CHAPTER XI.

POLITICAL CHARACTERS.

Ministry of the Pittites.—Time-serving conduct of the Allies.—Height and downfall of Napoleon.—Character of George the Third.—Mistakes and sincerity of the Examiner.—Indictment against it respecting the case of Major Hogan.—Affair of Mrs. Clarke.—Indictment respecting the reign of George the Third.—Perry, proprietor of the Morning Chronicle.—Characters of Lord Canning, Liverpool, and Lord Castlereagh.—Whigs and Whig-Radicals.—Queen Victoria.—Royalty and Republics.—Indictment respecting military flogging.—The Attorney General, Sir Vicary Gibbs.

The Examiner had been set up towards the close of the reign of George the Third, three years before the appointment of the regency. Pitt and Fox had died two years before; the one, in middle life, of constant ill-success, preying on a sincere but proud, and not very large mind, and unwisely supported by a habit of drinking; the other, of older but more genial habits of a like sort, and of demands beyond his strength by a sudden accession to office. The king—a conscientious but narrow-minded man, ob-
stinate to a degree of disease (which had lost him America), and not always dealing ingenuously, even with his advisers—had lately got rid of Mr. Fox’s successors, on account of their urging the Catholic claims. He had summoned to office in their stead Lords Castlereagh, Liverpool, and others, who had been the clerks of Mr. Pitt; and Bonaparte was at the height of his power as French Emperor, setting his brothers on thrones, and compelling our Russian and German allies to side with him under the most mortifying circumstances of tergiversation.

It is a melancholy period for the potentates of the earth, when they fancy themselves obliged to resort to the shabbiest measures of the feeble; siding against a friend with his enemy; joining in accusations against him at the latter’s dictation; believed by nobody on either side; returning to the friend, and retreating from him, according to the fortunes of war; secretly hoping, that the friend will excuse them by reason of the pauper’s plea, necessity; and at no time able to give better apologies for their conduct than those “mysterious ordinances of Providence,” which are the last refuge of the destitute in morals, and a reference to which they contemp- tuously deny to the thief and the “king’s evidence.” It proves to them, “with a vengeance,” the “something rotten in the state of Denmark;” and will continue to prove it, and to be despicable, whether
in bad or good fortune, till the world find out a cure for the rottenness.

Yet this is what the allies of England were in the habit of doing, through the whole contest of England with France. When England succeeded in getting up a coalition against Napoleon, they denounced him for his ambition, and set out to fight him. When the coalition was broken by his armies, they turned round at his bidding, denounced England, and joined him in fighting against their ally. And this was the round of their history: a coalition and a tergiversation alternately; now a speech and a fight against Bonaparte, who beat them; then a speech and a fight against England, who bought them off; then, again, a speech and a fight against Bonaparte, who beat them again; and then, as before, a speech and a fight against England, who again bought them off. Meanwhile, they took everything they could get, whether from enemy or friend, seizing with no less greediness whatever bits of territory Bonaparte threw to them for their meanness, than pocketing the millions of Pitt, for which we are paying to this day.

It becomes us to bow, and to bow humbly, to the "mysterious dispensations of Providence;" but in furtherance of those very dispensations, it has pleased Providence so to constitute us, as to render us incapable of admiring such conduct, whether in
king's evidences or in kings; and some of the meanest figures that present themselves to the imagination in looking back on the events of those times, are the Emperors of Austria and Russia, and the King of Prussia. It is salutary to bear this in mind, for the sake of royalty itself. What has since ruined Louis Philippe, in spite of all his ability, is his confounding royal privileges with base ones, and his not keeping his word as a gentleman.

If it be still asked, what are kings to do under such circumstances as those in which they were placed with Bonaparte? what is their alternative? it is to be replied, firstly, that the question has been answered already, by the mode in which the charge is put; and, secondly, that whatever they do, they must either cease to act basely, and like the meanest of mankind, or be content to be regarded as such, and to leave such stains on their order as tend to produce its downfall, and to exasperate the world into the creation of republics. Republics, in the first instance, are never desired for their own sakes. I do not think they will be finally desired at all; certainly not unaccompanied by courtly graces and good breeding, and whatever can tend to secure to them ornament as well as utility. I do not think it is in human nature to be content with a different settlement of the old question, any more than it is in nature physical to dispense with her pomp of flowers
and colours. But sure I am, that the first cravings for republics always originate in some despair created by the conduct of kings.

It might be amusing to bring together a few of the exordiums of those same speeches, or state papers, of the allies of George the Third; but I have not time to look for them; and perhaps they would prove tiresome. It is more interesting to consider the "state" which Bonaparte kept in those days, and to compare it with his exile in St. Helena. There are more persons, perhaps, in the present generation who think of Bonaparte as the captive of Great Britain, defeated by Wellington, than as the maker of kings and queens, reigning in Paris, and bringing monarchs about his footstool. The following is the figure he used to make in the French newspapers at the time when the Examiner was set up.

NAPOLEON AND RUSSIA.

"Tilsit, June 25, 1807.

