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WILLIAM PITT AND JOHN FORBES<sup>1</sup>

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A COPY of the first letter ever written from Pittsburgh lies before me. It is dated November 27, 1758, and is from General John Forbes to William Pitt.

Forbes wrote: "I do myself the Honour of acquainting you that it has pleased God to crown His Majesty's Arms with Success over all his Enemies upon the Ohio, by my having obliged the Enemy to burn and abandon Fort DuQuesne."

The general had previously given the names of the Duke of Bedford and General Ligonier to the depots he had established on his route across the Allegheny Mountains. He concludes the letter: "I have used the freedom of giving your name to Fort DuQuesne, as I hope it was in some measure the being actuated by your spirits that now makes us Masters of the place. . . . I hope the name Fathers will take them [Pittsburgh, Ligonier, and Bedford] under their Protection. In which case these dreary deserts will soon be the richest and most fertile of any possessed by the British in N. America."<sup>2</sup>

At least one of the godfathers, or name-fathers as the Scots have it, seems to have acceded to this request, for if Pitt could now see his name-

<sup>1</sup> Read at the annual meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on January 28, 1941.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, London, C.O. 5:50; Library of Congress transcript, 607-613; Alfred P. James, ed., *Writings of General John Forbes*, 267 (Menasha, Wis., 1938).

child he would behold one of the richest if not the most fertile spots in America.

I shall try to make these two men live again in your imagination, for they were both great men, and to their joint activity this community owes both its being and its name. The tribute that is their due is a sincere appreciation of their efforts, not a fulsome exaggeration of them.

The material about Pitt is superabundant; about Forbes, very scant, for this was the general's first independent command, and he died within four months after he had accomplished his purpose; while Pitt's biography is the history of England during that period.

To understand Pitt it is necessary to understand eighteenth-century England. He was a creature of his age: his career would have been equally impossible in the seventeenth century and in the nineteenth. Cromwell would have had none of him, nor would Cobden. Standing between the two, the century of Carteret, Chesterfield, and Cumberland knew how to make use of his genius.

When Pitt was born, in 1708, England was not the colossus of wealth and power that Victoria later ruled over. The British Isles then had a population of less than nine millions all told, as against twenty-one millions in France and forty millions in Austro-Germany's host of independent sovereignties.<sup>3</sup> The twenty-five years of warfare against Louis XIV had been concluded in 1713 by the treaty of Utrecht. Britain, due to its insular position, had suffered no depredations during the war; while Spain, northern France, western Germany, and the Netherlands had been repeatedly devastated by armies of foes and friends. So Great Britain at the peace was relatively the winner on balance; her future savings were not pledged to the rebuilding of towns and villages burned during the war; they could be devoted to trade expansion. In addition to this the Asiento treaty transferred from France to England a thirty-year monopoly of the Spanish-African slave trade, involving the transportation of 144,000 negroes to America. Also, 600 tons of manufactured goods were permitted to be shipped in an English vessel every year to Spanish-American ports.<sup>4</sup> The United Netherlands, which in the seventeenth century had been known as the "wagoners of the seas," lost

<sup>3</sup> Albert von Ruville, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, 1:10 (New York, 1907).

<sup>4</sup> "Asiento or Assiento," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th ed., 2:543.

their commercial supremacy. Dutch historians complain that Holland, situated between France and England, was constantly engaged in wars by one or the other, which exhausted Dutch finances, annihilated her navy, and caused a rapid decline in her commerce. Often, too, the friendship of England was scarcely less harmful to Holland than her enmity.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, by 1739, Pitt could boast that there were more ships in British harbors than in all the navies of Europe. But France was resilient after being bled white during the wars of Louis XIV; the peaceful policy of the Regent brought her national revenue up to \$125,000,000 by the mid-century, as against England's \$25,000,000.<sup>6</sup>

The English of that day, says Carlyle, "lived in perpetual terror that they would be devoured by France; that French ambition would overset the Celestial Balance [of Power], and proceed next to eat the British Nation." This terror, as Carlyle termed it, becomes in Sir J. R. Seeley's phraseology "Commercial Rivalry." In the 125 years that elapsed between the battles of the Boyne and Waterloo, France and England spent sixty-four years at war with each other; and this rivalry centered on the possession of America. "There was this fundamental difference between Spain and France on the one side," says Seeley, "and England on the other, that Spain and France were deeply involved in the struggles of Europe, from which England has always been able to hold herself aloof. In fact, as an island, England is distinctly nearer for practical purposes to the New World, and almost belongs to it. . . . As to France, it is still more manifest that she lost the New World because she was always divided between a policy of colonial extension and a policy of European conquest. If we compare together those seven great wars between 1688 and 1815, we shall be struck with the fact that most of them . . . have one aspect as between England and France and another as between France and Germany. It is the double policy of France that causes this, and it is France that suffers by it." Because France exhausted herself in Germany, continues Seeley, "her possessions in America passed into Eng-

<sup>5</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, 168 (Boston, 1911).

<sup>6</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 1:10, 158.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia Called Frederick the Great*, 4:10 (New York, The Kelmescott Society, n.d.).

land's hands." England has not had to withstand a European ascendancy within her own territory, as Portugal, Spain, Holland, and France have had to do in mortal conflicts. "In one word, out of all the five states which competed for the New World, success has fallen to that one . . . which was least hampered by the Old World."<sup>8</sup>

In the early eighteenth century England's colonial possessions could not "for a moment compare with the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires and were nearly the same as the French and Dutch colonies."<sup>9</sup> The French had then occupied the valleys of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi rivers and the intervening territory. They laid claim to the whole northern continent, except the areas occupied by the Spanish and English settlements on the Atlantic seaboard. If, as Ralph Waldo Emerson says, "*America begins at the Alleghenies*," then the French had claimed the bulk of America.

