WILLIAM PITT AND CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

By

Sister M. Martine Hundelt, O.S.F.

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PREFACE

William Pitt's Prime Ministership of England covered a substantial portion of the period during which the English and Irish Catholics endeavored to obtain the removal of the restrictions laid upon them by the penal laws of the preceding centuries. No one can read the literature on this struggle for emancipation without being aware of a disagreement among historians in regard to the effectiveness of Pitt's participation. The gauntlet of opinion extends from the consideration of the Prime Minister as one of the chief factors in the procuration of Catholic Emancipation to the labeling of him as the betrayer of the cause. It is the purpose of this thesis to study the relations between Pitt and the Catholics of both countries and to determine a possible conclusion to the efficacy of the role played by Pitt.

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CHAPTER I

The Status Of Catholics In England From The Reformation To William Pitt's Administration

The general English tradition was integrally Catholic at the time of Henry VIII's breach with the Papacy. It was inevitable that the following half century should have been a period of flux as the subsequent Tudor monarchs endeavored to retain the "old" religion or secure the new. With Elizabeth's reign commenced a long series of enactments directed against Catholics, both priest and laity. This code of laws, even when its more brutal decrees were inoperative, was an amazing system displaying a perverted ingenuity to procure the suppression of the Catholic religion. The proscriptions of this legislation made the Catholic politically an outlaw, cut off entirely from civic life by being deprived of franchise and debarred from sitting in either house of Parliament. Socially it hopelessly hampered him. A Catholic was ineligible for office in the army or navy; he was excluded from the professions of teacher, barrister, or doctor. He had to make his marriage legal by having it performed in the presence of an Anglican minister. When he died the Anglican death service was read at his grave. His right to property was seriously threatened and he labored under heavy financial burdens. The Catholic was also religiously reprobate.

Priests were liable to the grim penalties of high treason for saying Mass. It has been estimated that one hundred thirty priests and sixty lay persons suffered death in the reign of Elizabeth under these laws. Executions continued under the Stuarts, the last martyrdom occurring at the Titus Oates Plot under Charles II.

As the fierceness of religious controversy died away, as Catholics numerically declined, as fear of a Stuart restoration diminished, a considerable section of public opinion became opposed to the enactment of additional laws and to relentless enforcement of existing penal legislation. By the time the Hanovers had firmly established their dynasty the more sanguinary penal provisions had lapsed and other stipulations were falling into abeyance. Furthermore, the Voltarian atmosphere among the governing classes, the stereotyped but universal travel of the upper strata, the traditional popularity of Paris and the prestige of the French Court at Versailles all tended to dispel any narrowly Protestant outlook. This materialistic, secularist attitude rendered religious toleration inevitable provided the toleration did not interfere with the peace of the country.

Gradually Catholics became more active. Schools were surreptiously opened; the Catholic religion was discreetly practiced; Catholic publications circulated without too much interference.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the knife and the

rope were no longer imminent dangers, Catholics still had to exercise caution, for it was just the intermittent application of the penal code that made constant dread of its enforcement an ever present terror. Even as late as the reign of George III the Catholics suffered prosecution. To cite one example from many, in his famous Bristol speech of 1780 Edmund Burke refers to the recent attempt of a Protestant gentleman to claim the inheritance of a Catholic female relative who had been his benefactress. This woman would have been stripped of her entire fortune had not Parliament by a special act prevented it.[1]

1. Edmund Burke, Works, II, 394.

The clergy were in an even more precarious condition. Their very presence in the country was illegal. Hence, it was in the poorest surroundings and under the necessity of deliberate secrecy that a great deal of their ministrations had to be conducted. One would, for example, find Bishop Challoner preaching to his flock in an inn or public house. Each member of the congregation would have his pipe and sit with a pot of beer before him to obviate all suspicion of the real character of the guest and the purpose of the assembly.[2] These precautions were necessary as there was always

2. Michael Trappes-Lomax, Bishop Challoner, 40. Bishop Richard Challoner was the esteemed vicar apostolic of the London District from 1741-1781.

danger from the spying of common informers--those despicable characters who were lured on by the prospect of receiving the lucrative reward of one hundred pounds granted to anyone who could obtain the conviction of a priest exercising his sacerdotal functions.