"This day at one o'clock, the Emperor, accompanied by the Grand Duke of Baden, the Prince of Neufchâtel, Marshal Bessières, the Grand Marshal of the Palace Duroc, and the Grand Equerry Caulaincourt, embarked on the banks of the Niemen, in a boat prepared for the purpose. They proceeded to the middle of the river, where General Lariboisière, commanding the artillery of the guard, had caused a raft to be placed, and a pavilion erected upon it. Close by it was another raft and pavilion for their majesty's suite. At the same moment the
Emperor Alexander set out from the right bank, accompanied by the Grand Duke Constantine, General Beningsen, General Ouvaroff, Prince Labanoff, and his principal aide-de-camp, Count Lieven. The two boats arrived at the same instant, and the two emperors embraced each other as soon as they set foot on the raft. They entered together the saloon which was prepared for them, and remained there during two hours. The conference having been concluded, the persons composing the suite of the two emperors were introduced. The Emperor Alexander paid the handsomest compliments to the officers who accompanied the Emperor, who, on his part, had a long conversation with the Grand Duke Constantine and General Beningsen."

[Note.—That the compliments to officers are all paid by the vanquished man, the Emperor of Russia.]

NAPOLEON AND AUSTRIA.

"Paris, April 4, 1810.

"The civil marriage of his majesty, the emperor and king with the Archduchess of Austria, took place at St. Cloud, on the 1st instant, and the public entry into Paris, and the religious ceremony, the next day. Previously to the public entry, the weather had been very unpropitious, but on the firing of the cannon the clouds dispersed, and a serene sky and brilliant sunshine enabled the Parisians to enjoy the pageantry, illuminations, &c. &c., which continued during the whole week. At the civil marriage ceremony, their imperial majesties having taken their seats on the throne, the princes and princesses ranged themselves in the following order:—

"To the right of the Emperor, Madame; Prince Louis Napoleon, King of Holland; Prince Jerome Napoleon, King of
Westphalia; Prince Borghese, Duke of Guastalla; Prince Joachim Napoleon, King of Naples; Prince Eugene, Viceroy of Italy; the Prince Archchancellor; the Prince Vice Grand Elector. To the left of the empress, the Princess Julia, Queen of Spain; the Princess Hortense, Queen of Holland; the Princess Catharine, Queen of Westphalia; the Princess Eliza, Grand Duchess of Tuscany; the Princess Pauline; the Princess Caroline, Queen of Naples; the Grand Duke of Wurtzburg; the Princess Augusta, Vice-Queen of Italy; the Princess Stephanie, Hereditary Grand Duchess of Baden; the Prince Arch-Treasurer; the Prince Vice-Constable, &c. &c."

Look on those pictures, and on the following:—

"St. Helena, December 17, 1820.

"It is a great crime here to call Bonaparte Emperor.

"He appears very unhappy. The governor will have no communication with Bertrand, and Bonaparte will not receive any except through him. This system of vexation is said to annoy him considerably; and combined with the other measures adopted towards him and his followers, tends to keep his mind in a state of continual irritation."

"May 15, 1821.

"Bonaparte died (on the 5th instant) after an illness of six weeks. He must have suffered great pain, though no complaint was uttered. For several days previous to his death, he had his son’s bust placed at the foot of his bed, and constantly kept his eyes fixed upon it, till he breathed his last."

But the fortunes of Napoleon were on the decline, when they appeared to be at their height. The year 1808 beheld at once their culmination and their de-
scent; and it was the feeblest of his vassals who—by the very excess of his servility—gave the signal for the change. Fortunately, too, for the interests of mankind, the change was caused by a violation of the most obvious principles of justice and good sense. It was owing to the unblushing seizure of Spain. It was owing to the gross and unfeeling farce of a pretended sympathy with the Spanish king's quarrel with his son; to the acceptance of a throne which the ridiculous father had no right to give away; and to the endeavour to force the accession on a country, which, instead of tranquilly admitting it on the new principles of indifference to religion and zeal for advancement (as he had ignorantly expected), opposed it with the united vehemence of dogged bigotry and an honest patriotism.

Spain was henceforth the millstone hung round the neck of the conqueror; and his marriage with a princess of Austria, which was thought such a wonderful piece of success, only furnished him with a like impediment; for it added to the weight of his unpopularity with all honest and prospective minds. It was well said by Cobbett, that he had much better have assembled a hundred of the prettiest girls in France, and selected the prettiest of them all for his wife. The heads and hearts of the "Young Continent" were henceforward against the self-seeker, ambitious of the old "show of things,"
in contradiction to the honest "desires of the mind." Want of sympathy was prepared for him in case of a reverse; and when, partly in the confidence of his military pride, partly by way of making a final set-off against his difficulties in Spain, and partly in very ignorance of what Russian natures and Russian winters could effect, he went and ran his head against the great northern wall of ice and snow, he came back a ruined man, masterly and surprising as his efforts to reinstate himself might thereafter be. Nothing remained for him but to fume and fret in spirit, get fatter with a vitiated state of body, and see reverse on reverse coming round him, which he was to face to no purpose. The grandest thing he did was to return from Elba: the next, to fight the battle of Waterloo; but he went to the field, bloated and half asleep, in a carriage. He had already, in body, become one of the commonest of those "emperors" whom he had first laughed at and then leagued with: no great principle stood near him, as it did in the times of the republic, when armies of shoeless youths beat the veteran troops of Austria; and thus, deserted by everything but his veterans and his generalship, which came to nothing before the unyieldingness of English, and the advent of Prussian soldiers, he became a fugitive in the "belle France" which he had fancied his own, and died a prisoner in the hands of a man of the name of Lowe.
I do not believe that George the Third, or his minister, Mr. Pitt, speculated at all upon a catastrophe like this. I mean, that I do not believe they reckoned upon Napoleon destroying himself by his own ambition. They looked, it is true, to the chance of "something turning up;" but it was to be of the ordinary kind. They thought to put him down by paid coalitions, and in the regular course of war. Hence, on repeated failures, the minister's broken heart, and probably the final extinguishment of the king's reason. The latter calamity, by a most unfortunate climax of untimeliness, took place a little before his enemy's reverses.

