

majority of steam-frigates they have lately equipped, will doubtless be formidable with their batteries of fifty guns; but it has yet to be determined whether a huge vessel, such as their "Niagara," of fully five thousand tons, and mounting only a dozen pieces of artillery, may, notwithstanding their heavy weight, not be destroyed by one or two swift gunboats armed with a solitary gun of equal calibre; her huge bulk, even at the distance of four miles, being easily hit, while their pigmy assailant would be but a speck upon the waters. Be this as it may, however, we have no doubt that in any future contest the Americans will discharge their duty well.

But it is ludicrous for the landmen of America at present to proclaim that they are ready to "whip the Britishers and flog the world." There is no doubt that, as the great republic consists of at least thirty states, many of which individually are larger than the United Kingdom, in the course of ages and progress of population, England is destined to succumb to her offspring. The gigantic sire will be followed by a still more gigantic son, under whose younger and more vigorous arm it will be no disgrace for his age and decadence to fall. But a long period must elapse before this eventuality occurs, and the States themselves may previously have been broken up by internal discord. At present, there is little doubt they would at first be beaten in any conflict with the naval forces of England or France; but their extent of sea-board is so great, and their internal resources are so vast, that they could scarcely fail in the end to prevail.

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL'S "Letters" and "Life"* of Fox, contain little to modify the general estimate either of his public life or personal character. The story of these stirring times, however, is always fresh; and, in spite of the slovenly and confused manner of the biographer, many will read with interest these memorials of the great Whig leader, whose statue now faces that of his illustrious rival in the Statesmen's Gallery of the New Palace at Westminster.

The public life of Mr. Fox commenced in the House of Commons, where he made his maiden speech on the 9th of May, 1769, when little more than twenty years of age. On the 14th he again spoke in favour of the expulsion of the famous demagogue, John Wilkes. These youthful speeches were "off-hand," as his father, Lord Holland, exultingly said, and were remarkable for talent and not a little youthful forwardness. Horace Walpole, that invaluable chronicler of incidents not included in formal histories of his time, notices the "parts and presumption" of the young orator. Lord John Russell remarks of the same speeches, that "his doctrines at this time of his life were neither favourable to popular liberty nor agreeable to the practice of the constitution." He speedily changed, however, and became emphatically "the man of the people."

* Bentley, 1850.

In looking back upon the debates and conflicts of those times, it is melancholy to reflect how much time and energy were devoted to struggles for political power. The national strength, which, in the time of Chatham, had been combined for the defence and glory of the British Empire, was now wasted in intestine discussions. For thirty years of the reign of George III, the politics of the nation were comprised in a struggle between Privilege and Prerogative. The king fancied and declared that the Whig party wanted "to make him a slave for life;" and, whether right or wrong, his ruling idea was to resist them to the utmost of his power. There were always men eager to take advantage of this state of feeling, and to advance themselves under the guise of being the "king's friends." Others, on the contrary, appealed to the people for support, while maintaining that the king was aiming at "personal government" and "irresponsible power."

The results of this conflict are thus briefly described by Lord John Russell in his "Life of Fox."

"George III was animated by a conscientious principle and a ruling passion. The conscientious principle was an honest desire to perform his duty; and the ruling passion was a strong determination to make the conclusions of his narrow intellect and ill-furnished mind prevail over the opinions of the wisest, and the combinations of the most powerful, of his subjects.

"For the space of fifty years these two traits of his character had a mighty influence on the fortunes of Great Britain and of Europe. His domestic life, the virtuous example which he gave in his own court, his sincere piety, contributed much to the firmness with which the nation resisted the example of the French Revolution, and gave solid support to the throne on which he sat. But his political prejudices prolonged the contest with America; his religious intolerance alienated the affections of Ireland; his national pride, and his hatred of democracy, promoted the wars against France, whether monarchical or Jacobin.

"On the other hand, it was the task of Mr. Fox to vindicate, with partial success, but with brilliant ability, the cause of freedom and the interests of mankind. He resisted the mad perseverance of Lord North in the project of subduing America. He opposed the war undertaken by Mr. Pitt against France, as unnecessary and unjust. He proved himself at all times the friend of religious liberty, and endeavoured to free both the Protestant and Roman Catholic dissenters from disabilities on account of their religious faith. He denounced the slave trade. He supported at all times a reform of the House of Commons.

"These views and sentiments made him through life obnoxious to the king. The results of this antagonism were throughout, on both sides, not only political, but also in some degree personal. Thus, for a great part of his life, he appears as a kind of rival to the sovereign upon the throne."

It was to this antagonism that Dr. Johnson referred when he said, "Fox is a most extraordinary man, who has divided the kingdom with Cæsar; so that it was a doubt whether the nation should

be ruled by the sceptre of George III, or the tongue of Fox."