The St. Lawrence Valley was the key to the best of the fur-trade country and to the best fisheries in America. During the first hundred years after the settlement of the Anglo-American colonies, "furs and fish were the only exports of value from the region north of Maryland." The French had control of the trade with the Indians, who occupied the best country in the world for peltries. This trade was the Anglo-French bone of contention. And as soon as the territory north and west of the Allegheny Mountains was ceded to Britain by France in 1763, George III by proclamation forbade his "loving subjects" to make any settlements west of the summit of those mountains. The Lords of Trade explained this prohibition by saying that the object of American colonization was to extend the commerce and manufacture of Great Britain; that "the extension of the fur trade depends entirely upon the Indians being undisturbed in the possession of their hunting-grounds," and that "all colonizing does in its nature . . . operate to the prejudice of that branch of commerce."<sup>10</sup>

Turning now to the make-up of the government of England in which Pitt played so great a role, we find that in *name* it was then the same as

<sup>8</sup> John R. Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 94ff. (New York, 1891).

<sup>9</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 1:13.

<sup>10</sup> Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, 4: xxi, 6:687 (Boston, 1884, 1887).

it is now and as it was in 1630. The King, the Lords, and the Commons exercised the powers of sovereignty. In theory, at least, the high estate that the Commons attained in the great days of Hampden and Pym remained undisturbed. The Revolution of 1688 once and for all had fixed the supremacy of Parliament over the Crown. But, says the *Britannica*, "it is curious to observe the indirect methods by which the Commons were henceforth kept in subjugation to the Crown and the territorial aristocracy."<sup>11</sup> The representative character of most of the membership of that body had long ago become an illusion. The members, even those from the cities, were the nominees of the Crown, the Nobles, great land-owners, or close corporations. When influence did not suffice, direct bribery was employed.

But public opinion had been an increasing influence in government since the seventeenth century. All parties gave it at least lip service and Parliament generally kept itself in accord with the popular sentiment of the country. The Crown had been brought to concede the principle that its chief ministers must be of the party controlling a majority in the House of Commons. But since the Hanoverian kings were wedded to the Whig party, and that party between 1715 and 1760 always had a majority in the House, this restriction was not of great importance. The King was still free to appoint or dismiss at pleasure from the offices of state those Whigs whom he liked or disliked. And the power of the King to select or reject any particular individual as a minister was *the* important factor in political life during the Pitt era. The King's dislike made the politician's name taboo, although the King's favor could not always insure control of the Commons.

King George II was born in 1683, a generation before Pitt, and as the average age of the Crown's natural demise since the Reformation was only a trifle over 58 years, the anticipation of George II's early death was an element in the calculations of every statesman. Good relations had, if possible, to be maintained with the heir apparent, Frederick, Prince of Wales, until his unexpected death in 1751, and then with his son, George, born in 1738 and legally to come of age in 1756.

Broadly speaking, the great feudatories of the Middle Ages had been

<sup>11</sup> "Parliament after Restoration," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th ed., 17:319.

transformed into Royal adherents by the process of giving them highly paid positions, often with duties too insignificant to curtail the Royal monopoly of executive power. In England, at least, such positions survived as well-paid sinecures, the possession of which were among the chief prizes of political life, all being within the gift of the Crown.

The great Whig families stood next in importance to the Crown: the Russells, the Cavendishes, the Pelhams, the Bentincks, the Monks, and to a lesser degree the Temples, the Townsends, the Stanhopes, and others formed, when united, a front too powerful to be broken. Their influence in the House of Commons preponderated. The "rotten boroughs" were owned by them.

The money power and public opinion may possibly be grouped together in this sketch of the influences then affecting political activity. "Disposable wealth" in commoners' hands before the days of the Industrial Revolution generally vested in the wealthy merchants of London, Bristol, and other seaports. Whether these staid and respectable churchwardens set on the mobs which from time to time stoned the sedan chairs of unpopular ministers, broke their windows, and even burned their houses, will never be known. But such evidence of popular opinion as these acts of violence bespoke were pretty generally in accord with the rich merchants' ideas of what was wrong with the government of the day.

As we grow older our interest in the subject of heredity increases. We find or think we find characteristics of our friends of an older generation cropping out in their descendants. So I offer no apologies for outlining some parts of the Pitt family tree—on both sides. For it is rather absurd to eliminate the maternal side of one's ancestry. That is a habit derived from the Roman legal conception of marriage, as not only depriving a woman of her prior status as a member of a particular gens, but inferentially as obliterating the transmissible peculiarities of that gens. In fact, there is quite as much chance that any given trait may be inherited from the female parent as from the male, though post-natal developments of the offspring are more frequently conditioned by the paternal environment, especially in the best-recorded family pedigrees, those of Royal or near-Royal character.