George the Third was a very brave and honest man. He feared nothing on earth, and he acted according to his convictions. But, unfortunately, his convictions were at the mercy of a will far greater than his understanding; and hence his courage became obstinacy, and his honesty the dupe of his inclinations. He was the son of a father with little brain, and of a mother who had a diseased blood: indeed, neither of his parents was healthy. He was brought up in rigid principles of morality on certain points, by persons who are supposed to have evaded them in their own conduct: he was taught undue notions of kingly prerogative; he was suffered to grow up, nevertheless, in homely as well as shy and moody habits; and, while acquiring a love of power tending
to the violent and uncontrollable, he was not permitted to have a taste of it, till he became his own master. The consequences of this training were an extraordinary mixture of domestic virtue with official duplicity; of rustic, mechanical tastes and popular manners, with the most exalted ideas of authority; of a childish and self-betraying cunning; with the most stubborn reserves; of fearlessness with sordidness; good-nature with unforgivingness; and of the health and strength of temperance and self-denial, with the last weaknesses of understanding, and passions that exasperated it out of its reason. The English nation were pleased to see in him a crowning specimen of themselves,—a royal John Bull. They did not discover, till too late (perhaps have not yet discovered), how much of the objectionable, as well as the respectable, lies hidden in the sturdy nickname invented for them by Arbuthnot; how much the animal predominates in it over the intellectual; and how terribly the bearer of it may be overdriven, whether in a royal or a national shape. They had much better get some new name for themselves, worthy of the days of Queen Victoria and of the hopes of the world.

In every shape I reverence calamity, and would not be thought to speak of it with levity, especially in connection with a dynasty which has since become estimable, as well as reasonable, in every respect.
If the histories of private as well as public families were known, the race of the Guelphs would only be found, in the person of one of their ancestors, to have shared, in common perhaps with every family in the world, the sorrows of occasional deterioration. But in the greatest and most tragical examples of human suffering, the homeliest, as well as the loftiest images, are too often forced on the mind together. George the Third, with all his faults, was a more estimable man than many of his enemies, and, certainly, than any of his wholesale revilers; and the memory of his last days is sanctified by whatever can render the loss of sight and of reason affecting. In one respect, when sensible of his calamity, he must have experienced a great relief. He saw that none of his children were liable to it. They had been saved by the infusion of colder and more judicious blood from another German stock. George the Fourth, though not a wise man, had as sane a constitution as any man in his dominions; and since the accession of his brother William, royalty and reason have never gone more harmoniously together, than they have done on the throne of Great Britain.

Whatever of any kind has taken place in the world, may have been best for all of us in the long run. Nature permits us, retrospectively and for comfort’s sake, though not in a different spirit, to entertain that conclusion among others. But meantime, either
because the world is not yet old enough to know better, or because we yet live but in the tuning of its instruments, and have not learned to play the harmonies of the earth sweetly, men feel incited by what is good as well as bad in them, to object and to oppose; and youth being the season of inexperience and of vanity, as well as of enthusiasm otherwise the most disinterested, the Examinar, which began its career, like most papers, with thinking the worst of those from whom it differed, and expressing its mind accordingly with fearless sincerity (which was not equally the case with those papers), it speedily excited the anger of government. It did this the more, inasmuch as, according to what has been stated of its opinions on foreign politics, and in matters of church-government, it did not fall into the common and half-conciliating because degrading error of antagonists, by siding, as a matter of course, with the rest of its enemies.

I need not re-open the questions of foreign and domestic policy, which were mooted with the ruling powers in those days, Reform in particular. The result is well known, and the details in general have ceased to be interesting. I would repeat none of them at all, if personal history did not give a new zest to almost any kind of relation. As such, however, is the case, I shall proceed to observe, that the Examinar had not been established a year, when go-
vernment instituted a prosecution against it, in consequence of some remarks on a pamphlet by a Major Hogan, who accused the Duke of York, as commander-in-chief, of favouritism and corruption.

Major Hogan was a furious but honest Irishman, who had been in the army seventeen years. He had served and suffered bitterly; in the West Indies he possessed the highest testimonials to his character, had been a very active recruiting officer, had seen forty captains promoted over his head in spite of repeated applications and promises, and he desired, after all, nothing but the permission to purchase his advancement, agreeably to every custom.

