cabinet. "I always thought it actually out of the question to suppose that you would acquiesce in the choice falling on me."

Perceval realised the true aspect of the situation. Complications were likely to ensue in the case of Canning becoming Prime Minister, and Perceval foresaw that he could no longer continue to be Chancellor. He therefore suggested Lord Wellesley or some other Member as leader. "For it could not be otherwise brought about as I conceive than by my actual removal from my present office. You could not continue Secretary of State and be Prime Minister. You must be First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. This (I mean my actual supersession) would be the thing that I should feel principally painful;

and I cannot disguise from you that I should certainly feel it so. I therefore looked to the other Members of Parliament for a Minister who would leave us where we were, and consequently make the least practical change in either of our situation."

Arbuthnot wrote to Croker on the subject as follows:

"I know even that there was a doubt in Perceval's mind (who has the best-regulated ambition I ever witnessed) whether for the general good he should yield to Canning's pretensions, but his friends and relations would never have consented to such a lowering of himself. And so, alas, our former champions in the House of Commons have for the time separated, but their separation has been painful to both, and there has been nothing between them but the extreme of cordiality."

Judging from a letter of Canning's to the Duke of Portland, it would seem that he considered Perceval's succession to the leadership as the most satisfactory way out of the difficulty:

"The easiest arrangement on this principle would be the devolution of your Grace's office on Perceval. I trust, indeed, that neither your Grace nor His Majesty would think the worse of me if I avow those ordinary feelings of human nature which would preclude my remaining in office under such a change as the arrangement would necessarily produce in my situation. But I should carry out of office with me most sincere and undiminished goodwill towards Perceval, and shall retain equally as in office the most lively sentiments of gratitude and veneration towards His Majesty."

In reality Canning made various suggestions to prevent any possibility of Perceval succeeding the Duke of Portland. He whispered glittering proposals for Perceval's advancement in a safe direction. He was to be made a peer, President of the Council, with the Duchy of Lancaster for life; or perhaps the post of Lord Chancellor might prove acceptable.

Perceval was fully alive to Canning's

diplomatic efforts on his behalf. "However he attempted to gild and decorate the ornament, I am persuaded that he meant only to put an extinguisher on my head in the shape of a coronet."

Canning, trained in the by-paths of political intrigue, was one of our most successful foreign Ministers. His first diplomatic venture in the affairs of Pitt and Addington had been successful, his intrigue against Lord Castlereagh resulted in mutual resignations and a duel, but in spite of his diplomatic methods his efforts in this instance were unrewarded. To propose Perceval as Prime Minister to the Duke of Portland was outwardly a simple matter, it looked well on paper. Canning was on amicable terms with Perceval, but the retirement of the Duke was an opportunity not to be lost, and he tried by every means in his power to become his successor. Destiny, however, obliged Canning to wait for the leadership through the long years of Lord Liverpool's administration. His conduct in

the Castlereagh affair estranged many of the High Tory party, and his views on the Catholic question made it impossible for him to act as Prime Minister during the lifetime of George III. He was to be leader for barely four months in 1827, and to die before the dawn of great political changes and reforms.

On 18th September 1809 the remaining members of the Cabinet met at Perceval's house in Downing Street. The loss of Canning and Lord Castlereagh, Huskisson, and Sturges Bourne, left the Government in need of reinforcements. They decided at the council to apply to the inseparables Lord Grey and Lord Grenville. It was imperative to apply to both, as one would not accept office without the other. A minute of the meeting was forwarded to the King, and in it Lord Sidmouth's position was fully explained. He and his friends were unpopular with many people, owing to "the part taken by them in the last year of Mr Pitt's administration; there is every reason to believe that more

friends would probably be lost by an attempt to connect Lord Sidmouth with the Government, than would be gained by the members whom he would be able to bring in with him."

Canning hated Lord Sidmouth, and there was the danger to be considered of Canning in opposition. After the council, Perceval went to Windsor and had an audience with the King, who, in spite of a prejudice against the Grey and Grenville connection, agreed to their proposed inclusion, but refused to negotiate directly with either of them, on account of the Catholic question. The Cabinet expected Lord Grenville to be the more unapproachable of the political twins, but, to the surprise of every one, he announced his intention to return to town—"in humble obedience to His Majesty's commands," and on his arrival found a letter at Camelford House from Lord Grey which caused a change in his opinions. Lord Grey refused to help the Government in any way, on the grounds that he had no direct communication from

the King. Lord Grenville excused himself with becoming modesty, stating that his presence in the Government "would not be productive of any public advantage."

It is evident from these negotiations that the Government found itself in a very difficult position. Lord Grenville showed Lord Sidmouth the correspondence relating to Perceval's overture, and Lord Sidmouth answered that "he hoped that he and his friend Grey would be disposed to afford satisfaction and confidence to the King's mind on the Catholic question"; but Lord Grenville made no reply. It is sufficient proof of the dilemma in which the Government was placed that applications should have been made to men whose assistance would have proved small compensation for the loss of Canning.

THE PERCEVAL MINISTRY

1809-1810

V

THE PERCEVAL MINISTRY. 1809-1810

Lord Sidmouth and the "Greys and Grenvilles" being out of the question, Perceval was obliged to look in other directions. Lord Sidmouth prevented any of his followers from joining the Government, though overtures were made to Bragge Bathurst and Vansittart. There were difficulties to be faced on all sides. Lord Wellesley had gone on a mission to Spain expecting to be recalled to replace Lord Castlereagh, and, before starting, he left a letter with Canning, which contained his resignation in case of Canning's retirement from the Cabinet. At the beginning of October Canning had an audience with the King, having recovered from the effects

of his wound, and presented Lord Wellesley's letter. The King gave Canning permission to appoint Frere in Lord Wellesley's place, under the impression that it was a matter of general agreement on the part of all concerned. Canning, who possessed a strong sense of humour, made his request in the most innocent way sufficient to disarm suspicion. The Machiavelian method, the outward veneer of British subtlety, which is obvious enough when adopted by the average diplomatist, must have been irresistible in the poet of the Anti-Jacobin. But this fresh scheme was destined to come to nothing. Perceval saw the King shortly after the Canning audience, and heard of the arrangement in time to prevent the ship sailing with Canning's dispatch, which finally reached Lord Wellesley, with a letter from his brother, Wellesley Pole, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, explaining the situation. He was convinced that Lord Wellesley would accept the Foreign Office in spite of his intimacy with Canning.

No better man could be found for the post than the former Governor-General of India.

Perceval sent Sydenham, an intimate friend of Lord Wellesley's, to Seville with a letter offering him the Foreign Office, which Lord Bathurst had undertaken in the meantime. Three weeks passed before Sydenham arrived at Seville. In order to ensure the safety of the letter Lord Wellesley sent his letter of acceptance in duplicate by his friend, and by one of His Majesty's battleships.

"I therefore accept without hesitation the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and I shall return to England with all practical expedition for the purpose of discharging the duties of that important station with the zeal and attention which His Majesty may justly claim from a person so deeply indebted to His Majesty's gracious favour, and which he may expect from the whole tenor of my public life and services."

Lord Wellesley's acceptance of the Foreign Office filled one of the blanks of the Govern-

ment. Perceval, as First Lord of the Treasury, wished to find some one to take the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and relieve him of the double office; which had been held by Pitt in his two ministries. Two of the younger generation of politicians were approached, Robert Milnes in the first instance, and Lord Palmerston in the second. Milnes, who was an accomplished debater, would have been most acceptable to Perceval, but Milnes was a friend of Canning's, and, after an interview with Perceval, agreed to support the Government but declined office. Lord Palmerston, who contested the University in his undergraduate days, was an example of the youthful politician endowed with commonsense; as, instead of accepting the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, he offered to undertake the Secretaryship at War.

Then Perceval turned from youth to age, and applied to the unpopular veteran, George Rose. The Government was in sore need of debaters, and Rose was a conspicuous failure

in this respect, but he combined a knowledge of finance with a long experience of the House of Commons. After thinking it over for twenty-four hours he lectured Perceval on finance, and refused this responsible position.

Finally Perceval requisitioned Charles Long with no better success; so, after five refusals, he decided to remain Chancellor of the Exchequer without salary, and hold the double office.

The Government was now complete. Perceval succeeded the Duke of Portland, who remained in the Cabinet without office. Lord Wellesley replaced Canning as Foreign Secretary. Lord Liverpool was transferred from the Home to the Colonial Office, and Richard Ryder, a brother of Lord Harrowby's, received the Home Office.

Outside the Cabinet, Lord Palmerston succeeded Lord Granville Leveson Gower as Secretary at War. Dundas became President of the Board of Control. Richard Wharton followed Huskisson at the Treasury.

A question arose concerning Perceval's re-election. He had been Commissioner of the Treasury while Chancellor of the Exchequer. As First Lord he remained a commissioner from a technical point of view. The King was of the opinion "that his appointment will not even require that he should vacate his seat in Parliament."

The Speaker, the Chancellor, the Law Officers of the Crown, agreed that there was no necessity for a re-election. The same situation occurred with regard to Gladstone half a century later, with this difference, that Gladstone was First Lord of the Treasury when he took the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Lord Eldon and the Speaker considered that the actual office of Treasury Commissioner being the post of profit, decided this constitutional question. Consequently Perceval became First Lord of the Treasury without seeking re-election.

After much manœuvring, and correspondence and profitless negotiation, the ministry

was complete. Everything depended on Perceval; he stood alone to do battle with the Opposition. It was doubtful whether he would be able to meet Parliament at all. There was no one he could rely on in an emergency. Lord Wellesley, whose presence in the House of Commons would have been of real value to the Government (he was Perceval's most powerful colleague), was in the House of Lords. Lord Palmerston wrote that the ministry were "ill off for second-rates." It required much determination and pluck to attempt the task of meeting Parliament under such conditions. Beside the assault of Sheridan, Tierney, Whitbread, and Burdett, the Government might expect trouble from Canning and his friends. Perceval had now come to the most arduous period of his short political life. He was to uphold and support the Peninsular campaign to the best of his ability, with the everlasting cry of "stop the war" rising from the Opposition. Everything that political ingenuity could

devise was used by the Whigs to hamper the Government, and to underestimate the services of Sir A. Wellesley.

A less determined person would have recoiled from the task of opening the session with the phantom of the Walcheren expedition, and the shortcomings of Lord Chatham and Sir Richard Strachan, hanging over the heads of the ministry.

Sir Arthur Wellesley's victory at Talavera, which counterbalanced to some extent the Scheldt disaster—Talavera, the first of the long series of victories in Spain—was made light of by the leading members of the Opposition.

Under these conditions Parliament opened on the 23rd of January 1810. It is not surprising that the new session commenced unfavourably. The Government sustained four defeats within the space of a week on Lord Porchester's motion for the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry on the conduct of the Walcheren expedition, and in three successive debates on the subject of the

nomination of a Finance Committee. Lord Wellesley was of the opinion that the ministry could not continue. These defeats, though by small majorities, were serious enough at the commencement of the session. He hoped to succeed Perceval if the Government collapsed, and realised that the opportunity was fast approaching. He felt the leadership within his grasp, but his hopes were dashed to the ground. The ministry struggled on, and Lord Wellesley nursed his discontent until he resigned the Foreign Secretaryship. Having ruled India, Lord Wellesley was not satisfied with a subordinate position. Like Canning he was on amicable terms with Perceval, but it would appear he accepted office with the notion of succeeding to the first place at an early date. Knowing the difficulties which beset Perceval in a Government "ill off for second-rates," and with such an indifferent ministry. no one expected Perceval to continue in power. Creevey commented on the "madness" of

Perceval in attempting the Gargantuan task. During these early Government defeats an incident occurred which Napier and other political opponents have been only too ready to overlook. By the death of William Eden, a son of Lord Auckland who was found drowned in the Thames, a valuable sinecure became vacant, a tellership of the Exchequer worth £2,700 a year. Perceval had already refused to take the salary for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and it was only to be expected that he would reserve the perquisite for his eldest son. To people who lived under the system of sinecures—the recognised perquisites of those in power—a refusal to take advantage of such a life-provision might appear quixotic. Perceval, a defender of the system, would be the first person to profit by a windfall of the kind. His elder brother, Lord Arden, enjoyed in addition to his own fortune a sinecure worth £12,000 a year as Registrar to the Admiralty. Perceval, with six sons and six daughters to

provide for, with all the expenses which his position entailed, refused to take the tellership of the Exchequer, and gave it to Charles Yorke, one of his followers who was most in need of it. Lord Palmerston, writing to his sister, remarked: "There is not a man, I am persuaded, on the Opposition side of the House, who would not have taken it under similar circumstances."