The Pitts were a Dorsetshire family. In Tudor days a John Pitt was Clerk of the Exchequer. Naturally, therefore, he obtained some of the spoils of the dissolution of the monasteries. He died seized of Wareham Priory. His son was Comptroller of the Household under James I and was knighted at Newmarket—whether before or after the races, history does not say. Possibly Jamie lost a wager there and paid up with the knighthood. The older branch of the Pitts continued to thrive until they were made Barons Rivers. From their junior offspring stems the vicar of St. Mary's Blantford, Dorset, to whom in 1653 was born a son, Thomas, the famous governor of Madras. Early in life he went to India. There he became an independent trader, one not under the control of the East India Company, but an interloper, an opponent of the monopoly. He succeeded so well that in a few years he was able to give \$200,000 bail in a suit brought against him by the company. Later the old company took him into its fold and made him governor of Madras and Fort St. George. Then he turned his attention to diamonds and bought from a native the famous Pitt diamond for \$125,000. It weighed in the rough 410 carats, when cut, 135 carats. This gem motivated almost all his activities for fifteen years, until he sold it to the Regent of France for \$665,000. He had become to the world "Diamond Pitt," but doubtless stories of his great wealth were grotesquely exaggerated. He was the first Indian nabob to bring home for his own account vast wealth acquired in India and lay it out in the purchase of landed estates carrying with them the right to Parliamentary seats. Thus for \$7,500 he bought Old Sarum, the typical rotten borough. No one lived there, but it returned two members of the Commons, and these seats remained in the Pitt family for many years.

In India Governor Pitt married the niece of the company's Bengal agent. Her name was Jane Inness and she was a great-great-granddaughter of the Earl of Moray, Regent of Scotland, who was assassinated in 1571. He was a natural son of James V of Scotland. William Pitt therefore had one one-hundred-and-twenty-eighth part of Royal blood in his veins and was a fifth cousin once removed of King George II.

The governor's wealth, particularly the tales of the fabulous value of

the Pitt diamond, led to conspicuous marriages of his children. His heir married the daughter of the Viscountess Grandison; his second son, the heiress of the Earl of Londonderry (to which title he was afterwards raised); a third son married a daughter of Lord Fauconberg; one daughter married a Cholmondeley; and another the Earl of Stanhope, Premier of England.

Robert Pitt, the governor's heir and William's father, married Harriet Villiers, daughter of General Edward Villiers of the Duke of Buckingham's family. Little is remembered of the general except that he was a brave soldier but a man of wild and cruel humors. His widow, Katherine Fitzgerald, Lady of Decies, was a woman of hot rebellious Irish blood. She was created Viscountess of Grandison in her own right, and died one of the notable women of London. As a Villiers by marriage, she was buried in the great Duke of Buckingham's vault in Westminster Abbey. Four dukes assisted by eight earls acted as pall-bearers at her funeral and were accompanied by a troop of forty horsemen marshalled by the heralds. It must have been a sight sufficient to arouse the pride and yearning for theatrical display latent in her sixteen-year-old grandson, William Pitt.<sup>12</sup>

Robert was a handsome man, popular in the high social circles to which his wife's family belonged. They rather looked down on the Londonderrys, Cholmondeleys, and Stanhopes by reason of their Buckingham connections. But Robert's life was frustrated by his father's dictatorial character; he had no success in business or politics; he was always short of money, always looking forward to a great inheritance, and keenly disappointed when on the governor's death his estates were so burdened with legacies that comparatively little was left to the oldest son and heir. And of the half million dollars of money Thomas Pitt had, it was found that nearly all had been absorbed by his second son, the Earl of Londonderry, with or without the Governor's consent. Robert died in 1727, a year after his father's death, and left a very moderate estate, his son William being given an income of only \$1,000 a year.<sup>13</sup>

Robert and Harriet Pitt had six children, of whom William was the fourth child and the second son. All these children are said to have ex-

<sup>12</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 1:35.

<sup>13</sup> Basil Williams, *Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, 1:25ff. (New York, 1913).



hibited greater or less signs of mental instability. Indeed, his recent British biographer, Brian Tunstall,<sup>14</sup> insists that throughout his life William Pitt suffered at intervals from manic depressive insanity (such as George III was a victim of); that Pitt's spells of gout were in fact the phenomena indicative of the ending of such attacks. To the unlearned, who know that in some spheres action and reaction are equal, it may seem that this sonorous phrase, "manic depressive insanity," is merely a term of art; that it simply implies that after a period of exhausting oratorical or executive effort, a reaction sets in equating the previous exaltation. Many great men have suffered from some sort of mental depression or intellectual inertia at recurring intervals. Caesar and Napoleon are said to have been epileptics; Lincoln had fits of melancholia. However, this subject is more fit for discussion by a medical rather than an historical society, and to the disciples of Galen the topic is hereby committed.

Pitt went to Eton and Oxford but cherished the memory of neither in after life. In 1735 he obtained a cornetcy in a regiment known as "The Blues," and about the same time his older brother presented him with one of the family's rotten-borough seats in the House of Commons, that of the noted Old Sarum constituency. In 1736, by an ironical eulogium of the King on the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, he began his Parliamentary speaking career. The monarch was so much irritated by it that he had Pitt dismissed from the army. This created somewhat of a stir, and Pitt paraded his financial misfortune by driving through the country without a servant in a one-horse chaise. But the Prince of Wales, who was then the unofficial head of His Majesty's Opposition, soon gave Pitt a minor position in the Princely Establishment and encouraged him in his efforts to thwart the great peace minister, Walpole, the King's friend, the Prince's foe.

Agitation for war with Spain was the occasion of Pitt's rise to fame. The Asiento treaty had been made the excuse for a vast smuggling system. Sometimes the British sailors were roughly handled by the Guarda Costas. In 1731 Jenkins, master of the sloop "Rebecca" had his ear cut off by a Spanish official. His ear, or someone's ear, was carefully preserved in alcohol until 1739 when the English merchants stormed

<sup>14</sup> William Cuthbert Brian Tunstall, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (London, 1938).