Provoked out of his patience by these fruitless endeavours to buy, what others who had done nothing, obtained for nothing, and being particularly disgusted at being told, for the sixth time, that he had been "noted for promotion, and would be duly considered as favourable opportunities offered," the gallant Hibernian went straight, without any further ado, to the office of the Commander-in-chief, and there, with a vivacity and plain-speaking which must have looked like a scene in a play, addressed his Royal Highness in a speech that astounded him:

"I submitted (says he) to his Royal Highness's recollection, the long time I had been seeking for promotion, and begged him to take into his consideration the nature of the circumstances under which I was recommended to his notice; particu-
larly pressing upon his attention, that, in the course of the time I had been 'noted' on his Royal Highness's list, upwards of forty captains had been promoted without purchase, all of whom were junior to me in rank, and many of them, indeed, were not in the army when I was a captain. I added, almost literally, in these words,—'My applications for promotion have been made in the manner prescribed by the practice of the army, and by the king's regulations; unfortunately without success. Other ways, please your Royal Highness, have been recommended to me; and frequent propositions have been made by those who affected to possess the means of securing that object, that for 600l. I could obtain a majority without purchase, which is little more than half the sum I had lodged to purchase promotion in the regular course.* But I rejected such a proposition; for, even were such a thing possible, I would feel it unworthy of me, as a British officer and a man, to owe the king's commission to low intrigue or petticoat influence!' I expected the instantaneous expression of his Royal Highness's gratitude for such a candid declaration. I looked for an immediate demand for explanation, and was prepared with ample evidence to satisfy his Highness, that such proceedings were going on daily, as were disgraceful to the character of the army. But no question was put to me; his royal mind seemed astounded, vox faucibus hæsit, and I retired."

Having thus dumbfounded the unhappy Commander-in-chief, the Major, in his pamphlet, turned

* "The money paid in the regular course goes into a public fund, which is not tangible by any public officer for private purposes, while the private douceur is wholly applicable to such purposes."—The Major's Pamphlet.
round upon certain acquaintances of his Royal Highness, and thus further proceeded to astonish the public:—

"It has been observed to me (says he), by connoisseurs, that I should have had no reason to complain, if I had proceeded in the proper way to seek promotion. But what is meant by the proper way? I applied to the Duke of York, because he was Commander-in-chief. To his Royal Highness I was directed by the King's order to apply; and with these orders alone I felt it consistent with my duty as an officer, and my honour as a gentleman, to comply. But if any other person had been the substitute of the Duke of York, I should have made my application to that person. If a Cooke, a Creswell, a Clarke, a Sinclair, or a Carey, or any other name had been invested by his Majesty with the office of Commander-in-chief, to that person I should have applied. Nay, if it had pleased his Majesty to confer upon a female the direct command of the army, I should have done my duty, in applying to the legal depository of power. But to no one other should I condescend to apply; for I scorn undue influence, and feel incapable of enjoying any object, however intrinsically valuable, that should be procured by such means.

"I have that evidence by me (he observes); indeed, I am in possession of such facts, as it would be imprudent in me to write, and as no printer in England perhaps would venture to publish. But if any member of either House of Parliament should be disposed to take up the subject, I can furnish him with materials that would enable him to make such an exposé, as shall stagger even the credulity proverbially ascribed to this country.

"As some proof that I am known to possess materials that
are calculated to excite alarm amongst those who must recollect their own acts, and, if they are at all sensible, must be fully conscious of their objectionable character, I have to state the following extraordinary fact:—About dusk on the evening of the first day my advertisement appeared, a lady in a dashing barouche, with two footmen, called at the newspaper-office for my address. She must be, no doubt, one of the vulnerable corps, or their agent; as, upon the following evening, at my lodgings, the waiter delivered me a letter, which I opened in the presence of four gentlemen, whose attestation to the fact appears below. The following is a copy of the letter:—

"'Sir,—The enclosed will answer for the deficit of which you complain, and which was not allowed you through mere oversight. I hope this will prevent the publication of your intended pamphlet; and, if it does, you may rely on a better situation than the one you had. When I find that you have given up all your secrets from public view, which would hurt you with all the royal family, I shall make myself known to you, and shall be happy in your future acquaintance and friendship; by which, I promise you, you will reap much benefit. If you recall the advertisement, you shall hear from me, and your claims shall be rewarded as they deserve.

"'Major Hogan.'

"'Saturday, 27th August 1808.

"'We, the undersigned, do hereby certify, that we were present when Major Hogan opened this letter and enclosure, containing four bank-notes, to the amount of four hundred pounds.

"'John Daniel, late Capt. 17th Light Drags.  
Francis Moe.  
Henry Wheat, Lieut. 32nd Regt.  
Lewis Gasquet, late Lieut. 20th Light Drags.

"Frank's Coffee-house.
"'I do hereby certify, that this letter was delivered to me at the door by a lady, who particularly desired me to be careful to give it to Major Hogan, and instantly went away: it was dusk at the time: I returned into the coffee-room and delivered the letter.

"'George Fozed,
"'Waiter, Frank's Coffee-house.'

"But such expedients shall have no effect upon the revelations of

"D. Hogan."

"Frank's Hotel, 3, Brook-street,
"Sept. 2, 1808.

"P. S.—The person who enclosed the four hundred pounds, not having left any address, I cannot ascertain to whom I am to return that sum; but if the numbers of the notes received are sent to No. 14, Angel-court, Throgmorton-street, the money will be returned.—D. H."
bring the female alluded to by Major Hogan, before the notice of that tribunal.

I say "unexpectedly," because neither then, nor at any time, had I the least knowledge of Colonel Wardle. The * Examiner*, so to speak, lived quite alone. It sought nobody; and its principles in this respect had already become so well understood that few sought it, and no one succeeded in making its acquaintance. The Colonel's motion for an investigation came upon us, therefore, like a god-send. The prosecution against the paper was dropped; and the whole attention of the country was drawn to the strange spectacle of a laughing, impudent woman, brought to the bar of the House of Commons, and forcing them to laugh in their turn at the effrontery of her answers. The poor Duke of York had parted with her, and she had turned against him.