The good political Samaritans of the sinecure period were poor men, capable of sympathy for others. Pitt, during his first ministry, refused the Clerkship of the Pells, a prize which he presented to one of his father's poverty-stricken supporters, to the amazement of the world in general. Although Pitt had no wife and children dependent on him, it was the exception for a Minister to resist the temptation of an unearned income. The test of personal greed, the desire to obtain and save money, is the surest test of character. The statesman lacking a private fortune was placed in a position of peculiar

temptation at the commencement of the nineteenth century. Society itself was not entirely ruled by money, but, practically speaking, a Minister could make a life-provision for himself or his son with the greatest ease, without the assistance of doubtful speculations. The ubiquitous Hebrew magnate, the American plutocrat, the celestial choir of company promoters who ushered in the twentieth century, would have been aghast, spellbound with horror, at the man who refused sinecures in the dark ages before the Reform Bill.

George III. wrote to Perceval on the 28th of January, and the following extract gives an idea of the King's appreciation:

"His Majesty cannot in sufficient terms express his sense of the liberality and public spirit which Mr Perceval shows upon this occasion, when an opportunity occurred of making a handsome provision for one of his numerous family, and where indeed it had occurred to His Majesty to have proposed such an arrangement to him."

Since the early years of his married life, and the lodgings in Bedford Row, Perceval's expenses gradually increased. He lived for some time in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and then he took up his abode at Belsize House, Hampstead. He had already renounced a professional income varying from £5,000 to £10,000 for the sake of Parliament. "It is a great instance," wrote Lord Palmerston, "of self-denial and disinterestedness on the part of Perceval that with his large family he did not give it (the tellership) to his son." No doubt Perceval's act of self-denial was taken into consideration after his death, judging by the amount of the Parliamentary grant.

On the 1st of February Perceval proposed a vote of thanks to Lord Wellington (Sir Arthur Wellesley had been made Viscount Wellington after Talavera, and voted a pension). The attitude of the Whigs with regard to the conduct of the Peninsular war is a striking example of party tactics. Lord

Wellington was accused of fighting for a peerage. They complained that Talavera was in no way decisive, that the victory ended in a retreat. Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, complained that Lord Wellington had been sent to Spain "to hazard the treasure of the country where no possible good could result from it." Party malice reached a limit, and Lord Wellington became the target for men who were unable to see beyond the limited space of their own party horizon. Owing to the great successes of Wellington, the brilliant series of victories in Spain, the Whig party escape censure in subsequent history, but they fought tooth and nail to recall the British army in 1810. Napier's History of the Peninsular War, with its Holland House tradition, glossed over the doings of the Opposition. One sees Holland House in every reference to Perceval, and political misrepresentation has rarely reached higher flights. Makers of history for the use of schools were led astray by it, and

gradually many people ceased to remember that Perceval was a Minister who fought single-handed in support of the war. It is easy to understand the fury of a retired Whig point of view expending itself in florid prose, sheltering the Opposition, and accusing the Minister in power of impeding the war. In every war there are critics of the kind in every community, and they will continue to criticise in like manner until the end of all things. The most effective weapon in the hands of the Whigs was the disastrous Walcheren expedition, and a Committee of Inquiry had been appointed. A considerable amount of time had been taken up the year before with the enquiry concerning the Duke of York and Mrs Clarke. The enquiry had been openly conducted and fully reported in the Press. The Walcheren enquiry was held with closed doors, and no strangers admitted. But the evidence was retailed abroad, closed doors were not sufficient to prevent a widespread knowledge of the pro-

ceedings. Whitbread played a leading part by his attempts to extract all documents concerning the Scheldt disaster—documents which Lord Chatham had sent privately to the King in direct defiance of the constitution, and in spite of Lord Castlereagh's original instructions.

The Walcheren failure has been summed up in the well-known verse:

"Great Chatham's son with his sword drawn,
Was waiting for Sir Richard Strachan.
Sir Richard, eager to be at 'em,
Was waiting, too . . . for whom?—Lord Chatham."

It was Lord Chatham's policy to play a waiting game when he came face to face with a crisis. At first the King refused to surrender any papers connected with Lord Chatham, but finally Perceval persuaded him to do so. Whitbread, however, was not entirely satisfied. He moved two resolutions, firstly, dealing with the "secret narrative," secondly, stating "that the Earl of Chatham, by private communication to His Majesty,

accompanied by a desire for secrecy, did unconstitutionally abuse the privilege of access to his Sovereign, and thereby afford an example most pernicious in its tendency to His Majesty's service and to the general service of the State." Perceval offered no excuse for Lord Chatham's conduct, but pleaded for an adjournment, to which Whitbread raised no objection.

Then Perceval wrote to Lord Chatham with a view to the latter's resignation of his post of Master-General of the Ordnance. But Lord Chatham "was waiting," as usual. He was unable to realise the necessity for resignation, but this time he had not long to tarry. Whitbread's first resolution was easily carried when they continued the debate concerning Lord Chatham's shortcomings, and Canning's amendment was adopted,—which described Lord Chatham's attitude as "highly reprehensible" and deserving "the censure of this House." During the evening Whitbread, in conversation with Arbuthnot, enquired

whether Lord Chatham was still Master-General of the Ordnance, and observed, on hearing that Lord Chatham had not yet resigned: "Well, I shall wait a day or two, and then I shall put the same question publicly."

Perceval informed the Master-General of the Ordnance of this conversation, and the long-looked-for resignation became an accomplished fact. After various negotiations concerning the vacant post with Lord Gambier, Dundas, and Charles Yorke, the latter finally replaced Lord Chatham. The King considered Yorke a "meritorious individual," and His Majesty showed remarkable vigour in expressing his opinions up to the very commencement of his illness. It was Yorke who enforced the Standing Order for the exclusion of strangers from the House during the Walcheren enquiry, a precaution which did not increase his popularity.

The order for exclusion was followed by a speech of Windham's attacking the Press,

in which he stated that "he did not know any of the conductors of the Press, but he understood them to be a set of men who would give in to the corrupt representations of opposite sides, and he was therefore determined not to lend his hand to abrogate an order which was made to correct an abuse." The following week placards were posted over London which contained the subject for debate at a small club at Covent Garden: "Which was the greater outrage on public feeling, Mr Yorke's enforcement of the Standing Order to exclude strangers from the House of Commons, or Mr Windham's recent attack on the liberty of the Press?"

Yorke brought the affair before the House on the question of breach of privilege. Dean, the printer, was ordered to appear for examination. Dean apologised for the offensive placard, and admitted that he had been employed by Gale Jones, secretary to the Corresponding Society. In 1794 three leaders of the Corresponding Society were prosecuted

by the State. Dean was reprimanded, imprisoned for twenty-four hours, and released. Gale Jones was sent to Newgate.

The case of Gale Jones attracted the notice of that leading firebrand, Sir Francis Burdett, who made a violent speech on the subject, and wrote a still more violent letter to his constituents worthy of an Anglo-Saxon supporter of the Rights of Man, which was published in Cobbett's Register. It became a question for debate whether Burdett should be reprimanded or sent to the Tower. After an all-night sitting the latter course was decided on, and the Serjeant-at-Arms received instructions to make an immediate arrest. From the moment the warrants were issued a wild-goose chase commenced. When the Serjeant called to arrest Sir Francis he was away from home. Early in the afternoon the House assembled, but no arrest had been made, and the Speaker was furious with the Serjeant. But the Speaker was unable to say whether the warrant allowed the Serjeant

to break into Burdett's house. The proceedings could be kept quiet no longer. A mob gathered in Piccadilly on this eventful Friday, and when the Serjeant threatened an early arrest on the morrow, Burdett defied the Speaker's warrant. Early on Saturday morning the Serjeant went to make the arrest, but Sir Francis was out, so he left a messenger with the warrant to await the evasive Sir Francis, drove to Wimbledon on the chance of his being there, and returned empty-handed.

The object of his search had been taking a walk in the London streets, and when he came home in due course the messenger handed him the warrant, which Burdett put in his pocket, and remarked that "he had seen it before." The messenger, like a trustworthy bailiff in the Speaker's employ, told Burdett that he was obliged to keep an eye on him, and the messenger was firmly but gently conducted to the door. Thereupon the Speaker issued another warrant, and Burdett

sought protection from the Speaker, by applying to one of the Sheriffs of the County. If the Speaker was ignorant of the powers of his own warrant, Burdett might have resisted arrest indefinitely.

Perceval had so far taken no part in the matter, but on the Saturday evening he pointed out to the Serjeant that it would be as well, before taking further steps, to have a legal opinion on the scope of the warrant. The Attorney-General decided that no arrest could be effected before Monday, and that the officers would be responsible for the arrest, though the Attorney-General expressed himself obscurely on this point. In the meantime there had been rioting in the streets, and the troops were called out. When the Serjeant finally arrested Burdett on the Monday, the mob pelted the guards; they were obliged to fire, and a rioter was killed.

And all this came to pass on account of a dilatory Serjeant, and a Speaker who was ignorant of the power of his own warrant.

Perceval advised a more lenient attitude towards Burdett; but the Speaker acted from a high-handed standpoint throughout. Burdett remained a prisoner until the prorogation of Parliament on the 21st of June.

In the meantime he took proceedings against the Speaker and the Serjeant-at-Arms. The former requested Perceval to put an end to the matter by arresting all the attorneys connected with the case; but Perceval refused, and a Committee was appointed "to consider the fit course of proceeding and to manage the defence of the action." The case drifted to the House of Lords by writ of error, and was tried there. On the 16th of May 1810 Perceval brought in the Budget. The total supplies for the year amounted to £52,000,000. Great Britain was responsible for £46,000,000, and the remaining £6,000,000 was a separate charge on Ireland. The annual duties were estimated to provide £3,000,000, the War Taxes £19,500,000, the Lottery £350,000,

the surplus of the Consolidated Fund a little over £6,000,000, the Vote of Credit £3,000,000. For the rest the Chancellor proposed to raise a loan of £8,000,000, and to issue £5,300,000 of Exchequer Bills "to replace those which had been funded in the previous year."

Perceval commented in his speech on the growth of the revenue and the general expansion of trade. Exports were rapidly increasing. There was a widespread demand for labour; docks, canals, and public works of every kind were in course of construction.

The new loan was to be raised on more favourable terms than formerly. The country would pay rather less than $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. for it, which argued well for our credit.

Since 1797 and the Suspension of Cash payments Great Britain had been obliged to keep up appearances, to maintain an outward show of prosperity, by means of an inflated currency. In 1810 we were still at war, and it became impracticable

to abandon the system introduced by Pitt in 1797. In war time such a change would have resulted in national bankruptcy; and even when peace was declared and cash payments resumed, the credit of the country was taxed to the utmost.

An optimistic Budget came as a surprise to many. Members were unable to account for the atmosphere of prosperity. Fortunately for the Government Perceval was able to make the most of these outwardly prosperous conditions, and to show an increasing revenue, an unshaken credit. Paper money was in circulation throughout the country, and paid for the completion of public works, but paper money was useless as payment for the army in Spain. Spain herself was bankrupt, and the war depended on the solvency of Great Britain. The army in the Peninsula had to be paid in cash, either gold or silver; it was no easy matter for the Government to find money for the purpose. In 1809 the yearly cost of the

army in Spain was estimated at £3,000,000, but the estimate grew to £5,000,000, and Perceval was obliged to face the difficulty of finding an extra £2,000,000.

Perceval's correspondence with Lord Wellesley gives an idea of the hard struggle to provide payment for the army. Great Britain was the only country assisting Spain, and had a right to claim certain concessions, in connection with the export of bullion from South America. Spain, like the proverbial dog in the manger, refused, in the first instance, to assist Great Britain in the matter; but Perceval brought pressure to bear, and expressed himself as follows, writing to Lord Wellesley 4th March 1810:

"If these concessions cannot be procured, it is essential to our being enabled to feed and pay our army in the Peninsula, and in Sicily, that we should have liberty of exporting bullion in some way or other from South America."

Owing to the Continental system and the

Orders in Council, our European trade was paralysed, and it became a matter of necessity to obtain gold from the only possible market.

"Our enemy is endeavouring by new expedients every day to curtail our commerce in Europe, and we cannot stand unless the other parts of the world open new resources to our trade."

Meanwhile, early in April the Spanish Government made overtures for a loan of £2,000,000, to be repaid in six instalments, which gave Perceval an opportunity for negotiation. He was determined in event of our agreeing to the proposed loan that the Spanish Government should come "to a liberal understanding with regard to the trade of their colonies, at least during the period of the war, and for such time longer as the debt due from Spain to this country shall remain unpaid."

Perceval had made arrangements for the loan when Henry Wellesley (Lord Wellesley's brother), the British representative at Cadiz,

drew £400,000 in advance from the Treasury for the use of the Spanish Government—a sum destined for the army. Lord Wellington's last statement showed a deficiency of £100,000, and Perceval impressed on the Foreign Secretary the necessity for refunding the £400,000 as soon as possible from the South American supplies.

Perceval was able to reassure Lord Wellington with regard to future payments. Ten million dollars were expected from Vera Cruz, which would provide specie for the army in the Peninsula, as well as the troops in Sicily and Malta, and the Government hoped to receive the same amount yearly.