In 1765 in southern England a group of these informers did succeed in initiating a series of prosecutions that resulted in the suppression of various Mass centers. Official records show that the peak of these vexations was reached in 1767 when the most notorious of the informers, a certain William Payne, managed to obtain the conviction of an Irish priest, John Baptiste Maloney, to perpetual imprisonment "for exercising the functions of a popish priest." After four years this sentence was commuted to perpetual banishment.[3]

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3. Based on extracts from the Universal Museum quoted in Michael Trappes-Lomax, ibid., 196-197.

Just how many of the clergy were arraigned at this time it is not possible to estimate exactly. The cases must have been considerable for when Charles Butler made inquiries in 1780 respecting the execution of the penal laws against the Catholics, he found that the single office of Dynely and Ashmall, Attorneys-at-law in Gray's Inn, had defended more than twenty priests under such persecution. To their honor the lawyers had defended them gratuitously.[4]

4. Historical Memoirs of English, Scottish, and Irish Catholics, III, 83. Subsequently referred to as Hist. Mem.

Although to some degree a manifestation of popular anti-Catholic feeling, these prosecutions were undertaken without the approval of the government. Subsequent acquittals of indicted priests were due to the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, who held that it was necessary to prove the fact of ordination before such a prosecution could succeed. Because of his benevolent efforts Mansfield's house was pillaged and his own life endangered two years later during the Gordon Riots.

In addition to being subjected to a "war of nerves" due to the sporadic enforcement of the harsh penal laws, Catholics sufferend from social ostracism which tended to diminish their numbers as much as any active persecution had ever done. Joseph Berington's description of the state of Catholics in England in 1780 is generally accepted as an accurate account of their numbers and distribution. He reported the number of priests as three hundred sixty and estimated the total Catholic strength at sixty thousand.[5] Next to Lon-

5. The State and Behaviour of English Catholics From the Reformation to the Year 1780, passim.

don, where the ambassadors' chapels provided centers of worship for a very miscellaneous and scattered Catholic population, the greatest concentration of Catholics was in Lanca-

shire. Several of the other northern counties had a good percentage. A few chapels in various manufacturing and trading towns, particularly in the north where the Irish immigrants had come in, were exceptionally crowded. Generally speaking these urban Catholics took little part in the life of the nation. They were, as Newman called all the Catholics of England,

> "a gens lucifuga, a people who shunned the light of day, found in corners, in alleys, in cellars, on the housetops or in the recesses of the country; cut off from the populous world around them and dimly seen, as if through a mist or in the twilight, as ghosts flitting to and fro, by the high Protestants, the lords of the earth."[6]

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6. J. H. Newman, The Second Spring, 30-31.

Nearly everywhere outside the centers mentioned the Catholics were little more than groups of dependents gathered around the aristocratic families who lived on the remnants of their ancestral estates that had been left after two centuries of enormous fines. It was mainly owing to their influence and wealth that the Catholics had been able to preserve the practice of their religion, for the aristocracy not only succeeded in keeping chapels in their own great houses which became the centers of each local congregation, but also provided the clergy whom they maintained as their private chaplains. In Essex Lord Petre alone supported five missions, and Lord Teynham was described by Bishop Challoner as "the chief support of religion in Kent."

This Catholic aristocracy in 1780 was enumerated as including only eight peers, nineteen baronets, and about a hundred fifty gentlemen of landed property. Among the peers the Duke of Norfolk, Lords Shrewsbury, Arundel, and Petre each possessed considerable estates. The rest with few exceptions had less than one thousand pounds a year income from their landed property.