Parliament demanding war. Jenkins displayed the severed ear and called on his fellow countrymen in the House of Commons for revenge. Pitt championed his cause with telling oratory. Walpole succeeded in delaying action, but when the results of his negotiations were laid before the House, Pitt again turned loose his philippics; he then realized the power he had of giving voice to popular opinion. He made his first great speech on the war issue and so delighted his friends that the Prince of Wales kissed him before the assembled throng. Walpole, however, had summoned his henchmen for the fray and won the vote 260 to 232. Of the majority it was computed that 234 were place-men who drew yearly salaries of \$1,000,000 from the public treasury.<sup>15</sup> Very soon, however, the popular outcry forced the country into war. Admiral Vernon, with Lawrence Washington aboard, captured Porto Bello—and incidentally bestowed his name on one of America's shrines, Mount Vernon. Luck turned, and Vernon and an English army were beaten at Cartagena. The war then degenerated into a matter of privateering and greatly enriched Bristol and its sailor-folk, who fairly revelled in plunder.

The Parliamentary Opposition saw that the incompetency or lack of success of the Walpole administration gave them an opportunity to turn the "Old Master" out of office. Pitt led the attack, thundering against corruption and misgovernment. The election of 1741 greatly reduced Walpole's majority in the House and shortly after it he resigned, having been Premier for twenty years. He still was influential enough with the King to name his successors, Pulteney and then Carteret.

And now on the death of the Emperor Charles VI without male issue the question of who should succeed to the vast domains of the Hapsburgs and the Imperial Crown agitated Europe. Still preserving the bias of the Grand Alliance, England and Holland favored Francis of Lorraine, husband of the late monarch's daughter, Maria Theresa, as Emperor; while France and Prussia supported the Bavarian Charles in his claims. George II, as always, was devoted to his electoral domain of Hanover, the protection of which was his main concern. His chosen ministers could of course promise Parliamentary grants for that purpose, but they were not always able to secure a majority in the Commons on such matters. Walpole had taken the lead in subsidizing foreigners with

<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, 1:172-178.

British money when, in 1741, he secured \$1,500,000 for the Hapsburgs and promised to pay for 12,000 Danish and Hessian soldiers. Later when France menaced Austria he was able to make her sign a truce with Prussia, all with the object of saving the Electorate of Hanover from invasion. Carteret, continuing this policy, boasted: "It is my business to make kings and emperors, and to maintain the balance of Europe."<sup>16</sup> In London the propaganda for British participation in the continental war was in those days featured by innumerable pamphlets, the precursors of modern newspapers. Says Carlyle, quoting his "Constitutional Friend": "One other thing surprises us in those Old Pamphlets . . . How the phrase, 'Cause of Liberty' ever and anon turns up, with great though extinct emphasis, evidently sincere. After groping, one is astonished to find it means Support of the House of Austria; keeping of the Hapsburgs entire in their old Possessions among mankind! That, to our great-grandfathers, was the 'Cause of Liberty';—said 'Cause' being with us again [1860]. Electoral Suffrage and other things; a notably different definition, perhaps still wider of the mark."<sup>17</sup>

Carteret in this "Cause of Liberty" raised the Austrian subsidy to \$2,500,000, and hired 16,000 Hanoverians to join 16,000 British troops in the Netherlands. Parliamentary sanction sought for this effort produced violent opposition; it was the general belief in England that its interests were being subordinated to those of Hanover, and Pitt raised his voice in protest. Pitt was now the most distinguished of the opposition, "and by his pompous and sarcastical oratory . . . took the lead." "It is now too apparent," he exclaimed, "that this great, this powerful, this formidable kingdom is considered only as a province to a despicable electorate." The latter phrase George II never forgot nor forgave. It proved a stumblingblock many a time to Pitt's ambition for high office.

In 1743 George II commanded the Allied forces in the victory of Dettingen, the sort of victory where the victors leave their dead and wounded to the care of the vanquished. Carteret was able by this success, however, to arrange a pacification of Germany by promising a British subsidy to the Bavarian Elector. In the British Cabinet, Pelham

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, 1:98, 99.

<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, *Frederick the Great*, 4:9.

and his brother, the Duke of Newcastle, opposed this additional grant; and in the House, Pitt renewed his invectives against this continental policy, even sneering at King George's courage. Pitt's speeches had now become the notable events of the session, and even foreign newspapers quoted them.

The session of 1744 was Pitt's most active one; but it left him with a violent attack of gout, which incapacitated him for most of the autumn. In October, Carteret, hoping vainly to be able to retain his leadership, offered Pitt and his friends some places in the government. They contemptuously declined; and then the King on Walpole's advice dismissed Carteret and substituted Pelham and Newcastle. So for the second time within three years Pitt's oratory had been the decisive factor in overthrowing a great minister.<sup>18</sup>

Then died the old Duchess of Marlborough—and left Pitt \$50,000 for "his noble defense of the laws of England." Exactly what that phrase meant it would take another Carlyle to expound. The duchess had quarreled with Walpole on personal grounds, and perhaps she confused Pitt's opposition to Walpole with a defense of what she wanted and dubbed it the "laws of England."<sup>19</sup>

Carteret's successor, the Duke of Newcastle, was one of the most curious characters of that age. He was immensely wealthy and during his forty years of office-holding more than cut his income in two by his political expenditures. In those days that meant bribery, frequently not disguised at all. The game of politics absorbed him: patronage and the power it begets were his life's aim. He was ridiculously ignorant, believing that New England was an island because old England was. He looked for Jamaica in the Mediterranean, and inquired innocently where Annapolis was. Of fidelity to official associates he had no conception, and he constantly turned on those politicians with whom he had been previously leagued. During the following fifteen years he was to be the most important factor in Pitt's path of advancement.