The following is a specimen of the dialogue:—

*Question.* Who brought that message?

*Answer.* A particular friend of the duke's—Mr. Taylor, a shoemaker in Bond-street—(*a laugh*).

*Q.* Pray, by whom did you send your desires to the duke?

*A.* By my own pen.

*Q.* I wish to know who brought the letter?

*A.* Why, the same Ambassador of Morocco—(*loud laughing.*) The witness was here called to order by the Speaker, and admonished to be more circumspect, or she would receive the censure of the House.

*Q.* What is your husband's name?
A. Clarke.

Q. Where were you married?

A. Mr. W. Adam can tell. (Adam was the duke’s agent.)

Q. Did you not say you were married in Berkhamstead church?

A. No: I merely laughed at it, when I heard it.

Q. Did you ever see Mr. Alderman Clarke, or do you now believe that your husband was his nephew?

A. I don’t recollect having seen Mr. Alderman Clarke; and as to my husband, I never took any pains to ascertain anything respecting him, since I quitted him. He is nothing to me, nor I to him.

Q. But what profession was he of?

A. None that I know of; but his father was a builder. (He was understood to be a mason.)

* * * * *

Q. Have you not, at various times, received money from Mr. Dowler? (Dowler was Assistant-Commissary of Stores.)

A. At some particular times. I had a thousand pounds from him for his situation.

Q. Do you owe any money to Mr. Dowler?

A. I never recollect my debts to gentlemen—(a loud burst of laughter).

The upshot of the investigation was, that Mrs. Clarke had evidently made money by the seekers of military promotion, but that the duke was pronounced innocent of connivance. His Royal Highness withdrew however from office for a time (for he was not long afterwards reinstated), and public opinion, as to his innocence or guilt, went meanwhile pretty much according to that of party.

My own impression, at this distance of time, and
after better knowledge of the duke's private history and prevailing character, is, that there was some connivance on his part, but not of a systematic nature, or beyond what he may have considered as warrantable towards a few special friends of his mistress, on the assumption that she would carry her influence no farther. His own letters proved that he allowed her to talk to him of people with a view to promotion. He even let her recommend him a clergyman, who (as he phrased it) had an ambition to "preach before royalty." He said he would do what he could to bring it about; probably thinking nothing whatsoever—I mean, never having the thought enter his head—of the secret scandal of the thing, or not regarding his consent as anything but a piece of good-natured patronizing acquiescence, after the ordinary fashion of the "ways of the world."

For, in truth, the Duke of York was as good-natured a man as he was far from being a wise one. The investigation gave him a salutary caution; but I really believe, on the whole, that he had already been, as he was afterwards, a very good, conscientious war-office clerk. He was a brave man, though no general; a very filial, if not a very thinking politician (for he always voted to please his father); and if he had no idea of economy, it is to be recollected how easily princes' debts are incurred,
—how often encouraged by the creditors who complain of them; and how often, and how temptingly to the debtor, they are paid off by governments.

As to his amours, the temptations of royalty that way are still greater: the duke seems to have regarded a mistress in a very tender and conjugal point of view, as long as the lady chose to be equally considerate; and if people wondered why such a loving man did not love his duchess—who appears to have been as good-natured as himself—the wonder ceased when they discovered, that her Royal Highness was a lady of so whimsical a taste, and possessed such an overflowing amount of benevolence towards the respectable race of beings, hight dogs, that in the constant occupation of looking after the welfare of some scores of her canine friends, she had no leisure to cultivate the society of those human ones, that could better dispense with her attentions.

The ministers naturally grudged the Examiner its escape from the Hogan prosecution, especially as they gained nothing with the paper, in consequence of their involuntary forbearance. Accordingly, before another year was out, they instituted a second prosecution; and so eager were they to bring it, that, in their haste, they again overleaped their prudence. Readers in the present times, when more libels have been written in a week by Toryism itself against
royalty, in the most irreverent style, than appeared in those days in the course of a year from pens the most radical, and against princes the most provoking, are astonished to hear, that the offence we had committed consisted of the following sentence:

“Of all monarchs since the Revolution, the successor of George the Third will have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular.”

But the real offence was the contempt displayed towards the ministers themselves. The article in which the sentence appeared, was entitled “Change of Ministry;” the Duke of Portland had just retired from the premiership; and the Examiner had been long girding him and his associates on the score of general incompetency, as well as their particular unfitness for constitutional government. The ministers cared nothing for the king, in any sense of personal zeal, or of a particular wish to vindicate or exalt him. The tempers, caprices, and strange notions of sincerity and craft, to which he was subject, by neutralising in a great measure his ordinary good nature and somewhat exuberant style of intercourse on the side of familiarity and gossiping, did not render him a very desirable person to deal with, even among friends. But he was essentially a Tory king, and so far a favourite of Tories; he was now terminating the fiftieth year of his reign; there was
to be a jubilee in consequence; and the ministers thought to turn the loyalty of the holiday into an instrument of personal revenge.

