

The History of the Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham.

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INTRODUCTION.

MUCH has been said of historical impartiality; and the generality seem to require it, as the first, and most indispensable quality of this branch of literature. It is however, like almost all terms of human invention, of ambiguous meaning. There is an impartiality, that embraces no party; that relates, with the same spiritless and dispassionate tenor, the cruelties of a Nero, and the generous designs, and benevolent conduct of an *Henri le grand*. This is to be found, in the greatest perfection, in the dullest, and the stupidest historians. Lover, as I am, of impartiality, I think it my duty, in this place, to advertise my reader, that this kind of impartiality I abjure, and I despise. I am even free enough to think, that histories thus gifted, do not deserve the opening, to a philosopher; to a reader of morality; or a reader of taste.

But there is an impartiality; how shall I describe her? She is the native of no country; but a citizen of the world. She knows no personal regards; and she is superior to all party connections. She is deaf to the mandates of a court; and dead to the momentary gust of popular opinion. With a piercing eye, she looks through every disguise; and, with a discriminating spirit, she separates, in the most dazzling and beautiful characters, the false brilliant, from the true. She seats herself in the chair of truth. She appears the great archetype, of the celebrated Egyptian judge, who decided, with solemnity, upon the merits of the dead; and determined the proportion of luster, that should be reflected, from their characters, upon the remotest posterity. She considers this, as her sacred and inviolable office: and never never can any temptation move her, to lend her authority, to elevate vice, on the one hand; or, on the other, to give substance and energy, to the blast of envy.

But then she is the farthest in the world from the coolness and indifference. On the contrary, she treats every event, that comes before her, with deliberate, but energetic decision. Vice shudders, at her tribunal; and cruelty shrinks, into that abject, cowardly, trembling thing, that God and nature stamped her. Innocence, liberty, humanity enshrine themselves, beneath her standard. She is the only vicar of the divinity upon earth; and the visible head of that illustrious church, which alone, from all nations of the world, unalterable rectitude, and immortal benevolence shall honour, in a future state. In fine, she is the genuine professor of humanity. By imperceptible, never ceasing advances, she wins over the sons of men, to the restoration of paradise. She discovers, to them, all that is virtue, and all, that is praise.

And this is the consummation of her reign; to expand every beautiful affection of the human heart, wide, as the universe of God; to blunt the horrid instruments of savage war, into instruments of agriculture, and the arts of cultivation; and to render man to man, in every distant clime, the propitious genius, and the guardian angel.

An attempt, at the former sort of impartiality, has spoiled half the well written histories, in the world. The bulk, it was impossible, should by this, or any other mistake, be spoiled. It is very lately, that the world has been taught; if indeed, in a comprehensive sense, it can yet be said, to be taught, the superiority, and the value of the genuine impartiality, The first writer, that has had

the spirit, to assert it, in its fullest extent, seems to have been, the celebrated abbe Raynal. It is superfluous, to add, that this is the impartiality, to the attainment of which, the author of the following work, has most ardently aspired.

One word more, it is yet necessary to subjoin. His subject, abstracted, from its eternal arduousness, has, in this respect, a great additional difficulty. It is, in the utmost degree, recent; and one half of the characters, of which it is composed, are still living. In this case, the author does something more, than “walk, upon ashes, under which the fire, is not extinguished.” You may inveigh, against the projects of an Alexander, and extol the virtues of a Brutus, in the strongest terms, that language can furnish, without incurring the suspicion of partiality. But, could the author flatter himself, that he had been happy enough; to abstract so far, from the age, in which he lives; as to view events, with the same disinterestedness, that he might employ, in the former instance: yet sure it is, that he should find few readers, assiduous, and philosophical enough, to weigh him, in an even balance. He must throw himself then, upon the candour of the public; and rest his appeal, if that does not favour too much of vanity, with the judgment of posterity.

CHAP. I

Extraction and early pursuits of Mr Pitt. — Takes his seat in Parliament. — Administration of Sir Robert Walpole. — Spanish convention. — Administration of lord Carteret.

MR. William Pitt the subject of the present memoir was born on the fifteenth of November 1708. In conformity to the usual practice of biographers it may be expected that I should give some account of his extraction and family .

He has been treated by a celebrated nobleman as emphatically a new man. The fact is, that, as we cannot deduce his ancestry from a long line of nobility, so neither was it such, as that any man need be ashamed of it. His grandfather was Thomas Pitt, esquire, sometime governor of Madras, and who sold to the king of France the celebrated diamond, commonly known by the appellation of *Pitt's diamond*. A younger son of that gentleman was created earl of Londonderry in Ireland; and one of his daughters married James Stanhope, esquire, afterwards earl Stanhope, the minister and friend of king George the first. Robert Pitt, of Boconnoc, in Cornwall, esquire, the father of our hero, was the eldest son. His lady was sister to John, earl of Grandison. By her he had two sons, of whom William was the younger, and five daughters.

CHAP. II.

Administration of Mr. Pelham.—Mr. Pitt appointed paymaster-general.—His versatility.—Origin of the war of 1755.—Death of Mr. Pelham.—instability of his successors, the duke of Newcastle, and Mr. Fox.—Mr. Pitt appointed Secretary of State.—He is dismissed.

MR. PELHAM, who succeeded, was one of the eleves of sir Robert Walpole. He inherited his skill in parliamentary management, and was competently versed in the business of finance. But his abilities were in no degree equal to the conduct of a war. In some respects, however, he was directly the reverse of his master. The manners of Walpole were blunt and undisguised; and, as he was a stranger to the sentiments, so he was not studious to employ the language of virtue, but where it was indispensably necessary. The manners of Mr. Pelham were mild, plausible, and insinuating. Upon all occasions, he preserved the decency of a gentleman, and the respectableness of office. By much apparent candour, and ever knowing when to yield, he turned the edge of opposition. Though engaged in the prosecution of those ruinous measures of government, which were, in some measure, entailed upon him; he has usually been considered, as a man of integrity and honour: and, however mistaken in his maxims of administration, is supposed to have been actuated by a sincere love for his country.

Hitherto, amidst all the vicissitudes of the state, we have seen Mr. Pitt preserve a consistency of conduct, as laudable, as it is rare. It was this quality, which, united with his extraordinary talents, obtained him at once the admiration and esteem of all the disinterested part of the nation. And, though, by such a conduct, he excluded himself from those lucrative appointments under government, to which his great abilities must necessarily have introduced him; yet, had his passion been gain, which it certainly was not, he did not remain wholly without his reward. A little previous to the time of which I am speaking, died the very celebrated Sarah, dutchess of Marlborough, possessed of immense riches; and who, though her fortune had been chiefly acquired by her power with the whigs; was violently attached to the country party, and even supposed to favour the exiled family. Among other legacies, she bequeathed Mr. Pitt ten thousand pounds, “upon account,” as her will expresses it, “of his merit, in the noble defence he has made, for the support of the laws of England, and to prevent the ruin of his country.”

His opposition to the measures of government was, however, now at an end. Lord Carteret retired in the close of the year 1744; and, though Mr. Pitt did not immediately come into office, yet, in the latter end of the same session of parliament, he resigned his appointment in the prince of Wales’s household; which may reasonably be considered, as a previous step to the arrangement, that shortly took place in his favour. In the following February, he was appointed joint vice-treasurer of Ireland, and, two months after, upon the death of Mr. Winnington, he exchanged that office for the place of paymaster-general of his majesty’s forces.

During this whole period, from the resignation of lord Carteret, he appears to have preserved a total silence in parliament, respecting national questions, with a single exception. This was at the time, that they were called together, upon the breaking out of the rebellion in Scotland. He then stood up, in opposition to an amendment to the address to the throne, stating their determination,

speedily to frame bills, for the further security of the freedom of representation, and the independency of parliament. In what manner he voted during this time, I am not able to determine. If it be allowable to hazard a conjecture, I should suppose he observed the same moderation in this respect, as he did in speaking: sometimes voted with administration; and sometimes, upon points, where his judgment was fixed, or his opinions well known, joined the minority. Be this, as it will; certain it is, he did not enter himself, as a speaker in favour of administration, till in the session, subsequent to the treaty of Aix la Chapelle.

Here then it is, that we are presented with the first instance of that unsteadiness and versatility of conduct, which forms the favourite accusation of the enemies of this illustrious character. It is not, however, wholly without its excuse. Mr. Pelham affected to set out with forming an administration upon the broadest and most liberal plan. And, though he scarce indulged the people, with even the appearance of a change of measures; he was able to bring the principal persons in minority, in both houses of parliament, to acquiesce in his arrangement. This was partly owing to the assurances he gave, that he did not expect those, who joined him, to abjure the principles they had previously embraced; and was even contented, they should publicly oppose his measures, whenever they apprehended them to be of pernicious tendency.

In the acquiescence I have mentioned, Mr. Pitt had certainly little or no share. But, deserted of his colleagues in opposition, and obliged, either to follow them, or to stand almost alone, he demurred. To continue to oppose, appeared a heartless and a fruitless labour. He foresaw no advantage, that could result from it to the public weal; and he felt, that it would amount, in a manner, to the shutting a perpetual door, upon his admission into any of the great offices of state. Ambition was doubtless a leading trait of his disposition. And, in this consisted the virtue of his character; that his ambition was directed, not to crooked ends, but to the largest and most excellent purposes; and that he had rather have seen it forever ungratified, than gratified, in a manner, that, he believed, would not enable him to promote the service of his country. Accordingly, he introduced, by his integrity, a considerable reform into the pay-office, which, of all others, is the most liable to abuse; and distinguished himself by the very honourable singularity, of never making any advantage of the public money, while it remained in his hands.

But, though we have stated the reasons, which may be supposed to have influenced his conduct, we do not mean to adopt them. The first principle, whether of public or private virtue, is, to do that, which we apprehend to be right, without regard to consequences. He, who is the delegated guardian of the welfare, and the liberties of the people, is bound, upon all occasions, to exert the talents he possesses, in support of every salutary, and opposition to every pernicious measure. And the moment he deserts this line of conduct, he must be considered, in some measure, as betraying the trust that is committed to him, and sacrificing to personal considerations the interests of his country.

The period, of which I am now speaking, from the resignation of lord Carteret, to the peace of Aix la Chapelle, is, upon many accounts, a memorable era. The war was now become at once ruinous and absurd. If, in the beginning, its conduct were such, as entitled its director to the appellation of a Quixote; in its present state, it centred the extreme of madness, with the extreme of imbecility. It had, for some time, become totally destitute of an object; and was carried on for this single reason, because it was already begun. The victor, at the close of every campaign, held forth in vain to the vanquished, the most advantageous terms of accommodation. It is probable, that the administration, who, by their cabals, had prevented lord Carteret from accomplishing that desirable object, dared not immediately to do that themselves, which they had professed to

disapprove in another. In the mean time, this very period was distinguished by the most perfect supineness at home. The opposition in parliament, equally reduced in numbers, and in spirit, was such, as scarcely to deserve the name.

At length, however, at the time, in which ministers had chosen to accept the terms, that were held out to them, an accidental circumstance tended to revive, in some degree, the ardour of parliamentary debate. A fresh dispute had broken out between his majesty, and the prince of Wales. Lord Bolingbroke had, some time before, returned to his native country; and is now said to have secretly actuated the deliberations of the prince's court. The principal persons of that court, with the earl of Egmont at their head, fell down the stream of opposition. At the same time, Mr. Pitt, who, it is probable, had hitherto been restrained by his disapprobation of the conduct of the war, thought himself at liberty openly to support the measures of government. The minister had also a most able auxiliary in Mr. William Murray, now earl of Mansfield.

A generous mind can derive little pleasure, from detecting the inconsistencies, into which the greatest characters have fallen. But, though not an agreeable task, our regard for the truth of history renders it an indispensable one. Formerly Mr. Pitt had promoted, upon all occasions, the spirit of parliamentary enquiry; and stood forth the advocate of the most spirited measures in all our foreign concerns. Now he placed himself in the way of such discussions; and expatiated with fluency upon the advantages of temporising. Formerly he had pleaded, with vehemence and energy, for the substituting a general address of thanks, instead of those prostitute echoes of the speech from the throne, so unworthy the majesty of a free people. Now he carefully displayed the evil tendency of a dry and unanimated style; and assured parliament, that these things were mere words of course, and might afterwards be retracted, upon better information, without any breach of dignity or truth. Formerly he had distinguished himself by his opposition to a standing army; and, in pursuance of this principle, had espoused every restriction, that had been proposed, upon the despotism of military law. Now he pleaded for an extension of that law; and opposed a bill, whose object was to have created such a rotation in the army, that, in a few years, every peasant and artisan, in the kingdom, would have understood the business of a soldier; and the people in general have probably concluded, that a standing army was altogether useless. "Our liberties existed," he declared, "solely in dependence upon the direction of the sovereign, and the virtue of the army. To that virtue," said he, "we trust, even at this hour, small as our army is. To that virtue we must continue to trust, should we espouse all the precautions our warmest opposers can desire. And, without this virtue, should the lords, the commons, and the people of England, intrench themselves behind parchment, up to the teeth; the sword will find a passage to the vitals of the constitution." In fine, he had formerly been uniform in his opposition to continental measures, and the subsidising the princes of Germany. Now he stood up in defence of the most exceptionable species of subsidy; a subsidy, in time of peace; a subsidy, that has scarcely been found, in a single instance, to answer the end, for which it was designed, or to bind those to us in the season of danger, whom we thus anticipated in the time of tranquillity.

The generality, I believe, will be inclined to question the sincerity of this conversion; and will represent to themselves Mr. Pitt as engaged in the support of measures, which, in his own breast, he peremptorily disapproved. But they know little of the human heart, who suppose, that, in such cases, the judgment evidently points one way, and interest and inclination another. Perhaps there does not exist, upon the face of the earth, an hypocrisy, unmixed and pure. In order to deceive others, we first deceive ourselves. Interest and ambition not only alter our language, but our minds. They attract our choice, they warp our understanding, and they cloud our discernment. It

must also be remembered, that change of mind is scarcely ever the result of sudden conviction, but almost universally produced by a slow and imperceptible progress. In the complication of motives, then, by which our conduct is governed, it is seldom possible, to ascribe its proportion to the influence of each: and, though it were easy, we should hardly be much inclined to so unpleasant a task. Mr. Pitt was probably partly induced, to this second recession, from his original line of conduct, by the motive we stated in the former case. His conversion may be partly ascribed, to the power exhibited in a thousand instances, of the fascinating manners of Mr. Pelham. And, I believe, the rebellion had, in some degree, the same influence upon his comprehensive soul, that it certainly had upon every weaker mind, to increase his loyalty, and improve his complaisance.