Much has been made of the half-hearted support of the war by critics of the Napier school, regardless of the financial position and the possibilities of the Exchequer. Lord Wellington was represented as a martyr in the hands of a grasping Tory Government; Perceval withholding the surplus millions at his command, and starving the war on

every possible occasion. The Wellesley correspondence proves how entirely misleading these statements were, as regards Perceval's attitude. They originated from the fact, that Lord Wellington was obliged to economise according to the requirements of the time: a departure from the traditional extravagance of British warfare. Millions in war time are reckoned of small account; a prosperous community can afford a few millions more or less. The patient tax-payer is ready to condone official extravagance, and pays his income-tax with a cheerful smile. An extravagant war policy is part of the system, and the critics of the Napier school, were unable to reconcile our great general's economy with an adequate support of the war.

Perceval, writing to Lord Wellington on the 5th of July 1810, assured him that the country was exerting itself to the utmost; and there is not a shadow of evidence in the correspondence on the subject of supplies, to show Lord Wellington's dissatisfaction

with the support he received from Perceval. He fully understood the difficulties of the Government, and will remain for all time the only reliable authority on the situation. If Wellington had cause for complaint, it was against the men who feared the result of a war with Napoleon, who clamoured for the recall of the army from the Peninsula, who grudged a title and pension—the country's tribute, after the victory of Talavera.

Great Britain in those days of peril and uncertainty owed everything to Wellington and a steadfast policy.

THE KING'S MALADY. 1810-1811

VI

THE KING'S MALADY. 1810-1811

In spite of gloomy prophecies Perceval had succeeded with his indifferent following; the Government emerged unscathed from the session of 1810. Parliament was prorogued until the 1st of November, so there remained four months' breathing space in which to strengthen the ministry. There could be no certainty of a permanent majority with the irreconcilable trinity, Lord Sidmouth, Castlereagh, and Canning, standing aloof. When Lord Wellesley proposed to resign the Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs to Canning and remain in the Cabinet without holding office, Canning at first seemed inclined to accept the offer, but certain members of

the Cabinet would not hear of him. They had not forgotten his desertion in the previous autumn, nor his quarrel with Lord Castlereagh. Perceval was unable to come to any arrangement which would include either Lord Sidmouth and Canning, or Canning and Lord Castlereagh.

All Perceval's efforts to secure the services of any one of the three were fruitless; they declined to assist the Government, preferring to remain free-lances and await events.

Upon receiving Lord Castlereagh's refusal, Perceval wrote to Lord Eldon:

"And so ends our negotiation; and the consequence, I trust, will be, that we shall all be determined to do the best we can, to stand firmly and unitedly by ourselves when we find we cannot mend matters."

As long as George III. remained capable of expressing a lucid opinion, there was every chance for a united Tory Government. The situation depended on the King's health; he was the last English king to adopt a personal

attitude in his political dealings, and it has been shown that the very existence of a ministry hung upon Catholic Emancipation. Any sudden shock might prove dangerous to the King at his advanced age. Lord Sidmouth, in 1804, excused himself from remaining in office on the score of the King's health. It was a matter of continual anxiety to the Tories.

In the early autumn of 1810 Princess Amelia fell ill. She was George III.'s youngest daughter, and had always been his favourite. The Princess died on the 2nd of November; and when her father saw her for the last time, she placed a ring upon his finger containing a lock of her hair, with the inscription: "Remember me when I am gone." The King left his daughter's death-bed stricken in mind; he never recovered from the shock to his affections; the scourge of 1788 returned to darken the last decade of his long reign. From the 2nd of November until the Princess's funeral on the 14th, the doctors issued daily bulletins regarding the

King's health. Lord Eldon decided that His Majesty was not in a fit state to sign the Commission for the further prorogation of Parliament. On the 10th of November the bulletins were more favourable. The physicians reported a decided improvement, which they described as "a state of progressive amendment."

Parliament had been obliged to meet on the 1st of November, and adjourned till the 15th. Then Perceval announced the improvement in His Majesty's health, and proposed another fortnight's adjournment. The Opposition raised objections to the adjournment, but the Government won by a decisive majority.

On the 15th the King had recovered sufficiently to look into the Princess's affairs, and make the necessary arrangements for her household and effects. The effort proved too much for him: a relapse followed. At a meeting of the Privy Council on the 28th of November Sir Henry Halford and Dr Heberden, the physicians, were examined, and

they were hopeful of his ultimate recovery, and disposed to "a very great amendment in his mental health within the last twenty-four hours." Another physician was examined the following day, and gave corroborative evidence.

Parliament was again adjourned for a fortnight. In the meantime, the King recovered slightly and relapsed again. Perceval became aware that a further adjournment was unjustifiable, and he proposed a Committee to examine His Majesty's physicians.

Their evidence before the Committee was a repetition of that given to the Privy Council, consisting of a vague declaration of ultimate recovery. Perceval, on receiving the report from the Committee, gave notice that he should propose the Regency Resolutions on the lines of those drawn up by Pitt in 1788. It was resolved that the duty of Parliament was to supply the existing defect in the organisation of Government caused by the King's illness, by means of a Bill passed by

the two Houses of Parliament. The Opposition determined to approve the method of Procedure by Bill. The Whigs contended that the Prince of Wales should be appointed Regent by exclusive right. Pitt in 1788 denied that the Prince had any natural or legal right without the authority of Parliament. The Whigs in 1810 favoured the method of Procedure by Address, and they were supported by the "whole of the male branches of the Royal Family." The House decided by a large majority to proceed by Bill.

On the 19th of December Perceval forwarded the proposed restrictions to the Prince of Wales. The Regent was to be debarred from creating peers, from granting offices or pensions. The King's property was to be vested in trustees. The care of His Majesty's person was to be entrusted to the Queen, assisted by a council appointed by Parliament. These were the restrictions laid down by Pitt in 1788, and they were not

likely to prove acceptable to the Prince of Wales in 1810. He assembled the "whole of the male branches of the Royal Family" at Carlton House, and a solemn protest against these proposed restrictions of the Royal authority was drawn up, signed by them all, and sent to Perceval. The "solemn protest" was entered "against measures that we consider as perfectly unconstitutional, as they are contrary to, and subversive of, the principles which seated our family upon the throne of these realms."

Perceval sent a courteous ultimatum to the Duke of York in reply to the protest, stating that the proposed measures had the combined support of the Lords and Commons in 1788, and the approval of the King on his recovery.

On the last day of 1810 Perceval explained the Regency Resolutions before a Committee of the whole House of Commons. His attitude from the commencement of the King's illness remained unchanged. The solemn

protest, the risk of losing office, led to no wavering in the shape of compromise.

"All candid people," wrote Lord Dudley, "confess that Perceval has raised himself very much by his conduct in the transaction. He has shown great integrity, good temper, firmness, and ability. But I think he will be very hard pressed notwithstanding all these qualities."

The proposed Regency foreshadowed a change of Government. It was in the highest degree improbable that the Prince of Wales would countenance a Tory Government and an antagonistic Minister. In 1806 the Prince expressed a wish to jump on Perceval, and put a summary end to his existence by means of the stamping process. Perceval had been the King's Minister, the Princess of Wales's advocate, and the opponent of Fox—everything, in fact, to bring him into opposition with the future Regent. The King's illness afforded a great opportunity for the Whigs. There was small chance of his recovery; the

most sanguine of Perceval's supporters predicted that the Government would barely last a month. Lord Sidmouth and Canning were not to be relied on. The Regency debates were opened with every prospect of success for the Whigs. Perceval carried the first, second, and third resolutions by a trifling majority. The fourth was passed without a division. The political atmosphere was charged with rumour, and the Leaders of the Opposition, full of confidence at the small majorities, hastened to Carlton House in the early hours of the New Year to reassure the Prince.

Gossip already assigned to Whitbread the Foreign Secretaryship in the prospective Whig Government. The Peninsular war would soon be a thing of the past.

On New Year's Day Perceval moved the fifth and last resolution which gave the Queen the appointment of the entire household during the King's illness. The Opposition wished to modify the measure by giving her

control over the portion that remained to His Majesty. The Government was defeated on a division by thirteen votes owing to the defection of Canning, in addition to "Castlereagh, Wilberforce, and some saints." Plumer Ward describes the debate as follows: "Canning spoke again, and still more heavily than last night. Not a single flash of wit, but a dull and laboured argument in which he was wrong from beginning to end. Perceval, although he had a headache, answered him in his full style of manliness and beat him to pieces; showed that he even mistook his own principles and Lord Gower's amendment altogether. Many were struck with his marked superiority."

Perceval's fighting qualities found full scope during the Regency debates; the Prince's friends contested every inch of ground. Sheridan, the most eloquent advocate of the Carlton House interest, the confidential friend of the future Regent, led the attack on all restrictions. The flush of confidence and

port wine was evident in his oratory. He upheld the banner of an unfettered Regency, a Regent capable of distributing honours and awarding pensions to his faithful friends, a Regent who at any moment might succeed to the throne itself. The equal balance of parties was of small account. The Whigs had received reinforcements in the shape of deserters from the sinking ship, to turn the scale in the matter of votes. Political opportunists were completely satisfied with the state of affairs when the Regency Resolutions went to the Lords. With one exception the Whigs were unanimous in their opposition to the proposed restrictions, and the exception was Lord Grenville. He had upheld them in 1789, and caused his speech to be printed for all the world to see and to remember. Well might Sheridan deplore such an injudicious proceeding. Unconsciously Lord Grenville was Perceval's friend in need; he held the anomalous position of leader of the Whig party, and yet he proposed to limit the

power of the Regent. He voted against his own people on the most vital resolution concerning the making of peers, the granting of pensions, and gave the enemy a majority of six votes. "D——n him," said Lord S., "after the worst speech that was ever made to pave the way for inconsistency, to on a sudden leave us for the sake of consistency, and ruin the whole game." (Plumer Ward, who reports Lord S.'s genuine outburst of political grief, does not give his name.) This little act of "consistency" on Lord Grenville's part gave a finishing touch to the bitter struggle over the limited Regency. Both Lords and Commons agreed to the resolutions; Perceval moved that deputations should wait on the Regent and the Queen, and in due course formal answers were sent to the addresses from the House of Commons. On the 14th of January 1811 the Lords "sent down the resolution for a Commission to pass the Great Seal for the opening of the session."

THE SESSION OF 1811

VII

THE SESSION OF 1811

EARLY in January the bulletins showed a slight improvement in the King's health, and the possibility of his recovery, according to private reports, was rumoured abroad. The King's recovery would dispose of all hopes of a Whig ministry, and upset the schemes of Lords Grey and Grenville, who invariably acted from a haughty and superior standpoint in their dealings with the future Regent; they stood like political Pharisees afar off, and lectured the Prince. He resented the schoolmaster element in "Lords G. and G." They held an immense idea of their own importance, and looked upon the Prince in the light of an unruly schoolboy playing truant.

Lord Grey deplored His Royal Highness's lack of energy during the early days of the King's illness, and talked unguardedly upon the subject. The pose of pedagogue was not acceptable to one accustomed to flattery, and respectful attention from the Whigs. On many occasions at Carlton House he had given his political views at considerable length to Fox and Sheridan. There is intense pathos in that cry wrung from the heart of Fox, when summoned from his rose garden at St Anne's Hill: "Here must I leave my roses and St Anne's, and go to London to hear a lie an hour long at Carlton House!" Lords G. and G. had none of the good-nature of Fox, none of the exuberance necessary to create a sympathetic feeling at Carlton House.

Sheridan and the Prince made merry over their prim communications. Their depressing conduct did much to estrange His Royal Highness from the Whigs; they disapproved of Sheridan, and intended to exclude him

from the ministry. Lord Grey was willing to accept the office of First Lord of the Treasury in the new Government, on the condition that the Regent consulted Ministers chosen by Lord Grey. Sheridan and Lord Moira were to remain out in the cold. Lords G. and G. prepared a draft answer to the address of the two Houses which they sent to the Prince. He retaliated by sending them an answer with marginal notes inspired by Sheridan; they acknowledged the slight by a letter of remonstrance which the Prince forwarded to Sheridan, — his patience was nearly exhausted. In spite of the improvement in the King's health, and the Grey and Grenville fiasco, the Whigs lived in hope; January was a month of uncertainty and conflicting rumour.

"Let the Prince do what he will," wrote Lord Dudley, "there are great difficulties. If he keeps P., he must break his word and desert his friends, and *throw off* by establishing a character for being the weakest and

basest of mankind,—to say nothing of the Catholics, who will grow very troublesome. On the other hand, if he changes the Government, he must turn out the most popular man in England, which Perceval undoubtedly is, and break with the party which has supported his father during the whole of his long reign."