The entire passage charged with being libellous in that article, consisted of the words marked in italics, and the framers of the indictment evidently calculated on the usual identification of a special with a Tory jury. They had reckoned, at the same time, so confidently on the effect to be produced with that class of persons, by any objection to the old king, that the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*, Mr. Perry, was prosecuted for having extracted only the two concluding sentences; and as the government was still more angered with the Whigs who hoped to displace them, than with the Radicals who wished to see them displaced, Mr. Perry’s prosecution preceded ours. This was fortunate; for though the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle* pleaded his own cause, an occasion in which a man is said to have “a fool for his client” (that is to say, in the opinion of lawyers), he pleaded it so well, and the judge (Ellenborough) who afterwards shewed himself so zealous a Whig, gave him a hearing and construction so favourable, that he obtained an acquittal, and the prosecution against the *Examiner* accordingly fell to the ground.

I had the pleasure of a visit from this gentleman while his indictment was pending. He came to tell
me how he meant to conduct his defence. He was a lively, good-natured man, with a shrewd expression of countenance, and twinkling eyes, which he not unwillingly turned upon the ladies. I had lately married, and happened to be sitting with my wife. A chair was given him close to us; but as he was very near-sighted, and yet could not well put up his eyeglass to look at her (which purpose, nevertheless, he was clearly bent on effecting), he took occasion, while speaking of the way in which he should address the jury, to thrust his face close upon hers, observing at the same time, with his liveliest emphasis, and, as if expressly for her information, "I mean to be very modest."

The unexpectedness of this announcement, together with the equivocal turn given to it by the vivacity of his movement, had all the effect of a dramatic surprise, and it was with difficulty we kept our countenance.

Mr. Perry subsequently became one of my warmest friends, and, among other services, would have done me one of a very curious nature, which I will mention by-and-by.

As the importance attached to the article by government may give it some interest, and as it is not unamusing, I will here lay the greater part of it before the reader. He will see what a very little figure is made in it by the words that were prose-
cuted, and in how much greater a degree the writer's mind must have been occupied with the king's ministers, than with the king.

"Political Examiner, No. 92.—Change of Ministry."

"The administration is still without a head, but the ministerial papers tell us, it does quite as well as before. There can be no doubt of it. As it is not customary, however, for headless trunks to make their appearance at court, or to walk abroad under pretence of looking after the nation, it feels rather awkward without some show of pericranium; and, accordingly, like the vivacious giant in Ariosto, who dived to recover his head out of the sea, it has exhibited a singular ingenuity in endeavouring to supply its loss. At one moment, it was said to have clapped a great bottle on its shoulders, and called itself Richmond: at another, to have mounted an attorney's bag, under the name of Perceval; and at a third, to have put on an enormous balloon, and strutted forth under the appellation of Wellesley. The very idea, however, of these repairs appeared so ridiculous in the eyes of the spectators, that the project seems to have been abandoned for a time; for the trunk instantly set about repairing the additional loss of its arms, which were taken off the other day in a duel.* To this end, it is said to have applied to two great lords for assistance,† who answered, with manifest contempt, that they could not think of separating any of their members from each other to patch up so vile a body. The fragment, therefore, continues in a very desponding way at St. James's, where it keeps itself alive by

* Between Canning and Lord Castlereagh.
† Grey and Grenville.
cutting out articles for the *Morning Post* with its toes, and kicking every Catholic who comes that way, to the great diversion of the court. The other day it was introduced to his Majesty, who was pleased to express great commiseration at its want of brains, and said he would do something for it if he could.

"Such is the picture, and unfortunately no exaggerated one, of the British ministry. What the French must think of it, is too mortifying for reflection. Perhaps there never was an instance in this nation of any set of rulers, who suffered under a contempt so universal. In the general run of politics, people differ with each other on the acts of administration, as so many matters of opinion; but to admire Perceval and Castlereagh is an enormity reconcileable to no standard of common sense. Wherever there is an intellect, unpolluted by interest, there the contempt of these men is pure and unmixed. They cannot even produce a decent hirpling to advocate their cause; their writers have become proverbially wretched; and I believe the most galling thing that could be said to an author applying for one’s opinion of his manuscript, would be to tell him that he writes like the *Post*. As to the contractors and jobbers, who all praise the ministry, there are no doubt some shrewd men in so large a body of people; but a jobber has no opinion: his object is to cheat the army and navy, and become a baronet; and he knows very well, that these things are not done by speaking the truth. A contractor, therefore, should never say, 'It is my opinion,' or, 'I really think,' as Sir William, and Sir Charles, and Sir James are apt to do, by slips of the tongue: he should say, 'My turtle informs me;’—'I understand by a large order I had the other day;’—'I am told by a very accurate bale of goods,' &c. &c. When such men can come forward and render themselves politically pro-
minent by sounding the praises of an administration, it is a sure sign that there is nobody else to do it.