In the mean time, I have met with but one instance, in which he exhibited the remains of his old principles; and made use of that liberty, which Mr. Pelham indulged to all the servants of the crown. He had ever pleaded for the reduction of our army, and the increase of our naval force. And in the session of 1751, an amendment being moved, to substitute 10,000 instead of 8,000 seamen, for the service of the ensuing year, he stood up, and strenuously supported it.

One salutary measure particularly distinguished the present administration. Almost immediately upon the renewal of peace, Mr. Pelham revived a part of the scheme of sir John Barnard, for the reduction of the national debt; and, in the face of a thousand obstacles, carried it into execution, with a firmness and a patriotism, that must always be mentioned to his honour.

The last years of this minister, owing to the death of the prince of Wales, became once more undisturbed by opposition. Of consequence, Mr. Pitt remitted his exertions in support of administration, and fell back into that state of neutrality, which he had observed, previous to the conclusion of the peace of 1748. The only thing, by which he distinguished himself, during this period, was the bringing in a bill, for the relief of the pensioners of Chelsea hospital, and for abolishing the exorbitant usury, by which they were oppressed. He provided, that half a year's pension should always be paid in advance, and that the annuity itself should be incapable of being mortgaged. This regulation will ever remain a monument, of the distinguished humanity of its author.

But events now began to prepare the way, for Mr. Pitt's accession to that high employment, in which he acquitted himself with so much personal honour, and so much to the glory and advantage of his country. America had now, by insensible degrees, grown up to the highest importance. At the peace of Utrecht, when we gave the law to the first sovereign in Europe, the boundaries of its most northern provinces were esteemed, at once, so uncertain, and so trifling in their consequence; that their final settlement was referred to conferences, that were little attended to, and an arbitration, that was never concluded. At this time, the spirit of commerce, in that part of the world, was risen to its greatest height. As the French have ever excelled us in adroitness, and the art of winning the affections, we had no other resource, to put ourselves upon a par with them, but that of compulsion. While they persuaded the Indians, we carried our purposes by force; and while they won, we alienated their affections.

It would be absurd to institute an enquiry into which party was in the right, when the object of both was certainly not right, but convenience. It would appear still more absurd, when we reflected, that the Indians were the true proprietors; and that we, on each side, were indeed no better, than robbers, fallen out about the spoil, that they had made upon the innocent and defenceless passenger. But, whatever might be the sentiments of either party, upon this head, they do not seem, at any time, to have exerted themselves, to put matters in a train of accommodation.

France desired, under the name of peace, to continue her encroachments; and Great Britain, as usual, began with temporising and delay, and concluded with hastiness and precipitation.

In the beginning of this dispute, Mr. Pelham died; fortunately perhaps for his own character; universally regretted by the nation. The ministry, that he left behind him, and that held their ground for some time after his death, were a body of weakness and inanity, almost without a parallel. The principal figure in this groupe was the duke of Newcastle, brother to the deceased. His abilities were perhaps of the slenderest form, that were ever hazarded in so important a station. He was chiefly distinguished, for his unfeigned attachment to the house of Brunswic, and as one of the leaders of the whig party. He was not however deficient, either in pride, or ambition. It was his delight, to be surrounded with a crowd of dependents, and to appear distracted with a multiplicity of business. His manners were those of bustling importance. His judgment was confused, headlong, and abrupt. At the same time, he was personally disinterested. And the partiality which every man feels for his own talents, may well be supposed, to have hindered him from suspecting, that the desire he felt to engross the direction of affairs, could possibly be productive of any detriment to his country.

The temper of this nobleman was exceedingly visible in the measures, now adopted by administration. Fostered by their weakness and indecision, the American dispute got to a head. And when it could be neglected no longer, they ran immediately into the opposite extreme. Instead of sending to the French court their peremptory and ultimate demands, they issued clandestine orders of reprisal; and held up Great Britain under the character of the pirates of Europe. And instead of directing the whole energy of government, to the increasing our naval force, they employed themselves in forming expensive connections upon the continent, that could have no tendency, but to involve us in an unnecessary, general war.

At this juncture, and upon the meeting of parliament in November, 1755, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, the paymaster general, and secretary at war, put themselves at the head of opposition; and attacked the treaties, lately concluded with Russia and Hesse Cassel, with an energy and spirit, that seemed altogether irresistible. No two characters could be more dissimilar. But they agreed in this, the being both of them actuated by an uncontrollable spirit of ambition. They were sensible, that the present ministry could not stand long. By pushing them down the precipice, they expected to advance themselves upon their ruins. And indeed it was impossible for both of them to be disappointed. Accordingly Mr. Fox became secretary of state, and ostensible prime minister; and Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Legge, who had joined in his opposition, were commanded to resign their respective employments.

Though, by this step, the hands of government acquired a temporary addition of strength, yet neither was the spirit of parliamentary opposition much diminished, nor the conduct of foreign affairs at all altered. The succeeding campaign in America was altogether inactive. The administration seemed wholly engrossed by their fears. And the government of France, understanding their weak side, marched several bodies of troops to the coast of our channel, and studiously adopted the appearance of an intended invasion; while their real attack was turned upon the side of Minorca. The stratagem had had all the effects its most sanguine friends could have wished. Great Britain was immediately deluged with Hessian and Hanoverian auxiliaries; while the devoted island, was, in a manner, utterly forgotten. But the events that chiefly distinguished this year, and were alone lasting in their consequences, were the alliances concluded between France and Austria on the one hand, and Great Britain and Prussia on the other.

If the two contending powers in America, were inspired with an insatiable lust of gain; much more were the two great states of Germany, possessed with a most restless spirit of ambition. The loss of Silesia perpetually haunted the reflections, and disturbed the repose of the empress; while her illustrious antagonist appeared not to remain contented with his acquisition. He probably looked forward to some object, of which perhaps himself had no determined idea, but which has certainly never been perfectly understood by the world. With these dispositions, they only waited for an opportunity to declare themselves. And this opportunity was furnished by the mutual cabals of the courts of Versailles and London. The former understood too well our sovereign's predilection for his German dominions, not to foresee their advantage, in distracting the attention, and dividing the force of their enemy, by an attack upon Hanover.

For some time, it was uncertain, which of the Germanic powers should unite with which of the maritime ones. Never did any war commence in such a medley of contradictory treaties. Austria had been our old ally, and, presuming upon her friendship, we had engaged the Russians to make a diversion in her favour. At the same time, we refused to concur with her in her views upon Silesia, and by that means forced her into the arms of France. The king of Prussia, protecting against the admission of any foreign troops into the empire, seemed to our ministers to open a door to a more intimate connexion. He was not backward to embrace the proposals, that were made him. And thus we exchanged our old and natural ally, for a prince, who must be supported by an enormous subsidy, and whose friendship could never afford us the smallest advantage. We paved the way to a fresh example of those singular confederacies; not, of many smaller powers to reduce one overgrown one; but of several, the greatest powers upon earth, combined for the destruction of one state, small in extent, and shallow in its resources.

In the mean time, these proceedings, however injudicious, were perhaps too complicated for the level of popular decision. But the loss of Minorca blew up the flame of national resentment to its highest pitch. By a train of insidious arts, the ministry were able to throw the weight of it, in a good-measure, off themselves, upon the admiral they had employed. Accordingly he was soon after sacrificed, in a manner, which whatever may be the opinion we form of the merits of his conduct, was undoubtedly disgraceful to the nation, and infamous to the persons concerned. And, after all, the administration remained so unpopular, that Mr. Fox soon after thought proper to resign. The motive of his conduct was supposed, to be an unwillingness to bear the odium of measures, in the forming of which he was allowed very little share. He probably thought this embarrassment not unfavourable to his views, and threw up his employment, with the hope of speedily resuming it, upon more advantageous terms.

Of the numerous disciples of sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Fox was the individual that most resembled him. He however finally became more unpopular than that minister ever was. His manners had something less of the plausible; and his temper, especially towards the close of his life, was infinitely more rapacious. In his turn of mind, however, there appeared something, less distant from the character of a great minister.

Upon the removal of this principal prop, the whole structure of administration fell to pieces. Those, who had so long retained their influence in the cabinet, thought proper, at least in appearance, to retire from the direction of affairs. And Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Legge, the two most popular characters in Britain, were now admitted into the responsible offices of government. But as, on the one hand, it was not intended, to cede to them the power of administration; so on the other, they were found in no degree adapted to the purposes designed. They were, as it should seem, too fresh from opposition. They could not immediately adopt the pliant manners of a court, or

lay aside those principles, to which they had been indebted for their popularity. They were not of a temper, to submit to be the tools, or the scapegoats of an interior cabinet. They had too high a sense of the consequence they had acquired, lightly or inconsiderately to sacrifice it. Accordingly they opposed, both in council and in parliament, every measure, however patronised, that they apprehended pernicious. And even their concessions, for concessions, it must be owned, they made, came with so ill a grace, and were so clogged by the conditions, that accompanied them, that they tended rather to irritate, than to reconcile.

The efficient ministers, tired of perpetual thwarting, and convinced, that their arrangement must prove abortive, spared no pains, to prepossess their against his new servants; and determined, at all events, to expel them from the government. It should seem that the king had long since conceived a prejudice against Mr. Pitt. Though it had been frequent, to appoint the paymaster-general one of the lords of regency, during the king's absence upon the continent, this had never been done, while Mr. Pitt held that office; and even, in one instance, the secretary at war had been appointed, in a manner, over his head. This celebrated commoner had almost uniformly opposed those continental measures, to which his sovereign was known to be so much attached; and, as his language was vigorous and decisive, it probably left an impression upon the royal breast. And undoubtedly those, who immediately surrounded the throne, had taken care to represent him, as haughty, imperious and uncourtierly. They even intimated their suspicions of his loyalty. Thus artfully undermined, he was once more honoured with the royal command to resign. Mr. Legge, earl Temple, whose sister he had lately married, and many other of his friends, accompanied him in his retreat. Their country remained, for near three months, in the very heat of war, absolutely destitute of any regular administration.

It is truly wonderful, that a set of men, weak, timid, incapable and rash, beyond example, not contented with their influence in the disposal of places and pensions, should have continued thus obstinately set, upon retaining the direction of a complicated and most perilous war. For more than two years, they had exhibited an unvaried scene of defeat and dishonour. They had reduced their country to the brink of destruction. And, at the same time, by their cabals at home, they had caused the spirit of party to be every where substituted for the spirit of patriotism. The more imminent were the distresses of Britain, the more irreconcilable were the factions, that divided it.

CHAP. III

Coalition of parties.—Mr. Pitt's administration.—Progress of the war.—Campaign of 1759:—Fruitless negotiations of peace.

The situation of Mr. Pitt, at this crisis, was, in one respect, more extraordinary, and more honourable, than any of those, by which the latter part of his history was distinguished. Without any practical knowledge of his abilities; and attracted only, by his consummate eloquence, his singular disinterestedness, and the supposed purity of his views; the people of England united to look up to him, as t the person, in whom they confided, for the salvation of their country.

The whole nation seemed to rife up, as one man, in vindication of the character of the exiled patriots. The most respectable cities and corporations presented them with the freedom of their respective bodies; and addresses were sent up from all parts of the kingdom, soliciting their restoration to their respective employments. It were, at once, difficult and uninteresting, to trace the steps, by which the subsequent coalition was effected. Suffice it to say, that Mr. Pitt was again resorted to the office of secretary of state; the duke of Newcastle was placed at the head of the treasury; and Mr. Mox was gratified with the appointment of paymaster-general. Each of them brought in his respective friends; and thus the three great parties, into which government was sent, were happily brough, in some manner, to co-operate for the welfare of their country.

It is, at this moment, that Mr. Pitt's administration properly commences. During the short time he had before held the seals, his influence in the cabinet appears to have been very small; and it would perhaps be difficult, to lay our hand upon the measure of government, which properly originated with him. Now he assumed, not by his influence with the foreign but by his popularity with the nation, that ascendancy in our public councils, which Lord Carteret had formerly enjoyed, under more hostile auspices, and with less happy consequences.

As it is by this period of the life of Iorn Chatham, that his public merit is principally to be estimated, we shall doubtless be excusable here, if we run out into greater length, or more frequent reflections, than upon any other part of our subject. We have seen, in the example of lord Carteret, how unsuccessful a coalition usually proves. We shall see, in the perfect, a coalition, succeeding beyond all reasonable expectation; the most heterogeneous ingredients, and the utmost harmony. But it is from the former, and not the latter, that a general rule is to be deduced. A thousand circumstances combine to render the present a singular case. Both the other parties had made their trial, and may be supposed to have been, in some measure, convinced of their incapacity. And the abilities of Mr. Pitt, were palpably such, as, by no means, to afford ground for a general conclusion. Any principle may doubtless be pushed too far. At the same time, it may be owned, that moderate abilities, at least, maybe soft effectually exerted in connection; and that man must be singularly formed, who cannot meet with those, whose general principles of government coincide with his own, and with whom he can honestly concur in the usual tenor of their conduct. Truly pitiable is the country, that cannot afford an administration of honest views, and uniform principles; or that has not virtue enough left to support such an administration, against the opposition of the interested, and the cabals of faction!

The first step Mr. Pitt made, was to give up those principles, which had led him to oppose a continental war; and to fall implicitly into the views of his foreign. It may be alleged in his excuse, that the alliances were already made, and the war had assumed its form, before he was called to the head of affairs. He may be supposed to have been partly actuated, by a sentiment of generosity for the kind of Prussix; upon whom the measures of his predecessors had contributed to bring a combination of the most powerful states in Europe, and whom it would now be cruel to desert. And, above all, he probably found this to be the alternative; that he must either serve his country in the way prescribed him, or not serve her at all. A continental war would inevitably be prosecuted. At any rate, it was pernicious. If prosecuted without popularity, and without abilities, it must be destructive. If carried on with unanimity and energy, it might be productive of glory, if not of advantage, and impending ruin warded off.

BUT why should we endeavour to conceal the truth? Mr. Pitt, I have already said was possessed with a spirit of boundless ambition. As the leading trait, by which he had hitherto been distinguished, was eloquence, it was the gown, that seemed defined for the scene of his renown. His ambition was no subservient to the desire of luxury and ease; he was disinterested. The mere possession of power was not calculated to gratify it. Upon power, plodding, useless, torpid and supine, he looked down with contempt. It must be gilded with the rays of glory; it must be stamped with the dignity of patriotism; or it was not worth acceptance.

There are but two ways, in which for the minister of a free country to acquire to himself immortal honour. By renovating the vigour of its original constitution, by counteracting the tide of venality and corruption, and erecting new mounds against the encroachments of despotism. This seems to have been the path, that Mr. Pitt first chalked out to himself. For that end, with the unconquerable spirit of a Roman, he set himself to oppose the destructive system of Walpole. Too happy Britain, had the abilities of thy first and noblest statesman been thus employed!