In forming his administration in 1744 Newcastle actually submitted Pitt's name to the King for the position of secretary of war, only to have it promptly rejected by His Majesty, as Newcastle doubtless knew it

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, 1:101, 104, 106, 109, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 1:234.

would be. So Pitt was spared the unpopularity of being a member of the government during the following year. That twelvemonth witnessed the battle of Fontenoy, politely fought and politely lost, and the French victories at Tournai, Ghent, Oudenarde, and Ostend.

Then came the Young Pretender in 1745. He raised the Highland clans and beating the English at Prestonpans got as far south as Derby by December. The road to the capital was open and London in a panic. But Prince Charlie feared a trap: there was no popular rising in England and he turned north to be beaten disastrously by the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden on April 16, 1746.

With the enemy at the gate, Newcastle and Pelham in February laid before the King a list of new ministers, including Pitt again as secretary of war. In spite of the black prospect the spunky King refused their demands. They resigned, leaving the country leaderless with the Jacobites at its throat. Carteret and Pulteney failed to form a ministry, and back triumphantly came the Pelham brothers. On March 6 the King submitted and appointed Pitt receiver-general of Irish taxes, a sinecure worth \$13,000 a year. Thus far the political bosses could go. The King said obstinately of Pitt, "the fellow shall never enter my cabinet."

So for the first time the monarch was forced to admit to office a man he disliked. The Whig oligarchy took advantage of a grave military crisis to establish a new constitutional precedent; the party leaders might under propitious circumstances force a man of their own choice on the King's pay roll.

Of course the reason for the appointment was that the leaders wanted to stifle the oratory of their main critic. In accepting office Pitt was eminently practical; he realized that he could never secure a majority in the Commons, no matter how much his eloquence was feared. To advance he must hold a minor office before he could by any possibility achieve a leading position in the hierarchy. Now his assistance was appreciated in spite of the storm of lampoons and cartoons that were broadcast against him for accepting office. Newcastle soon advanced him to the office of Paymaster of the Forces, the most lucrative of the lesser jobs, with a salary of \$20,470 a year and perquisites galore. The Treasury always handed over \$500,000 to a new paymaster. In practice this sum was invested in government bonds, the interest on which until it was needed

belonged to the official who took the risk of the fall in the price of those bonds. The profit was usually \$20,000 a year. Then on foreign subsidies a commission of one-fourth of one per cent was customarily given to the paymaster through whose office payments were made; and these commissions then aggregated \$25,000 a year. These extra-legal benefits Pitt promptly declined to have anything to do with: the Treasury's advances were at once deposited in the Bank of England and even the King of Sardinia's "present," equal to the rejected commission, was returned.<sup>20</sup>

Pitt's actions made a great impression on the nation which had grown used to seeing the state regarded as a milch cow by its rulers. He rose in popular esteem, and even the King began to entertain a better opinion of him. He had set a new standard of official conduct which many years later was embodied in the statutes.

In his second year in office, the Duke of Bedford, encouraged by the New Englanders' capture of Louisburg, collected a fleet and army to capture Quebec. In this he had Pitt's support, the first evidence of Pitt's interest in America. The Cabinet, however, rejected the proposal.

Peace was made in 1748 on the basis of *status quo ante bellum*, Louisburg being exchanged for Madras. Pitt had no illusions as to the permanency of that peace with France, but he seems to have realized that the time-honored alliance with Austria had had its day and that to encircle the Bourbons a new ally in Germany was essential.<sup>21</sup>

And now the center of activity shifts to western Pennsylvania. The first organized effort to acquire title to lands west of the Allegheny Mountains was made by the Ohio Company, an association of Virginians and Londoners formed in 1748. That company's roster contains the great name of Washington, which obscures to our eyes all the other names on it. But the list included two names then well known in London: Arthur Dobbs and Thomas Hanbury. Dobbs had been Surveyor General of Ireland and had taken a great part in the northwest-passage voyages, the pamphlet war over which kept Dobbs in the public eye for a decade. Hanbury was a wealthy Quaker merchant of London, influential enough subsequently with Newcastle to deflect Braddock's route

<sup>20</sup> Tunstall, *William Pitt*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, 1:163, 167.

from Pennsylvania to Virginia. The Ohio Company petitioned for a grant from the Crown of 200,000 acres of land south of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers, in the vicinity of the Forks of the Ohio. Their petition was granted, provided they settled one hundred families and built a fort on the land within seven years.

Almost at the same time the governor of Canada sent Céloron de Blainville down the Allegheny and Ohio to bury at the mouth of each stream emptying into those rivers leaden plates proclaiming that Louis XV had resumed possession of the lands watered thereby, to which he had a right under the treaties from Ryswick to Aix-la-Chapelle. And then the enterprising governor next began to build a chain of forts extending from Presque Isle down La Belle Riviere to connect with the French fort, Chartres, in Illinois.