The reference to Perceval's popularity at this time was no exaggeration. Step by step he raised himself in the estimation of every one. It is instructive to read contemporary opinions of Perceval during the Regency debates. Bragge Bathurst declared "his following and applauses were equal to what he had known in Mr Pitt's time. Some of the Whigs were none too sanguine of a change of Government." Brand, for instance: "Though he had spoken, and strongly, against us in the debate," wrote Plumer Ward (in describing a conversation with Brand), "he opened immediately upon the merits of Perceval. He admired his conduct and

ability so much that, if he had never given him a vote in his life, he said, he would have supported him on these questions; that his character had enabled him to commence the stand he had made, and character had attached his party so much to him as to continue the majority all through; that this sentiment was not peculiar to him in the Opposition, but partaken by many; indeed, all admired him; that this would give him extraordinary influence as the head of an Opposition which must give great trouble to the new Government when it was formed; nevertheless he thought we were not going out; it was too dangerous to come in; probably, he added laughing, the Regent will keep Perceval three months as his father's Minister, and then 'fall so much in love with him' (that was the expression) that he will continue him as his own."

The Regency Bill was read for the first time on the 15th of January, and for the second on the following day. On the 17th

the "House went into committee on it." Opposition intended to limit the Peerage restrictions to six months instead of a year, and fought hard to gain this point, but were defeated on division by twenty-four votes.

Tierney admitted that on this occasion Perceval's speech was worthy of Pitt. There were three divisions on the Household questions which the Government won, and the Opposition allowed them to adjourn,—"though delay is death to them," wrote Ward—Perceval's majorities were gradually increasing. By the 23rd of January the third reading was passed, and the Bill went to the Lords. By the 2nd of February "the Great Seal was put to a Commission to pass it, and on the 4th of February it received the Royal assent." Perceval had succeeded in steering the Regency Bill through troubled waters in practically its original state. Handicapped from the commencement, he brought the Bill single-handed through the House of Commons with a determination

and pluck that won the admiration of both sides. He prevailed over the Whig party in the House of Commons notwithstanding their allies outside, who canvassed against him, those formidable "male branches" of the Royal Family, headed by the future Regent.

Though the Regency Bill had received the Royal assent, it was by no means certain that the Prince would retain Perceval. Towards the end of January His Royal Highness exclaimed: "By God, they shall not remain one hour!" Sheridan realised that the Whigs had played their cards badly; the Grey and Grenville faction sufficed to complicate matters.

On the 24th and 26th of January the King was sufficiently well to see Perceval and Lord Eldon. On the 29th, Perceval had an hour's audience with His Majesty, and described the political events of that eventful January. When the King learnt from Lord Eldon on the 31st that the Prince intended to change the Government,

His Majesty said "he would bring his present servants back." The Queen's letter to the Prince on the 1st of February sealed the fate of the Whigs for the time being. It contained a warning that a change of government might imperil the King's health. The future Regent, after a long consultation with his brother, the Duke of York, sent a message to Lords Grey and Grenville to inform them that for the present he had no intention of making a change of government. They had been busily engaged, preparing for the Whig ministry, and no doubt the Prince felt some satisfaction in putting an end to their dreams of restoration. Since the death of Fox, the Whigs lost their hold to a great extent on the Prince of Wales. No politician, not even Sheridan, could expect to replace Fox as political mentor. The situation required a magnetic personality to dominate the Regent, to guide his wayward fancy, to humour his caprices. It is not surprising that he turned his back on

the Grey and Grenville lectures. The Regent has been pilloried by Thackeray, and other writers, on the subject of George IV. as the faithless lover, the faithless friend, the leading voluptuary of the age. But it must be remembered to his credit that he numbered Fox and Sheridan among his intimates. His interest in politics was somewhat cynical; Whig or Tory was much the same to him at this stage in his existence, and the Queen's letter helped to turn the scale in favour of a Tory Government.

After waiting three days the Prince wrote to Perceval on the 4th of February from Carlton House. The letter contained (with the exception of a preamble) little more than the following extract:

"The Prince feels it incumbent on him, at this precise juncture, to communicate to Mr Perceval his intention not to remove from their stations those whom he finds there as His Majesty's official servants. At the same time the Prince owes it to the

truth and sincerity of his character, which he trusts will appear in every action of his life, in whatever station placed, explicitly to declare that the irresistible impulse of filial duty and affection, to his beloved and afflicted father, leads him to dread that any act of the Regent might in the smallest degree have the effect of interfering with the progress of the Sovereign's recovery.

"This consideration alone dictates the decision now communicated to Mr Perceval."

Brand's prediction had come to pass, and there were cynics among the Whigs who declared that the Prince was playing a part all through, and with an outward show of reluctance he intended to retain Perceval.

Parliament met on the 12th of February. Perceval had prepared the Regent's speech, and His Royal Highness observed, on hearing it read, that the speech "could not be better." The Regent explained to his Whig intimates that only the probability of the

King's recovery made him continue with Ministers whom he hated, and Lord Holland derived comfort from the fact that His Royal Highness took the oath of Regency at Carlton House, "with the bust of Fox ostentatiously displayed."

The Prince might be compared to Canning in the school of political intrigue, and it was Perceval's policy to attract the Regent as far as possible to the Tories, and he succeeded beyond all expectation. The Whigs resigned themselves to the inevitable, and their leaders continued to clamour against the war in Spain; they declared that no British soldier would leave the Peninsula except as a prisoner; they felt no confidence in Wellington, in spite of the defeat of Massena at Busaco on 29th September 1810, and the final retreat of the French army from Portugal, owing to Wellington's defensive scheme; the lines of Torres Vedras, where for five months Wellington held Massena in check. The Government expected little more of Wellington than

the defence of Portugal. The relief of Spain seemed impossible considering the numerical superiority of the French.

Perceval had already obtained a grant of £1,000,000 for the maintenance of a body of Portuguese troops, and on 18th March he proposed that an additional £1,000,000 should be voted for the following year. The vote was carried to the usual accompaniment of discontent from the Opposition. They argued that it was fighting a forlorn hope. Napoleon had practically conquered Europe, and must succeed in the Peninsula from sheer force of numbers. Nevertheless a vote of thanks to Wellington for his defence of Portugal, from both Houses, was carried at the end of April. Then came the news of Wellington's victory over Massena, at Fuentes D'Onoro, on 5th May, and Beresford's defeat of Soult on 16th May at Albuera. The two most vital issues of the session of 1811 were the successes of Wellington in the Peninsula, and the commercial depression at home.

Everything combined to create a crisis: the agricultural prospect, depreciation of paper money, over-speculation by brokers on the Stock Exchange, and Horner's report urging a resumption of cash payments within the space of two years, which caused something in the shape of a panic in the mercantile world. Yankee trade had proved disastrous to many speculators. Merchants, who had suffered, appealed to the Government, and Perceval, on the 1st March, obtained the appointment of "a Select Committee to enquire into commercial credit." An issue of £6,000,000 in Exchequer Bills was authorised by Parliament to be paid to the sufferers, following the precedent of Pitt in 1793. The Budget itself showed few signs of the commercial crisis. The supplies slightly exceeded £56,020,000, and little more than £49,450,000 was a charge on Great Britain. Perceval estimated the ways and means at £49,555,000 but £24,000,000 was to be raised by loan, £12,000,000 to replace Exchequer Bills, and

£12,000,000 by fresh stock. The Select Committee reported that the crisis was due to over-speculation. The financier in these days of wealth would view with amazement such misplaced charity as a Government grant of £6,000,000 to speculators in 1811. The cry of the impoverished bird of prey, the vulture of the Stock Exchange, falls nowadays on unsympathetic ears. The many victims of company promoters, and the Kaffir Circus, fade into oblivion.

The financial genius of to-day can afford to regard with a superior smile the commercial panic of 1811. He will welcome Socialism with open arms for election purposes, scorning the pigmy efforts of a hundred years ago, and considers an ever-increasing income-tax and the downfall of Beer as evidence of the superiority of modern methods.

Horner's resolution with regard to the resumption of cash payments were rejected in two successive divisions on 7th May. Then Vansittart proposed seventeen resolu-

tions on the question to take the place of Horner's, in which he received Perceval's support. Vansittart realised the difficulty of the Government in "providing for the foreign expenditure," and declared that it did credit to the manly character of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he has not attempted to disguise this difficulty, or to keep out of sight the degree in which the evils we suffer are to be traced to the necessity of carrying on a vigorous and expensive war on the Continent. Vansittart's resolutions set forth the possible danger "of fixing a definite period for the removal of the restrictions of cash payments at the Bank of England prior to the term already fixed . . . of six months after the conclusion of a definite treaty of peace."

These resolutions were finally carried by a large majority, but the vexed question of the paper currency had not come to an end. Fresh complications arose owing to the action of Lord King, who early in June "issued a

notice to his tenants that his rents were in future to be paid either in gold or in paper estimated by the price of gold."

There had been a depreciation in the National currency to the amount of 20 per cent., and the Government regarded Lord King's notice to his tenants in the light of a mild eccentricity, a form of protest to show his displeasure at the result of the recent debates. Lord King, however, was in deadly earnest, and demanded his pound of flesh in the approved manner of the Rialto, and it seemed probable that other landowners would follow his example. To counteract this movement on the part of the anxious landlords, Lord Stanhope brought a Bill into the House of Lords to make bank-notes a legal tender, where it was opposed by two stars in the Whig firmament, Lord Holland and Lord Grenville. But the Bill was rapidly passed through the Upper Chamber, and Perceval took charge of it in the Commons on the 9th of July.

The first reading was carried by 64 votes to 19, the second on the 15th of July by 133 votes to 35. Tierney declared "the advocates of the Bill were two of the most suspicious characters in the world: a Chancellor of the Exchequer and a Bank director" (Baring). Creevey took advantage of the debates for attacking the Bank directors, and Lord Arden, whose name stood alphabetically first on the list, became a target for Creevey, that master of invective.

Perceval had expressed his disbelief at the first reading, that Lord King, on reflection, would persist in methods hitherto adopted by pedlars and Jews, and Creevey retorted in his wrath by enquiring whether Lord Arden, whose sinecure as Registrar of the Admiralty amounted to £12,000 a year, and "who never had less than £200,000 of public money in his hands, might not be given the same appellation?" Creevey was assured of the Regent's perfidy, which explains his onslaught to some extent. On the second

reading of the Gold Coin Bill wrote the Speaker: "All the Prince's friends voted for the Bill."

Pierce, the Governor of the Bank, was present under the Gallery during the debates. "The Duke of Cumberland sat by him, flirting, for two hours one night." The gulf between the Regent and his former friends grew wider than ever. The debates on the Gold Coin Bill mark an epoch. The Regent had gone over to the Philistines and broke bread with them.

Thomas Creevey unburdened himself on the subject to his wife after a stroll of inspection one evening in July. Possibly the scent of cooking arrested him on his progress through Downing Street. Doubtless the very odour made him feel faint on that warm July evening, and compelled him, against his better nature, to satisfy his curiosity and peep in the direction of the kitchen, and then return and write as follows to Mrs Creevey at Brighton:

"The folly and villainy of this Prinny is

certainly beyond anything. I was forcibly struck by this as I passed Perceval's kitchen just now, and saw four men cooks and twice as many maids preparing dinner for the Prince of Wales and Regent,—he whose wife Perceval set up against him in open battle, who, at the age of fifty, could not be trusted by the said Perceval with the unrestrained government of these realms during his father's incapacity. He who, on his last birthday at Brighton, declared to his numerous guests that it was his glory to have bred up his daughter in the principles of Mr Fox,—he who, in this very year, declared by letter to the said Mr Perceval, and afterwards had the letter published as an apology for his conduct, that he took him as his father's Minister, but that his own heart was in another quarter,—by God, this is too much!"

Creevey, in the character of "Peeping Tom," had seen with his own eyes the dinner preparations for the faithless Regent, and all the anguish of a Whig soul in torment un-

burdened itself in that letter to Brighton. Perceval, with the aid of four men cooks, and twice as many maids, was casting a spell over "Prinny" in a manner commensurate with the requirements of a hungry and thirsty age. To entertain the Regent was sufficient tax to the richest of his subjects, and Creevey, when he witnessed the dinner preparations, reflected upon all the Whig hospitality of the past accepted by the Regent, who threw aside his political friends with less compunction than a favoured coat.