But riper years and maturer deliberation taught him, that his country was too far advanced imbecility, to make the execution of his first scheme probably; that circumstances were by no means favourable; and that nothing, at any rate, but great and marked calamities, could be expected to awaken her from slumber. And there yet remained another path open. A path too, that led to more certain, more immediate, more undivided applause. He might expect change the cold had of reform, and the austere spirit of independence, for the brilliancy of success against a foreign enemy, and for the trophies of conquest. Britain was once again plunged in a complicated war, and seemed advancing with hasty steps to her ruin. Himself had almost passed the meridian of his life. Life Themistocles, the trophies of his ancestors would not let him sleep, and like Caesar, he wept to think, how many had closed a career of honour, at a period of life, at which he had done little to distinguish himself. Now he felt was the crisis of his fate. Now he must rise to glory, or fall forever down the stream of oblivion. He snatched the ruling helm. He silenced the cabals of a rival, and the discontents of the governed. He braved the tempests of the deep.

One of the first measures of his administration was the expedition against Rochfort. 'Through carried on with a secrecy, that had hitherto been though incompatible with the nature of our own government, it proved in the end most despicably abortive. In the mean time, the Hanoverian army, under the duke of Cumberland, was compelled to surrender. The campaign in America was whole spent in the forming of plans, in order afterwards to reject them; and the largest and best appointed army, that continent had ever seen was kept in total inaction. Thus the campaign of 1757 closed, like the campaign of 1756, without any thing being done, correspondent to the public expectations.

Popular applause is in its very nature inconstant; and what had now happened, were enough, to have damned the reputation of any other man. The changing of sides, in order to the coming into power, must ever be disreputable. The officers, that had been sent against the French coast, made no scruple to impute the failure of their enterprise, to its having been originally formed upon insufficient intelligence. And, though it does not appear, that Mr. Pitt had any immediate concern in the other business of the campaign; yet the coincidence of times often presents an attention to a circumstance, like this, among the vulgar. But fame, in the present instance, as if to vindicate her character, did not once desert her favourite. All Mr. Pitt's apologies were admitted; his preparations for another campaign cheerfully concurred in; and the popular expectations once more became, as sanguine as ever.

But if the disappointment did not strongly affect the public, it however sunk deep into the spirit of Mr. Pitt. In public he complained loudly of the military commanders; and lamented, that scarcely a man could be found, with whom the execution of a plan of enterprise and peril, could with confidence be trusted. With himself, he doubtless reflected whether the failure of success, in any degree, remained with him. He was not afraid to see his errors; and he had too much spirit, not to wish, by the mistakes of the past, to improve his conduct for the future. I believe, the charge brought against him, by the commanders at Rochfort, of the superficiality of his intelligence, was, in some degree, founded. Accordingly he probably felt its justice; and laboured, with unwearied ardour, to remove it; till, at length, he perfected a degree of information, that was perhaps superior, to what had ever been obtained in this, or any other court in Europe. In a word, he felt his abilities; he saw the theatre in which he was placed; the eyes of the nation, the eyes of the world animated him; and he burned to finalise himself, in a manner, worthy of the hopes he had excited.

From the peace of Utrecht, to the moment, which I am writing, the character of Britain has been entirely different, from what the annals of former ages have exhibited her. The influence of corruption has enervated her spirit. Ruin and imbecility have crept upon her with incessant, unobserved steps. It is the glory of Mr. Pitt, to have changed the scene. Like the comet, he spread a transitory splendour over the prospect, and threw a stream of lustre in his train. Hitherto our councils had been weak, inconstant and contradictory. Our exertions had been impotent. In peace we were despised. In war we were baffled, defeated, and disgraced. The present war had indeed begun in unmeaning precipitation. In its progress we were passive. We did not so properly resist. We suffered whatever the enemy saw fit to inflict upon us.

Never was the great scene of things suddenly shifted, as in the influence before us. Whatever comprehensive genius, extended intelligence, deep political knowledge, and indefatigable industry could effect, was ours. From torpid supineness, we astonished the enemy with unremitted activity. Not a ship, not a man, was suffered to remain unemployed. Europe, America, Africa felt the influence of Mr. Pitt's character in an instant. His glory, in the mean time, advanced, like a regular fabric. Gradual in its commencement, it however, discovered, to the discerning eye, a grandeur of design, and promised the most magnificent effect. By degrees, it disclosed beauty, utility and majesty; it outstretched the eye of the spectator, and hid its head among the clouds.

Though the preceding year had been unaccompanied with any successes to the British arms; it is however the most brilliant period in the history of our illustrious ally. He commenced it with a considerable victory, which was succeeded by a still more considerable, and apparently decisive, defeat. But, like Antinous, he rose more dreadful from his fall, and closed the year with the successes of Rosbach and Lissa; successes, that seemed to wither the everlasting laurels of an

Alexander. Such is the story of this period: and, as a contemporary writer has expressed it, "It is not the story of a " century; it is the account of a single campaign."

The victories of Frederic enabled the Hanoverian army to renew their hostilities. The French general, in using his superiority, had laid aside the principles, both of policy, and humanity; and the time was now come for him to feel the resentment of the those, upon whom he had trampled. No occasional compact can annihilate the external rights of humanity. Even the surrender in question, had been made upon mutual conditions: and neither party had certainly a right to the advantages, stipulated in his favour; unless, on his side, he punctually fulfilled the conditions, that were made in behalf of his adversary. In the mean time, the cause of the allies did not now seem more favoured of justice, than of fortune. They expelled the enemy from their own territories, and purified them into the kingdom of France itself.

For the rest, the campaign of 1758 was chequered with victory and defeat. We conquered the French settlements on the coast of Africa; we loft Fort St. David's in the East-Indies. We subdued Louisbourg and the island of Cape Breton; we were repulsed with loss at Ticonderoga. In our predatory expeditions, we were victorious at Cherbourg; we were defeated at St. Cas.

It seems to me, that these expeditions ought not to be passed over without animadversion. They undoubtedly manifested vigour and spirit. They, in some measure, answered the ends, for which they were designed. But they exhibit war in its most horrid form. It was visionary, in these scenes of rapine, to expect to restrain them, merely to the destruction of implements of offense They will ever fall, with the greatest severity, upon the innocent and unresisting. War must be considered, by the soul of humanity, as the scourge of human kind. Her laws, if we are to credit the expositions of them, that have recently been made by men, who would thought skillful in the science, may be brought to countenance every waotoonefs, and every barbarity. But humanity looks above this. Whatever gives new ruggedness to the horrid scene, and a wider spread to the field of blood, she will ever regard with unmingled abhorrence.

The memory of the subsequent campaign will certainly never be erased from the minds of its contemporaries. It was one tissue of victory. It was distinguished by the battle of Minden, the most considerable action in the course of the German war. In it, we acquired the ascendancy in the East-Indies, which we have ever since been enabled to maintain. We captured the island of Guadaloupe, one of the most valuable of the French sugar plantations. We subdued the fortress of Niagara, and possessed ourselves without opposition of Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

CHAP. IV.

Origin of the war with Spain.—Death of king George the second.—Cabals of lord Bute.— Mr. Pitt resigns.—Critique of his administration.

MR. Pitt had, in the mean time, called upon the Spanish ambassador, to disavow the memorial of the French negotiator. He avowed it in the most offensive terms; he avowed the union, that subsisted between the two courts; and extolled the generousness and sincerity of the French advances. Mr. Pitt then wrote, upon the same subject to our ambassador at the court of Madrid. He represented the memorial, as offensive and insolent. At the same time, he directed the minister, in case he should perceive a disposition in that court, to explain away their concern in the business; with readiness and, address, to adapt himself to so desirable a circumstance; and to open to the Spaniards as handsome a retreat, as possible. The answer from Madrid, though accompanied with those professions of amity, which, in political transactions, seem ever to be most carefully employed, upon the eve of a declaration of war, was not a whit more satisfactory, than that, which had been given by their ambassador here. In the mean time, Mr. Pitt had received the most undoubted intelligence of the conclusion of the celebrated family compact. This alliance, which fell little short of a union of the monarchies, seemed almost alone sufficient, to authorise a rupture, when it was become, in a manner, impossible, to distinguish between the two powers.

The situation I have described formed a new era in the theatre of contention. Like a lion, who repeatedly urged, repeatedly delaying to rouse himself from his slumber, at length arises in his might; so majestic and terrible appeared the British minister. All temporising, all relaxation of the spirit of enterprize was at an end. The energy and activity, with which his administration had commenced, seemed now redoubled. Those vast conceptions, and that comprehensive view, by which his character was distinguished, animated him with renewed vigour, when he felt himself about to act upon a more extended scale. He determined to be before-hand with the enemy, and to come to immediate action. He formed a plan for the seizure of the Spanish flota, upon which their revenue, in a great measure, depends. He seems even to have imagined a descent upon Cadiz. He instantly destined a considerable force for the capture of Martinique; and he probably regarded this, as a prelude, to an attack upon the Spanish settlements in that part of the world. As all his conceptions were manly, he doubtless, in that case, would have begun with the most considerable, that of the Havannah. But a mine was, at this moment, sprung, that dispersed all his projects; and put an end to an administration, which had given lustre, before unknown, to the honoured name of Britain.

The campaign of 1759 had dazzled the people of England. The campaign of 1760, less brilliant and active, restored them to their senses. They began to reflect on the nature of that continental war, in which they were involved. They could not forget, that Mr. Pitt had heretofore been its warmest opponent. His fervid, caustic stile of eloquence, that made so lasting an impression upon his auditors, was little calculated for a man, versatile and uncertain in his political principles. They recollected the time, when he had declared with an energy, peculiarly his own, that he would never consent to our sparing “a man—no, not half a man,” to maintain a continental quarrel in the

fields of Germany. —Independently of this circumstance, they recollected the nature of those continental connections, which had heretofore been so much the object of dispute. They had all been confederacies of many considerable powers in Europe, to check the ambitious views of France. No man had dared to propose our engaging in such a field, without that support. No man had thought of opposing himself to anything, but our unnecessarily taking the lead in the dispute, and exerting ourselves beyond the proportion of the rest of the allies. What judgment then must they form of a case, in which Europe was so far from being alarmed by the ambition of France, that all her most considerable powers combined in her favour? What judgment must they form of a case, in which we singly encountered them all; in which victory appeared unaccompanied with advantage, and defeat was doubly destructive.—Add to this, they could not but behold with regret the treasures, that were squandered upon this useless object. Had the half of them been diverted into the line of maritime exertion, our success, they believed, had been unbounded; and a peace equally speedy and honourable.

The seeds of this kind of disaffection were already disseminated, and there seemed nothing wanting, but an able statesman, to turn them to his own advantage. In the mean time, king George the second, in complaisance to whose prejudices the continental war had been undertaken, died. His reign had been long, and he died more advanced in age, than any of his predecessors. Notwithstanding which, he had the rare fortune, of dying in the height of popular veneration, and was sincerely regretted by the whole kingdom. He had few personal attachments to his ministers. And, though Mr. Pitt was originally forced upon him, much against his inclination; yet the success of his scheme at length effected a reconciliation; and he had the happiness, to be, at once, high in the favour of his sovereign, and the object of applause and adoration to the people.

The predilection of one monarch, is rarely a recommendation to the good opinion of his successor. Mr. Pitt however, for the present, retained his situation. But the young prince had a governor and a friend, who gave a new turn to the politics of the kingdom, and makes a conspicuous figure in the history of the reign. It was the earl of Bute. His temper was recluse and reserved. The sciences, to which he was attached, were those, that consist in cold and minute investigation. He was hesitating, prevaricating and timid; the qualities, that form the discriminating, character of a student. The library, and not the cabinet, was the scene, for which nature had destined him. In the mean time, he was sensible to the goad of ambition. With that conceit of his own talents, which solitude is calculated to inspire, he formed no less a plan, than to drive, from the helm of affairs, the most popular,—I had almost said, the ablest minister, by whom it was ever guided; and to seize, once for all, the government of a mighty kingdom.

He began by turning to account that dislike, which was insensibly gaining ground, to the continental system. He carefully disseminated those principles, and held forth his pupil, as the deliverer of England from so enormous a burden. In the next place, he examined the materials, of which the administration was composed. They were heterogeneous and dissimilar. Nothing, but the predominant abilities of Mr. Pitt, had held them together for so long a time. Of the two other leaders, Mr. Fox had a personal animosity to the secretary; and the duke of Newcastle looked back, with regret, to the time, in which he had so impotently wielded the government of his country, without control. The path of the favourite was, in this case, obvious and easy. He entered into an intimate connexion with Mr. Fox, who was too penetrating to be deceived, and whose skill in parliamentary management would do him the most essential service. Of the duke of Newcastle, weak and aspiring, he bought the assistance, at a cheaper rate, by flattering the fond expectations he had formed from the fall of his rival.

The influence of the secretary was now sensibly declining. One of the most striking symptoms, and which ought to have given him the most serious alarm, was the dismissal of his faithful associate, Mr. Legge, from the superintendency of the finances. But, as he had always acted alone, and not enlisted himself in a party; so he seems never to have formed any violent attachments. He probably considered his influence, as of a species of its own, and necessarily uncontrollable. The earl of Bute was, at the same time, appointed secretary of state, together with Mr. Pitt.

At length, in the critical moment, in which his imagination was fired with its largest, and most comprehensive plan, he found himself suddenly and invincibly prevented. In the councils, that were held upon this business, he demonstrated, in a manner, he apprehended, the most incontestible, the hostile dispositions of Spain. He expatiated upon the alarming nature of the family compact, of the conclusion of which he had received the fullest intelligence. He told them, that this was the instant to attack Spain, unprepared and with advantage. Even while they deliberated, the time would be past. Now she was willing to temporise. So soon as her treasure were safe in her harbours, he prophesied, with the utmost confidence, she would keep terms with us no longer. Beyond that time, we might endeavour to defer hostilities, in vain.—These things however, with whatever else he could urge, were to no purpose. He found the whole council, with a single exception, (earl Temple,) dividing against him.

They represented it, as little less than madness, in their present situation, to engage precipitately with a new enemy. In the mean time, they declared themselves willing to maintain the honour of Britain, and, if expostulations proved ineffectual, to support the secretary in the vigorous prosecution of a war.

Three times was this important question deliberated. At length, Mr. Pitt rose up, and declared once more, that this, he was convinced, was the time for humbling the whole house of Bourbon; that, this opportunity omitted, it could never be recovered; and, of consequence, since he could not prevail here, he was resolved, that should be the last time he would sit in council. He thanked the ministers of the late king for their support. He said, that, for his own part, he had been called into administration by the voice of the people; to them, he considered himself, as accountable for his conduct; and he could not remain in a situation, that made him responsible for measures, which he was no longer allowed to guide.