It was this group in particular that had the most to gain by conforming. In consequence every few years added one more to the list of famous titles that passed out of Catholic hands as some head of the family left the ranks such as Chister of Arlington, Clifton of Lythom, Heneage of Hainton, Sir Edward Swinburne, and Sir Thomas Gascoigne. When a Catholic family of such distinction conformed, the private chaplain was usually discharged, and the Catholics in the immediate neighborhood of the manor soon fell away in consequence of being deprived of a place of worship. Berington stated that within the past fifty years he could recall at least ten noble families that conformed or became extinct, as well as many Commoners of distinction and fortune. The defection of the heirs of the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Teynham in 1780 caused a loss of Catholics greater than the total number gained by proselytes since the Revolution.[7]

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7. The description of the status of the Catholic gentry is summarized mainly from Joseph Berington, op. cit., 115, et seq.

However, the remembrance of all employments from which they were excluded has tended to encourage an exaggeration of the degree to which the wealthier families faithful to the old religion suffered isolation in the Hanoverian regime. By the middle of the eighteenth century their social influence and their great estates enabled them gradually to break down some of the rigid barriers erected against them. Debarred from active politics and the army, the squires became in some cases well-traveled cosmopolitans and connoisseurs and patrons of art, accomplishments that were respected and appreciated by polite Georgian society.

Some of the Catholics were even admitted to the intimate friendship of the royal family. Thus, Lord Petre entertained King George III at his home in 1781. And Thomas Weld, who was considered the second largest landowner in England, not only had the King as guest at his Lulworth estate, but was advised by the King himself as to the best way of building a private chapel which would not incur interference. George III actually suggested that Weld should build a family mausoleum to divert attention from its real use and fit it up inside as a Catholic Chapel. This layman had also been publicly to Court in London.

This state of affairs in which their social prestige was unbalanced by political freedom brought some of the Catholic peers and gentry to a condition of unfruitful dissatisfaction. It undoubtedly played its part in convincing a

section of the principal laity that they could best hope for the alleviation of their lot by negotiating directly with their Protestant fellow-countrymen who knew their personal worth, instead of permitting the intervention of the Catholic episcopate.

It was not until 1778, when the Government was in the midst of the American war and was threatened with a conflict on the Continent as well, that the urgent need for soldiers brought the first amelioration of the English penal laws. Lord North's Ministry, anxious to secure the enlistment of the Scottish Catholics of the Highlands, sent a recruiting agent, Sir John Dalrymple, to investigate the possibilities. Dalrymple obtained an interview with Bishop Hay of Scotland, who gave him a digest of minimum Catholic terms. The prelate realized that the request of a total repeal of the penal laws would be premature. He therefore suggested that three impediments in particular should be removed; viz., the laws against those who said and heard Mass; the statutes that allowed a Protestant heir to take the estate from the Catholic proprietor; and religious references in the attestation oath, so that the recruits should be required only to swear fidelity to the king and obedience to the laws of war. These terms were significant as they became the basis of subsequent negotiations.

The bishop further advised Sir John to secure the cooperation of the English Catholics before going ahead with the

plans and gave him letters of introduction to Bishop Challoner. The interview with Challoner was not very successful. Dalrymple found the prelate "old and timid and using twenty difficulties." Doubtless it seemed to the frail, aged man of eighty-seven a strange and bold step for Catholics to take any sort of public action. The terrible scenes that took place two years later during the Gordon Riots proved in the event that his timidity (or prudence?) was justified. Having been all his long life accustomed to the usual Catholic attitude of thankfulness for not being molested, it was not easy to realize that in some sudden and unforeseen manner relief was to be expected. Others shared this view. Matthew Duane, a Catholic conveyancer, whose authority on legal matters was weighty, thought the measure was "imprudent if not dangerous." And Bishop Walmesley of the Western District bluntly asserted that, if some small measure of relief was granted, substitute repressive legislation would undoubtedly make the lot of the outlawed Catholic minority even more intolerable.[8]

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8. The negotiations between the bishops and Dalrymple are discussed at length by Michael Trappes-Lomax, Bishop Challoner, 238-242.