In 1753 Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia dispatched George Washington to inquire officially of the French commandant what he meant by this invasion of British territory. Says Carlyle: "Mr. George got to Ohio Head . . . and thought to himself, 'What an admirable three-legged place: might be Chief Post of those regions,—nest-egg of a diligent Ohio Company.' Mr. George found . . . [the] French Commandant . . . [who said]: 'My orders are, to keep this Fort and Territory against all comers'. . . And the steadfast Washington had to return; without result." Then the Ohio Company sent out men to build a stockade at the Forks of the Ohio, and these were followed by 150 soldiers under Washington. He soon learned that the Virginians had been driven off by the French, who themselves then built Fort Duquesne. Washington entrenched at Fort Necessity and was attacked by a superior French force; when his ammunition was expended, he capitulated, and marched home with the honors of war. This was the spark that ignited the Seven Years' War.

Then the Royal Duke of Cumberland picked General Braddock and two regiments to conquer Fort Duquesne. Carlyle says: "Royal Highness consults, concocts, industriously prepares, completes; modestly certain that here now is effectual remedy." Braddock arrived at Hampden, Virginia, in February, 1755, and "found . . . that this was not the place to arrive at; that he would lose six weeks of marching by not having landed in Pennsylvania instead. Found that his Stores had been mis-

packed at Cork . . . and, in short, that Chaos had been very considerably prevalent. . . . Poor man: very brave, they say; but . . . brain mostly of pipe-clay quality. . . . He was like to be starved outright, at one time; had not a certain Mr. Franklin come to him, with charitable oxen, with £500-worth provisions. . . . Franklin . . . did not much admire this iron-tempered general with the pipe-clay brain." Braddock topped the Allegheny Mountains by June 15, 1755, "and forward down upon *Fort Duquesne*, 'roads nearly perpendicular in some places,' at the rate of 'four miles' and even of 'one mile per day.' Much wood all about,—and the 400 Indians to rear, in a despised and disgusted condition, instead of being vanward keeping their brightest outlook." And so, crossing the Monongahela River on July 9, Braddock's army of 4,000 men was ambushed by the French and Indians, cut to pieces, and the general mortally wounded.

Then the Indians broke over the mountains, burning and scalping, and the back settlers fled eastward with horror and despair. "But," says the Sage of Chelsea, "there happens to be in England a Mr. Pitt, with royal eyes more and more indignantly set on this Business; and in the womb of Time there lie combinations and conjunctures. If the Heavens have so decreed!"<sup>22</sup>

Newcastle had reshuffled the cards when his brother Pelham died and made Fox secretary of war, passing over Mr. Pitt. Then the volcano, quiescent for the past few years, burst into flame. He orated against any and all subsidies to Hanover or other continental states. In so doing he virtually proclaimed that he had given up hope of the King's favor. He was at once dismissed from the paymastership. And now his brother-in-law, Lord Temple, came to his relief, promising him \$5,000 a year "until better times."

Since the last war a new combination of powers had been forming on the continent. The age-long strife of Bourbons and Hapsburgs had come to an end; France and Austria joined with Russia and Saxony to obliterate Prussia, England's only possible ally against France. The Convention of Westminster in January, 1756, united those two nations in a defensive alliance.

<sup>22</sup> Carlyle, *Frederick the Great*, 5:257, 259, 262.



The year was a miserable one for Newcastle and his lieutenants: Pitt browbeat and cowed them all in the House except the imperturbable Fox. Admiral Byng was beaten and Minorca lost to the French in the spring. Then in the summer Fort Oswego was captured. Fox resigned rather than incur further tirades of popular wrath at governmental failures. The political wiseacres proclaimed that Pitt had become inevitable. For the first time he now waited on the King's mistress, Lady Yarmouth, and explained to her that while he would not serve with Newcastle, he would not oppose subsidies to Hanover. A few weeks later Newcastle resigned and the King, courteously enough, delivered the seals of office to Pitt on December 4, 1756.<sup>23</sup> Then Pitt remarked to the figurehead Premier, the Duke of Devonshire: "I can save England and no one else can." Curiously enough this modest statement was absolutely correct. Newcastle lacked mental capacity, Fox honesty; the Duke of Cumberland had the pipe-clay quality of military brains; Carteret had degenerated into a mere gourmand; and the other politicians lacked either capacity or popularity or both.

Pitt was a demon for work and for compelling others to work. He energized the whole government. But this his first administration was not a success; he was in office long enough to order the sending of 8,000 troops to America and the raising of two new regiments among the Highland clansmen who had been rebels ten years earlier. The speech from the throne, which he prepared, contained this statement: "The succour and preservation of America cannot but constitute a main object of my attention." "Stuff and nonsense," said the old King when this was read to him. But he let the utterance stand.

The gout seized Pitt in January, 1757, and his life was despaired of; but he rallied to plead for Admiral Byng's life after a court-martial had condemned him. This injured Pitt's popularity with the masses who were still clamoring for blood. It irritated the King who had promised to let the law take its course and did not like to have clemency urged on him. So Byng was shot, "to encourage the others," Voltaire said. The climax, however, came when the Duke of Cumberland refused to take command of an army in Hanover if Pitt remained in office. The King's son really feared that Pitt would fail to send him needed supplies and

<sup>23</sup>Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, 1:274.

thus ruin the expedition and undermine the Duke's reputation. So Pitt was dismissed in April, 1757.<sup>24</sup>

Then a revulsion of popular feeling in favor of Pitt took place; London voted him the freedom of the city and other communities followed suit.

The King found it impossible to form a new ministry without Pitt; and after the ship of state had drifted aimlessly for three months a coalition ministry of Pitt and Newcastle was formed on June 29, Pitt saying, "I have borrowed the Duke's majority in the House for the service of the country."