Happily, the politics of those times have long been extinct. All parties in the state are now at one in regard to the limits of royal and parliamentary power. In so far as they conduced to a clearer understanding of these constitutional principles, the conflicts of other days were not without powerful influence. The convulsions following the French Revolution, the glorious dictatorship of Mr. Pitt, and the wars with Napoleon, delayed but did not prevent the general recognition of the constitutional principles which had been fought out between George III and Mr. Fox, and upon which all British statesmen are now agreed.

From the contemporaries of Fox we obtain testimonies of his power as an orator, far beyond what could be gathered from the imperfect reports of his speeches. Lord Erskine dilates on "his glorious conceptions, the depth and extent of his information, the retentive powers of his memory," and other elements of public eloquence equal to the greatest orator of antiquity. "He possessed, above all men I ever knew, the most gentle and yet the most ardent spirit—a rare and happy combination! He had nourished in his mind all the manly and generous sentiments which are the true supports of the social world; he was tremblingly alive to every kind of private wrong or suffering; and from the habitual and fervent contemplation of the just principles of government, he had the most bitter and unextinguishable contempt for the low arts of political intrigue, and an indignant abhorrence of every species of tyranny, oppression, and injustice."*

"Horace Walpole says: 'Fox had not the ungraceful hesitation of his father, yet scarce equalled him in subtlety and acuteness. But no man ever excelled him in the closeness of argument, which flowed from him in a torrent of vehemence, as declamation sometimes does from those who want argument.' Burke has called him 'the greatest debater the world ever saw;' Mackintosh, 'the most Demosthenean speaker since Demosthenes.'"

The personal character and private life of Mr. Fox had too much influence on his public career and destiny, to be thrown entirely out of sight, and offers, besides, a vivid picture of a state of society happily vanished from every rank, and for ever. Precoxious, indulged beyond measure, and led into temptation even by his own father, there is much allowance to be made for the impetuous passions and dissolute habits of Charles James Fox. Yet, condemnation cannot be dumb. "Before Mr. Fox's entrance into office, George III looked upon him as a dissolute and unprincipled man, in whom he could place no confidence, and from whom he could expect no support. But a stronger feeling than distrust and dislike now sprung up. The Prince of Wales, as soon as he was old enough to appear in public, took a course very distasteful to his father. Coming from a strict and religious home, he surprised and shocked society by his very lax morals, while he gained the goodwill of many by his agreeable man-

ners and convivial disposition.* He offended the king by inattention, and by evincing openly his want of respect for his royal parent. One day when the Prince of Wales, with his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, attended the king's hunt, the prince and the duke, at the end of the day's sport, got into the only hack-chaise that could be procured, and went off to London, leaving the king to shift as he could. Another offence was the prince's habit of frequent visits to Mr. Fox's house, where, though not in his presence, language little decorous to the sovereign was frequently heard. On the day Mr. Fox resigned the seals of office, the prince dined with him, and, expressing much kindness towards him, assured him that he should ever consider Lord Rockingham's friends as the persons the most to be depended upon, and as the best friends of the country.† Thus the king was shocked by the morals, thwarted by the politics, and deeply irritated by the personal connections of his son. While he was painfully struggling against party, he saw a new banner of opposition unfurled by the heir to the throne, and attributed to his late minister the alienation of one from whom he had expected submission and obedience.

"Charles Fox, now released from the forced industry of office, fell back into licentious habits and idle dissipation. Mr. Hare, one of his best friends, said he saw him seldom except at supper at Brooks's, with Lord John Townshend." It was to this, one of his best friends, that the *mot* is applicable, when Fox saw the Jew money-lenders on the look-out, and exclaimed, "Gentlemen, are you Fox-hunting or Hare-hunting this morning?"

Gambling was indeed a greater vice of the day, than even intemperance and open profligacy, which, alas! were fashionable too. "It is to be lamented," says Lord John, "that, during this period of his life, Mr. Fox entered deeply—almost madly—into the pursuit of gaming. Lord Egremont afterwards suspected that he was the dupe of foul play. Be that as it might, he borrowed to such an extent, that the purchase of the annuities he had granted cost his fond and indulgent father no less a sum than £140,000." And Horace Walpole tells us: "As the gaming and extravagance of young men of quality had arrived now at a pitch never heard of, it is worth while to give some account of it. They had a club at Almack's, in Pall Mall, where they played only for rouleaus of £50 each, and generally there was £10,000 in specie on the table. Lord Holland had paid above £20,000 for his two sons. Nor were the manners of the gamblers, or even their dresses for play, undeserving notice. They began by pulling off their embroidered clothes, and put on frieze greatcoats, or turned their coats inside outwards for luck. They put on pieces of leather (such as are worn by footmen when they clean the knives) to save their laced ruffles, and, to guard their eyes from the light and to prevent tumbling their hair, wore high-crowned straw hats with broad brims and adorned with flowers and ribbons; masks, to conceal their emotions when they played at

* Fox's Speeches, vol. i. Letter of Lord Erskine.

* Walpole's "George III."

