

CHAPTER XV.

The king announces to Parliament the capitulation of Cornwallis.—Debates on the Address very hostile to the ministry.—Strong expressions of Fox.—More prudent language of Pitt.—Differences in the Cabinet.—Lord G. Germaine retires.—Losses of West India Islands and Minorca.—The government in a minority.—Lord North announces that his administration is at an end.—The Rockingham ministry.—Rodney's victory over De Grasse.—Breaking the Line.—Capture of the Ville de Paris.—Change of costume in the House of Commons.—Burke's Bill for Economical Reform.—Bills on Revenue Officers and Contractors.—Pitt's motion for Parliamentary Reform.—Arming the People.—Retrospect of the state of Ireland.—Irish Parliament.—Grattan.—His efforts for legislative independence.—The Volunteers of Ireland.—The king's message to the British and Irish Parliaments.—The Statute of George I. asserting the dependence of Ireland repealed.

THE Session of Parliament was opened on the 27th of November, 1781. The Royal Speech had been prepared before the news of the capitulation of Cornwallis had reached London on the 25th. The mover of the Address had been appointed, and had got by heart the echo of the speech. The ministers had little time to prepare or alter the speech, says Walpole. They were obliged to find another mover of the Address; for the young lord Feilding, originally chosen, "avoided making himself as ridiculous as the Royal Speech."* The inconsistency of the production is manifest. The beginning and the end declare the king's resolution to persevere in extinguishing the spirit of rebellion amongst his deluded subjects in America, precisely in the same tone as if Cornwallis had sent Washington a prisoner to London. But one little sentence creeps in, which renders these words of sound and fury of no significance: "It is with great concern I inform you that the events of war have been very unfortunate to my arms in Virginia, having ended in the loss of my forces in that province." It was to be expected that the calamity of Yorktown would give new effect to the efforts of the Opposition to put an end to the war; but the temper which was evinced in this royal communication was calculated to raise hostility to a ministry into bitterness against the sovereign. Lord Shelburne talked of the greatness of mind with which his majesty could rise superior to the dreadful situation of his affairs. "He was not surprised that ministers should take advantage of the noble sentiments of their monarch, and contrive and fabricate such

a speech as should best flatter his personal feelings; but it was to be remembered that those ministers had never governed long for the people's advantage, in any country, who had not fortitude to withstand the mere impulse of their master's sentiments." * Upon this point, it is curious to note the difference of opinion between two eminent statesmen of our own times. Lord Holland laments the weakness, while he enters into the chivalrous feelings, of lord North, which induced him, in opposition to his better judgment, not to abandon a master who expressed for him such confidence, affection, and regard. Lord John Russell holds that the king's opinion that the independence of America would be tantamount to the ruin of the country, was the opinion of Chatham and others of the most eminent of his subjects; that the king was only blameable for the obstinacy with which he clung to this opinion; but that lord North, who was disposed to conciliate America, and was quite ready to consent to peace, by remaining in power to carry into effect the personal wishes of the sovereign, which he preferred to the welfare of the state, exhibited a conduct which might be Toryism, but was neither patriotic nor constitutional. †

The debates in the House of Commons at this crisis, as developing the characters of the two men who were to become the great leaders of the rival parties for twenty years, are singularly interesting. Charles Fox, now in his thirty-third year, by the force of his parliamentary abilities had obtained the highest position in popular estimation. He was the recognized leader of opposition; the most accomplished debater in either house. His notorious contempt for some of the decencies of life, unquestionably of evil example to younger men,—and therefore particularly offensive to the king,—his reckless spirit of gambling, which involved the ruin of his fortune, and all the humiliating exposures of irretrievable debt,—these defects could not abate the love and admiration which he commanded by his frank and generous nature, and by his wonderful powers. But his capacity of winning friends was often neutralized by his rashness in making enemies. Lord North, a man of the most imperturbable good-nature, could readily forgive all the bitter things which Fox could say of him, and even smile at his threats of bringing him to the block. George III. treasured up in his memory the strong expressions of Fox, as he had treasured up those of Chatham; and his hatred of these two amongst the most influential of his subjects was never subdued, and rarely concealed. Fox might naturally look to take a high place in the government when the ad-

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxii. col. 644.