In the *Athenæum* of February the 18th, 1832, appeared the lines to Spencer Perceval, Esq., M.P. (Perceval's eldest son), by Thomas Hood. The delicate question of self-denial in the direction of superfluous eating and drinking had been raised, and met with a witty response in verse from Hood. The small loaf has been found the most effective of all election cries, roast beef was still the stronghold of Great Britain in the early days of the Reform Bill. Possibly Peeping Tom

Creevey remembered that evening in July 1811, and the preparations for the Regent, when he read the following lines:

"Oh, Mr Spencer,
I mean no offence, Sir,
Retrencher of each trencher,—man or woman's.
Maker of days of ember,
Eloquent member
Of the House of Com—I mean to say short commons.
Thou Long Tom Coffin singing out, 'Hold fast—
Avast!'
Oh, Mr Perceval, I'll bet a dollar, a
Great growth of cholera,
And new deaths reckoned,
Will mark thy Lenten twenty-first and second.
The best of our physicians when they con it
Depose the malady is in the air.
Oh, Mr Spencer, if the ill *is* there,
Why should you bid the people live upon it?
Why should you make discourses against courses,
While doctors, though they bid us rub and chafe,
Declare of all resources,
The man is safest who gets in the safe?
And yet you bid poor, suicidal sinners
Discard their dinners;
Thoughtless how Heaven above will look upon't,
For men to die so wantonly of want.
By way of a variety,
Think of the ineffectual piety
Of London's Bishop at St Faith's or Bride's,
Lecturing such chameleon insides,

Only to find
He's preaching to the wind.
Whatever others do—or don't
I cannot—dare not—must not fast, and won't,
Unless by night your day you let me keep,
And *fast* asleep ;
My constitution can't obey such censors :
I must have meat three times a day to eat ;
My health's of such a sort,—
To say the truth, in short,
The *coats* of my stomach are not *Spencer's*."

PERCEVAL'S FINAL SESSION
1812

VIII

PERCEVAL'S FINAL SESSION. 1812

When Sir Robert Peel enquired of an ardent supporter the chief requisites for a Prime Minister, he was informed "that an income of £20,000 and a stature of not less than five feet ten" were essentials for political success. Perceval lacked these superficial gifts; he entered the arena with a weak ministry, and his fighting powers were put to a severe test. A champion of the old *régime*, he fought on until his death in defence of a George III. tradition and the policy of Pitt. His views on Parliamentary Reform, his opposition to the Catholic claims belong to the latter part of the eighteenth century. He resisted all concessions, all attempts to abolish sinecures. He became

the despair of the disciples of Tom Paine and the Jacobin orator.

Sir Francis Burdett and other Anglo-Saxon reformers worshipped at the shrine of so-called Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, inspired by the French Revolution. They raved at Perceval in vain. The barking of Cobbett, the buffooneries of Burdett, served to enliven a small section of the community. The pseudo-Radical (who received a scathing tribute from the pen of George Borrow) was of small account in the early days of the nineteenth century, and the agitator led a precarious existence. Perceval, the defender of sinecures, never held one himself, with the exception of his farcical Surveyorship of the Meltings. Whigs and Tories were unanimous in their desire to protect their privileges. They had no intention of upsetting the political machine which worked so smoothly. Few Whigs would have welcomed the abolition of sinecures at this time. They were quite as much interested in the preservation of the old

system as the most hardened Tory of the eighteenth century. It was the exception for a Minister to refuse a sinecure, and Lord Liverpool, Perceval's successor, provided himself with the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, before he became Prime Minister. It is no doubt to be regretted that Perceval was unable to abolish the sinecure system, to recognise the Catholic claims, but from the point of view of history it is far more important that he determined, at all costs, to carry on the war in Spain, and was strong enough to rise above all the petty intrigues of the men who might have supported him.

There was no one of his own calibre to be relied on among the Tories. Canning and Lord Wellesley intrigued successively for the leadership. Two such distinguished Etonians would naturally resent a Harrovian Prime Minister — a mere barrister, who appeared unexpectedly on the scene after the death of Pitt. Canning was all for extinguishing the intruder by means of a

coronet, and Wellesley felt confident when he accepted the Foreign Secretaryship that Perceval was in an isolated and therefore hopeless position. When Perceval survived the Regency, all his lordship's calculations were upset; and in September 1811, according to the Duke of Buckingham, he commenced coquetting with the Regent. He felt thoroughly out of touch with the Cabinet, and having governed India resented all contradiction. He was accustomed to deference and a proper sense of deportment. The sight of Lord Westmoreland with his feet resting on the table at a Cabinet council shocked his sensibilities. "I will go on with my remarks when the noble lord assumes a more seemly attitude," he murmured. There was no Canning at these meetings to keep him in countenance. Taking everything into consideration, it is surprising that Lord Wellesley retained the Foreign Secretaryship so long; the very sight of Lord Westmoreland's boots perched upon the table might have brought matters to

a crisis. Throughout the autumn of 1811 he tried to beguile the Regent; the restrictions would elapse six weeks after the meeting of Parliament.

"I am sure the powder in His Royal Highness's hair is much more settled than anything in his head or indeed heart," wrote Thomas Moore, "and would stand a puff of Mr Perceval's much more stoutly."

Lord Wellesley could count on the support of the Dukes of Norfolk, Northumberland, and Devonshire, with Canning in the background.

The Duke of York was his advocate with the Regent, the Duke of Cumberland supported Perceval, and towards the end of the autumn it was whispered that the Duke of Cumberland was a more frequent visitor at Carlton House than the Duke of York. Again the scene changed. At Christmas time the Regent was lying ill at Oatlands, and the Duke of York and Lord Wellesley hovered round him. Very soon the Prince would be his own master, and the question of his debts and the Civil list would occupy

the House. Lord Holland considered that Perceval's arrangements with regard to the Household, and the tactless methods of the Roman Catholics, saved the situation for the Tories. Since the Fitzherbert marriage the Catholics built their hopes upon the Prince of Wales, and they were grievously disappointed when he accepted Perceval.

"Even those among us," wrote Lord Holland, "who were most indignant at the conduct of the Prince Regent, felt that it was not good policy to express their sense of it too warmly, much less in the coarse, revolting, and scurrilously personal libel which Lord Donoughmore permitted himself to make use of in the House of Lords. This attack in which the Prince's name was coupled with Lady Hertford caused a wider breach than ever, and only drove the Prince to the anti-Catholic party, and established Perceval more firmly than ever."

All hope of the King's recovery had been abandoned even by the court physicians. The Cabinet was prepared to allow £100,000 for

the King's establishment, and £70,000 for the Queen's, to be deducted from the Prince's Civil list. It was proposed that £50,000 should be replaced by paying a portion of the Prince's Exchequer revenue to the Civil list.

The Prince claimed the Cornish arrears, which amounted to £700,000, and Lord Wellesley proposed to compromise this modest demand by paying the Prince's debts, which amounted to £525,000, though no mention of this proposal appears in the Wellesley letters. One of the principal causes of Lord Wellesley's disagreement with Perceval, was the subject of the grant to the Regent. Perceval opposed the Prince's appropriation of the Cornish arrears, and he received the support of the Cabinet. Parliament assembled on the 7th of January 1812. No serious opposition was expected until the Regency restrictions elapsed. Burdett distinguished himself on this occasion by a fierce and lengthy oration, a retrospective criticism of England's policy "for the past eighteen years," and found himself in a minority of 1 to 243.

The next event in the session of 1812 was the resignation of Lord Wellesley; he tendered his resignation to the Regent on the day that Perceval introduced the Household regulations. The Regent informed Perceval immediately of Lord Wellesley's resignation, consequently he was not surprised when Lord Bathurst came to him from Lord Wellesley to break the news. Various reasons were given for his resignation: the conduct of the war, the Catholic claims, the impossibility of serving under Perceval, a difference of opinion concerning an extra £50,000 for the Regent. Lord Wellesley knew that his resignation would materially weaken the Cabinet, and it seemed possible that he might effect by resignation that which he had failed to do by courting the favour of the Regent. In the Wellesley and Perceval letters of 1810-1811 there is no mention of the war in Spain. Lord Wellesley has been represented by the Napier and school text-book authorities, as dissatisfied with Perceval's support of the war, regard-

less of the fact that the Duke of Wellington, as the person principally concerned, gave a direct contradiction to the imaginative statements of these authorities. In 1835 he wrote a letter to Perceval's son, Dudley Montagu Perceval (which settled the question with regard to the conduct of the war), and he referred to the Ministers concerned as follows:

"I have repeatedly declared in public my obligation for the cordial support and encouragement I received from them; and I should have been ungrateful and unjust if I had excepted Mr Perceval, than whom a more honest, zealous, and able Minister never served the King."

Lord Wellesley's disagreement with the Cabinet on the subject of the grant to the Regent, was as plausible a reason for his retirement as the war in Spain or the Catholic claims. In any case, he felt himself superior to his colleagues. Contradiction of any kind was out of the question; he was described on his return from India as "Sultanised." Notwithstanding a feel-

ing of conscious superiority, Lord Wellesley showed nervousness as a debater in the House of Lords; and failed to do himself justice in this respect; and Perceval was in need of a debater to lighten the burden in the House of Commons. Lord Wellesley's brother, Wellesley Pole, Chief Secretary for Ireland, supported Perceval on the question of the Irish Catholics, who clamoured for concessions. "I lament extremely," wrote Wellesley Pole, "that Lord Wellesley should have differed from the Cabinet."

Perceval, on the day Lord Wellesley resigned, advised the Regent to make Wellington an Earl, and to augment his pension by an additional £2,000, and the Prime Minister was able to write and inform Lord Wellington that "the House received the message with an acclamation of applause." Sir Francis Burdett, needless to say, distinguished himself. His solitary voice was raised against the proposed reward, and he again found himself in a minority of one. If the Opposition had been in a united frame of mind at this

time, Perceval in all probability would have been obliged to resign when the Regency restrictions terminated.

Early in February Lord Dudley wrote concerning the club rumours "that Perceval had already resigned"; and, speaking of the Opposition, he added, "Indeed, they will want some support beyond what they can have from their own troops—particularly in the House of Commons, where they have no man that is at all a match for little Perceval." But the Regency restrictions lapsed, and the Perceval ministry remained in power.

When Sir Thomas Turton, on the 27th of February, moved for a committee on the State of the Nation, Matthew Montague made a scathing assault on Whitbread and the Opposition. "He observed that the Honourable Member for Bedford (Whitbread), and those who voted with him, seemed generally to select these times for their attacks upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when it was not allowable by the practice of the House

for him to answer them. Single-handed, the right honourable gentleman had beaten all the talents."

Lord Castlereagh replaced Lord Wellesley as Foreign Secretary, and the vacancy at the Admiralty, caused by the retirement of Charles Yorke, on account of illness, was filled by Lord Melville.

On the 3rd of March Brougham's motion for a Select Committee on the question of the Orders in Council came before the House. The Orders in Council dated from the "Talents" ministry in 1807.

Perceval himself had never defended the Orders from an abstract point of view, and the Government at the commencement of 1811 was prepared to repeal them, but refused to relinquish their right to blockade unfortified places. The American war of 1812 was due to the British claims of blockade: a measure which originated from Fox, and corresponds to the claims of the United States in the Civil War. The commercial crisis, followed by the rupture with America, had been

sufficient to draw attention to the Orders in Council. For three years after their adoption in 1807, the trade of England flourished, and the French Customs declined to a fifth of their amount. If the Orders were responsible, a commercial crisis would have occurred before 1811, that year of intense agricultural depression and over-speculation on the Stock Exchange. Perceval's policy with regard to the Orders in Council was characteristic of the man, and the debate on 3rd March was the last important debate in which he was destined to take part. Canning had thrown in his lot with the Opposition, and Plumer Ward described the sitting which dragged on until the early dawn. "Brougham opened it in a very long declamatory speech of loud tone, answered by Rose, heavy enough. Baring replied with a speech heavier still. Canning spoke, and as he had been a most active supporter of the Orders in Council, his audience were anxious to hear how he would explain matters. Perceval was never in more force or spoke

better, and asked (Canning) if he had forgotten the measure they had so often fought together against the side on which he was now going to vote. . . . With respect to the principle upon which the Orders in Council were founded, he begged to state that he had always considered them as strictly retaliatory; and, as far as he could understand the matter, they were most completely justified upon the principle of retaliation. The object of the Government was to protect and force the trade of this country, which had been assailed in such an unprecedented manner by the French decrees. If the Orders in Council had not been issued, France would have had free Colonial trade by means of neutrals, and we should have been shut out from the Continent. . . . The object of the Orders in Council was, not to destroy the trade of the Continent, but to force the Continent to trade with us."

Necessity became in this case the mother of protection during the struggle for existence. To people living in the calm atmosphere of the

twentieth century, the period of unbounded taxation, a retaliatory measure may appear inconceivable. The country has experienced the doctrine of Free Trade — a philanthropic epoch of peace and good-will, though the cost of living increases from year to year, and the poorer citizens are crushed in every direction. Rent, food, and fuel continue to augment, but they are told to sleep soundly in their beds. The necessaries of life are as nothing compared to a sense of security. The well-nourished plutocrat is able to slumber without a sleeping draught in his palace, and the unemployed may rest by the wayside without fear of invasion.

The skilfully conceived Act with regard to Patents, has come to pass in spite of everything, and argues well for a new policy in the future—a policy of protection. There was no sense of national security in the years before Waterloo. The Orders in Council were both protective and retaliatory. Strong measures were necessary when Napoleon issued the decrees of Milan a hundred years ago.