† Fitzpatrick's "Journal." Corr.

quinze. Each gamester had a small neat stand by him, to hold their tea, or a wooden bowl with an edge of ormolu to hold their rouleaus. They borrowed great sums of Jews at exorbitant premiums. Charles Fox called his outward room, where those Jews waited till he rose, his Jerusalem Chamber."

The record of early irregularities affords a striking warning to the young. Taking only the lower ground of worldly policy, the lesson of early and more mature vices is a pitiable one for men of all ages and degrees; and we see the force of the biographer's softened allusion to "a fondness for the pleasures of unbridled youth, which in his after life marred the effect of his brilliant talents, and prevented his acquiring the entire confidence of the moral and sober part of the nation."

Had Charles Fox united weight of character to his great abilities and generous qualities, he might have swayed the destinies of the nation to a greater extent, and with more of popular attachment, than any minister that has existed since the days of Cardinal Wolsey.

THE CAB-STAND.

THE cab-stand, as an institution long established in London and in other large towns, must be familiar to most of our readers, though few of them, probably, regard it as an object of any peculiar interest. A string of cabs in single file, each with its "speculative" steed, drowsily resting his weary legs one at a time; a few drivers, some asleep on the box, others in straggling groups, exchanging rough compliments, or, with hands buried in their pockets, and coats buttoned to the chin, padding the sloppy ground, and peering wistfully about for customers; some fifty yards of macadam in solution, or of granite paving-stones ankle-deep in mud, on the surface of which lie fragmentary whisks of hay and patches of scattered chaff, with here and there a pewter pot and scraps of tobacco-pipe; such, and nothing more, is the cab-stand to the common eye. Perhaps, if we look at it a little nearer, we may see a little more. Let us try.

The cab-stand which is the subject of our contemplation stands a little way in the suburbs—it matters not in what direction—and its site runs parallel, not with a row of shops, of private houses, or even with a brick wall, but with the wooden palings which divide the garden-grounds of a nursery-man from the public road. The vehicles, in close rank, touch the kerb, and the long narrow avenue between that and the palings is, to all intents and purposes, cabbie's private domain and park; the "public in general" having by tacit consent made it over to him, and chosen the other side of the way for themselves. We have noticed, for years past, that this particular Stand is a favourite with the professors of the whip, and that, let the weather be what it will, and though the cabs may have vanished from all other Stands, you are pretty certain to meet with one there. There are, in truth, more reasons than one for this preference. In the first place, the spot is rural and pleasant; in the second place, it is situate at a point just over

the mile from the two great railway stations, and therefore is hardly liable to the abomination of a sixpenny fare; in the third place, the beer at the neighbouring "public" is of the kind for which cabmen have a predilection; and fourthly, the Stand is not plagued by a table of fares and distances stuck up on a board, which at other places is apt, by its gratuitous information, to mar the speculations of the members of the brotherhood. We might add, as another reason, that the site is almost clear of the omnibus routes, and thus the cab-drivers suffer little from the competition of conductors.

The above reasons may perhaps account for the partiality of the cabmen for this particular Stand. At any rate, here you will find them in considerable force all the day long, and, for the matter of that, all the night too. What they do in the pauses—and they are very long pauses sometimes—between the fares, it is not easy to declare. There is a good deal of barter going on at times; we have seen exchanges of a rather singular kind take place, which have quite puzzled our powers of valuation; such as two capes from a many-caped coat, in compensation for a dog-collar—a catch-em-alive rat-trap against a nose-bag—a pair of gaiters, rather shreddy from wear, for a curry-comb—and a razor, not by any means warranted to shave, in lieu of a tobacco-box. The occupations of an industrial kind are many, but are all pursued in an off-hand kind of way, as though it did not much matter if they were neglected *in toto*. There is polishing of plate harness, a little greasing of wheels, some dusting of cushions, ditto cleaning of panels and muddy spokes, with a show at least of sweeping out and ventilating their vehicles, which are, for the most part, sadly in want of renovation. Then there is the plaiting of whips, and the renewal of whip-ends, and much chaffering on the score of whip-handles. But the chief pastime of all is conversation, and exchange of ideas on matters public and private. We are of opinion that it would be extremely difficult for any other than a cabman to come at the real sentiments of the fraternity, even if he were admitted to these open-air but private conclaves; because the discussions are carried on in a phraseology so wonderfully abbreviated as to be intelligible only to themselves. Their utterances are the veriest samples of the *multum in parvo* ever met with. Take a specimen which we overheard accidentally the other day.

"Seen Brimble, Ned?"

"Reyther!"

"How about his old 'ooman?"

"All right—four o'clock 's mornin'."

"Bwoy?"

"Gal."

"That makes five on 'em?"

"Six."

"Wh-whew!"

Thus is the narrative of Mr. Brimble's domestic felicity shorn of its fair proportions on the cab-stand, and thus curtly is expressed the brotherly sympathy in his paternal embarrassments. There is a valid ground, however, for this brevity of speech, and it will be found in the peculiar cir-