It had been the glory of Mr. Pitt's government, to abolish the spirit of party, and to introduce into the senate an unanimity hitherto unexperienced. The ambition of lord Bute brought things back again to their original chaos, and gave new life to all the bitterness and implacability of faction. A circumstance, that occurred, at this time, deserves to be mentioned, for the singularity, that attended it. Upon Mr. Pitt's declaring his intention to resign, earl Granville, formerly lord Carteret, who had, for some time, possessed the appointment of president of council, rose up to speak.—We are here presented with the incident, which faction took to work upon. One party represent him, as addressing the secretary, with all the asperity of studied insult. "I find," said he, "the gentleman is determined to leave us, nor can I say, I am sorry for it. He would otherwise have certainly obliged us to leave him. If indeed he be resolved to appropriate the right of advising his majesty, and directing the operations of war, to what purpose are we called to this council? He talks of being responsible to the people. Let him remember, that this is to talk the language of the house of commons; and that, at this board, he is responsible only to the king. He may possibly have convinced himself of his infallibility. But it still remains, that we should be equally convinced; before we can resign our understandings to his direction, or join with him in the measures he proposes."—According to the account however of Mr. Pitt's advocates, lord Granville

repeatedly and publicly denied the having said any thing of this sort. On the contrary, they represent him, as having declared his very high opinion of the secretary's wisdom, penetration, honour and integrity; and as stating, in a most particular and emphatical manner, the many and insurmountable difficulties, with which he had had to struggle.—The authorities, by which these two very different accounts have been vouchsafed to the public, are so equally matched, that we have nothing, but the internal evidence of each, by which to determine our preference.

The consequences of the procrastination of the English government were doubtless highly disadvantageous. If they could have been prevented, without any breach of honour and dignity, the not preventing them did certainly deserve the loudest condemnation. If Mr. Pitt meant, as he probably did; and as the reference, made, by his friends, to the manner, in which the war originally commenced, strongly confirms; to set out with acts of piracy and surprise: I believe, the philosopher and the citizen of the world, will not hesitate to pronounce, that advantages, however great that must be so bought, must be bought too dear. *Fiat justitia, ruat caelum*, is perhaps an hyperbolic maxim, that will not admit of a strict examination. The principle however, in which it is founded, is not less just, than it is beautiful. In the mean time, it is certain, that the delay of the succeeding ministers was greater, than such a principle could require. How far the schemes of Mr. Pitt might have been reconciled, with open proceedings, and an honest declaration of war, I will not take upon me to pronounce. It may not however be improper to remark, that this is one of repeated instances, which the discerning eye will observe, in the course of this history, to prove, how far exalted genius is compatible with local prejudices; and how difficult it is, to be, at once, a great statesman, and a citizen of the world.

The resignation of Mr. Pitt was certainly founded in the highest rectitude. Responsibility is the first principle of a free government; and the confidence of the people the only basis of a good administration. By a cabinet, whose opposition to him, was unqualified, in so leading a measure, he could expect to be allowed no scope of action, nor the smallest particle of discretionary power. The disadvantageous effects, that flowed from an opposite line of conduct, demonstrate the magnitude of the question, that divided them. Mr. Pitt's secession was necessary, in candour to the people, and to enable them to fix the era of the change of measures. It was a piece of friendship to his brother ministers, from whose schemes if any success could be expected, it could certainly be most rationally expected, when they were permitted to act, without distraction, and without control.

Mr. Pitt resigned on the fifth of October. On the eleventh, his resignation was signified in the gazette, together with the creation of lady Hester Pitt, his wife, baroness of Chatham, and his own acceptance of an annuity of £3000. At the same time, it contained an article of intelligence from Madrid, calculated to evince the pacific intentions of that court, and of consequence, to show the weakness and precipitation of Mr. Pitt's advise. By this artifice, the earl of Bute hoped, in some measure, to turn the tide of popular disapprobation. In the mean time, he added the employment of a set of unprincipled scribblers, to place these circumstances in the most favourable light, and to asperse and vilify the character of the saviour of their country!

One of the points, upon which they expatiated, was the reduced condition of the king of Prussia. He had struggled for six campaigns, against all Europe, in a manner, combined against him, with an activity, fortitude and perseverance, that surpass all former examples of heroism, Never was it known, that a confederacy, made up of so disjointed materials, should have continued so long unbroken. At length, exhausted, and entrenched upon, on every side, it seemed, as if nothing, but an immediate interposition of providence, could preserve him from ruin. This interposition soon

after took place in the death of the Czarina: an event, that opened an immediate vista through the gloom, and gradually obtained for him such a superiority over his antagonists, as enabled him to dictate the terms of accommodation.

In the mean time, it seemed not improbable, that another campaign might have been fatal to him. The ruin of the king of Prussia, must necessarily have been followed, by the destruction of the army in Westphalia. With a foresight of these circumstances, Mr. Pitt, they said, had fought to divert the attention of the public, by involving us in a new quarrel with the court of Madrid.

Disappointed in this, having steered the vessel of the state into the midst of shoals and quicksands, he deserted the helm in rage and despair; and left his fellow ministers to extricate themselves, as they could.—How reasonable this is in itself, and how consistent with the character of Mr. Pitt, I shall leave to my readers to determine.

In the mean time, this part of their accusation, seems to have left no impression upon the minds of the people. In another charge they brought against him, they had somewhat better success. The cry of pension is one of the watch-words of vulgar indignation, and it was not entirely without its effect. But the people of England were not long missed in this respect. They presently saw through, and despised the stratagem, that was attempted to be played upon them. The generosity of a free country could not suffer them to be blinded to so essential services. In a word, Mr. Pitt lost little, or nothing of his popularity, and the general indignation fell back, with redoubled violence, upon his successors.

In the mean time, I am not apprehensive, that, with the cool and impartial, Mr. Pitt's conduct will need any vindication. If the public money were always bestowed in this proportion to desert, there would certainly be no danger of its being squandered. The most disinterested character, that lives, when he has a posterity to provide for, may surely be allowed to accept so small an acknowledgment, for so signal services. The multitude are too apt to confound such an acceptance, with an infamous bargain for the sacrifice of integrity. But certainly nothing of this sort is necessarily included. Should we allow it to imply a sort of obligation, not to run into all the asperities of faction; let it be remembered, that this were also unworthy of the exaltation of Mr. Pitt's character, and the vast space, that he filled in the eye of his country. And it ought not, in any just construction, to interfere, with a cool, manly and independent declaration of sentiment upon any occasion.

Having brought the story of Mr. Pitt's administration to a close, it may be worth while, to endeavour to form a general estimate of its merits. The same spirit of party, that, in a former instance, had induced its infatuated votaries, to question the duke of Marlborough's capacity as a general; did not fail, in the present case, to induce some persons to assert, that the successes of Mr. Pitt's ministry, were owing entirely to the commanders, that executed, and, in no degree, to the minister, that planned them. In himself, he was headstrong and precipitate; but fortune smiled, and victory set her seal upon his undertakings.

It must be owned, that the good conduct of a general, in any particular instance, is, in some degree, more palpable, than the good conduct of a minister at war. It is difficult, upon the most circumstantial documents, and, in a manner, impossible, upon a cursory view, to draw the line, where the merits of the project ends, and that of the execution begins. But, without entering into such detail, there is a general evidence arises, sufficient to determine every intelligent spectator. In a single instance, a man may be fortunate, or well supported; he may be victorious, without merit, and even handed down to immortality, without having possessed, either fortitude, or common sense. But a chain of successes carries conviction upon the face of it.

In the mean time, we need not here confine ourselves to reasonings, which apply equally in a thousand cases. There is a lustre in the present, that is peculiar to Mr. Pitt. We need but contrast the first years of the war, with those, that immediately succeeded the period, in which he assumed the direction of affairs, in order to the being struck with the fullest conviction. During the former, all was weakness, dejection, stupour and inanity. In the commencement of the latter, vigour presented itself in the place of remissness; and the gallantry of invasion succeeded to the cowardice of unresisting passivity. Lately, the nation seemed to be made up of isolated individuals, where each man was left, by his uninterested neighbour, to the defence of his own person and property. Now, they were formed into an unconquerable army of brothers, and their exertions centered by the ardent spirit of patriotism. Lately, they seemed absolutely destitute of commanders; or had commanders, who contentedly intrenched themselves, behind the cold dictates of cautious prudence, or the unintelligible quibbles of military law. Now, they were led by a race of heroes. Whence came this change? Did Mr. Pitt actually create a new race of men? No: but he blew the trumpet of war; with the voice of irresistible eloquence; and he displayed the consecrated standard of unconquerable abilities. He became at once, the ruling head of Britain; and the members, with one consent, implicitly submitted to his direction. Did the generals Mr. Pitt employed, exist, before he was called into power? Most true. But he led them forth, from the torpor of unnoticed obscurity, and breathed into them his own enterprising and undaunted spirit.

He did not resemble those accomplished gentlemen who accept of employment, for the sake of the eclat, that it brings, or the emoluments, that attend it; and cannot bring themselves to submit to the drudgery of office. From his youth, he had been no stranger to severe application. Formed, by nature, to be a man of business, he was unwearied in the discharge of it; and he forgot all his personal concerns in the welfare of his country. The parade of levees he abjured. The distribution of places and pensions he resigned to his colleagues in office. His hours were devoted to the essential interests of Britain. He took, in some manner, the oversight of every department of government, upon himself. His intelligence, from foreign countries, was early, authentic and universal. Possessed of the secrets of our enemies, understanding their strong and their weak sides, he accordingly formed his conclusions, and erected his projects. During his administration, the nation had confidence in government, and the spirit of the people was with it. His name alone struck terror into our enemies. Finally, in his negotiations, he never failed to support the honour of the crown, which he served, and the serene dignity of the conquests he had obtained.

Such then were the abilities Mr. Pitt displayed. But a more important question, relative to his administration, remains to be examined. I mean that of the advantage, or detriment, of which, in an extensive view, it may have been productive, to this country; and of its consistency, with the general interests of mankind.

And here, we cannot help, in the first place, dropping the tear of humanity, over the most general, and widely wasting war, of which there is perhaps any example in the annals of history. What indignation does not the generous spirit feel, when he sees the cold, inanimated politician, issuing his precepts from the cabinet; and, for the unintelligible objects of a senseless ambition, rioting in the blood of thousands, and turning out defenceless tribes, to all the variety of wretchedness? If, in spite of a thousand other arguments, we needed any fresh proof of an after retribution, here it is presented to us, in inextinguishable colours. Nothing, but inexpiable damnation, can ever repay the more than infernal spirit, I have described. The pretended reasons

of war are usually unintelligible and absurd. But never was war founded, in such frivolous allegations, and inexplicable claims, as that, of which I have been treating.—But in the commencement of it, we must recollect that Mr. Pitt had no concern. And, when he came into power, it would certainly have been most difficult in itself, and impracticable, in opposition to the court, and the nation, to have effected a peace.

The same kind of reasoning, is all we have to offer in favour of our hero, upon another head. War, in its general view, would have been carried on, if Mr. Pitt had not conducted it: therefore the blame is not eminently his. In like manner, the German war was resolved upon, without his participation. Thus far however, we must confess a blemish. But Mr. Pitt's blemishes, like the spots in the sun, serve but as foils to the luster of his character. This certainly is an additional circumstance of his glory. Obligated to engage, in a ground, not his own, and which he originally disapproved, he came off with more honour, than other men, who have had every advantage in their favour. And, in a general view, it must be considered, that the war, which was irreversibly determined on, was, in its nature destructive. Britain seemed to verge on her last hour. Though Mr. Pitt did not redeem her from this situation, and conduct her to unfailing safety; not, as it should seem, from the want of inclination, but of power: he however procrastinated her fall. He raised her, like the phoenix, from her ashes; or, like the dying swan, gave her last hour to be enchanting and divine.

Posterity will look back, with astonishment, and, if it were possible, with incredulity, upon the infatuated expenses of this war. The supplies of the year 1761, more than trebled the supplies of any year of the war of queen Anne. If the treasures had been raised, as well as expended, it might indeed pass for gallantry and spirit. But, when we reflect, that these exertions were only effected, by the creation of an enormous debt, that shall one day fall back upon us, with accumulated ruin; every feeling heart must weep, to see poison so gilded, and a nation ruined by her victories, in a way, more terrible, than old Pyrrhus ever thought on.—In the mean time, it must be acknowledged, that there are some favourable circumstances, which deserve to be taken into the account. The trade of the kingdom was so far, from being diminished, or considerably interrupted, that it was indeed much augmented, by the events of the war.

The parliamentary history of Mr. Pitt's administration, so far as it has hitherto been published, is particularly defective. It has been alleged against him, that, with all his apparent enthusiasm for liberty, while in power, he erected no new bulwarks in her favour. I will not suppose, that this was from the want of sincerity. His engagements as secretary of state, were exceedingly multiplied. His connections in parliament were few. And he, in a manner, regularly divided his power, with his colleagues in administration; he assuming foreign, and they retaining the disposal of domestic affairs. These considerations furnish a sort of excuse; though they must be acknowledged not to amount to a complete defence. In the second session of his ministry, a motion, for shortening the duration of parliaments, was negatived. In the mean time, a bill of some of importance was passed, for ascertaining the qualification of electors; and, shortly after, another, respecting that of representatives in parliament. It was also, during his secretaryship, that the militia bill was, first carried into a law, and afterwards improved. This measure, though narrowed, by the jealousy of the old ministers, till it became, in a manner, abortive, was certainly founded in the principles of liberty. It had been formerly introduced, and was now patronised, by Mr. Pitt.

But there is yet another view, in which this period may be considered, which does considerable honour to the secretary. Though nothing permanent was indeed established, in favour of freedom; yet his administration must certainly be regarded, as the temporary triumph of the people. By

their voice, he was called into power. By their verdict, he was supported. He carried his measures, by the unbought suffrages of their representatives. An unanimity of this sort in parliament, was altogether unexampled.—And, when he fell, he fell, covered with popular honours: the gratitude of a mighty people followed, and illustrated him; and their indignation, and their curse was the inheritance of his successors.

(Pages 109–139 missing)

CHAP. VI

Mr. Pitt becomes lord privy seal, and earl of Chatham. — His coadjutors in administration. — Measures of government. — Lord Chatham withdraws from public business. — System of American taxation renewed. — Middlesex election. — Earls of Shelburne and Chatham resign. — Subsequent transactions.

THE generous mind would wish to draw a veil over the scenes which followed. We have beheld Mr Pitt at the head of the most strenuous and most successful administration this country ever knew. We are now to behold an administration formed under his auspices, the feeblest, the most disunited, I had almost said the most pernicious that the present reign fruitful in such administrations, has exhibited. In treating of it however, let us endeavor, to distinguish the blamable, from that, which is simply unfortunate in the story of our hero; and to draw the line, between what an undistinguishing vulgar man stigmatize, and what cool and disinterested philosophy must condemn.