Brougham's motion failed, for the time being, by 244 votes to 216; but the manufacturers intended to make a scapegoat of the Orders, and presented many petitions. In April it was decided to examine witnesses before a Committee of the whole House of Commons, to trace as far as possible the alleged depression caused by the Orders in Council.

THE ELEVENTH OF MAY, 1812

IX

THE ELEVENTH OF MAY, 1812

Early in the afternoon of Monday, the 11th of May, a man kept careful watch in the lobby of the House of Commons, near the door through which the Members entered the House; a tall, sombre figure clad in a snuff-coloured suit. In the House, Brougham had moved the order of the day for going into committee. He remarked on Perceval's absence, and thereupon commenced the examination of a Staffordshire potter; for the Committee of Inquiry concerning the Orders in Council was still in progress. One of the Members went to Downing Street to fetch Perceval, but met him in Parliament Street on his way to the Committee. Hearing that the examination had commenced, he hurried

to the House, and walked rapidly through the lobby, and when he reached the entrance door, the man who had been waiting there raised his arm, and fired almost point blank at Perceval's breast. The lobby was crowded when the shot was fired. One who was present noticed "a small curling wreath of smoke like the breath of a cigar rising above Perceval's head. I saw him reel back against the ledge on the inside of the door, and then making an impulsive rush, as it were, to reach the entrance of the House on the opposite side, I saw him totter forward not half-way and drop dead between the four pillars in the centre of the space, with a slight trace of blood issuing from his lips."

William Smith, at whose feet Perceval had fallen, failed to recognise the Prime Minister, until he raised the body in his arms. An officer of the House cried out: "Where is the rascal that fired?" The assassin had made no attempt to escape. He rose quietly from a seat near the door, and said: "I am the unfortunate man," whereupon the

Member for Liverpool, General Gascoigne (who subsequently identified the man as John Bellingham), caught hold of him with such fury, that Bellingham nearly had his arm broken.

Other Members helped to secure Bellingham. He was quickly searched, and they found in his pocket another pistol (loaded) and some papers. The shot was heard in both the Lords and Commons. Lord Holland wrote:

"The whole scene and many of the circumstances recalled the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham by Felton, and in nothing did it resemble it more than the cool composure of the assassin, who, I think, resumed his seat, but certainly made no effort to escape. . . . We heard either the report of pistols, or the screams of horror which the perpetration of the crime had excited. I recollect exclaiming: 'What is that?' and being told, after a short interval, that it was a madman who thought himself the Duke of Norfolk and frequently molested the Courts of Justice with his pretensions. It was not long, however, before a figure, pale and

breathless, rushed into the House, and, leaning on the bar, repeated twice or thrice: 'He is murdered, I saw him dead!' 'Who? Where are we to go to assist?' was reiterated from many present; and some minutes, I think, elapsed before we actually learned that it was Mr Perceval who was killed. The consternation was great; the appearance of most present ghastly. . . . The peers were coming in very fast, and I think we took some precaution to inform Lord Arden of the event. All expressed horror; some few seemed to ponder on the changes likely to ensue, and more were manifesting apprehension that the crime was connected with extensive designs, and the result of conspiracies which the state of the country rendered by no means improbable."

They brought Perceval's body to a room in the Speaker's house. Dr Lynne examined the wound, and found that the bullet (an exceptionally large one) had pierced the heart almost in the centre. The Speaker took the chair in the House, and General Gascoigne identified Bellingham. He was

detained till a magistrate arrived, then he was taken to the prison room of the Serjeant-at-Arms. Few men have been born to greater misfortune, or under an unluckier star, than John Bellingham; few men have suffered more on the rack of life.

He was born at St Neots, in Huntingdonshire, the son of a land surveyor, who spent some years in a madhouse, and died insane. Bellingham commenced his career as a jeweller's apprentice, then he was nominated to a cadetship in the East India Service. The ship he sailed in was wrecked on the passage out. He gave up the idea of the East India Service, and returned to start life again as a tinplate worker. Fresh troubles awaited him. His house was burnt to the ground, and he became bankrupt; he failed as an insurance broker, owing to lack of capital. Then he embarked on matrimony, and marriage merely accentuated the tragedy of his existence. His next venture was a merchant's office in Liverpool, and the firm sent Bellingham as their commission agent

to the White Sea. He drew bills on the firm for £10,000, and disposed of the money on his own account—threw it away like many another optimist with schemes for making a fortune. He returned to England, and underwent imprisonment for breach of contract; on his release he reappeared at Archangel, but misfortune dogged his footsteps. When they arrested him for debt, the British Ambassador was unable to interfere on his behalf; the arrest was legal, and he experienced five years of a Russian prison. He occupied himself on his return to England by sending petitions to Lord Wellesley and Lord Granville Leveson Gower and Perceval, in his endeavours to obtain compensation. He brought a petition himself, on 10th May 1810, to Downing Street; and Perceval's private secretary informed him that Mr Perceval would not give permission for the introduction of his petition.

"Perceval, as was his duty," wrote Sir Samuel Romilly, "refused to listen to these applications. But he could hardly have

accompanied his refusal with any harshness, for few men had less harshness in their nature."

On 12th March 1812 Bellingham made a final effort, and forwarded a printed circular to the Prime Minister and every Member of the House of Commons; enclosing copies of a petition to the House, and the replies he had received from Ryder's private secretary.

Bellingham confessed that he intended to shoot Lord Granville Leveson Gower owing to his refusal to support his claims at Petersburg, "but," he added, "Perceval appeared, and he felt that he must kill some one."

In an anonymous French pamphlet, entitled "Martin de Gallardon," on the subject of the Louis XVII. pretender Naundorff,[1] it is suggested that Perceval, in common with other notabilities, was assassinated on account of his knowledge of the escaped Dauphin. It would seem that such a suggestion was purely fantastic; on the other hand, it has become evident, that he was informed of the

[1] *See* Appendix.

existence of the Dauphin, in the year 1807. His wife and family were firm believers in the Naundorff claim. The following extract, from a letter to the author from the late Lord Egmont, Spencer Perceval's great nephew, dated Cowdray, 25th March 1891, accounts in some way for the allusion to Naundorff:

"I am sending you a book translated from the French by my father, 'The Misfortunes of the Dauphin,' which I told you of the other day, and came across in the library. He translated it for the benefit of his cousins who believed in the Naundorff Dauphin,—the likeness must have been remarkable. You will see by the book he was acknowledged by Madame de Rambaud,[1] St Hilaire, La Rochefoucauld, and others of the court of Louis XVI. The story is most mysterious. He never had a chance with the French tribunals, and there were other Bourbon claimants (thirty-six in all) on the scene. . . . Naundorff's wife received a pension from the family until her death."

The reference to Perceval's assassination

[1] The Dauphin's nurse.

in an obscure French pamphlet, is probably accounted for by private knowledge of the support extended to Naundorff by Perceval's children. In all likelihood the interest taken by the Percevals in the Bourbon cause originated with the unfortunate Maria Stella, Lady Newborough, the alleged daughter of the Duc de Chartres, afterwards known as Philippe Egalité. Lord Newborough's first wife was Lady Katharine Perceval, Spencer Perceval's half-sister. Her son, John Wynn, died without issue in 1800. Lord Newborough had married Maria Stella in 1786. A widower of fifty, he fell in love with the little actress, aged thirteen, whom he saw in Florence. In 1800, when John Wynn died, Lord Newborough intended to make Spencer Perceval's second son his heir. His union with Maria Stella had been so far platonic, but she wrote: "*J'ai consentis à devenir mère*," and she bore two sons, Thomas John in 1802, and Spencer Bulkeley in 1803.

Neither Maria Stella nor Naundorff could

expect sympathy at the hands of Louis XVIII. and "King Chiappini." Mrs Atkyns, the English friend of Marie Antoinette, who obtained access to the Queen's cell, spent £80,000 in her attempts to rescue the Dauphin; and in 1807 she wrote to Perceval from her home, Ketteringham Hall, in Norfolk, congratulating him on his elevation to the ministry. The "circumstance" which Mrs Atkyns alludes to at the end of her letter is a veiled reference to Louis XVII., of peculiar interest.

"If, sir," wrote Mrs Atkyns, "at any time I can by any means be of the least use with regard to French affairs, having more knowledge of that country than perhaps, sir, you are aware of, you may command me. There is a circumstance that most certainly may one day or other prove a severe check to the allied Powers should they attempt to enter France. It is a secret or artful menace, that Buonaparte reserves for a last manœuvre. When I come to town, which will be in less than a fortnight, I will, sir, if you please, explain my meaning. I need not request, sir,

that any communication I give, or my *now* having taken the liberty to address you, may remain a profound secret."

The story of the escaped Dauphin is one of many mysteries, but there is no doubt as to Bellingham's insanity. He was a victim to the curse of heredity; his misfortunes, the refusal of his petitions, worked on a mind predisposed to madness.

Bellingham's counsel should have been permitted by the judge to obtain witnesses to testify to the prisoner's mental condition. Within a week of the murder Bellingham was tried at the Old Bailey, and hanged on the 18th of May. He was spared the protracted agony of a lengthy trial, the succession of medical experts. He was spared the opinions of self-advertising novelists, the publicity of a long criminal case with its adjournments, and the tedious cross-examination of witnesses. A gross breach of justice occurred, however, in the refusal of the court with regard to Bellingham's application for witnesses. According to Lord Rokeby, Perceval

had strange forebodings of his approaching death, a few days before it occurred, and gave his will to Mrs Perceval at the time.

The dream of John Williams in May 1812 and the vision which appeared to Robert Perceval in June 1667 bear a certain resemblance, with the exception that Robert Perceval received the warning himself, and in Spencer Perceval's case the whole scene of the murder occurred in Williams's dream. The following statement was written by Williams at his friends' request:

"Some account of a dream which occurred to John Williams of Scorier House, in the county of Cornwall, in the year 1812.

"Being desired to write out the particulars of a dream which I had in the year 1812, before I do so, I think it may be proper for me to say that at that time my attention was fully occupied with affairs of my own, the superintendence of some very extensive mines in Cornwall being entrusted to me. Thus I had no leisure to pay any attention to political matters, and hardly knew at the time who formed the administration of the

country. It was therefore scarcely possible that my own interest in the subject should have had any share in suggesting the circumstances which presented themselves to my imagination. It was, in truth, a subject which never occurred to my waking thoughts. My dream was as follows: — About the 2nd or 3rd of May 1812 I dreamed I was in the lobby of the House of Commons, a place well known to me. A small man dressed in a blue coat and white waistcoat entered, and immediately I saw a person, who I had observed in the first instance dressed in a snuff-coloured coat and yellow metal buttons, take a pistol from under his coat and present it at the little man above mentioned. The pistol was discharged, and the ball entered under the left breast of the person at whom it was directed. I saw the blood issue from the place where the ball had struck him. His countenance instantly altered, and he fell to the ground. Upon enquiry who the sufferer might be, I was informed he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I further saw the murderer laid hold of by several gentlemen in the room. Upon waking, I told the particulars to my wife. She treated the

matter lightly, and desired me to go to sleep, saying it was only a dream. I soon fell asleep again, and again the dream presented itself with precisely the same circumstances. After awaking a second time, and stating the matter again to my wife, she only repeated her request that I should compose myself and dismiss the subject from my mind. Upon my falling asleep the third time, the same dream without any alteration was repeated, and I awoke, as upon the former occasion, in great agitation. So much alarmed and impressed was I by the circumstance above narrated that I felt much doubt whether it was not my duty to take a journey to London and communicate upon the subject with the party principally concerned. Upon this point I consulted some friends whom I met on business at the Godolphin mine on the day following. After having stated to them the particulars of the dream itself, and what were my feelings in relation to it, they dissuaded me from my purpose, saying I might expose myself to contempt or vexation or be taken up as a fanatic. Upon this I said no more, but anxiously watched

the newspaper every evening as the post arrived. On the evening of the 13th May, as far as I can recollect no account of Mr Perceval's death was in the newspapers. But my second son, at that time returning from Truro, came in a hurried manner into the room where I was sitting, and exclaimed: 'Father, your dream has come true. Mr Perceval has been shot in the lobby of the House of Commons. There is an account come from London to Truro, written after the newspapers were printed.'"

For the second time within the space of a hundred and fifty years a warning had been received of approaching death in the Perceval family.

The body of Robert Perceval, aged nineteen, was found by the watchmen "under the Maypole in the Strand," in the early morning of the 5th of June 1667. He was uncle to the first Earl of Egmont, and had come to London to study for the law under the guardianship of his uncle, Sir Robert Southwell.

"Many extraordinary circumstances attended

this sad affair. The particulars are delivered word for word, as they are minuted down by the present Earl of Egmont upon a conversation which Sir Robert Southwell had with him immediately before his death."

"Robert was but twenty when he was murdered in the Strand by villains, that, to this day, are not found out, and lies buried at Lincoln's Inn, near one of the pillars underneath the chapel. Some circumstances concerning his death are too extraordinary to be passed by, and what I am going to relate, I had from two persons whose sincerity I can depend on.