† "Memoirs of Fox," vol. i. p. 247.

ministration of lord North should come to an end, as was clearly inevitable; but he could scarcely expect to propitiate the sovereign by the language which he used on the 27th of November, in moving an Amendment to the Address. The speech from the throne may be considered as the speech of the ministers. But if men, he said, were unacquainted with the nature of our Constitution, what would they pronounce that speech to be? "What! but that it was the speech of some arbitrary, despotic, hard-hearted, and unfeeling monarch, who, having involved the slaves, his subjects, in a ruinous and unnatural war, to glut his enmity, or to satiate his revenge, was determined to persevere in spite of calamity and even of fate;—that it was the speech of a monarch incapable of feeling his own misfortunes, or of sympathising with the sorrows of his people, when the high prerogative of his despotic will was disputed; for despotic monarchs were the most tenacious of their rights, as they called them, and allowed nothing to the feelings or to the comforts of their fellow-creatures." * Burke, on this occasion, used a forcible image, which passed into a proverb. Denouncing the "miserable and infatuated men" who claimed a right of taxing America, without the power of enforcing the claim, he employed this illustration: "Oh! says a silly man, full of his prerogative of dominion over a few beasts of the field, there is excellent wool on the back of a wolf, and therefore he must be sheared. What! shear a wolf? Yes. But will he comply? Have you considered the trouble? How will you get this wool? Oh, I have considered nothing, and I will consider nothing, but my right; a wolf is an animal that has wool; all animals that have wool are to be shorn, and therefore I will shear the wolf." † The Amendment of Fox was lost.

William Pitt did not speak in support of the Amendment; but the next day, on the motion for bringing up the report of the Address, he made, according to Walpole, "a most brilliant figure, to the admiration of men of all sides." Fox praised him in the warmest terms. Mr. Courtenay, although he supported the government, said, "No man could be more affected by what fell from Mr. Pitt than he was. His splendid diction, his manly elocution, his brilliant periods, his pointed logic conveyed in a torrent of rapid and impressive eloquence, brought strongly to his recollection that great and able statesman, whose memory every grateful and generous Briton reveres." The son of Chatham, then in his twenty-third year, was a striking contrast to Fox, in the rigid decorum of his life. But he was not an unsocial young man. There was a

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxii. col. 698.

† *Ibid.*, vol. xxii. col. 722.

club known as Goostree's, where he regularly supped with old University companions. He was the wittiest and most amusing amongst a party of professed wits, who spent an evening in memory of Shakspeare, at the Boar's Head in East Cheap.* But his ambition entirely subdued any disposition to surrender himself to such pleasures as those which interfered with the power and influence of Fox. Ambition was his master-passion, and it once betrayed him, in this stage of his career, when North was expected to resign, into a declaration that he would accept no subordinate post in a new administration. Walpole, who held that this arrogance proved that "he was a boy, and a very ambitious and a very vain one," states that the moment that Pitt had sat down he was aware of his folly, and said he could bite his tongue out for what it had uttered. † There was one imprudence from which this ambitious youth carefully refrained. He gave vent to those sentiments of indignation which he found it impossible to repress, against those ministers who were running headlong into measures which could end only in the ruin of the State; but he was especially careful not to say one word that could imply any disrespect to the sovereign. Dundas, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, though a ministerial officer, made a speech on this occasion which practically supported the arguments of the Opposition. Did the future follower of William Pitt already recognize his natural and rightful leader?