Dalrymple was about to report the failure of his mission when he fortuitously met William Sheldon, a Catholic barrister, who immediately sponsored the project. This young lawyer

had the enthusiastic vigor and initiative required to undertake so unprecedented an action as a movement among Catholics for their relief. Moreover, Sheldon was convinced that this was a matter for the laity to handle and not the bishops and clergy, as he later expressed himself: "I strongly opposed any application to our clergy in temporal matters, the English Catholic gentlemen being quite able to judge and act for themselves in these Affairs."[9] Conse-

9. Cited in Michael Trappes-Lomax, ibid., 243.

quently, the optimistic Sheldon contacted the leading Catholics of London and arranged a conference at the Thatched House Tavern. None of the clergy was invited. On the day appointed Bishop Hay accompanied the Scottish delegate, Lord Linton, to the meeting place but was refused admittance. Sir Robert Throckmorton bluntly remarked, "We don't want bishops." The attitude evidence in this discourtesy, as well as in Sheldon's statement, presaged a dissension that later was to become more serious. After advising the group to request the repeal of no specific legislation but simply to ask for free toleration, Bishop Challoner did not intervene until the committee solicited his sanction for the oath of allegiance which they had drafted into the bill.

The negotiations with the Government were transacted under the chairmanship of Lord Petre. Edmund Burke wrote the text of a petition to the King which was signed by the

Duke of Norfolk, the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury, by Lords Linton, Stourton, Petre, Arundell, Dormer, Teynham, and Clifford, and by one hundred sixty-three commoners. On May 1, 1778, the request was presented to the throne by the earl of Surrey, Lord Petre, and Lord Linton; it was favorably received. This was the first collective address that the English Catholics had dared to present, and the obsequiousness with which men of such prestige found it necessary to make the petition indicates the state of abjection in which they had been living for generations.

A fortnight later Sir George Savile introduced the bill into the House of Commons. It passed both Houses without a single negative vote and on June 3 received the royal assent.[10]

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10. Annual Register, XXI, 191. A copy of the Act, 18 Geo. III c. 60, is found in the Annual Register, XXIII, 254-256.

This fairly enlightened Act was the first breach in the penal code. It not only abolished the prosecution of bishops, priests, and Jesuits, but removed from the legal market the viciously tempting bait formerly offered to informers. In addition Catholics could again legally inherit and purchase land. It can be seen that this Relief Bill of 1778, while redressing some of the most glaring items of legal injustice, did not effect much in the way of actual freedom. It did, however, restore to Catholics "a thousand indescribable

charities in the ordinary intercourse of social life which they had seldom experienced."[11]

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11. Chas. Butler, His. Mem., III, 294. Butler was twenty-seven at the time the Act was passed.

However, as Challoner had foreseen, the passing of the Act immediately caused a recrudescence of anti-Catholic feeling that was assiduously fostered and systematically organized throughout England and Scotland. In 1779 there were riots in Edinburgh and in the following year the trouble spread to London, where a Protestant Association pledged to obtain the repeal of the Relief Act had been organized under the bizarre leadership of Lord George Gordon, a Member of Parliament. For a time Gordon had spectacular success. Very earnest, with the courage of a partially unhinged mind, he harangued and incited the London mob.

The first reaction of the Government to this agitation seems to have been an irritated indifference at the tiresome result of an act towards which all parties had shown a desultory sympathy. Unimpeded, the movement gained momentum; a mass demonstration was held and a petition presented to Parliament. On the afternoon of June 2, 1780, the demonstration with its petition turned into a riot and the members of Parliament known to be friendly to the Catholics were attacked. Peers arrived in the House of Lords with their clothes in tatters and covered with filth.

For five days London was at the mercy of an infuriated

mob. The chapels of the Sardinian and Bavarian ambassadors were desecrated and razed to the ground. Other well-known chapels at Moorfields, Wapping, and East Smithfield were similarly wrecked. Attacks were made on Catholic homes and business establishments, and on the residences of those who favored the Relief Act. Edmund Burke's life was threatened and he had to take refuge with his friend, General Burgoyne. Lord Mansfield, who had saved the priests from the toils of the informer, was assaulted. His family barely escaped before the mob descended upon his house. Its contents of every kind were flung out of the windows and made a bonfire. Newgate prison, where some of the rioters had been imprisoned, was stormed and burned outright, while every prisoner was liberated. Such excesses continued until the King at last issued a proclamation authorizing the military forces to suppress the rioters.