One of the first unfavourable circumstances, attending its formation, was its displacing a connection of men, virtuous in their intrinsic character, who had been gradually advancing in the public esteem. The jealousy between these two parties, has perhaps been one of the principal misfortunes of the reign. Could they have firmly united, and forgotten all their petty differences, for the sake of the public good; they might probably have formed an immovable barrier against that secret influence, of which each of them has complained in his turn; and an invincible phalanx, in the cause of public liberty, and the vindication of national honour.

The plan too, upon which the new administration was formed, was, to say the least of it, a very hazardous one. The precarious and infirm health of Mr. Pitt rendered it impracticable for him, to engage in any of the great responsible offices, or regularly to superintend the helm of government. In a word, he had no other alternative, but that of composing an administration of such persons, as he could best trust; and delegating his credit to colleagues, who should studiously fill up his plans, and, from conviction, pursue his measures. To give efficiency to a system of this sort, implicating confidence, and unlimited friendship were necessary.

In the mean time, it must not be concealed, that Mr. Pitt, with all his abilities, and all his virtues, was not a temper, the best adapted to the milder ties of friendship. His unbounded ambition could not admit of a perfect participation of interests; and the imposing superiority of his talents was calculated to keep lesser minds at an awful distance. Something of sort will probably be thought visible, in the misunderstanding, that now broke out, between him, and his noble brother in law, earl Temple.

They had long preserved the most perfect harmony upon every political question, and the great commoner had warmly declared in parliament, that he would “live and die with his noble brother.” But,—such is the mutability of all human things!—these illustrious persons could not now agree, in the very outset of the business; and seem to have displayed that harsh and unaccommodating humour, that would have been ungraceful in perfect strangers. As lord Temple designed, to hold the first ostensible place in government, and Mr. Pitt meant what had usually been considered,

as an irresponsible office, for himself; that nobleman, it seems, expected to have been traded upon an equality; and conceived, that he might claim a regular share, in nominating the whole administration. The ideas too, which these two great men has formed of the plan, upon which their ministry should be adjusted, appear to have been different. Lord Temple was for such a coalition of parties, as, he apprehended, would best conduce to give solidity to the system, and form the most effectual barrier against any extrinsic influence. Accordingly he proposed one noble lord, out of their own connection; and another, earl Gower, who adhered to an opposite party, for two of the most considerable places. Mr. Pitt answered, that those place were already engaged; and, upon this, his lordship immediately broke off the conference.

Thus far we perceive nothing, that pointedly interferes with any general principles of government, or strongly impeaches the character of either of the persons in question. We have only to lament, that they discovered this uncomplying temper, at a time, when their union was most desirable; a that Mr. Pitt was deprived, by the means of it, of one of the most valuable securities he could have had, for the uniform pursuit of his measures.—What followed is not equally indifferent.

Not satisfied with the sinister consequences, inseparable from their discord, they proceeded to the disreputable length of a paper war. Mr. Pitt was first attacked in a pamphlet, which is said, by lord Chesterfield, to have been written by the earl himself; and of which a more proper character cannot be given, than that, which has subjoined to this information; that it is “very scurrilous and “scandalous and betrays private conversation.” The answer was written, not by Mr. Pitt himself, but probably by one of his friends, and under his sanction. The character of earl Temple however, lord Chesterfield conjectures, from the manner, in which it is expressed, to have been Mr. Pitt’s own. As excellent satire is seldom wholly unfounded, and as it may serve, at the same time, to illustrate the disposition of our hero, it may not be unworthy of insertion.

“Lord Temple, though he has possessed some very considerable offices in the government, has never been remarkable for any astonishing share of abilities; and, till his resignation with Mr. Pitt, on the accession of his present majesty, he was looked upon, merely, as a good-natured, inoffensive nobleman, who had a very fine feat, and was always ready to indulge any body, with a walk in his garden, or look at his furniture. How he has suddenly commenced such a statesman, as to be put in competition with Mr. Pitt, is not easy to determine: but so far is clear, that, had he not fastened himself into Mr. Pitt’s train, and acquired, by his affinity, such an interest in the history of that great man; he might have crept out of life, with as little notice, as he crept in, and gone off with no other degree of credit, than that of adding a single unit to the bills of mortality.”

The noble earl bring now out of the question, the duke of Grafton was appointed first lord of the treasury; and, at the same time, Mr. Charles Townshend, was constituted the minister of the house of commons. Both of them were remarkable, for the versatility of their political conduct. Their characters however were not entirely similar—the duke had originally formed himself, under the auspices of Mr. Pitt. He afterwards joined the Rockingham administration. When it began to be pretty generally perceived, that their power was drawing to a close, and it was in contemplation to apply to the great commoner; the duke of Grafton resigned, declaring, that he thought that administration too weak, to do any essential service; but that, under his illustrious patron, he would be content, “the accept the most insignificant office, and the wiled a spade, or a mattock.”—He is represented, by a very penetrating writer, as having been “sullen and severe, without probity;” ad having been “unprincipled and dissipated, without gaiety.” In him were supposed to have been blended, whatever is most odious, with whatever is most contemptible.

With parts, plausible enough, to disgrace and betray the first and wisest head in Britain; he had not penetration enough, to hinder him from being the tool of men, who were happy to meet with a person, that seemed ready to pursue any plan, however, unprecedented; and to adopt any measure, however absurd.

In Mr. Townshend, on the contrary, fickleness and levity were so shaded, under a thousand beautiful accomplishments, that they seemed to stand up, and claim their pardon. He possessed the most brilliant wit, and the most lucid eloquence. He was the delight and ornament of the senate; and the charm of every private society, that he graced with his presence. In a word, he was capable of becoming the first character of his age, had there been any connection of men, by whom he could have been trusted. Such were the persons, to whom, in some manner, the whole success of a system, upon the event of which the existence of this country possible depended, was committed.

Lord Camden, the firmest patriot, and the truest friend, was made chancellor. The two secretaries were the earl of Shelburne and general Conway. The former, though he had once opposed our hero with peculiar acrimony, was now his most professed admirer and pupil. The latter was one of those persons, who retained their appointments, upon the dismissal of lord Rockingham. Mr. Pitt himself accepted the office of lord privy seal. As this post had been constantly annexed to a peerage, he was, at the same time, created earl of Chatham.

Should it be the fate of this essay, to survive the period, in which it was immediately written, it is to be feared that some of the reflections it contains, will become scarcely intelligible. If our hero were fortunate, in an unexampled degree of popularity and reputation; he, at least experienced the fate of all shining characters, to have his action subjected to the harshest constructions, and his faults exaggerated with laborious asperity. Nothing could be more natural, or more reasonable, than his acceptance of a peerage, in the circumstances I have described. Few, one would have imagined, would have envied him the repose, that his infirmities required; or the dignity, he had earned, by the unremitted patriotism of a whole life of services. And yet this promotion involved him in the bitterest obloquy.

It happened, as, without any great hazard of disappointment, might have been readily predicted. Scarcely was the administration adjusted, ere it was disunited. Mr. Townshend was not formed to be the deputy of any man. His conscious abilities forbade it; and the versatility of his disposition rendered it impracticable. In the mean time, it is not improbable, the secret influence, we have so repeatedly mentioned, was not without its share, in this inauspicious event; and that the division was fomented by the most dishonourable artifices. Taking it for granted, for a moment, that such an influence existed, all that would be necessary, would be ostensible administration; which, the more it was divided in itself, the more easy it would be to defeat, in any of their deviations, from that unseen line, that was marked out for them. In that café, it might possibly be the height of their ambition, to outwit the abilities, and fix a blot upon the name of the most illustrious statesman, that ever existed.

Short was the date of the ministry of lord Chatham. There are but two measures, that can properly be ascribed to it. One of them was certainly defective in the designing; and neither were productive of any benefit to his country. The former related to the state of the kingdom with regard to corn. The harvest of 1766 had proved so unfavourable, that the nation was threatened with a famine. In this exigency, the ministry issued a proclamation of embargo, though corn was yet at a price, at which it might legally be exported. Thus far they did perhaps what was necessary; and their proceedings might be justified by the maxim, that the preservation of the

people is superior to every other consideration. But they ought to have had the wisdom and magnanimity, immediately to have proposed an act of indemnity, of the most general nature. Instead of the executive power; and, when an amendment was offered, that should extend its operation to themselves, they vigorously opposed it. In a word, the public had the astonishment, to see the lords Chatham and Camden, whom they had ever considered, as the grand supporters of liberty and the constitution, pleading for that most dangerous of all prerogatives, a power of dispensing with the laws of the land.

The second measure of this administration, was the appointment of a committee, to enquire into the state of the East-India company. Lord Chatham certainly felt, with the deepest regret, the immense load of debt, under which his country appeared ready to sink. We had already miscarried in an attempt, to discharge part of our burden upon the shoulders of America. The apparent prosperity of our affairs in the East, at that time, attracted very general attention; and it was natural to think of tuning so extraordinary successes, the public advantage. But, before the committee had come to any resolution, lord Chatham was attacked with that long and dangerous illness, which necessarily sequestered him from public business, and finally deprived the nation of his further services. What his plan was, it is difficult now, with any certainty, to determine. By many, at that time, it was supposed, that he intended entirely to deprive the company of their acquisitions, and finally to vest them in the crown.

The administration has originally been composed of such, as had immediately enlisted themselves under the banners of Mr. Pitt; in conjunction with several persons, who were contended to retain their preferments, upon the dismissal of lord Rockingham. It was only advanced thus far in its progress, when it received a severe shock, from the resignation of the greater part of those, who came under the latter description. Upon this emergency, lord Chesterfield asserts, that the earl of Chatham made proposals to the duke of Bedford. Certain it is however, that no coalition of this kind took place; and the men, who were now introduced into office, were principally composed of the personal friends of lord Bute.

It was, by this time, sufficiently obvious, that lord Chatham's arrangements must finally prove abortive. The changes, that had now taken place, seemed to prove, that the secret influence, so often complained of, continued to exist. The breach between Mr. Townshend, and his political creator, instead of being healed, grew wider and wider. And it is probably, that the noble lord began, by this time, to experience that coolness and desertion in his treasurer, which he is said afterwards to have stated, as one of the causes of his miscarriage. To complete the whole, his constitutional distemper was risen to a height, that rendered him absolutely incapable of public business. It is probably, that the unfavourable appearances, I have described, sat strongly upon his mind, and, concurring with his disorder, precipitated him into that state of imbecility, of which he now became the victim.

Such is the history of lord Chatham's second administration. Humanity drops a tear upon it; and the generous spirit, warmed, even to enthusiasm, by the contemplation of his former services, would wish to blot it from the records of time.—But it does not end here. In its commencement, it displaced an administration, as virtuous, as disinterested, as ever sat at the helm of government. Britain seemed to derive new vigour from their fostering hand. Her wounds, which erewhile appeared all livid and ghastly, seemed fast converging to a perfect recovery.—And what kind of an administration did lord Chatham leave in the possession of government? An administration, unprincipled and disunited, made up of the deserters of all parties. An administration, to whose errors, their full effect was carefully preserved; and whose virtues, all thinly sown, as they were,

by an unseen, malignant influence, were blasted in the bud. In a word, an administration, which, with a slight reinforcement, retained their posts fourteen years, and reduced their country to the lowest abyss of poverty, contempt, and dishonour.

One of the first acts, that followed lord Chatham's demission of the government, was an act, for granting certain duties in the American colonies. This is certainly one of the most extraordinary events, that history records. Three principal members of the cabinet, with the first lord of the treasury at their head afterwards declared, that it had never received their approbation. While the baleful effects of the stamp act were yet fresh in the memory of every man; the same measure was renewed, with circumstances of additional irritation. While every thing was carried on, with great parade, in the name of lord Chatham; this was the period they chose for their operations. Lord Chatham, who had distinguished himself, by being the first public man in this country, to declare the exclusive right of America, to grant her own money. Lord Chatham, to whom the gratitude of America had raised statues, and erected monuments; and whose name had been repeated, from one end of the continent to the other, as the symbol of liberty. Mr. Townshend was the official author of this measure. The constant object of his pursuit was applause. When the voice of this country seemed to call for a revenue from America, he had been an advocate for the stamp act. In the following session, when events had changed the popular opinion, he voted for its repeal. The fall of the Rockingham administration naturally brought their favourite measure into disrepute. To conform therefore to the temper, which began to prevail, Mr. Townshend declared, very early in the session, that a revenue must be had out of America. He was instantly tied down to his engagements. And, that he might fulfill them in the most plausible manner, he introduced his bill, with a preamble, declaring the necessity of a revenue, to make it palatable to the high-fliers at home; and he adopted the American distinction, of restricting himself to external imposition. But the measure had the usual fate of all exquisite policy.

Its author had, by this time, probably begun to flatter himself with the idea, that he was, in reality, the first minister of his country. But the men, he had to deal with, seemed perfectly to understand the art of degrading patriotism, and mortifying arrogance. To convince him of his dependency, he found himself, towards the close of the session, in a question, relative to the business of the East-Indian committee, together with the Mr. Secretary Conway, in a very inconsiderable minority.

Soon after the session was concluded, Mr. Townshend died; the secretary resigned; and the remaining members of the administration formed that coalition with the Bedford party, which, unlike all the former political maneuvers of the reign, proved so durable. What principally attracted the public attention, in the next, and last session of this parliament, was an attempt, made by administration, to deprive the duke of Portland of an estate, that had continued in his family for seventy years, by virtue of a grant of king William the third. The attempt itself was scarcely more odious, than the unfair and precipitate methods, that were taken to accomplish it.

The ministry was, by this time, become so unpopular, that the ensuing elections were very generally and warmly contested, throughout the kingdom. But the person, who man himself principally noticed on this occasion, was the celebrated Mr. Wilkes. While the methods, employed in his prosecution, were declared illegal by the Rockingham administration, he himself was, in a great measure, forgotten. Upon the ensuing change, when the duke of Grafton, who had professed the strongest attachment for him, was placed at the head of the treasury, his hopes revived. He applied, with confidence to that nobleman, to solicit his pardon. Finding himself here treated with neglect, if not with insult, he became desperate. The despair of a man of his intrepid

spirit, is always formidable. He took the resolution to come over to England; and offered himself a candidate, to represent, first the city of London, and afterwards the country of Middlesex. In this latter attempt, he was successful. The nation saw, with astonishment, an obscure individual, with courage enough to engage in so arduous an undertaking, thought in continual fear of his creditors, and with the terrors of an outlawry hanging over his head: and the administration of a mighty kingdom, so dastardly and pusillanimous, as not to venture to take him into custody, when they might have done it, almost without animadversion; but suffering him to go such a length, as, in the event, to be able to defy their utmost efforts. When, at last, he was apprehended, the populace declared themselves strongly in his favour. In the mean time, the ministry increased the general resentment, by appearing studiously forward, to call in the assistance of the military; and afterwards by screening, with a thousand arts, the ministers of their vengeance from the hands of justice, in cafes, in which they had gone beyond, what even military rules could authorize.