"A few nights before the murder, Robert, who was a student in Lincoln's Inn, was sitting in his chamber reading, and it was late at night when there appeared to him his own apparition, bloody and ghastly, stalking into his chamber. My uncle was so astonished at the sight that he immediately swooned away; but, recovering, he saw the spectre walk out again and vanish downstairs. When he was recovered of his fright he undressed himself and went to bed, but in

extraordinary uneasiness, so that he could not sleep, but rose early, and, putting on his clothes, went to his uncle and guardian, Sir Robert Southwell, who lived in Spring Garden. It was so early that Sir Robert was not yet stirring, but nevertheless he went into his room and waked him. It was a freedom he was not used to take, and Sir Robert was surprised; but, asking him what made him there so early, my uncle, still in consternation, replied he had that night seen his ghost, and told him all the particulars as I have related them. Sir Robert at first chid him for reporting an idle dream, the effect of an ill life and guilty conscience (for he loved his pleasure, and followed it too much); but, observing the disorder he was in, and having repeated the story to him, he grew very serious, and desired his nephew would take care of himself, and recollect if he had given occasion to any person to revenge himself on him; for this might be a true presage of what was to befall him. My uncle after some time left him, and, notwithstanding the impression thus made at first, I suppose he wore it off soon, or else it were impossible

he could be so careless of himself the night he was killed. For that evening he was dogged from house to house where he visited, by a single man, who followed him at a small distance, who when my uncle went into a house would wait like a footman in the porch till t'other came out; insomuch that once or twice he spoke to him, asking what was his business in following him so close, and the other answered what was that to him, he was about his own business. Nay, when my uncle told his friends he was dogged, he would not let them send a footman to attend him; and when at eleven o'clock at night he was assaulted by two or three, and wounded slightly as he entered a tavern in the Strand, where some friends of his were, he would take no warning, nor admit any one to see him safe away, though the tavern boy was so urgent with him that he chid him for his impertinence. But, leaving that company, he was a little time after found dead by the watchmen in the Strand, supposed to be killed in a house and laid there afterwards. I have the examinations taken by a coroner's inquest now by me, but they

could not help to a discovery. This my uncle Southwell told me a little time before he died, word for word.

"It is said of this unfortunate young gentleman, that when he came into the tavern before mentioned, he called for a glass of brandy, saying he was a little faint; and then, after having wiped his sword, which was stained with blood (as he said) of one of those by whom he was assaulted, and whose business (as he expressed it) he had done; and after having with his handkerchief tied up his leg, which was wounded, as he was going out of the house to return to his own chambers, he stepped back to tell the master of the tavern that he should remember, *that he had been attacked by persons who bore him an old grudge, and that, if he was murdered, his friends would find it out.*

"His person and conversation were both more agreeable to others than advantageous to himself, for they led him into company which proved his ruin. Example and fashion had, as it generally has upon men of his years, too great an influence, which showed itself in most of his actions, and in one

particular (in which it was exaggerated by a great courage and high spirit) in a remarkable degree; for he had been engaged in nineteen duels before he was twenty years of age, in all of which he came off with honour, and commonly with advantage. . . .

"A stranger's hat with a bunch of ribbons in it was found by his side, from whence it was at first hoped that the murderer might be discovered; but this expectation was found vain. For though the King by his proclamation, and the family by all proper enquiries, endeavoured to bring the offenders to justice, no positive or certain proof was ever attained to, and the villainy has as yet escaped at least a publick punishment. . . . Some imagined it was done by Beau Fielding, with whom he had a quarrel at a play; others by a near relation to Sir Robert Southwell's wife."

The assassination of Spencer Perceval affords a landmark in the early political history of the nineteenth century, and the dream of John Williams has been quoted in

matters of psychical research. But the direct death-warning of Robert Perceval has a romance, a mystery of its own. The same fatalism connects itself with the murder of a Prime Minister in the lobby of the House of Commons, and the death of a young law student, his ancestor, who was found on a June morning lying dead—"under the May-pole in the Strand."

THE TRIBUTE OF PARLIAMENT

X

THE TRIBUTE OF PARLIAMENT

In an up-to-date novel of the Regency period, Perceval has been referred to as "old Percival," though his years were not excessive for a Prime Minister when he met his death at the age of fifty. The spelling of the name is often left to chance. Percival is sometimes chosen as a Christian name by parents who require something more fanciful than the simple two-syllabled Percy, consequently an "i" creeps into the name when vague references are made to a statesman, — a Mr Percival, who was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons.

The day after Perceval's death a meeting of the leading Members of both parties took place at the Speaker's house, "to consult upon

the proper course of recommending Perceval's family to the protection of the Crown." It was rumoured that he had been unable to make a suitable provision for his wife and children. Ponsonby, Whitbread, Canning, Lord Castlereagh, and Ryder, were present at the meeting. Lord Castlereagh informed them that it was the Regent's intention to send a message to the House of Commons recommending a grant of £50,000 for the children, and an annuity of £2,000 a year for Mrs Perceval. The Regent's message was received with unanimous approval. Perceval's generosity to others during his lifetime met with a widespread recognition after his death. His most bitter political opponents combined in their appreciation of his private qualities.

The House met an hour after the meeting at the Speaker's. Lord Castlereagh delivered the Prince Regent's message.

"The Prince Regent, deeply impressed with the serious loss His Royal Highness and the country have sustained in consequence of the murder of the Right Honourable Spencer

Perceval, and being desirous of marking his sense of the public and private virtues of Mr Perceval, and of affording relief and assistance to his numerous and afflicted family, recommends to the House of Commons to enable His Royal Highness, in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, to make such provision for the widow and family of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval as to the justice and liberality of Parliament may seem proper."

In answer to a question concerning Mrs Perceval and her children, Lord Castlereagh replied that "he was not minutely in possession of the circumstances of the family, but he was able to state that the provision that Mr Perceval had left for his family was so moderate as not to leave a possibility of their living in a style suited to their rank. . . . He had forsaken a lucrative profession in which he had attained the highest eminence, and had not left behind him even the means of introducing his children into any profession suitable to their rank in life."

The pages of Hansard record the tribute paid to the memory of Perceval by Whig and Tory. Among the many speakers Whitbread commented on the right honourable gentleman's "perfect and unceasing control of temper. He hoped that beyond that House he had never on any occasion carried a feeling of resentment or displeasure against any one of its members. Against the right honourable gentleman he had even found it impossible to carry such a feeling even as far as the door." Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, said that he "entertained the highest affection for his person. He had known him in early life, and he had never known a man of greater worth."

Canning spoke of the "virtues and talents of a man whose loss all parties agreed in deploring, and of whom it might with particular truth be said that, whatever was the strength and extent of political hostility, he had never before that last calamity provoked against him a single enemy."

The address to the Regent was agreed to

unanimously. It was presented to the Prince by three hundred gentlemen in mourning representing the House of Commons. On the 14th of May Lord Castlereagh "moved before a committee of the whole House that £50,000 should be granted to Perceval's family, and £2,000 to Mrs Perceval for life." An additional £10,000 was proposed for the eldest son, the grant to Mrs Perceval to be raised to £60,000, the annuity to descend to her eldest son. These proposals were carried by 107 to 67. On the following day Huskisson moved that "the Prince Regent should be enabled to grant to the eldest son the sum of £1,000, from the date of his father's death during his mother's lifetime, and at her decease he should have the yearly sum of £2,000." The resolution was carried without a division.

On the 15th of May Lord Clive proposed that a public monument should be raised in Westminster Abbey to Perceval's memory, and to mark the general abhorrence of the deed which ended his career. Lord

Clive's proposal was carried by 199 votes to 26.

The family desired that the funeral should be of an entirely private nature, but it was difficult to arrange this, though they avoided the publicity of a London ceremony. Perceval was buried in Lord Egmont's family vault at Charlton on Saturday, the 16th of May. The pall-bearers were Lords Eldon, Liverpool, Harrowby, and Richard Ryder. Public monuments were erected to his memory at Westminster Abbey, Lincoln's Inn, and Northampton. He had represented the borough during the sixteen years of his Parliamentary life.

His connection with politics was largely due to force of circumstance. Until the death of Pitt there was no question of his abandoning the law.

As a Parliamentary leader it is sufficient to refer to the verdict of his contemporaries. No Minister accepted office under such precarious conditions.

Much has been written of the parlous state

of England during the great struggle for existence from 1802 until the defeat of Napoleon. We read patronising accounts of the Regent, of the privileged class, of the people, of the rotten boroughs and sinecures, of the state of London, its cockpits and taverns, of the brutal methods of the press-gang, the election riots and all the stock-in-trade bogeys of the period. In these days Rowlandson's caricatures are described as "odious" and coarse. Civilisation has made rapid strides, the gentle tactics of a modern election show a distinct advance on the dark days of electioneering. The Regency has been patronised sufficiently in our *golden* age; money-worship allied to vulgarity point the way to the apotheosis of city swashbucklers and Americanism.

Each class endeavours to ape the class above it. The golden age produces its *Lanzknechts* in emulation of the Middle Ages, and they worship one God—these heroes of the money market. They have done much to encourage the cult of Socialism, the well-

paid agitator has become the terror of politics, and the number of unemployed increases from day to day.

Wealth is the only god, the only accepted measurement of success in a plutocratic age, and money is held in vulgar hands.

To the average materialist of these days a character like Spencer Perceval's presents the aspect of a sealed volume. There were many things that wealth failed to purchase a hundred years ago. The aspect of life was entirely different. The good taste and simplicity of the period is revealed by the houses people lived in at the close of the eighteenth century. With the growth of a hundred years the old houses are gradually destroyed, and hideous terra-cotta edifices and blocks of flats take their place in obedience to the gospel of gold. The monstrosity of marble and terra-cotta replaces Adams. Nothing reflects an age more than the architecture. "They will not look forward to posterity," said Burke, "who never look back to their ancestors;" and it would seem that simplicity

is banished from the land, and Vulgarity lounges at her ease in the synagogue of Park Lane, never to be dethroned, encircled by machine-wrought terra-cotta, granite and marble of strange and awful hues, blazing in the light of myriad arc lamps. From her twentieth-century throne Vulgarity preaches the gospel of gold to the hustling crowd. Vulgarity is come into her own, and the voice resounds from London to Chicago. The talk is of steel trusts, and oil trusts, and corners in wheat and beef,—a halfpenny newspaper world, convulsed by rumours of a corner in paper. The contrast of a hundred years is significant, and those who are satisfied and rejoice over the political aspect of the halfpenny era, may look back to the Tory Government during the Peninsular war, and to Perceval's tenure of office; with uplifted eyebrows and sorrowful countenances, but it may be urged, notwithstanding, that he never turned aside in his political career, never shirked a difficulty by resigning the leadership.

Lord Dudley's estimate of Perceval gives a clear picture of his public and private qualities. A contemporary criticism is worth all the guess-work of after years. It is the candid opinion of a man who was in no way biassed by a political friendship.

"He wanted Mr Pitt's splendid declamatory eloquence, but in quickness and dexterity he was (I think) hardly inferior to him. On the whole, he appeared to me the most powerful man (independently of his situation) that we had in Parliament since the death of Mr Fox. In private, by the universal consent of everybody that knew him, he seems to have been possessed of all the qualities that can make human nature amiable and respectable — particularly good temper and generosity. I have heard several well-authenticated instances of his liberality at a time when he was himself in comparatively narrow circumstances,—and as to his temper, in spite of all the conflicts in which he was engaged, and all the business with which he was overwhelmed, he never was observed, even

by his family and those who approached him most nearly, to be at all ruffled, except once. It was for the eight and forty hours preceding the day on which he first met Parliament as Prime Minister. He was then remarked to be gloomy and silent, but neither before nor after did his cheerfulness and kindness to everybody about him sustain the smallest interruption. Nothing could be so gentleman-like and fair as his management of the House of Commons. Indeed, I do not believe that in the height of his prosperity he ever showed the least mark of insolence."

This appreciation of Perceval bears out, politically speaking, the opinion expressed by Pitt in his letter of 1798 to Lord Mornington, and his subsequent reference to a probable successor at the time of the duel with Tierney. It was "character," as Brand observed, that attached the party so closely to him, and enabled Perceval to continue the struggle. His unfailing tact and courtesy inspired respect, and he gave and received the hard blows of debate with absolute good-humour.

Lord Holland complained of his retaliatory powers, and the complaint may be considered in the light of a compliment from a Whig authority. He was essentially a powerful debater, and his resources were sufficiently taxed in the session of 1811—few Ministers of his day worked harder. It can with truth be said that Perceval never spared himself either as counsel or politician; and every one who came in contact with him admitted the charm of his personality—a gift of the gods — which the Law and the House of Commons (those schools of Dryasdust) failed to tarnish.