"That Lords Grenville and Grey should have refused to coalesce with such a ministry, cannot be matter of surprise. Mere shame, one would think, must prevent them. Accordingly, their lordships are said to have transmitted the same prompt refusal from the country, though at the distance of six hundred miles from each other. Lord Grenville, however, having followed his letter to town, caused a 'great sensation' among the coffee-house speculators, who gave him up for lost in the irresistible vortex of place; but the papers of yesterday tell us, that his journey was in consequence of the artful ambiguity of Mr. Perceval's letter, which was so worded as to render it doubtful whether its proposals came direct from his Majesty, or only from the minister: his lordship, they say, was inclined to view it in the former light, and therefore thought himself 'bound to be near the court in its emergencies;' whereas, Lord Grey regarded it entirely as a ministerial trap, and treated it accordingly. Whatever may be the truth of these statements, it is generally supposed that the mutilated administration, in spite of its tenacity of life, cannot exist much longer; and the Foxites, of course, are beginning to rally round their leaders, in order to give it the coup-de-grace. A more respectable set of men they certainly are,—with more general information, more attention to the encouragement of intellect, and altogether a more enlightened policy; and if his Majesty could be persuaded to enter into their conciliatory views with regard to Ireland, a most important and most necessary benefit would be obtained for this country. The subject of Ireland, next to the difficulty of coalition, is no doubt the great trouble in the election of his Majesty's servants; and it is this, most probably, which has given rise to the talk of a regency, a measure to which the court
would never resort while it felt a possibility of acting upon its own principles. What a crowd of blessings rush upon one's mind, that might be bestowed upon the country in the event of such a change! Of all monarchs, indeed, since the Revolution, the successor of George the Third will have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular."

Of the ministers, whom a young journalist thus treated with contempt, I learned afterwards to think better. Not as ministers; for I still consider them, in that respect, as the luckiest, and the least deserving their luck, of any statesmen that have been employed by the House of Brunswick. I speak not only of the section at that moment reigning, but of the whole of what was called Mr. Pitt's successors. But with the inexperience and presumption of youth, I was too much in the habit of confounding difference of opinion with dishonest motives. I did not see (and it is strange how people, not otherwise wanting in common sense or modesty, can pass whole lives without seeing) that if I had a right to have good motives attributed to myself by those who differed with me in opinion, I was bound to reciprocate the concession. I did not reflect that political antagonists have generally been born and bred in a state of antagonism, and that for any one of them to demand identity of opinion from another on pain of his being thought a man of bad motives, was to demand that he should have had the antagonist's father and mother
as well as his own—the same training, the same
direction of conscience, the same predilections
and very prejudices; not to mention, that good
motives themselves might have induced a man to go
counter to all these, even had he been bred in them;
which, in one or two respects, was the case with
myself.

Canning, indeed, was not a man to be treated
with contempt under any circumstances, by those
who admired wit and rhetoric; though, compared
with what he actually achieved in either, I cannot
help thinking that his position procured him an un-
due measure of fame. What has he left us to
perpetuate the amount of it? A speech or two,
and the Ode on the Knife-Grinder. This will
hardly account, with the next ages, for the statue
that occupies the highway in Westminster; a com-
pliment, too, unique of its kind; monopolizing the
parliamentary pavement, as though the original had
been the only man fit to go forth as the representa-
tive of Parliament itself, and to challenge the
admiration of the passengers. The liberal measures
of Canning's last days renewed his claim on the
public regard, especially as he was left, by the jeal-
ousy and resentment of his colleagues, to carry
them by himself; jealousy, because small as his wit
was for a great fame, they had none of their own to
equal it; and resentment, because, in its indiscretions
and inconsiderateness, it had nicknamed or bantered them all round,—the real cause, I have no doubt, of that aristocratical desertion of his ascendancy, which broke his heart at the very height of his fortunes. But at the time I speak of, I took him for nothing but a great sort of impudent Eton boy, with an unfeelingness that surmounted his ability. Whereas, he was a man of great natural sensibility, a good husband and father, and an admirable son. Canning continued, as long as he lived, to write a letter every week to his mother who had been an actress, and whom he treated, in every respect, with a consideration and tenderness that may be pronounced to have been perfect. "Good son" should have been written under his statue. It would have given the somewhat pert look of his handsome face a pleasanter effect; and have done him a thousand times more good with the coming generations, than his Ode on the Knife-Grinder.

The Earl of Liverpool, whom Madame de Staël is said to have described as having a "talent for silence," and to have asked, in company, what had become of "that dull speaker, Lord Hawkesbury" (his title during his father's lifetime), was assuredly a very dull minister; but I believe he was a very good man. His father had been so much in the confidence of the Earl of Bute at the accession of George III., as to have succeeded to his invidious
reputation of being the secret adviser of the king; and he continued in great favour during the whole of the reign. The son, with little interval, was in office during the whole of the war with Napoleon; and after partaking of all the bitter draughts of disappointment which ended in killing Pitt, had the luck of tasting the sweets of triumph. I met him one day, not long afterwards, driving his barouche in a beautiful spot where he lived, and was so struck with the melancholy of his aspect, that, as I did not know him by sight, I asked a passenger who he was.

The same triumph did not hinder poor Lord Castlereagh from dying by his own hand. The long burden of responsibility had been too much, even for him; though, to all appearance, he was a man of a stronger temperament than Lord Liverpool, and had, indeed, a very noble aspect. He should have led a private life, and been counted one of the models of the aristocracy; for though a ridiculous speaker, and a cruel politician (out of impatience of seeing constant trouble, and not knowing otherwise how to end it), he was an intelligent and kindly man in private life, and could be superior to his position as a statesman. He delighted in the political satire of the Beggar's Opera; has been seen applauding it from a stage box; and Lady Morgan tells us, would ask her in company to play him the songs on the
pianoforte, and good-humouredly accompany them with a bad voice. How pleasant it is thus to find oneself reconciled to men whom we have ignorantly undervalued! and how fortunate to have lived long enough to say so!