Lord Chatham had long ceased, to have any concern in public affairs. Partly upon account of his health, and partly from the disgust and mortification he conceived from the conduct of ministers, the business of his office had, for a considerable time, been transacted by commission. At this time, there happened an event, which, in some measure, roused him from his torpor, and determined him finally to withdraw his name from an administration, with which he had long ceased to have any connection.

The brave Corficans had long struggled against the tyranny of the Genoefe. Tired of an unprofitable and disputed dominion, that republic had lately made over her claim to the crown of France. But, though, in consequence of this session, their new matters poured upon them an immense military force; yet, by the independent, unsubmitting spirit, that had long animated them, they were induced, to hold out to the last, and defend themselves to their rocks and fastnesses. They hoped, that some friendly power would, at length, be roused to their relief; and were persuaded, that it was better to die in the cause of freedom, than to submit, and be slaves. Such a determination naturally commanded the sympathy of Britain. Separately too from this consideration, the island, from its site in the Mediterranean, was generally esteemed of considerable importance in the commercial world. Quietly to permit it therefore, to be thrown into the scale of a power, whose superior strength had long rendered her formidable in the eyes of Europe, was certainly contrary to the politics, by which that quarter of the globe had been actuated, for more than a century past. Most persons imagined, that a strong remonstrance, from our court, would have deterred France from her undertaking, without the risk of a war.

In this however, they seem to have been mistaken. Such a remonstrance was actually transmitted to our ambassador by the earl of Shelburne, and by him delivered to the court of Versailles. From the opinion they formed of the imbecility of our government, it was treated with contempt. The conclusion was simply this. The ambassador insisted upon a recal, and, at the same time, lord Shleburne was dismissed from his office. The intimacy, that now subsisted between this nobleman and lord Chatham, induced the aged leader, to display, at once, his resentment of the affront, offered to his friend, and his sense of the national disgrace, by an immediate resignation. It will probably be asked, how lord Chatham, who, in the beginning of the reign, had declared, that he would never make himself responsible for measures, which he was not allowed to guide; came now to defer this step to so late a period? I will not assert, that his conduct, upon this head, was entirely blameless. In the mean time, much might be said, in his excuse, with regard to the distemper, under which he labored; which, especially in the former part of this period, had

debilitated his faculties, and rendered him incapable of public business, to the degree; that, for a considerable time, he did not open a single packet, that was sent to him, of a public concern. Much also might be said, respecting the desertion of his friends. The last lesson of a generous, untainted heart, is that of a suspicion. This is one part of the apology, he is said afterwards to have offered in his own behalf. At the same time, he complained of a circumstance, which could only be ascertained by repeated experience, that the open treachery, that was practiced against him, was abetted by secret influence; and that he found “a power behind the throne, greater, than the throne itself.”

In the mean time, the discontents in America, and particularly in the capital of Boston, had risen to a very formidable height. Several regiments of soldiers however were ordered upon that station, and a temporary tranquility re-established. In the first session of the new parliament, these affairs formed a principal object of their attention. They voted several very strong censures of the Bostonians, and addressed his majesty, to cause the delinquents there, to be brought over to this country for trial. These seemingly resolute measures were, in the mean time, accompanied to America; with a circular letter of the secretary of state, promising a repeal of the greater part of the obnoxious duties, and assuring, that the idea, of deriving a parliamentary revenue from that country, was entirely abandoned.

Nothing can be more truly deplorable, than to behold the possession, of the most valuable jewel of the British crown thus egregiously trifled with. By a partial repeal, we displayed a spiritless temper of insidious concession: at the same time, that the tax we retained, not being sufficient, to pay the charge of collection, demonstrated, that we retained, it for the sake of asserting our imaginary rights; and gave the lie to our most solemn declarations. The minister’s engaging the honour of the sovereign, for an act hereafter to take place in parliament, was also considered, as not a little extraordinary. In a word, there appeared nothing manly, decisive and ingenuous in the whole transaction. “If we contend for a revenue,” such was the language of opposition, when the affair came afterwards to be canvassed, “let us establish a revenue, that shall be worth contending for. But if, with mature wisdom, and juster principles, we mean concession; let us come forward, like men, and confess our error. Let our acknowledgement of the rights of others, be as honest and undisguised, as we would wish upon a proper occasion, to be the assertion of our own.”

In the mean time, the most extraordinary domestic occurrences of the present reign had taken place, in the affair of the Middlesex election. Mr. Wilkes was expelled the house of commons; re-elected by his constituents; and, in return, declared incapable of fitting in the present parliament. As the country was not to be diverted to another choice, the ministry offered the feat to any one, who would propose himself as a candidate, though he should have but four voices.

Upon this principle, Mr. Luttrell was afterwards declared, by the house of commons, the legal member. Never did any determination spread a more universal flame of discontent. The city of London led the way, and many of the most considerable countries in the kingdom, imitated them, in petitioning the sovereign for the dissolution of parliament.

CHAP. VII

Lord Chatham takes the lead of opposition. — Appointment of lord North. — Falkland's islands. — Imprisonment of the lord mayor. — Incroachments upon the East India company. — Riot at Boston. — Penal acts of parliament.

We are now brought to the last era of the life of lord Chatham. From henceforth, his conduct in unaccommodating and uniform. The figure however, which he makes, at this time, is different from that, in which we have hitherto seen him. From his resignation in 1761, he seemed in some manner, to fill the eye of the public. Every man, not enlisted in a party, seemed to look up to his principles, as the standard of liberty; and to his conduct, as the model of public spirit. A thousand lesser deviations were forgiven him, or indeed seemed to pass unobserved, amid the splendor of his virtues. But the fatal era of his administration, sunk him in the public esteem. It was inglorious; and the generality judge rather by events, than by actions; and are not curious in discriminating the unfortunate, and the blamable. A considerable part of the blame they places, where, I believe, posterity will not be forward to place it, in the acceptance of a peerage. The removal however, from the house of commons, that attend it, contributed to shut the door, against his recovering that boundless popularity, which he had formerly enjoyed.

Disappointed in the inauspicious event of the administration which he had formed with so assiduous care; and mortified, at the impolitic proceedings, of which he had been, however designedly, in some measure, the occasion, he laid, for some time, his head in the obscurity of retreat. But even there, the voice of the people reached him. He was roused from supineness and slumber. He came forward, to face his own treacherous friends, together with those new associates, whose principles, he had ever considered, as inimical to liberty. He even seemed, to have risen from the grave, that erewhile had half closed upon his head; and to have caught, once more, all the vigour and animation of unworn youth. He shook off all his long infirmities. He managed not his declining years. With ambitious eagerness, he presented himself upon every occasion; and where the artillery of opposition had made an impression, upon the defenses of the cabal, he was ever foremost to mount the breach. Together with him, he brought a small, but chosen phalanx. The blunt, the honest and the artless earl Temple. The accomplished, the elaborate Lord Shelbourne. And lastly, his excellent friend, the lord chancellor, sagacious and penetrating, unmoved by wiles, unawed by power.

With this addition to the strength of minority in the house of lords, that party appeared, every way, so respectable, as to divert the attention of the people, almost entirely, from the proceedings of their representatives; upon whom it has usually been fixed; but who had, in a great measure, alienated their affections, by their conduct in the affair of Mr. Wilkes. The session commenced, with a motion, for an amendment to the address, by lord Chatham, promising, with all convenient speed, to take into consideration the causes of the public discontents, and particularly the affair, from which they were supposed, to have originated. This amendment was supported, with much energy and decision, by lord Camden. The consequence was his immediate dismissal from office. The seals were offered to Mr. Charles Yorke, who is said to have accepted them with re-

luctance, through the personal intreaties of his sovereign; and who survived his appointment only three days. He was supposed to have put an end to his own existence, in consequence of his remorse, for the disgrace, he imagined himself to have sustained. Terrified by so many concomitant circumstances; the discontents of the people; the hostility of his old patron; and the present unfortunate event; the duke of Grafton deserted the helm of government; and lord North, who had been, for some time, the minister of the house of commons, was appointed to succeed him.

The administration of lord North will ever make a principal figure, in the history of this country. It must be acknowledged, in his favour, that the feeds of those calamities, by which his story is so eminently distinguished, were remotely sown, before his accession to office; and that he came forward, at a very alarming and critical period. His appointment was evidently, in some measure, the effect of necessity. It was by chance, that he was placed at the head of affairs. But it has been the distinguishing characteristic of the present reign, that those appointments, which were, at first, the most evidently temporary, have almost universally, in the end, proved the most permanent.

If this nobleman had never possessed so conspicuous a post, one may almost venture to say, his abilities would never have been thought of. His politics have surely had a sufficient trial, and the event has decided upon their merit. His boasted skill in finance, seems to have partaken of the nature of fairy money, and, when it was called into use, vanished from the touch. If he had any abilities it appears to have been in debate. At the same time, his voice was harsh, and his manner unwieldy. His speeches were never illuminated with one ray of genius; and, when he aimed at animation, he became an object for laughter. But he possessed a sleepiness, and a phlegm, from which it was just possible for him to be roused. The philippics of opposition seldom broke in upon his repose. And, as they simply played upon the surface of his brain, without wounding his mind, he was able to retort them with a buffoonery, that was admired, because it was unresembled. He had the first-rate quality of being able to talk long, without embarrassment. He was able too, to state a matter of complicated calculation, with considerable clearness. In this respect, the day, in which he opened the budget, was the very acme of his glory.

In some things, his lordship resembled Mr. George Grenville, one of his predecessors.

Lord Chatham had ever considered this man, as a useful drudge; and acknowledged, that he had been frequently indebted to his researches. Lord North had served the witty, the volatile Mr. Charles Townshend, in the same capacity; and that gentleman is said, so have entertained a similar contempt for him. In one respect however, the nobleman in question, was perfectly opposite to his predecessor. Mr. Grenville was shrewd, sagacious and inflexible. Lord North seemed to have no sentiments of his own. He maintained, with the same unvaried countenance, a system today, the very opposite of the system of yesterday. Like the Desdemona of Othello's distempered imagination, he could "turn, and turn, and yet go on." He seems to have no objection to the execution of measures, which, at the same time, he professed to disapprove. I am afraid, this is the very worst feature, that can belong to a political character.

These changes however did not make any immediate alteration in the face of affairs. Lord Chatham prosecuted his object, without intermission; and tried every means for the gratification of the wishes of the people. He endeavoured, both by resolution, and by the bill, to reverse the proceedings upon the Middlesex election. He moved to censure the minister, who had advised the king's answer to a remonstrance, upon that subject, from the city of London. And he endeavoured to obtain, from the house of lords, an address to the sovereign, for what was then so eagerly desired, and the dissolution of parliament. But all his eloquence was in vain. Ministers did not

even seem to study the plausible, and never engaged heartily in the debate, till they came to the division. This venerable hero was repeatedly called down, by the youngest, and least considerable of the peers, for what they pretended to consider, as an undue warmth of expression, — His perseverance however, did not go undistinguished. The city felt a suitable gratitude, and voted their thanks to him for his conduct.

There is somewhat remarkable in the speech he delivered, in support of a motion, for augmenting the number of seamen. He concluded with these memorable words: “Although, my lord, “ said he, “ it seems to be so unsettled among us, whether we shall put on the armour of defense; — a question, at worst, if carried in the affirmative, which cannot but be considered, as an act of prudence; — I do now pledge myself to this honourable house, for the truth of what I am going to assert: that, at this very hour, that we are sitting together, there has been a blow of hostility struck against us, by our old inveterate enemies, in some part of the world.” — This prediction was, almost immediately verified, in the affair of Falkland’s islands.

Political prophesy is a discriminating particular in lord Catham’s character. He willingly indulged himself in it; and he was perhaps very seldom mistaken. Much was undoubtedly owing to his intelligence; and much to that sagacity, without which, he pronounced extrinsic intelligence to be nothing. But this is not all. There is an enthusiasm; if you will, an inspiration, that is connate to all original genius. Nature seems to delight, to own, and to vindicate it, in all it’s effervescencies.

In the mean time, this is perhaps one of the most extraordinary instances of the kind, that is to be met with in history. It may therefore be worth while to attempt to analyze it, and distinctly to assign its various causes. The character of Britain had palpably been sinking for several years in the eyes of Europe. The affair with Corsica had, at once, demonstrated this circumstance, and increased it. Warlike preparations were commenced in the ports of France and Spain. The continuance therefore of the general tranquility was become precarious. But there is something peremptory and circumstantial in the prediction I have related, that these considerations do, by no means account for. The object of the preparations was apparently uncertain. We were, at present, in full, peace; and, if its duration were precarious, the immediate commencement of hostilities was much more so. It was improbable, that the enemy should begin, by a precipitate attack, upon a distant and unimportant part of the empire. The attack made no part of any regular system; and there-fore, as the part of such a system, it could not be developed.

The territorial right to the islands in question, was a matter, involved in the utmost obscurity. The Spaniard however had invaded our possession, without any previous discussion, and in full peace; and had stripped us of it, with circumstances of deliberated insult. This proceeding certainly demanded exemplary reparation. They seemed however much disposed, to procrastinate the negotiation. At length, by the mediation of France in the hopes of whose warlike assistance they appear to have been disappointed, they consented to replace every thing in it’s former situation. The acceptance of these terms might have been ascribed to a spirit of moderation. No object of dispute could certainly be more frivolous, or more unworthy of plunging half mankind in the horrors of war. It came out however, some time after, by the confession of the French ambassador, that, in order to obtain these terms, we were obliged to stipulate, on our part, the finally evacuating the disputed islands, and in being the first to desist from our warlike preparations.

Proceedings, like these, though the last article was, at that time, only suspected, were so much the reverse of the haughty and decisive manners of lord Chatham, that it is not to be wondered at, that he strained every nerve, to obtain a parliamentary stigma, upon the conduct of the British ne-

gotiators. He compared the present compromise, to the famous convention of sir Robert Walpole, that led the way to the war of 1739; and asserted the probability of a similar event.

With that unchanging perseverance, that constitute so leading a trait of his character, he brought forward, once again, the affair of the Middlesex election. In order however to vary the subject of discussion, he digressed into a stricture, upon some recent particulars, in the conduct of our courts of justice, that were thought to infringe, upon that invaluable characteristic of the English constitution, the trial by jury. The person, who was principally pointed at, in this affair; and who did not meet the discussion, with that readiness, which the public desired, was the celebrated lord Mansfield. He was nearly of the same age with our hero; and they came forward, about the same time, to general observation. He was the greatest of all lord Chatham's contemporaries upon the public stage. The celebrated compliment of Pope to him, is not less just, than it is beautiful; that nature had left it in his choice, whether he would be a Tully, or a Maro. Minute observers have pretended to discover in him, something of the vindictive, and something too much of art. He has been uniformly accused, of leaning towards the principles of despotism. In the mean time, the firmness of his judgment, and the honourable uniformity of his conduct, will not permit us, for a moment, to doubt of his sincerity, in all the sentiments he professes. That however, which we dare not blame, we may have leave to lament.