The fruits of headless government soon appeared; Cumberland was badly beaten at Hastenbeck on July 26, and Hanover was overrun by the French; Mordaunt returned from an invasion of France without accomplishing anything; and Loudoun in America failed to capture Louisburg. Only Britain's ally, Frederick the Great, lightened the gloom by his thumping victory over the French at Rossbach.

In the meantime Pitt was infusing his spirit in the government—a herculean task in those days of sinecures and noble incompetents. Carlyle says he threatened to impeach sundry lords whose procrastination delayed preparations.

He replaced Loudoun with Abercrombie, then Abercrombie with Amherst in America; and he first showed the world that England through her enormous economic prosperity could sustain a duel with France. It was England's allies, maintained by English money, who checked the French in Germany and diverted French support from their American forces.<sup>25</sup> "America was won in Germany," said Pitt, defending the policy of pouring British subsidies into that country. And it was the "boast of London merchants," said Mahan, "that under Pitt commerce was united with and made to flourish by war." The money which the war carried out was returned by the produce of her industry.<sup>26</sup>

In 1758 Amherst captured Louisburg, but Abercrombie was beaten at Ticonderoga.

The important event of that year, indeed of the whole Seven Years'

<sup>24</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 2:100-110.

<sup>25</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 2:169.

<sup>26</sup> Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, 297.

War, was General Forbes's capture of Fort Duquesne, the connecting link between Canada and the Mississippi Valley.

Here I depart from the strict chronological order of events to sketch the career of that great man.

The Forbes clan is one of the best known in Scotland. For centuries it has produced notable men, whose names stud the pages of the *British Dictionary of National Biography*. There were at least six "John Forbes's" in the eighteenth century prominent enough to be mentioned in that compendium. One John Forbes resigned from the Admiralty rather than sign Byng's death warrant. Another rose to a high command in the Portuguese service and accompanied the Braganzas in their flight to Brazil. Duncan Forbes, Lord President of the court of session, beggared himself by the financial help he gave the local government in suppressing the Highland Rebellion of 1745, and a statue of him by Roubillac was erected in memory of his services. This Duncan was a brother of Colonel John Forbes of the Marlborough period, who died in 1707 leaving three sons of whom "our" general was the youngest. In 1735 this particular John Forbes purchased a cornetcy in the Royal Scots Greys Regiment, otherwise at times known as the North British Dragoons, a regiment organized in 1678 and still in existence. Indeed, it was in its regimental headquarters at Aldershot that I located a portrait of General Forbes in 1937—a picture that has been photoengraved and copies of it placed in this society and many other depositories of portraits of famous persons, here and abroad, as the only authentic likeness of "our" general.

By purchase and promotion, Forbes advanced in the same regiment for the ensuing fifteen years or more. During the War of the Austrian Succession he saw active service with it in the Netherlands; participated in the battles of Fontenoy, Lauffeld, and probably Culloden; and rose to the position of deputy quartermaster-general under the Duke of Cumberland, Lord Stair, and the Earl of Loudoun.<sup>27</sup> In 1750 he was commissioned lieutenant colonel of his regiment, and it was as such that he was portrayed. His great-great-grandnephew, Colonel T. Robertson Aikman, C. B., of The Ross, Lanarkshire, Scotland, has the original of

<sup>27</sup> James, ed., *Writings of General John Forbes*, x; *Dictionary of American Biography*, 6:504.

this picture among the hundreds of family portraits that cover the walls of his home. It is a colored crayon without any artist's name on it; but as Forbes's brother Hugh had married a daughter of William Aikman, the first of Scotland's great historical painters, it is a fair assumption that the artist faithfully depicted his subject. It exhibits a pleasant-faced, rather florid man of middle age, substantial weight, and good health, as he apparently was in 1751. His correspondence, beginning five years later, contains frequent allusions to his lameness, his troubles with his feet and legs, and the "cursed flux" that plagued him during the last two years of his life.

In March, 1757, the colonel of the 17th Foot died and the King gave Forbes his regiment, then destined for America. On his arrival here, Loudoun, the commander in chief, made Forbes, his old companion in arms, adjutant general of all the British forces in this country.

During the winter Forbes prepared elaborate plans for military operations on all fronts. He stressed the importance of taking Fort Duquesne because it controlled the French line of communications between Canada and Louisiana and its capture would gain for the English the support of the Seneca Indians who held the balance of power in western New York and Pennsylvania.

On March 4, 1758, came word from England that Pitt had made Forbes a brigadier general and put him in charge of all operations south of New York. He was given entire discretion about attacking Fort Duquesne, or remaining on the defensive, as Governor Dinwiddie urged. Naturally Forbes decided to attack. That, too, was Washington's view. His first step was the organization of the forces of the several Colonies, which were to be supported by a contingent of Regulars.<sup>28</sup>

Pitt at last had selected the right man for the job in hand. His choices of Mordaunt, Marlborough, Sackville, and Blythe, for campaigns in Europe, had been, as it were, trials of a prentice hand. The inefficiency of those generals had taught Pitt the need of a sound quality of mind to lead an expedition, rather than high birth or Court connections. Now he had picked the proper sort of a soldier to perform a difficult task in a distant and dangerous country, one experienced in the organization of an army, its equipment and supply, and, moreover, a man of diplomatic

<sup>28</sup> James, ed., *Writings of General John Forbes*, 54.

capacity, competent to deal with the jarring influences active in our Colonial governments. Now there would be no chaos, no starvation, no pipe-clay brain in control.

Pitt at the same time initiated a new era in Anglo-American relations. Heretofore a colonel in a Colonial regiment was outranked by a cornet holding a Royal commission. Henceforward Royal and Colonial commissions were to stand on a footing of equality, thereby removing a great source of irritation.