There were differences in the Cabinet on the question of continuing the war with America which soon became manifest. Lord George Germaine had declared in Parliament that he would never sign a treaty which should give independence to America. Lord North had felt it necessary to declare that for the future the war in America would be confined to an endeavour to retain certain posts which were necessary even for the conduct of the war against France and Spain. Lord George Germaine retired from office, and was created a peer. The naval management of lord Sandwich was vigorously assailed; for he had sent admiral Kempenfeld to intercept a French fleet sailing from Brest to reinforce their squadrons in the West Indies, and the British admiral was forced to return to England, after taking some transports, finding himself likely to be opposed by a very superior force. In the West Indies the prospect was not encouraging to a falling ministry. St. Eustatius, Demerara, and Essequibo had been re-taken by the French and restored to their original possessors. Our own colonies of St.

* "Life of Wilberforce," vol. i. p. 18.

† "Last Journals," vol. ii. p. 514.

Christopher's, Nevis, and Montserrat, had fallen into the hands of our enemies. To complete the sum of national misfortunes, Minorca, that noble harbour of the Mediterranean, which was lost in 1756, and regained at the peace of Paris, was surrendered to the French on the 5th of February, after a long siege and gallant defence.

Thus, with disasters on every side, the administration of lord North was in no condition to stand up against the repeated attacks of a powerful opposition, and the manifest defection of alarmed supporters. On the 22nd of February, general Conway, having expressed an opinion that there was a disposition in America to treat for peace, moved that an Address be presented to the king that "he will be pleased to listen to the humble prayer and advice of his faithful Commons, that the war on the continent of North America may no longer be pursued for the impracticable purpose of reducing the inhabitants of that country to obedience by force." Mr. Ellis, the new Secretary of State, resisted the motion; which was finally rejected by a majority only of one in a House of three hundred and eighty-seven members. On the 27th, general Conway renewed his motion in another form; and the government was then in a minority of nineteen, in a House of four hundred and forty-nine members. The king's reply to the Address then voted was cold and sullen: "You may be assured that, in pursuance of your advice, I shall take such measures as shall appear to me to be most conducive to the restoration of harmony between Great Britain and the revolted colonies." On the 9th of March, lord John Cavendish moved a vote of censure on the ministers for the conduct of the war, which was only rejected by a majority of ten. On the 15th, after another bare majority, the king wrote to lord North, "I am resolved not to throw myself into the hands of opposition at all events; and shall certainly, if things go as they seem to tend, know what my conscience as well as honour dictates as the only way left for me." In his Diary of the 18th of March, Walpole says, that the king "not only talked of retiring to Hanover, but it is certain that for a fortnight together the royal yacht was expeditiously preparing for transporting him." This idle threat of the king is properly ascribed by Walpole to "moody peevishness, which had not looked for, nor fixed on, any system." The king could not retain his old ministers; he threw every difficulty in the way of treating with the formidable leaders who had now the command of the House of Commons. But there was no possibility of escape, except by some course which the king knew would end in that confusion which he had the sense at last not to

risk. On the 20th of March, lord North announced in Parliament that his ministry was at an end. Lord Holland's relation of the scene on this occasion is a relief to Walpole's tedious narrative of negotiations between lord Thurlow and lord Rockingham, which have lost the interest they might once have possessed:—"I have heard my uncle Fitzpatrick give a very diverting account of the scene that passed in the House of Commons on the day of lord North's resignation, which happened to be a remarkably cold day, with a fall of snow. A motion of lord Surrey's, for the dismissal of ministers, stood for that day, and the Whigs were anxious that it should come on before the resignation of lord North was officially announced, that his removal from office might be more manifestly and formally the act of the House of Commons. He and lord Surrey rose at the same instant. After much clamour, disorder, and some insignificant speeches on order, Mr. Fox, with great quickness and address, moved, as the most regular method of extricating the House from its embarrassment, 'that lord Surrey be now heard.' But lord North, with yet more admirable presence of mind, mixed with pleasantry, rose immediately, and said, 'I rise to speak to that motion;' and, as his reason for opposing it, stated his resignation and the dissolution of the ministry. The House, satisfied, became impatient, and after some ineffectual efforts of speakers on both sides to procure a hearing, an adjournment took place. Snow was falling, and the night tremendous. All the members' carriages were dismissed, and Mrs. Bennet's room at the door was crowded. But lord North's carriage was waiting. He put into it one or two of his friends, whom he had invited to go home with him, and turning to the crowd, chiefly composed of his bitter enemies, in the midst of their triumph, exclaimed in this hour of defeat and supposed mortification, with admirable good humour and pleasantry, 'I have my carriage. You see, gentlemen, the advantage of being in the secret. Good night.'"* On the 27th of March, the king wrote to lord North, "At length the fatal day is come, which the misfortunes of the times, and the sudden change of sentiments in the House of Commons, have driven me to, of changing my ministers, and a more general removal of other persons, than I believe ever was known before." The king refused to have any personal communication with lord Rockingham until his administration was completed and he was admitted to an audience as First Lord of the Treasury. Thurlow was continued as Chancellor. Shelburne and Charles Fox became Secretaries of State. Burke, Thomas Townshend, and