The session closed with an affair, that, at once, revived all the democratical ardour, that had attended the proceedings against Mr. Wilkes. An imperfect account had long been given, in the public papers, of the debates of the house of commons with impunity; though there was a standing order against it. At this time, a member thought fit to complain of the misrepresentation he had suffered; and the printers were immediately ordered into custody. Three of them were soon after apprehended, and severally carried before the lord mayor, and the aldermen Wilkes and Oliver; who discharged them from confinement, and bound them over to prosecute their captors. Inflamed at this instance of contempt, the house committed Mr. Oliver and the chief magistrate to the tower. Some difficulty arising, concerning the manner of Mr. Wilkes's appearance before them, who claimed, as a member; his conduct passed without animadversion. The two prisoners were attended to confinement by the acclamations of the people. They were followed by the thanks of their fellow citizens. And the day of their liberation was celebrated, with every mark of festivity and triumph. The dislike, that parliament had incurred, was so far swelled by this business, that lord Chatham employed it, as a strong additional argument, when he renewed his motion, to address the king to dissolve them.

In the following session, his lordship came forward, as the advocate of religious liberty, in support of a bill for the relief of Protestant dissenters. The year 1772 was undistinguished by any remarkable event. The popular spirit began, at this time, to subside; and has since remained, for the most part, in a state of languor and inactivity. The strength of opposition in parliament was also decaying; Mr. George Grenville was sometime dead, and lord Chatham began, once again, to withdraw himself from the public theatre. It was now that the character of the minister began, most visibly, to give a colour to the public counsels. Generally slow: anon, decisive, with a veil of constitutional modesty, violent, under the guise of phlegmatic moderation. This temperature was exceedingly visible, in the measures, that were now adopted, respecting the East India company. The scheme of lord Chatham, whatever it was, was compromised, by his successors in office, in consideration of a large annual subsidy, to be paid to government; which, it afterwards appeared, the company could ill spare; but the payment of which they preferred, to that invasion, which was threatened, of their territorial claims. At this time, they became so embarrassed in their

affairs, as to be obliged to discontinue the subsidy; and even to demand, from government, a considerable loan. The minister, beholding the company prostrate at his feet, considered this, as the time, to assert his supremacy. Without actually depriving them of their possessions, he established a parliamentary assertion, that they held them by sufferance, and in consequence, passed a great number of vexatious regulations; which threw a considerable weight of influence into the scale of government, but which were little less obnoxious, than would have been the most peremptory and unqualified proceedings. At the same time, he seemed willing to grant them some compensation.

Administration had long triumphed in the success of their American measures. They saw, however not openly, the tea imported, and the tax, in some measure, submitted to. They did not know, that the stillness, that prevailed in that country, was the stillness of reflection; and they could not perceive, that their minds were progressively alienating from dependence upon Britain. They fancied, they saw them reconciling, by degrees, to unlimited submission: things, they believed, had continued long enough, in their present course: this was the time to act with decision. Accordingly they imagined, they should effect two purposes, at once, by granting to the East India company, who heretofore had never exported her own commodities, the liberty of exporting tea, in whatever quantity, without being subject to the usual impositions. Thus encouraged, the company shipped a considerable quantity for America.

No sooner had the account of these things crossed the Atlantic, than America rose up, as one man; and all the colonies, without previous concert, resolved, not to permit the cargoes to be landed. In most places, the vessels, perceiving their voyage to have been to no purpose, peaceably returned. At Boston, and other places, this was refused. Finding, therefore no other remedy, and persuaded, that the tea would be brought on shore, by degrees, and their resolves evaded, a considerable party of the inhabitants went on board, in disguise; and having, without interruption, destroyed the cargoes, immediately dispersed.

Matters were thus brought to a very serious crisis. The minister, who, in the foregoing session, had trampled upon a defenseless commercial company, now imagined, he could do the same with three millions of people, stretched over a wide continent, of fifteen hundred miles in extent: with a people, whose ancestors had left their native fields, and fled to the uncouth deserts of America, in pursuit of liberty; and who themselves, nursed in the lap of strenuous freedom, were now in the first stage of cultivation, hardy, laborious, intrepid, and enterprising. Administration owed all its misapprehensions concerning them, in a manner, to one source; the misinformation of the provincial governors. It had been observed, in the commencement of the last war, that the Indians, almost universally, sided with the French. Their commanders, persons of generous blood, and gentle demeanour, won over the natives, by their accommodating manners and their equitable conduct; while ours, men, for the most part, of broken fortunes, and ruined character, employed no management, and understood no policy. Posterity will look back astonished, to see their ancestors, sacrificing their dearest possessions, to the precipitation of a very few obscure individuals, in their origin base, and in their persons contemptible.

In this manner misled, administration determined upon measure of the boldest description. Their policy was comprised in four acts of parliament; for shutting up the port of Boston; for changing the government of the province of Massachusetts-bay; for adjourning the trial of delinquents in America, from one of the colonies, to another, or to great Britain; and for extending the limits, and granting an establishment to the French system of policy and religion in Canada. — In

the course of this session, and a little previous to the disclosure of the above system, opposition obtained a most invaluable acquisition, in the person of Mr. Charles Fox.

CHAP. VIII

Meeting of the general congress. — Lord Chatham's conciliatory plan. — Coercive measures pursued. — Commencement of the war. — Declaration of independency. — Campaign of 1776. — Expedition from Canada.

THOUGH, in the year 1770 lord Chatham had come forward, with an apparent determination, from thenceforth to take a regular share, in the parliamentary deliberations; he however found himself irresistibly baffled by the encroachments of disease. From his youth, he had been the martyr of an hereditary gout. Scarcely any person was ever subject to that painful distemper, in a greater degree. For some years, before his death, he was, in a manner, confined to his chamber. It was only, at distant intervals, that he could tear himself from the couch of imbecility; and appear, in his darling character of a senator, and upon his proper theatre, the great council of the nation. But rare, as these appearances were, they acquired, from that circumstance, an additional splendour. It was no longer proper, for this hero of a former age, to waste his efforts upon a vulgar theme; or, in any case, to join in the cry of a party, or view situations, through the medium of private affection. Aloof from the herd of listed combatants, it became him, as it were, to dictate his sentiments from a more elevated station: and he seemed to require a theme, new, as his situation; and large, as his godlike soul. And such a theme was provided for him.

It may not be displeasing, to recollect, for a moment, by what gradual steps, he rose to an elevation, which never mortal knew beside him. In his commencement he appeared humble and unassuming, very limited in his income, and placed at the very foot of a profession, in which merit often grows gray in obscurity. It was by silent, unobserved steps, by laborious study, and accumulated reflection, that he advanced. At length, he took his seat in parliament, and became distinguished for an eloquence, beautiful, magnificent and imposing. By degrees, he far outstripped his competitors, and stood alone, the rival of antiquity.—Fixed in his character for eloquence, he was now destined to appear in a different scene. He became the first minister of Britain; the sole conductor of an arduous war; the object, upon which the hopes of his country, and the apprehensions of contending Europe, were ultimately fixed. In this situation, it is little to say, that he called forth the long forgotten magnanimity of the empire; that uninterrupted, unrivalled success attended his administration. He was himself a host. His name alone, withered the hearts of our enemies, and made their arms drop useless from their hands. His reputation sounded through the universe. Dismissed from power, he became independent, and self-moved. His eloquence gave him dignity, his information fixed attention; and his character attracted love. He was the patron of the oppressed; the corrector of ministerial rashness; and the prophetic soul of Britain. —Still however, something human hung about him. He had not yet shaken off the infirmities of ambition; or laid aside the garb of party. He came forward too much upon trifling occasions; and gave into the exaggerated representations, which are perhaps necessary to a regular opposition. But such were not the errors of his closing years. Infirmity, at least, curbed his ever active spirit. I will not say, that heaven provided the awful scene of an American war, to give new lustre to the setting sun. But I will say, that heaven prolonged the shutting day, that it might finally close,

with untried splendours, for the world to wonder at. Perhaps no man ever filled so important a situation. A thousand circumstances seemed to point him out, as the arbiter of two contending countries, great in their inherent magnitude, and whose dispute was, every way, peculiarly interesting. Ah, happy Britain! had she seized the golden opportunity; and listened to the Voice of native sagacity, and accumulated experience, which was thus poured in her ears. In the mean time, the want of success, which attended the efforts of our hero, however, as men, we may lament it; in the eye of abstract taste, perhaps contributes, to the whole, a finishing beauty. This is its language. If "Britain could have been saved, by this right-hand it had been saved." And this is its effect. To give an unspeakable solemnity to the scene, and to complete the most awful tragedy in the worlds by joining, with the death of Chatham, the Crush of a mighty empire in his ruins.

It was in the close of the session, whose principal acts have already been described, that this nobleman appeared, once again, within the walls of parliament, in opposition to the Canada bill. He lamented that want of health, which prevented him, from bearing his uniform testimony, against every part of so destructive a system. He went over the same ground of argument and advice, to which he had adhered, upon this subject, with the most unalterable consistency. But his principal effort was reserved, for the commencement of the year 1775.

In the mean time, the ensuing summer appeared with the most serious and threatening aspect in America. Both parties were backward in proceeding to extremities. But the impending tempest, the more slowly it forms, and the longer it is brewing over our heads, grows much blacker and blacker, and rushes upon us, at last, with more tremendous fury. Administration had closed the session with triumph, and expected, that the firmness of their countenance was immediately to terrify America into abject submission. The event was exactly the reverse of the prediction. Menace and coercion serve only to rouse the manly spirit. Every province associated herself, in the cause of liberty; and the weak and improvident measures, that were intended to divide them, proved to them, the cement of an indissoluble union. They immediately elected a general congress, who determined upon the most deliberate measures for their future safety; and concluded with drawing up addresses, to their fellow citizens; to their neighbours of Canada; and to the inhabitants of Britain; together with a petition to the throne. These papers were executed with uncommon energy and address; and, in vigour of sentiment, and the nervous language of patriotism, would not certainly have disgraced any assembly, that ever existed.

The session of 1775, especially in its commencement, certainly included as awful a crisis, as can be imagined. The event of peace or war; the immediate desolation of America; the eventual ruin of Britain; and the emancipation of one half of the world, palpably hung upon their first determinations. Ministry, in order to have a clearer field before them, had previously dissolved the old parliament, and summoned a new one. In their last session, it had been usual, for the commons, to consult the temper of their constituents more, than upon other occasions, in order to insure their suffrages, at the general election. And it was indispensably necessary, that they should be unshackled, in the commencement of so arduous an adventure.

In the mean time, the servants of the crown were so backward, in bringing out their American system, that the plan of conciliation, formed by lord Chatham, had the start of them. He began with a motion, for withdrawing the royal forces from Boston. He told the house, that, in this distracted situation of affairs, he had crawled thither, to offer them the best of his experience and advice. He urged the necessity of the step he had recommended, as the means of opening a way for settling the dangerous troubles in America, by beginning to allay ferments, and soften animosities there. He said, an hour now lost, might produce years of calamity.- His object was, to put his foot

upon the threshold of peace. His present motion was only the introduction, to a comprehensive plan; and he pledged himself to the house, that he would not desert for a moment the conduct of this mighty business. Unless nailed to his bed by the extremity of sickness, sickness, he would give it his unremitting attention; he would knock at the door of a sleeping and confounded ministry, and rouse them to a sense of their important danger.

He described the situation of the troops at Boston, as truly unworthy, being penned up, and pining in inglorious inactivity. He called them, an army of impotence and contempt: and, to make the folly equal to the disgrace, they were an army of irritation. "You irritate your colonies to unappeasable rancour. It is not repealing this, or that act of parliament; not the annihilation of a few dirty shreds of parchment, that can restore America to your bosom. You must repeal her fears; and her resentments; and you may then hope for her love and gratitude."

He was lavish in his praises of the congress. For himself, he must avow, that in all his reading and observation: -and it had been his favourite study; he had read Thucydides; and had studied and admired the master states of the world:-antiquity recorded nothing, more honourable, more respectable, than this despised meeting. It has been in circulation, that, if the stamp act had never been repealed, we should, at this hour, have been at peace and quietness with America: and from this, "many people urge the danger, as well as inefficacy of conciliating measures, at present." I know, on the contrary, from the most respectable authority, that these were, at that instant, the prevalent and steady principles of America: that you might destroy their "towns, might cut them off from the superfluities, and even the conveniences of life"; but that they were prepared to despise your power, and "would not lament their loss, while they had, -what, my lords? - their liberty.

"Do you think, that men, who could be roused to forego their profits, their pleasures, and the peaceable enjoyment of their dearest connections, all for the sake of liberty, will be whipped into vassalage, like slaves? Why, "this conduct in government, is so fantastical and aerial in practice, that it, "by far, exceeds the boldest wing of poetry; for poetry has often read in"structive, as well as pleasing lessons to "mankind; and, though me sometimes "amuse herself in fiction, that fiction, ' to please, should be founded in veri"similitude. But, in this wise system, "there is nothing like truth; nothing like policy; nothing like justice, experience, or common sense."

"We shall be forced ultimately to retract: let us retract, while we can do it with honour. These violent, oppressive acts must be repealed. I pledge myself for it, that you will, "in the end, repeal them. I stake my reputation upon it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed. The cause of America is allied to every true whig. This glorious spirit animates three millions of men in our colonies. What shall oppose this spirit? aided by the congenial flame, glowing in the breast of every whig in England, to the amount, I hope, of double the American numbers. Ireland they have to a man. Nay, what dependence can you have upon your soldiery, the unhappy instruments of your wrath? They are Englishmen, who must feel for the privileges of Englishmen and their carrying muskets and bayonets about them, surely does not exclude them from the pale of civil community. Foreign war hangs over your heads, by a flight and brittle thread. France and Spain are watching

"your conduct, and waiting for the maturity of your errors."

"But you are anxious, who should disarm first? The great poet, and perhaps a greater politician, than ever he was a poet, has given you the wisest counsel; follow it."

Tuque prior, tit parce; genus qui ducis Olimpo;

Projice tela manu.

“With a dignity, becoming your exalted situation, make the first advances to concord, to peace and happiness; for that is your true dignity, to act with prudence and with justice.”

The noble earl concluded his animated harrangue in the following emphatical manner. “My lords, if the “ministers thus persevere in misadvising and misleading the king, I will not say, that they can alienate the affections of his subjects from his crown; but I will affirm, that they will make the crown not worth his wearing. I will not say, that the king is betrayed; but I will affirm, that the kingdom is undone.