Pitt also requested the Colonial governors to secure the early assent of their legislatures for calling out their militias, and announced that the Crown would be responsible for their commissariat, munitions, artillery, and transport. Also it was specifically promised that Parliament would indemnify the Colonies for the pay of their troops.<sup>29</sup>

When we consider the great dearth of ready money in the Colonies at that time, and the consequent hesitancy of the popular assemblies to lay unusually heavy burdens on their constituents, it is remarkable how successful Forbes was in the prompt organization of his army. His first letter on this subject to Governor Denny of Pennsylvania is dated March 20, 1758. Yet by April 22, "the money bill was crammed down the governor's throat by the Assembly." Pennsylvania raised 2,700 men for the expedition against Fort Duquesne, Virginia 1,900, and Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina a few more. There were allotted to Forbes 1,300 Highlanders, 400 Royal Americans, and some artillery, as well as an irregular force of Cherokees who came and went at will.<sup>30</sup> By June 16 his store ships from England arrived; a week later Montgomery's Highlanders came up from Charleston; and by July 10 the whole army had reached Carlisle on the frontier. And there the real difficulty of the expedition began.

As we motor today over the Pennsylvania Turnpike at sixty or more miles an hour, we are apt to forget that when Forbes's army came over the mountains there were no roads of any description there. An Indian on foot might follow the course of the sun and plod along over the "endless mountains," as the old maps designated them, and cross the state in a fortnight or so. But for an army, for cannon, munitions, wagons, and

<sup>29</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt*, 2:174ff.

<sup>30</sup> Gertrude S. Kimball, ed., *Correspondence of William Pitt*, 1:111 (New York, 1906).

supplies a real road was needed. The making of it was the work of a strategist, if strategy is "getting there first with the most men"; and Forbes was a builder. His "Great Road" for a century remained a landmark and boundary in conveyances of farms in the western counties. Forbes wisely refused to follow Braddock's route because it was at least thirty miles longer and the French were expecting his army to come that way and had prepared innumerable ambuscades to thwart him. He set his men to the slow job of felling trees, removing hummocks, and bridging gullies. So the summer wore on while Forbes's negotiations with the Indians progressed to the point of withdrawing many of them from the French alliance; the trees became bare of leaves and offered fewer chances for hidden foes to attack; the French supplies diminished daily; and the Illinois Militia and many Indians departed from Fort Duquesne in quest of provender.

All this time Forbes was suffering agonies from the "cursed flux." He had to be carried on a litter but he "breasted every discomfort and harassing complexity of the details, which he had to manage almost in every particular, with a courage that might have done credit to a man in vigor." "It was a story of stubborn Scotch purpose," says the historian Winsor.<sup>31</sup>

I shall not attempt to recount the events of the expedition, which must have been fully related to this society in the past. But I cannot refrain from telling one story that illustrates Forbes's tenacity of purpose. When the army approached Turtle Creek his commissary urged him to turn back because provisions were running low. Forbes, whom the Indians had named "The Head of Iron," replied: "Young man, tomorrow night I will sleep in Fort Duquesne or in hell."

But the French, like Davy Crockett's coon, didn't wait to be shot; they blew up their magazines and departed down the Ohio River.

Forbes, after christening the place "Pittsburgh," returned to Philadelphia where his illness overcame him and he died on March 11, 1759, less than four months after attaining his object. He was buried there in Christ Church, and the Society of Colonial Wars has put up a tablet there commemorative of his achievements.

<sup>31</sup> Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History*, 5:528.

The next year Quebec fell, and loud was the roar of triumph over that victory; a monument was speedily erected in Westminster Abbey to the memory of the victor, Wolfe. In the year following George III acceded to the throne and within a twelvemonth he had Pitt out of office and peace negotiations begun. The result we all know: France surrendered all her possessions east of the Mississippi River. The treaty was made on the familiar principle of *uti possidetis*, or "you hold what your armies have occupied."

I cannot follow the later and glorious career of William Pitt, created Earl of Chatham, but shall conclude with a brief comparison of the respective achievements of Wolfe and of Forbes.

Wolfe had no difficulty in reaching the vicinity of Quebec; his transports landed his whole army at the front door of that town. It was then a small settlement whose enceinte could not have exceeded a score of miles, which anyone could have perambulated in a day, and in so doing could not have failed to observe "Wolfe's Cove" and the path leading from it to the Heights of Abraham. Half a dozen kegs of powder would have obliterated that approach. Why Montcalm did not take such ordinary precautions has never been explained. It was crass negligence on the part of the French commandant to leave such an easy means of access to a commanding position available to the invader. Pipe-clay brains, it seems, were not then a monopoly of the English military.

The romantic deaths of both Wolfe and Montcalm, the slaughter of more than a thousand men, the fact that Quebec, small as it then was, was the capital of French Canada, and especially the fact that Wolfe recited *Gray's Elegy* as he was being rowed into the cove have conspired to give his victory a special schoolbook appeal which Forbes's did not have.

And finally what was the result of the respective victories on the *uti possidetis* basis?

By Wolfe's victory, Quebec and Ontario provinces were divested of French ownership. This territory comprised a little over a million square miles (1,114,096) mainly in the frozen north, and in 1931 it had a population of 6,305,938, mostly huddled together in the livable southern quarter of that bleak region.

By Forbes's victory, western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and half of Alabama were relinquished by the French—an area approximating 419,000 square miles in the temperate zone, with a present population of 37,200,000.

Which was the greater victory?