An entire lack of insincerity and affectation, a generosity which is sufficiently rare in human nature (when the question of money has to be considered) were dominant qualities in Perceval's character. His home life became a matter of anxiety to Sydney Smith; in the Plymley letters he contended that the welfare of the nation, the Britain of the great Whig party, had nothing to do with the private qualities of the Tory leader.

He would have none of them. Perceval must owe the butcher "for the veal of the preceding year, destroy the domestic happiness of Wood and Cockell, whip his boys," and by these drastic measures promote the salvation of his country. His conversation during the early days of the Midland circuit was described by Romilly as "barren of instruction," coupled with "invincible prejudices"; he admits that in spite of these deficiencies Perceval was the delight of all who knew him. The phrase "barren of instruction," dear to the heart of the encyclopædist, speaks volumes in favour of Perceval's social qualities; the instructive talker, the well-informed prig sheds an all-prevailing blight on social intercourse; he had little in common with the talking machine who exists through all the ages, making a parade of learning, leering at his victims through spectacles or *pince-nez*.

Statesmen who lived during the struggle for existence were fortunate in many respects; they never knew the American system of

publicity and advertisement; the photographer, the interviewer of the halfpenny press, and other heralds of the higher vulgarity were unknown.

The spirit of romance recoils at the spectacle of Pitt and Fox pursued from door to door by the interviewer, harassed by militant viragos; their daily lives were free from assaults of this kind, free from headlines and the click of the camera. Williams, who dreamed of the murder, in Cornwall, had no knowledge of the members of the Cabinet in 1812: a higher civilisation has made manifest the face of every politician from the Land's End to John o' Groats.

In the days of the Regency they were spared the amateur socialist prattling of communal division from a motor-car: a perfect union of individualism and socialism, craving for self-advertisement, eager to demolish the work of past builders, in order to air the half-addled theories of a contemptible creed.

APPENDIX A
THE HOUSE OF YVERY

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ANDERSON, in his preface to the "Genealogical History of the House of Yvery," announces that he has relied wholly upon "original records or visitations or such other public authorities as the Courts of Justice admit in evidence."

Of the four branches of the Norman House of Yvery the two baronies of Luvel and Gournay expired in the male line. The barony of Luvel was revived by the second Earl of Egmont when he took his seat in the House of Lords, the rights of Gournay passing through the family of De la More to the Percevals, the only existing branch in the male line of the House of Yvery. The work traces the descent of the Percevals in England from Ascelin Gouel de Perceval, who received

a grant of lands in Somerset after the Norman invasion, and founded the house of Weston-in-Gordano.

His grandson Richard, being related by marriage to Richard de Clare (surnamed Strongbow), accompanied him in the first invasion of Ireland. He also fought in the Crusades, and his monument existed in the church of Weston early in the eighteenth century. The crest of the knight on horseback and the motto "Sub Cruce Candida" were derived, according to Anderson, from this Richard Perceval, "qui militavit in terra sancta." The Percevals of Weston continued to hold considerable property in the county of Somerset; and in 1456 Ralph Perceval received the estate of Tykenham also in Somerset from his elder brother, and became the ancestor, in eleven descents in the male line, of John Perceval, Earl of Egmont, the father of Spencer Perceval.

The Percevals of Tykenham and Rolleston made additions to their property by marriages with the heiresses of the Caves of Sydenham

and Bampfyldes of Poltimore; but owing to extravagance during two generations the property became considerably diminished, and, to quote the work:

"Richard Perceval, following the example of his grandfather and father, was guilty of great extravagance and riot in the beginning of his life, and, marrying Joan, the seventh daughter of Henry Young, a second brother of the House of Buckhorn Weston in the county of Dorset, with whom he had no portion, so angered his father by this step (who had depended on his prudent marriage for the re-establishment of his encumbered affairs) that he would never see his face again, till the great change which happened many years after in his conduct and circumstances. Being thus rejected by his father, he maintained himself as long as the credit of his reversionary fortune would support him, and till he had tired his friends with his frequent applications to them; at length, being no longer able to remain in England in these circumstances, he travelled into Spain, leaving his wife and five children to the care of the families of Cave and Bampfylde, his nearest

relations. He stayed in that country about four years, and then, hearing of his wife's death, returned to England in hope to reconcile himself with his father, but he continued still inexorable. This severity of his father, and the change which his misfortunes had wrought in his favour, engaged all his relations on his side, particularly Roger Cave of Stamford. Which Roger Cave, having married the sister of Lord Burleigh, he there contracted an acquaintance with that lord which was afterwards of great service to him. For the Lord Burleigh, moved with compassion for him, interposed with his father in his behalf; but, finding his endeavours unsuccessful, he with great friendship took him under his particular care. Not long after, in 1586, the Spaniards making vast preparations for that great Armada with which they invaded England two years after, a packet of letters was thrown overboard by a Spanish vessel, which was chased by an English ship, and, being recovered by the latter, was brought to the Queen and Counsel, where, being written in cypher, there was no man to read the contents; whereupon, at the recommendation of Lord Burleigh, the letters were entrusted to

this Richard Perceval, who returned them the next morning to the Queen at the same hour decyphered and translated into Spanish, Latin, and English. This was the first certain intelligence of that formidable design (which was soon to be further confirmed by a letter obtained out of the Pope's closet by a priest, who was a spy employed by Sir Francis Walsingham); and the importance of the discovery was such, and so grateful was the Queen, that she instantly ordered him a pension of eight hundred marks, which he enjoyed all his life after, and rewarded him further with a place worth four hundred pounds per annum in the Duchy Court of Lancaster.

"Some time after, Sir Robert Cecil, second son to Lord Burleigh, being made Master of the Court of Wards (the same who was afterwards Earl of Salisbury), he was, at the recommendation of the father, appointed to that court and place worth two thousand pounds per annum."

And the historian adds that he became reconciled with his father.

Richard Perceval was Member of Parliament

for Richmond in Yorkshire; and, though he had reason to regret the death of Salisbury and the succession of James I., he was eventually made registrar of the Court of Wards. At his father's death he inherited the Somersetshire property, which he partly sold, and bought land in Ireland with the proceeds.

His son, Sir Philip, held many offices in the reign of Charles I., was a member of the Privy Council, and became possessed of seventy Knight's fees in Ireland; during the Rebellion he garrisoned and maintained five strongholds in the county of Cork at his own expense. He died on the 10th of November 1647, at the comparatively early age of forty-four, of a "fever upon the Spirits," and "by order and at the expense of Parliament" was buried at St Martin's-in-the-Fields.

Of the two epitaphs composed at his death, the following is the most descriptive:

"Patriot, without pretence, from faction free;
Just to his prince, and true to liberty.
Who, high in office, bore no publick curse;
Who drew no profit from the publick purse.

With private arms his country's foes withstood,
From private stores supplied her hosts with food.
Of various posts endured the various toil,
In view of glory, not in thirst of spoil.
In council faithful; in the senate bold;
Nor bribed by favour, nor by power controlled.
Great in himself, the guilty title scorned,
By birth ennobled, and by worth adorned."

A certain fatality seemed to pursue the Perceval family until the close of the seventeenth century; within the space of fifty years there were no less than five successors to the estates.

Sir Edward Perceval died in 1691, aged nine, and was succeeded by his brother John, who became the first Earl of Egmont.

APPENDIX B
"NAUNDORFF"

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"NAUNDORFF"

THE two familiar pretenders of English history, Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, who appeared upon the scene after the murder of Edward V. and his brother in the Tower, were easily disposed of,—there was no confusion of claimants. In the case of Louis XVII. (who was popularly supposed, according to the school text-books, to have died in the Temple) the claimants were legion, and the number of impostors served to obscure the cause of Naundorff. By the process of elimination the Dauphins were reduced to four: Naundorff, Richemont, Eleazar Williams, and Augustus Meves. The works published on the subject are practically inexhaustible, and show no signs of decreasing; even a Spanish novel has

been written on the vicissitudes of Naundorff. There are the books of Augustus Meves and his sons, Hansons on Eleazar Williams, and Normant des Varannes on Richemont; a monthly periodical, *La Légitimité*, and *La Revue Historique sur la question Louis XVII.* Works by Sardou, Lenotre, Henri Provins, Lanne, and the two weighty volumes of Naundorff's correspondence with his family, edited by Otto Friedrichs.

"A Friend of Marie Antoinette," with the preface by Sardou, gives the life-story of Mrs Atkyns (whose maiden name was Charlotte Walpole), who, after a short and successful career on the stage, married Edward Atkyns of Ketteringham Hall in Norfolk. On a visit to Paris Mrs Atkyns made the acquaintance of Marie Antoinette at Versailles, and she became a most devoted friend to the Queen.

Sardou states that it is evident from documentary evidence that the Dauphin was smuggled out of the Temple, and in course of time the part played by Josèphine de

Beauharnais and Mrs Atkyns will in all probability be more clearly understood. At the death of Marie Antoinette (whom Mrs Atkyns attempted to save), she devoted all her energies and the revenues of the Ketteringham estate in her endeavours to rescue the Dauphin. He was hidden in a loft on the top floor of the Temple till the 12th of June 1795; the boy who had been substituted for him died on the 8th. Josèphine had watched over the Dauphin, and through her influence with Barras placed a countryman of hers, Laurent, at the Temple. He remained in charge until the 31st March 1795, when he was replaced by Caron, cup-bearer to Louis XVI.

Some writers on the subject of Louis XVII. assert that the Dauphin, after his removal from the Temple, was allowed to run away by himself and disappear in the whirlpool of Paris. It is improbable that such a valuable life was deliberately thrown away. Mrs Atkyns's letter to Spencer Perceval in 1807 indicates that the existence of Louis XVII. was known to those behind the political scene. Sardou

is of the opinion that before many years have passed this vexed problem will be solved; in the meantime Mrs Atkyns's postscript, cautiously worded, comes to light after a century.

The young man who was released by agents of the Empress Josèphine in 1809 from Vincennes, was taken to Spandau in 1810, and received the rights of citizenship in 1812, under the name of Naundorff. He adopted the trade of a clockmaker during his sojourn in Prussia, and married a Fraulein Einert in 1818; there were four sons and five daughters of the marriage.

In 1835 he went to Paris and found many supporters, including Jules Favre and members of the court of Louis XVI., who were satisfied with his claims. His sister, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, was carefully prevented from granting him an interview; and when he tried to obtain recognition and the confirmation of his civil rights, Louis Philippe had him expelled from France under police escort, and he arrived in London July 1836.

Spencer Perceval's widow (who remarried

Sir William Carr in 1815) and her family, took an interest in the unfortunate Naundorff; her knowledge of the existence of a Louis XVII. was derived from her first husband. His nephew, the Hon. and Rev. C. G. Perceval, Rector of Calverton, translated Naundorff's account of his wanderings, which was published in London in 1837. *Abrégé de L'Histoire des Infortunes du Dauphin depuis L'Epoque où il a été enlevé de la Tour du Temple jusqu'au moment de son Arrestation par le Gouvernement de Louis Philippe.* The book was published by C. Armand of Rathbone Place, Oxford Street. Two attempts were made to assassinate Naundorff during his residence in London, where he remained until January 1845. Then he sought refuge in Holland, where his family have lived ever since.

The Dutch Government caused their Minister in Berlin to examine the secret archives which contained proofs of Naundorff's identity, with the result that he obtained complete recognition. He died shortly after from poison on the 10th of August 1845.

The following inscription can be seen on his tomb at Delft:

"Ici Repose
LOUIS XVII
Charles Louis Duc de Normandie
Roi de France et de Navarre

Né à Versailles le 27 Mars 1785
Décédé a Delft le 10 Août 1845."

The French Government protested against this inscription, but Holland replied by a request for proofs showing that Naundorff was not Louis XVII., and France was unable to furnish them. Whether Naundorff was Louis XVII. or a native of Potsdam can only be proved to the satisfaction of contending parties when the secret archives (hitherto withheld from students of history) yield up the secret, until then the controversy in Paris will rage indefinitely. One thing is clear, the case of Naundorff is a striking example of a powerful combination to crush an individual, for State purposes, and for the protection of those whose chief recommendation was their command of immense wealth.

It must be remembered that Naundorff, unlike Richemont, was unable to obtain a hearing in the courts of justice, though he demanded a full enquiry, and his cause had been taken up by one of the ablest advocates in France.

Mention of the Dauphin occurs in a letter written by the Princess of Wales in 1817, which is of interest, as showing the belief at that time in the existence of Louis XVII.; though Naundorff himself is supposed to have been released from Vincennes in 1809.

"The great news most talked of is this great State prisoner retained in the prison of Vincennes. I, in my own mind, am convinced it is the Dauphin, with which I should be delighted, but particularly to see completely the nation made an April fool of by *this scham King* (Louis XVIII.). I am only afraid it would involve the nation in a civil war, as these old gouty fellows would not like to remove the crown so easily. How many regrets about the Saint-Esprits and the garters will be expressed,

which, after all, was a very rash action of two old foolish noddles. The English nation has at all times been made April fools of, but never so completely than this year of our Lord 1817."

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