

condition of France very difficult of contrast with a country whose paper-money was convertible into specie. The financial ruin of France, in the ordinary sense of ruin, was approaching very surely though gradually at the beginning of 1792; but towards the end of the year the excessive issue of Assignats, based upon the forfeited property of emigrants, produced a terrible amount of private ruin and misery. Yet the amount of private calamity did not in the least prevent the French revolutionary government from carrying on hostilities with an energy that astonished the statesmen of other countries, who provided the means of war by the ordinary routine of loans and taxes. The mistake which the British government constantly made with regard to France, long after 1792, was to believe that the ruin of her finances necessarily involved the submission of her rulers—"as if credit was necessary to a government of which the principle was rapine; as if Alboin could not turn Italy into a desert till he had negotiated a loan at five per cent.; as if the exchequer bills of Attila had been at par."\*

On the 17th of February, in a Committee of the whole House, Mr. Pitt brought under consideration a general view of the Public Income and Expenditure. No prospect could be more gratifying than the eloquent minister's survey of the resources of the country; no declaration of policy more statesmanlike. He looked forward to the operation of the Sinking Fund during a period of tranquillity that was likely to endure for some years; he calculated what that fund would amount to in 1808. "There never was a time in the history of the country," he said, "when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment."† He displayed the great increase of revenue. He enlarged upon the causes of that increase, derived from the natural industry and energy of the country; the improvement of every branch of manufacture; the invention of machinery for the abridgment of labour; that continual tendency of capital to increase, whenever it is not obstructed by some public calamity, or by some mistaken and mischievous policy. Such circumstances were naturally connected with the duration of peace; they were connected still more with our internal tranquillity, and with the natural effects of a free but well-regulated government. "It is this union of liberty with law, which, by raising a barrier equally firm against the encroachments of power, and the violence of popular commotion, affords to property its just security, produces the exertion of genius and labour, the extent and solidity of credit, the

\* Macaulay—"Biography of Pitt."

† "Parliamentary History," vol. xxix. col. 826.

circulation and increase of capital; which forms and upholds the national character, and sets in motion all the springs which actuate the great mass of the community through all its various descriptions." Fox complimented his rival upon his eloquence; upon his philosophical view of the principles of government; upon his true and splendid enumeration of the causes of national prosperity. What, indeed, we may now say, could a free nation desire more than such an expositor of its principles, and such a leader in a continued course of greatness and honour? Throughout that Session we see William Pitt truly the foremost man of all the world—calm, amidst the storms which were raging around; in his majestic oratory asserting the grandeur of his country, and vindicating the soundest doctrines of public economy, and the most noble principles of justice for the oppressed. On the 2nd of April, Wilberforce moved for a Committee of the whole House to consider the African Slave Trade, with a view to a resolution for its immediate abolition. Pitt on this occasion supported his friend in one of the most eloquent speeches on record. "Windham, who has no love for Pitt," writes Wilberforce, "tells me that Fox and Grey, with whom he walked home after the debate, agreed with him in thinking Pitt's speech one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired. He was dilating upon the future prospects of civilizing Africa, a topic which I had suggested to him in the morning." This almost inspired passage of Pitt's oration may scarcely bear the sober examination of those who contend for the difference of races; but there are certainly few things in the whole compass of oratory more magnificent than his retrospect of the early condition of the Britons, as slaves exported to the Roman market, and his reproof of those who contended that Africa was incapable of civilization: "Why might not some Roman senator, reasoning on the principles of some honourable gentlemen, and pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, 'There is a people that will never rise to civilization; there is a people destined never to be free; a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world.' Might not this have been said, in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa?" It was decided that night, by a large majority, that the Slave Trade

\* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxix. col. 1155.

should be gradually abolished. Pitt and Fox contended for the immediate abolition.

In this session was carried that great improvement of the law known as Mr. Fox's Libel Bill, by which was established the right of juries to give a general verdict of guilty or not guilty upon the whole matter put in issue upon the indictment. This Bill was carried in the House of Commons in the Session of 1791, Pitt supporting Fox and Erskine in the necessity of taking some step, at least to regulate the practice of the Courts on the trial of libels, and render it conformable to the free spirit of the constitution. In the House of Lords, the Chancellor, lord Thurlow, moved the postponement of the Bill; and it was lost for that Session. In the Commons, in 1792, it was again passed; and sent to the Lords. It was again opposed by the Chancellor, who was supported by the whole body of the Judges—"sad to relate," says lord Campbell. But the principle was advocated in every stage by lord Camden, and by lord Loughborough, and the measure was finally carried on the 11th of June. Lord Thurlow had become troublesome in the ministry of Mr. Pitt, occasionally setting up an independent authority, in which pretension he appears to have reckoned upon the support of the king. On the 14th of May he made an unexpected opposition to a ministerial measure in parliament, and had nearly obtained a majority. Grenville wrote to his brother, "I think the consequences must be decisive in his situation or ours. But it requires some reflection, and some management in the quarter you know."\* In that "quarter," there was no hesitation. The king sent a message to the chancellor requiring him to give up the office; but leaving the time to his choice. The great seal was then put in commission. Lord Loughborough, who belonged to the Whig party, was ardently desirous for the seat on the wool-sack. He attempted for some time to bring about a Coalition between Pitt and Fox, to which Pitt appears to have opposed no insuperable obstacle, though Fox declared that the minister was not sincere. The Whigs were divided between the opinions of Burke and those of Fox on the question of the French Revolution; though many were not indisposed to join Pitt to form "a strong government." Burke thought that "Mr. Fox's coach stops the way," but that there was no doing without him or with him.† The attempts to bring about a Coalition failed, as might naturally have been expected—not so much from any insuperable difference of principles between the two great parliamentary leaders at that time,