* "Memorials of Fox," vol. i. p. 295.

Sheridan held minor offices. Burke felt somewhat mortified at that exclusiveness in the party that "almost avowedly regarded power as an heir-loom in certain houses."* He wrote to an applicant for place, "I make no part of the ministerial arrangement. Something in the official line may possibly be thought fit for my measure."

At the precise period when the successors of lord North were entering upon their tenure of office, a signal triumph of the British navy was taking place, which, had it occurred earlier, might have somewhat altered the course of party movements and of national feeling. Sir George Rodney, at the beginning of the year, had left England to resume his command on the West India station. He arrived at Barbadoes on the 19th of February, with twelve sail of the line. He would learn that the surrender of St. Christopher's had taken place a week before his arrival. He would find that of all the West Indian possessions of Great Britain only Jamaica, Barbadoes, and Antigua remained. The united naval force of France and Spain in the West Indies amounted to sixty ships of the line; and it was known that a formidable armament was preparing to attack Jamaica. Fortunately Rodney was enabled to form a junction with the squadron of sir Samuel Hood, whose efforts had been unavailing to prevent the surrender of St. Christopher's. With a reinforcement of three sail of the line from England, Rodney had now thirty-six sail of the line, although several ships were in bad condition. His cruisers were watching the movements of De Grasse in the harbour of Port Royal, where he was re-fitting and taking troops on board. On the 8th of April signal was made that the French fleet had put to sea, with thirty-three sail of the line. It was the obvious policy of Rodney to engage De Grasse before a junction could be effected with the Spaniards. His fleet, which had been anchored at St. Lucia, was immediately under weigh, and in pursuit of the enemy. In the French fleet there were vessels of very heavy metal, especially the *Ville de Paris*, the flag-ship, of 110 guns, considered the pride and bulwark of their navy. In the English fleet there were five ninety-gun ships. On the 9th of April, the van under Hood became engaged with a superior number of the French ships; but the disproportion was remedied by Rodney coming up with a few ships of his division. The baffling winds prevented a general engagement, which De Grasse was evidently desirous to avoid. But on the evening of the 11th, Rodney, after a continued chase, in the endeavour to cut off two of the French ships that had made signals of distress, found himself in face of the main fleet of De Grasse

* Lord Mahon, vol. vii. p. 211.

which had borne down to the assistance of the disabled vessels. It was manifest that a general battle on the next day was inevitable.