The *Examiner*, though it preferred the Whigs to the Tories, was not a Whig of the school then existing. Its great object was a reform in Parliament, which the older and more influential Whigs did not advocate, which the younger ones (the fathers of those now living) advocated but fitfully and misgivingly, and which had lately been suffered to fall entirely into the hands of those newer and more thorough-going Whigs, which were known by the name of Radicals, and have since been called Whig-Radicals, and Liberals. The opinions of the *Examiner*, in fact, both as to State and Church Government, allowing, of course, for difference of position in the parties, and tone in their manifestation, were those now swaying the destinies of the country, in the persons of Queen Victoria, and her minister Lord John Russell. I do not presume to give her Majesty the name of a partizan; or to imply that, under any circumstances, she would condescend to accept it. Her business, as she well knows and admirably demonstrates, is, not to side with any of the disputants among her children, but to act lovingly and dispassionately for them all, as circumstances
render expedient. But the extraordinary events which took place on the continent during her childhood, the narrow political views of most of her immediate predecessors, her own finer and more genial brain, and the training of a wise mother, whose family appears to have taken healthy draughts of those ample and fresh fountains of German literature which are so well qualified to return the good done them by our own, and set the contracted stream of English thought and nurture flowing again, as becomes its common Saxon origin,—all these circumstances in combination have rendered her what no prince of her house has been before her,—equal to the demands, not only of the nation and the day, but of the days to come, and the popular interests of the world. So, at least, I conceive. I do not pretend to any special knowledge of the court or its advisers. I speak from what I have seen of her Majesty's readiness to fall in with every great and liberal measure for the education of the country, the freedom of trade, and the independence of nations; and I spoke in the same manner, before I could be suspected of confounding esteem with gratitude. She knows how, and nobly dares, to let the reins of restriction in the hands of individuals be loosened before the growing strength and self-government of the many; and the royal house that best knows how to do this, and neither to tighten those reins in anger
nor abandon them out of fear, will be the last house to suffer in any convulsion which others may provoke, and the first to be re-assured in their retention, as long as royalty shall exist. May it exist, under the shape in which I can picture it to my imagination, as long as reasonableness can outlive envy, and ornament be known to be one of nature's desires! Excess, neither of riches nor poverty, would then endanger it. I am no republican, nor ever was, though I have lived during a period of history when kings themselves tried hard to make honest men republicans by their apparent unteachableness. But my own education, the love, perhaps, of poetic ornament, and the repulsiveness of a republic itself, even of British origin, with its huffing manners, its frontless love of money, and its slave-holding abuse of its very freedom, kept me within the pale of the loyal. I might prefer, perhaps, a succession of queens to kings, and a simple fillet on their brows to the most gorgeous diadem. I think that men more willingly obey the one, and I am sure that nobody could mistake the cost of the other. But peaceful and reasonable provision for the progress of mankind towards all the good possible to their nature, is the great desideratum in government; and seeing this more securely and handsomely maintained in limited monarchies than republics, I am for English permanence in this respect, in preference to French.
volatility, and American slave-holding utilitarianism.

The Tory government having failed in its two attacks on the *Examiner*, could not be content, for any length of time, till it had failed in a third. For such was the case. The new charge was again on the subject of the army,—that of military flogging. An excellent article on the absurd and cruel nature of that punishment, from the pen of the late Mr. John Scott (who afterwards fell in a duel with one of the writers in Blackwood), had appeared in a country paper, the *Stamford News*, of which he was editor. The most striking passages of this article were copied into the *Examiner*; and it is a remarkable circumstance in the history of juries, that after the journal which copied it had been acquitted in London, the journal which originated the copied matter was found guilty in Stamford; and this, too, though the counsel was the same in both instances,—the present Lord Brougham.

The attorney-general at that time was Sir Vicary Gibbs, a name, which it appears somewhat ludicrous to me to write at present, considering what a bugbear it was to politicians, and how insignificant it has since become. He was a little, irritable, sharp-featured, bilious-looking man (so at least he was described, for I never saw him); very worthy, I believe, in private; and said to be so fond of
novels, that he would read them after the labours of the day, till the wax-lights guttered without his knowing it. I had a secret regard for him on this account, and wished he would not haunt me in a spirit so unlike Tom Jones. I know not what sort of lawyer he was; probably none the worse for imbuing himself with the knowledge of Fielding and Smollett; but he was a bad reasoner, and made half-witted charges. He used those edge-tools of accusation which cut a man's own fingers. He assumed, that we could have no motives for writing but mercenary ones; and he argued, that because Mr. Scott (who had no more regard for Bonaparte than we had) endeavoured to shame down the practice of military flogging by pointing to the disuse of it in the armies of France, he only wanted to subject his native country to invasion. He also had the simplicity to ask, why we did not "speak privately on the subject to some member of Parliament," and get him to notice it in a proper manner, instead of bringing it before the public in a newspaper? We laughed at him; and the event of his accusations enabled us to laugh more.

The charge of being friends of Bonaparte against all who differed with Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning was a common, and, for too long a time, a successful trick, with such of the public as did not read the writings of the persons accused. I have
often been surprised, much later in life, both in relation to this and other charges, at the credulity into which many excellent persons had owned they had been thus beguiled, and at the surprise which they expressed in turn at finding the charges the reverse of true. To the readers of the Examiner, they caused only indignation or merriment.

The last and most formidable prosecution against us remains to be told; but some intermediate circumstances must be related first.