\* "Court of George III.," vol. ii. p. 207.

† See "Malmesbury's Diary," pp. 418 to 443.

as from the difficulties that were sure to arise out of the conduct and opinions of the extreme men of either party. If Pitt, united with Fox, had adhered to his principle of neutrality in the impending struggle between France and the German powers, Fox might have moderated many of those opinions which appeared to make him the advocate of the excesses of the French Revolution. But the great question of peace or war with the French republic really depended upon the feelings of the majority in parliament; and before the close of the Session of 1792, it became pretty evident that the strongest ministry would have real difficulty in preserving England from an interference in this question, which so stirred the passions of the community.

On the 30th of April, Mr. Charles Grey gave notice of a motion for Reform in the representation of the people—he who, as earl Grey and Prime Minister forty years afterwards, carried the Reform Bill. On the 26th of April, 1792, at a general meeting of the Society of "The Friends of the People, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform," a Declaration was agreed to be signed by many members of parliament and other gentlemen; and it was resolved that Mr. Grey and Mr. Erskine be requested to make a motion on the subject in the next Session. Mr. Grey accordingly gave notice of his intention in a brief speech. Mr. Pitt at once came forward to declare his opinions on the subject. He had supported reform in former times, when he thought that "if some mode could be adopted, by which the people could have any additional security for a continuance of the blessings which they now enjoy, it would be an improvement in the constitution of the country. . . . He would ask all moderate men what were their feelings on this subject at this moment? He believed he could anticipate the answer—'This is not a time to make hazardous experiments.' Could we forget what lessons had been given to the world within a few years?" Mr. Pitt made some pointed allusions to the Declaration of "The Friends of the People," and a heated debate followed, in which Mr. Fox supported Mr. Grey, but intimated his opinion of the impolicy of joining an Association for Reform. On the 21st of May, a Royal Proclamation was issued, against the publication and dispersion of seditious writings. On the 25th, an Address to the king was proposed, expressing the determination of the Commons to support his majesty in the resolution which he had adopted. Mr. Grey moved an amendment, in which he brought forward Mr. Pitt's former opinions on the subject of Reform; described his conduct as that of an apostate; and treated the Proclamation and the proposed Address as calculated to throw odium upon a

Society that had been formed with the purest intentions. The Proclamation, he said, was intended to separate the Whig party. There were, indeed, many signs that a separation of old political friends was inevitable. In the House of Lords, the prince of Wales, always hitherto associated in politics with Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and the Opposition, spoke, for the first time, on this subject of the king's Proclamation. The matter in question was, he said, whether the constitution was or was not to be maintained; whether the wild ideas of theory were to conquer the wholesome maxims of established practice; and whether those laws under which we had flourished for such a series of years were to be subverted by a reform unsanctioned by the people. "I exist," exclaimed his royal highness, "by the love, the friendship, and the benevolence of the people, and their cause I will never forsake as long as I live."\*

The Proclamation against Seditious Writings stated that "we have reason to believe that correspondences have been entered into with sundry persons in foreign parts, with a view to forward the criminal and wicked purposes" alluded to. M. Chauvelin, the French minister plenipotentiary, upon the appearance of this Proclamation, addressed a note to Lord Grenville, in which he says, "If certain individuals of this country have established a correspondence abroad, tending to excite troubles therein, and if, as the proclamation seems to insinuate, certain Frenchmen have come into their views, that is a proceeding wholly foreign to the French nation, to the legislative body, to the king, and to his ministers; it is a proceeding of which they are entirely ignorant, which militates against every principle of justice, and which, whenever it became known, would be universally condemned in France. Independently of these principles of justice, from which a free people ought never to deviate, is it not evident, from a due consideration of the true interests of the French nation, that she ought to desire the interior tranquillity, the continuance and the force of the constitution, of a country which she already looks upon as her natural ally?" Arguing thus, at considerable length, M. Chauvelin requests that the Secretary of State would communicate his note to both Houses of Parliament previous to their deliberations upon the proposed Address. Lord Grenville administered a dignified rebuke to the French ambassador: "The deliberations of the two Houses of Parliament, as well as the communications which his majesty shall be pleased to make to them, relative to the affairs of the kingdom, are objects absolutely foreign to all diplomatic correspondence, and upon which

\* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxix. col. 1517.

it is impossible for me to enter into any discussion whatever with the ministers of other courts." It is clear that there could not be any very cordial communication between the French envoy and the English ministers although the forms of diplomatic courtesy were sedulously preserved. On the 18th of June, M. Chauvelin, having previously announced the commencement of hostilities, invites his Britannic majesty, in the name of the king of the French, to use his influence, "to stop, whilst it is still time, the progress of a confederacy, which equally affects the peace, the liberty, and the happiness of Europe." Lord Grenville, coldly answering this impassioned exhortation, says, "the same sentiments which have determined the king not to take part in the internal affairs of France ought equally to induce him to respect the rights and the independence of other sovereigns, and especially those of the allies; and his majesty has thought that, in the existing circumstances of the war now begun, the intervention of his counsels, or of his good offices, cannot be of use, unless they should be desired by all the parties interested."

The Parliament was prorogued on the 16th of June. In his speech on closing the Session the king said, "I have seen with great concern the commencement of hostilities in several parts of Europe." The war between Turkey and Russia was at an end. The disciplined armies of Austria has scarcely yet come into conflict with the raw levies of France. But if there were evils to be dreaded from the progress, of democratic opinions, there was no less a danger to be apprehended from the daring ambition of absolute monarchs. There was another Revolution upon which those who feared anarchy but loved liberty looked without apprehension. In 1791 a great change had been effected in the government of Poland. The tyranny of the nobles had been abolished with the entire concurrence of the king and the people. A new Constitution was established, which provided for an hereditary Crown; a Legislature consisting of two Houses; equality of civil rights; a complete toleration of all religions. This rational system was offensive to the despotic empress of Russia; and she sent an army into Poland to destroy the new liberties of the country. The king of Poland appealed to his ally the king of Prussia, to send him that aid which Prussia was bound by treaty to render. The tricky court of Berlin replied that the change in the government of Poland had cancelled the obligation. Such were the Allies to whom Great Britain had to look, if she was to take any hostile proceedings against the revolutionary government of France. Some enthusiasts in England thought, in the summer of 1792, that it

would be a wise policy for our country to make common cause with France in resisting the despots who were crushing the independence of Poland. Against this scheme, Burke was indignant. He applauded the Revolution of Poland; he hated that of France. He lamented the fate of Poland; but he would sooner let affairs there take their course than enter "into a confederacy with the horror, turpitude, baseness, and wickedness of the French Revolution." \* Things in Poland did take their course. The crimes of monarchy were at hand to make men careful not to exhaust all their indignation against the crimes of democracy.

\* "Correspondence of Burke," vol. iii. p. 472.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Deaths of the emperor and the king of Sweden.—The Girondin Ministry.—French declaration of war against the king of Hungary and Bohemia.—The Veto.—Roland, and two other ministers, dismissed.—Insurrection of the 20th of June.—The Country in Danger proclaimed.—Arrival of the Marsellais.—Proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick.—Insurrection of the 10th of August.—Attack on the Tuileries.—Royal family removed to the Temple.—Longwy taken by the Prussians.—The Massacres of September.

In March, 1792, two of the crowned heads of Europe who were meditating upon the great question of a war with France were removed by death. Leopold, the emperor, died on the 1st of March. He was succeeded as king of Hungary and Bohemia by his eldest son, Francis II. Gustavus III., king of Sweden, was shot on the 6th of March, at a masked ball, by Ankerstroem, one of the nobles whose privileges he had abrogated in 1789 to establish his own absolute power. He was succeeded by his son, a boy of thirteen years of age. The successor of Leopold was not yet elected emperor when France declared war against him on the 20th of April. This declaration was the act of the Girondin ministry. The administration which represented the Feuillans, or party of the Constitution, of whom Bertrand de Moleville and Narbonne were leading members and political rivals, was broken up by its own differences. The king had now to look to a party of greater power in the Assembly, but more likely to precipitate the Court into dangerous measures. On the 15th of March, general Dumouriez was offered the ministry of Foreign Affairs. By the 23d a new administration was formed. Clavière was appointed minister of finance; and Roland de Platière was appointed minister of the interior; he, of whom Authur Young writes, in 1789, as "a gentleman somewhat advanced in life, who has a young and beautiful wife," and who then filled the humble office of inspector of fabrics at Lyons.\* Roland has now brought to Paris his beautiful wife, the daughter of an engraver, to aid him in weightier matters than such as he discussed with the English agriculturist. The grave man goes to Court in plain black, with strings in his shoes; and the horrified master of the ceremonies points to him; and ejaculates to Dumouriez—"Quoi!—no

\* "Travels in France," 4to., p. 262