The scene of action on the memorable 12th of April has been described "as a moderately large bason of water, lying between the islands of Guadaloupe, Dominica, Saintes, and Mariegalante; and bounded both to windward and leeward by very dangerous shores."* At seven in the morning the battle commenced. It was sunset before it was finished. As the British ships came up, having received the signal for close fighting, they ranged closely along the enemy's line—so close that every shot that was given or received told with fatal effect. The slaughter was tremendous in the French ships that were crowded with troops. It was about noon when Rodney, in the *Formidable*, led the way in the daring manœuvre of breaking the enemy's line. He was followed by the *Namur*, the *Duke*, and the *Canada*. They broke the French line, about three ships from the centre, where De Grasse commanded in the *Ville de Paris*. Rodney was followed by the ships astern of his division; and then wearing round, doubled upon the enemy and completed the separation of their line. It is difficult, if not impossible, to show in words the precise effect of such a manœuvre. Rodney himself, in 1789, wrote some marginal notes in a copy of a book which we shall presently notice, in which he said that it was the duty of an admiral "to bring, if possible, the whole fleet under his command to attack half, or part, of that of his enemy." He further said that, in the engagement with De Grasse, his own ship, the *Formidable*, "began a very close action within half musket-shot, and continued such action close along the enemy's lines under an easy sail, till an opening appeared at the third ship astern of the enemy's admiral, which gave an opportunity of breaking their line, and putting their rear in the utmost confusion." The French fleet was indeed thrown into confusion by a movement so wholly unknown in maritime warfare. Rodney furnished an example which was gloriously imitated by Duncan at Camperdown, by Howe, and by Nelson. There have been pages of controversy on the question whether Rodney is entitled to the merit of the idea of breaking the line, for the first time carried into effect on this 12th of April. About the period that Rodney left London to take the command in the West Indies, was printed "An Essay on Naval Tactics," by Mr. John Clerk, of Eldin. This treatise contained a very able exposition of the different principles of maritime warfare pursued by the English and the French—the one making an attack

* "Annual Register," 1782.

from windward, the other courting a leeward position; which difference, the author contended, had produced many of our failures in general engagements, where the results were indecisive and totally inadequate to the bravery of our sailors and commanders. He compared the meeting of two fleets, on contrary tacks, to a rencounter of horsemen, where the parties pushed their horses at full speed, in opposite directions, exchanging only a few pistol shots as they passed; and thus two great armaments had often engaged and separated, without any serious damage or loss on either side. But Mr. Clerk held that if an enemy's line be cut in twain, that portion which is separated from the rest can more readily be destroyed. He alleged, in a later edition of his book, that before its publication he had communicated his views to Mr. Atkinson, a friend of Rodney; and that the admiral himself, before quitting London in 1782, said he would bear them in mind in engaging an enemy. On the other hand, sir Charles Douglas maintains, by a comparison of dates, that Rodney could not have acquired this information before he left to take his command at the beginning of 1782; and that his father, the captain of the *Formidable*, made the suggestion to the admiral in the heat of the engagement, when he saw a favourable opportunity of breaking the line.* In these rival claims to what has in some degree the character of an invention, most persons will be inclined to consider that the greater merit rests with the man who first gives a practical value to a theory, and especially so in the case of a naval or land commander, who, in the hurry and tumult of a battle, seizes the right moment for carrying a principle into operation.

The engagement of the 12th of April terminated in the most signal success. The admiral held that it was the severest sea-fight on record. The great triumph of the day was the capture of the *Ville de Paris*. De Grasse continued the fight in this mighty vessel—mighty as compared with the usual size of seventy-fours, and even ninety-gun ships, in that day—till the victory was decisive over the other portions of his fleet. The last broadside from the *Barfleur*, commanded by Hood, compelled him to strike. Five large ships were captured, and one sunk. Those that escaped fled to various ports, and were not again united for any continuance of the naval warfare. Jamaica was saved from the joint attack of the French and Spanish; for which vast preparations had been made in the trains of artillery that were found on board the captured

* Clerk's claims are advocated in the "Edinburgh Review," vol. vi. p. 301. The pretensions of Clerk and Douglas are minutely examined in the "Quarterly Review," vol. xlii. p. 50.