The times were greatly changed, since this wonderful man moulded the attentive senate. Formerly he had touched a master passion in humanity, and thundered in their ears the advancement of their country’s dignity and power. Now he addressed an assembly, all whose prejudices and pre-conceptions were in opposition to him. He had armed them against himself, by the successes of the last war, and the immeasurable haughtiness they inspired. Wrapped in the contemplation of their own grandeur amid irresistible strength, he had to reason down in them the pride of empire; and to persuade those to yield, who imagined themselves able to dictate. Perhaps no orator ever succeeded in a cause, in which it was impossible for him to interest any active passion of the soul in his favour.

The rejection however of his motion, did not discourage lord Chatham, from bringing forward the body of that conciliatory scheme; which he had already, in part, announced, and to which the motion was only introductory. He accordingly offered to the house, the outlines of “a provisional act, for settling the troubles in America; and for asserting the supreme legislative authority, and superintending power of Great Britain, over her colonies.” Among a great variety of matter, the bill was to declare the colonies, dependent upon the crown, and subordinate to the parliament of Britain. It asserted the competency of parliament, to make laws to bind America, in matters, touching the general weal; and more especially in regulating affairs of navigation and trade. It admitted, that no tax, tallage, or revenue could be levied in America, except by common consent in their provincial assemblies. It legalised the holding the ensuing session of congress, for the double purpose of recognising the superintending power of the British legislature; and of making a grant to the king of a certain perpetual revenue, subject to the disposition of parliament; not as a condition for redress, but as a testimony of affection. Lastly, it eventually repealed the obnoxious acts of parliament.

It’s illustrious author intreated the assistance of the house, to digest the crude materials, which in the form of a bill, he had presumed to lay before them. He called on them, to exercise their candour; and deprecated the effects of party and prejudice, of factious spleen, or blind predilection. He declared himself to be actuated by no narrow principle, or personal consideration. And he said, that, though his bill might be looked upon, as a bill of concession, it was impossible, not, at the same time, to confess, that it was a bill of assertion.- Things were however now carried with so high a hand, that the bill was rejected, by a majority of almost two to one, and not even suffered to lie upon the table.

It cannot reasonably be doubted, that this bill, if it had passed into a law, would have been productive of the most salutary consequences. To affirm so complicated a measure, to have been, in all its parts unexceptionable, would be to advance a most adventurous position. But the very veneration and confidence, that America entertained for the character of lord Chatham, would have led them to review it, in a very different spirit; from that, which actuated them in surveying, what they thought, the contracted and insidious schemes of the persons, then in administration.

The whole continent was, as yet, by no means, persuaded into the manly and decisive ideas of independence and total separation. And the more resolute and philosophical would doubtless have postponed their conceptions, to the dread of disunion, and the recollection of the possible mischances, and inseparable calamities of war.

By this distinguished parliamentary effort, ministry were roused to bring forward their own plan. They declared a rebellion, actually existing, in the province of Massachusetts bay. They brought in a bill, for restraining the commerce, and annihilating the fisheries of the New England provinces. The principles of this bill were, soon after, extended to most of the southern colonies. And to wind up the whole, they introduced, what they called, a conciliatory proposition, permitting each colony separately, to offer a certain income to government, which, if approved, might be accepted in lieu of a parliamentary revenue. This was the consummation of the plan, at this time, avowed by administration, and founded in the maxim, as impolitic, as it is detestable, *divide et impera*. Ten thousand men was the force, destined to carry the ministerial ideas into execution.—In the mean time, towards the close of the session, Mr. Burke, the profoundest politician, and the most eloquent speaker of the commons, proposed a plan of conciliation, to that house, in a considerable degree, similar to that of lord Chatham.

But the season of deliberation was now at an end. The standard of civil war was unfurled. By the unaccountable ignorance and improvidence of our government, on the one hand, and the unremitting exertions of the Americans, on the other; they saw themselves, by the close of the ensuing winter, masters of the whole continent, from Nova Scotia, northward, to Florida, on the south; and, to the east, they were only checked, after a very critical escape, on our part,—by the fortress of Quebec. In the mean time, the expenses of this campaign were computed, to exceed those of any, the most celebrated periods of the last war.—It was in this stage, that America made her last effort towards a treaty, by a very celebrated petition from the continental congress, distinguished by the moderation of its demands, and teeming with expressions of duty, respect and loyalty to the king, and unfeigned affection for the parent state. To this petition it was signified, by the command of his majesty, that no answer would be given.

Government were now taught to understand, how much they had been mistaken, respecting the strength of America. The discovery however did not turn their thoughts to peace. In the beginning of the following session, their language indeed was more indecisive. In the course of it, their notions hardened into form. The mild and candid earl of Dartmouth was removed from the American department, and succeeded by the severe and saturnine lord George Germaine. To him most of the subsequent American measures have generally been attributed. The language of administration was gradually screwed up to the highest pitch; and no terms were now held out, but those of unconditional submission. This lofty stile was accompanied with the most immense preparations; and the romantic exploits of an Alexander, or a Charles the twelfth, seemed ready to be acted over again, upon the theatre of the new world.

It was this terrific crisis, that the general congress of America chose additionally to signalise, by a declaration of independency. The royal forces were already hovering over the central province of New York. It is an example of intrepidity, not to be paralleled in the annals of mankind. It was little likely, that a resolution, thus announced, should ever be retracted. In a word, a new era was palpably fixed in the history of the globe.—The campaign of 1776 was however studded over with the most brilliant successes. But they proved, as it usually happens, in such fairy projects, more brilliant, than they were durable.

The following session of parliament was less active, than most of the preceding. Intoxicated, as we were, with our temporary successes, opposition despaired of any good consequences, from resisting the general voice of an unreflecting nation. The declaration of independency too had created a new situation. And it is probable, that party had not yet made up their mind, respecting the plan of conduct, that might now be requisite. Accordingly, influenced by one, or both of these motives, the majority of them, after a few unsuccessful efforts, took the resolution of absenting themselves, in all discussions, relative to the present unhappy contest.

In the mean time, affairs began to assume a less favourable appearance. The campaign had ended somewhat abruptly. Our forces received a check, during the winter, that turned back the tide upon us, with irresistible impetuosity. All Europe had beheld the strenuous resistance of America with predilection; and the court of France, in particular, was supposed to be biased in her favour, at once, by sentiment, and by policy. The declaration of independency had probably been made, partly in accommodation to her views. At this time, the celebrated Dr. Franklin, the nursing mother, and the guardian genius of the United States, arrived in that country, to plead their cause. Every thing was to be reckoned upon, from his hoary wisdom, his intimate knowledge of mankind, and his consummate political address.

A period, like this, when we were not unsuccessful, but when the forerunners of misfortune thickened upon us, from every side, brought lord Chatham again down to the house of lords. The session closed with his proposal, for an address to the sovereign, beseeching him, "to take the most speedy and effectual measures, for putting a stop to hostilities in America, by the removal of accumulated grievances." Under the words, "accumulated grievances," his lordship intended to convey every thing, that had passed in parliament, relative to America, since the year 1763. This, he said, would be the herald of peace. And he particularly insisted, upon the immediate necessity of adopting this measure, from the imminent danger, to which we were exposed, from what national politics had taught him to call, "our natural, hereditary and inveterate enemies" of the house of Bourbon. A few weeks, he asserted, might decide our fate, as a nation. A treaty, between France and America, would be that final decision. America was contending with us, under a masked battery of France, which would infallibly open upon us, as soon, as our weakness, and her preparations were sufficiently advanced.-The motion was rejected by a large majority.

The campaign of 1777 was decisive of the fate of the war.-General Burgoyne, in pursuance of a plan, which was esteemed the favourite child of the American secretary, marched an army from Canada, against the back settlements of the northern provinces. Sir William Howe, the commander in chief at New York, opened the campaign, on that side, by an unsuccessful effort, to dislodge the main army of the states. In these proceedings, the first part of the summer was consumed. The autumn was more busy and active. General Burgoyne, by the impracticable nature of the country, through which he was to pass; and by the northern militia, which incessantly harrassed him in his march, was reduced, to surrender his whole army prisoners of war. Sir William Howe, after a tedious voyage, from New York, up the Chesapeak, at length, advanced, by that route, against the central post of Philadelphia. The proceedings of the army, in this situation, partook of the brilliancy of the former campaign; but that brilliancy no longer deceived anybody:

The news of these latter events had not yet reached England, when the parliament met. The disaster of the northern force began indeed to be generally conjectured. The superiority of the British in Pensylvania, was less clearly foreseen. The invincible partiality of France, to the revolted colonies, formed a principal object of the public attention. The naval preparations, that were carried on, in her ports, were, to the last degree alarming. The cabals in that court, seemed

daily ripening towards decision. Never was there a session of parliament, more teeming with important events, than the present.

CHAP. IX

Fourth session of the third parliament of George the third. — Address to the throne. — Enquiry into the state of the nation. — Transaction with lord Bute. — Lord North's conciliatory bills. — Treaty between France and America avowed. — Debate concerning the independency of America. — Death. — And character of lord Chatham.

The situation of his country, which had for some years been growing more and more critical, and now seemed fast verging to it's acme, roused lord Chatham to bestow his whole attention, upon the affairs of the public. Curbed by, what was esteemed, the irresistible force of disease, he had, of late, appeared rarely upon the public theatre; and reserved himself for singular and distant occasions. At this time, he shook off the fetters of his destiny. He grappled with the chilling powers of hoary age, and set mortality itself at defiance. He stripped the slough of wrinkled years, and burst forth with all the vigour and activity of spritely youth. He came down continually to the house of lords, resolved to spend his last breath, in pouring the warning voice of anxious generosity, and inextinguishable patriotism, in the ears of his country.

On the first day of the session, he moved an amendment, to the address to the throne, recommending an immediate cessation of hostilities, as preliminary to a treaty of peace. Never was he more animated than upon this occasion. Though borne down with the weight of years, his speech afforded no equivocal specimen of what had been his youthful powers. — In the first part of the address, he said, he should heartily concur. No man, rejoiced more sincerely, than he did, upon an addition to the royal family, and the safe recovery of the queen. But he must stop here. His courtly complaisance would carry him no farther. He could not join in congratulation upon misfortune and disgrace. It was a perilous and tremendous moment, and not a time for adulation. It was necessary, to dispell the delusion and darkness, which enveloped the throne; and to display in it's full danger, and it's native colours, the ruin, that was brought to our doors. "This, my lords," said he, "is our duty. We sit here, the hereditary council of the nation."

"And who is the minister, where is the minister, that has dared to suggest to the throne, the contrary, unconstitutional language, this day, delivered from it? The accustomed language, from the throne, has been, an application for advice: as it is the right of parliament to give, so it is the duty of the crown to ask it. But, on this day, at this awful moment, the crown, from itself, and by itself, declares an unalterable determination, to pursue measures —and what measures, my lords? — the measures, which have already reduced this late flourishing empire, to ruin and contempt. *But yesterday, and England might have stood against the world; now none so poor, to do her reverence.* I use the words of a poet; but, though it be poetry, it is no fiction. And can the minister of the day, now expect a continuance of support, in this ruinous infatuation? Can parliament be so dead to it's dignity and it's duty, as to be thus deluded, into the loss of the one, and the violation of the other?"

His lordship then drew an affecting picture of our weakness at home, and our situation, with respect to foreign powers; the insults, we were compelled to pocket, and the evasions, at which we were forced to connive. He blamed the conduct of the war. He condemned the employing foreign

mercenaries against our brethren. He reprobated, in the most glowing colours, the associating the savage Indians to our standard.-The independent views of America were stated, as the foundation of our proceedings. No man, he said, wished more, for the due dependence of America upon this country, than himself. But he pleaded for our granting her the participation of our rights. In a just and honourable quarrel, he said, he would part with the shirt off his back, to support the contest. But, in the present ignominious dispute, he would not contribute no, not a shilling.

He warned them, that the present moment was perhaps the last, in which we could hope for success in these views. In her negotiations with France, he said, America had, or thought she had reason to complain. It was notorious, that she had received, from that power, important supplies and assistance, of various kinds. But it was certain, that she expected something more immediate and decisive. She was now in ill humour. America and France, he said, could not be congenial. There was something confirmed and decisive in the honest American, that would not assimilate to the futility and levity of Frenchmen.

He asked, in this complicated crisis of weakness at home, and calamity abroad; terrified and insulted by the neighbouring powers; unable to act in America, or acting, only to be destroyed: where was the man, with the forehead, to promise, or hope for success? "You cannot conciliate America by your present measures. You cannot subdue her by your present, or any measures. What then can you do? You cannot conquer, "you cannot gain; but you can address. You can lull the fears and anxieties of the moment, into an ignorance of the danger, that should produce them."

The season was long past, since the fortune of Europe seemed, to hang upon the voice of this illustrious personage; and he appeared the arbiter of peace and war to mankind. His eminent services could not command respect. Neither his hoary age, nor the disinterested patriotism, by which he was distinguished, could compel veneration. It seemed to have become fashionable, among the court lords, not only to treat his advices, with an affected indifference; but even to thwart and overbear him upon smaller matters, in a way, that, at least, merited the appellations of captiousness and petulance. What party was eventually disgraced, by this conduct, I shall leave it to my reader to determine.

In consequence of this disposition, lord Chatham's speech, at the opening of the session, involved him in two sharp contests. In stating our internal debility, he had asserted, that we had scarcely twenty ships of the line, ready to put to sea. The position was warmly controverted, by the earl of Sandwich, at that time, first lord of the admiralty. This nobleman was a man of gay manners, and a lively wit; an attractive companion, and a steady friend. At the same time, his principles were, in the utmost degree, relaxed and dissolute. One of his favourite maxims seems to have been, the laudableness of deceiving those, with whose affairs he was intrusted, when he had any valuable end in view. At this time, he told the house, that he should esteem "that first lord of the admiralty, worthy to lose his head, who did not constantly maintain a fleet, that should be able to face the united house of Bourbon." For his own part, he was happy to inform them, that we had now thirtyfive ships of the line, ready for sea, and seven more, that would be ready in a fortnight. Unfortunately however, lord Chatham's assertion seemed to gain more credit, even at the time, than lord Sandwich's. After what has been said, it is almost superfluous to mention, that the admiral, who was appointed; to command this boasted fleet, found only six ships ready, in the following March; and, by the most strenuous exertions, was enabled to sail with twenty, in June, against thirty two, that lay in Brest harbour.

The other dispute was carried on with more acrimony. A noble lord in office had undertaken, to answer the principal heads of lord Chatham's speech; and, in defence of the measure of employing the savages, he said, he was clearly of opinion, that we were fully justified, in using every means, "that God and nature had put into our hands, to crush rebellion."

THE END

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