vessels. Lord Cranston, an officer who was sent, after the *Ville de Paris* had struck, to receive De Grasse's sword, described the carnage which he beheld on board the great ship as altogether terrible. Only De Grasse himself, with two or three others, remained on the quarter-deck. The French admiral was only slightly wounded, though the fire of so many hours had swept away most of his officers. De Grasse could scarcely recover from his astonishment at seeing his vessel taken, and himself a prisoner—the vessel which, on the news at Plymouth, provoked an exclamation from some French officers, of "Impossible! Not the whole British fleet could take the *Ville de Paris*." It was held that Rodney ought to have followed up his success by chasing the ships that escaped. But in those latitudes total darkness comes on immediately after sunset. He attempted a pursuit the next morning, but his fleet was becalmed for three days off Guadeloupe. On the 19th of April, Hood came up with five French vessels, in the *Mona Passage*, and captured two seventy-fours, and two frigates. Two of the French ships taken in this action never came as trophies to England. The *Ville de Paris*, and the *Glorieux*, went down in a great storm off the banks of Newfoundland in September, when three English vessels of a fleet from Jamaica also perished; leaving only two remaining of those that had sailed homeward with admiral Graves.

On the 8th of April the Parliament met after a short recess, during which the re-elections had taken place of those members who had accepted office in the new ministry. An eye-witness describes the change of costume which the House of Commons presented, when Lord North and his friends took their seats on the opposition benches, in great coats, frocks, and boots; and their successors, having thrown off the Whig livery of blue and buff, appeared in all the dignity of swords, lace, and hair-powder. One tenacious holder of office, Mr. Welbore Ellis, appeared on that 8th of April, for the first time in his life, in an undress.* The new ministers came from the *Levéé* and the *Drawing-room* in their unfamiliar and uncomfortable finery; and Fox and Burke had to hear the whispered joke circulating amidst the joke-loving Commons, that lord Nugent, whose house had been robbed of many articles of dress, fancied that he saw some of his laced ruffles on the hands of the gentlemen who now occupied the Treasury bench. The change of measures was far more remarkable than the change of costume. The opportunity for carrying those plans of salutary reform which were once so hateful to the Court, appeared to have

* *Wraxall's "Memoirs,"* vol. ii. p. 172.

come. George III. did not even look frowningly upon the men whose advent to office was to have been the signal for his abdication. "The king appears more and more good-humoured every day," writes Fox on the 12th of April. "I believe he is really pleased with the full *levées* and drawing-rooms which he sees every day, and which he thinks flattering to him."* But the administration had the elements of decay and dissolution in its own bosom. Thurlow, who had continued on the *woolsack* because "the Tiger," as he was called, growled so ominously that the hunters were afraid to disturb him in his lair, began at the very onset to give trouble to his coadjutors. On the 12th, a royal message on the subject of Burke's measure for economical reform was discussed in the Cabinet. Thurlow was decidedly opposed to the Bill; Fox as resolute that it should be carried. The king's counsellors were wrangling till the 15th, when it was arranged that Fox should that day carry a message to the House of Commons, "which looks and points to Burke's Bill."†

The royal message was very indefinite. It recommended the consideration of an effectual plan of economy through all the branches of the public expenditure, "towards which important object his majesty has taken into his actual consideration, a reform and regulation in his civil establishment, which he will shortly lay before the House." Burke declared to the Commons that the message was the genuine effusion of his majesty's paternal care and tenderness for his subjects. Shelburne pledged himself to the Peers that the present message was the voluntary language of the sovereign himself. Horace Walpole describes Burke and Shelburne as "ridiculously extravagant in panegyrics on his majesty for this magnanimity, which certainly was no measure of his, but an artifice of their own, and but a shallow one, to persuade the people that they meant to adhere to their former principles."‡ Burke did not desert the principles which he had advocated in the original introduction of his great scheme of reform; but like most other reformers, he was compelled to a compromise—to tolerate the continuance of some evil for the sake of securing some portion of a comprehensive good. Burke had no seat in the Cabinet, and he was thus compelled to adopt the decisions of those who were divided amongst themselves, and could only hope to hold together by mutual concessions. His bill did not interfere with the mode of supplying the Royal Household; did not abolish the two ancient

* Russell—"Memorials of Fox," vol. i. p. 315.

‡ "Last Journals," vol. ii. p. 540.

† *Ibid.*

offices of Treasurer and Cofferer,—great functionaries who carried white wands, and whose abolition might appear an encroachment upon the splendour and dignity of the Crown. He left untouched the principality of Wales and the duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall. The Ordinance and the Mint were continued in the enjoyment of their own anomalous relations with the other branches of the public service. Nevertheless, a great reform was effected. A number of useless and mischievous offices, usually held by members of parliament, were abolished, by which an annual saving of seventy-two thousand pounds was effected, and one of the readiest modes of corruption was taken away from the power of a ministry. The pension-list was limited to an annual amount of a very moderate extent, but not before extravagant pensions had been granted to Barré and Dunning. Burke, who held the office of Paymaster of the Forces, which had been a fountain of monstrous wealth to rapacious politicians, had the honour of proposing a distinct Bill for the regulation of that office, by which no balance could in future accumulate in the hands of the Paymaster, enabling him, at the public expense, to pocket the interest even of a million sterling, whilst the Chancellor of the Exchequer was raising new loans, to be followed by increased taxation.

There were two important reforms with reference to the constitution of Parliament which the Rockingham ministry lost no time in carrying. The one was to exclude Contractors from sitting in the House of Commons; the other to prevent Revenue Officers from voting at elections for representatives in Parliament. These measures for limiting the influence of the Crown did not pass without opposition from the Lord Chancellor and from lord Mansfield. To indicate how prodigal contracts were obtained through parliamentary influences, lord Shelburne pointed to the splendid palaces of contractors, that stared the people in the face all round the metropolis—the sumptuousness and expense with which they were known to live, which rivalled those of the most successful nabobs. The contractor and the nabob were not without reason the great marks for the finger of scorn to point at. To show the power of revenue officers at elections, lord Rockingham declared that in seventy boroughs the returns to parliament chiefly depended upon those functionaries. The constitutional principle of these disqualifications has never been contested since these measures became law, in spite of that opposition which Thurlow headed and Mansfield supported. A more extensive principle of Parliamentary Reform was at this time advocated by William Pitt. He held no place in the government; but he was deemed a supporter of more

liberal doctrines than some of the most influential holders of office. A large addition to the number of county members, and the repeal of the Septennial Act, had been the constant petition of the Associations in Yorkshire and other counties. The livery of London invariably maintained that the inequality of the representation was the main cause of calamitous wars and profligate expenditure. Mr. Pitt was speaking therefore the sentiments of a large body of the people, rather than representing the opinions of a party, when, on the 7th of May, 1782, he moved for a Committee to inquire into the present state of the Representation of the Commons of Great Britain. His motion pledged the House to no definite plan, but his speech sufficiently indicated the necessity for “a calm revision of the principles of the constitution, and a moderate reform of such defects as had imperceptibly and gradually stole in to deface, and which threatened at last totally to destroy, the most beautiful fabric of government in the world.” There were boroughs wholly under the command of the Treasury. There were others which had no actual existence but in the return of members to the House—they had no existence in property, in population, in trade, in weight—the electors were the slaves of some person who claimed the property of the borough, and who in fact made the return. There were other boroughs where the return to parliament was sold to the best purchaser; and thus it was well understood that the nabob of Arcot had no less than seven or eight members in that House. Mr. Pitt made a pointed allusion to one, now no more, of whom every member could speak with more freedom than himself. It was the opinion of that person that without the establishment of a “more solid and equal representation of the people, by which the proper constitutional connection should be revived, this nation, with the best capacities for grandeur and happiness of any on the face of the earth, must be confounded with the mass of those whose liberties were lost in the corruption of the people.” Such were the opinions advocated by the son of Chatham, “with the ardour for melioration characteristic of ingenuous youth.”* The Lord Advocate of Scotland, Dundas, with that assurance which never failed him, told the ingenuous youth that he must be mistaken with regard to the opinions of his father; for on searching the Journals, he had not found that lord Chatham had ever brought in any reform whatever, and therefore plainly saw the constitution wanted no such alteration. Mr. Pitt's motion was rejected by a majority of twenty. Fox thought the defeat upon this proposition would have many bad consequences. The late ministry voted against it in a

* Aikin—“Annals of George III.” vol. i. p. 306.