In the provinces there was some repercussion of the disturbances, but both in town and country the Government's measures effectively prevented any renewal of the rioting. Many of the rioters were hanged. Lord George Gordon, whose inflammatory speeches had instigated the movement, was acquitted. He soon lost all public significance and eventually died in prison while undergoing a sentence for libel.

The victims of this No-Popery vandalism had remained amazingly quiet under great provocation. Compensation was made to them as well as to the Protestants whose property

had been destroyed. Bishop Challoner did not long survive the riots. With his death in 1781 there vanished the chief support for the oppressed Catholics during the eighteenth century.[12]

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12. A graphic account of the Gordon Riots is given in the Annual Register, XXIII, 190-192, 257, 251.

CHAPTER II

William Pitt

When tranquil days again returned to England, the Catholics asked no greater favor than to be left unmolested and undisturbed. It seemed that a dreary vista would always lay before them. Yet that very year a little borough was launching upon his parliamentary career a young man who for eighteen years would be intimately associated with movements for their relief. In 1780 Sir James Lowther settled an election in his closed borough, and Appleby returned William Pitt to Parliament.

William Pitt was the son of the famous statesman and orator, the Earl of Chatham. His mother, a sister of Lord Temple and the Prime Minister, George Grenville, was Countess Temple in her own right. By birth, then, Pitt belonged to the "set" of Whig families that monopolized the offices in the political, naval, military, and social affairs of England--a monopoly well illustrated in this very family. He himself, his father, his uncle, and his first cousin, Lord Grenville, all held the office of Prime Minister. Pitt's biographers claim that he inherited much of the personality and personal appearance of the Grenvilles. As one writes, "The starchy, half-sulky aloofness of his early Parliamentary conduct is certainly most typically Grenville."[1]

1. D.C. Barnes, George III and William Pitt, 41.

Since William was a younger son and would inherit little property, his father planned to have him take up law as a profession. But it was the son's ambition to speak in Parliament as his father did. Because Pitt's health was delicate from his earliest youth, his education was directed by a tutor, under whom he studied Greek, Latin, the English classics, and mathematics. In the evening Chatham took over. The boy would join his father and recite in English the passages read in Greek and Latin in the course of the day. To the Pitts literature was the raw material of rhetoric. What was important to them was style. The elder Pitt would make his son think a passage through and deliver it in his best style at the first reading. From paternal instruction of this nature Pitt emerged with a facility of words that was difficult to surpass. On any occasion and without hesitation he could utter sentences sonorous, dignified, and precise, which captured the ear.[2]

2. Details of Pitt's education summarized from P.H. Stanhope, Life of Wm. Pitt, I, 3-8.

At fourteen the future Prime Minister entered Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, where he resided three years as an undergraduate under the direction of George Pretyman, later Bishop Tomline. During this time his favorite relaxation was a trip

to London to hear his father speak. The first occasion at which he listened to the great orator was in January, 1755, when the subject was an appeal for conciliation with the American colonies. Henceforth Pitt would frequently be seen haunting the galleries in the House of Commons or squatting on the steps of the throne in the House of Lords. Fox tells us how he listened. Pitt would turn to him and remark, "But surely, Mr. Fox, that might be met thus," or "Yes, but he lays himself open to this retort." Already he was measuring his wits against the Parliamentarians of the time.[3]

3. Narrated by P.H. Stanhope, ibid., I, 27.

In his last years at Cambridge Pitt became friendly with a group of young men, some of whom would later be associated with him in government: Lord Westmorland, Lowther (Lord Lonsdale), Pratt (Lord Camden), Pepper Arden, Eliot, and St. John. He did not become acquainted with his closest friend, William Wilberforce, until he entered Parliament.

It has been suggested that Pitt's career at Cambridge would have been more fruitful had he mixed more with the undergraduates.[4] He knew not the competition of a classroom

4. J.H. Rose, Wm. Pitt and the National Revival, 58.

nor the dust and heat of sports. Not once was he rolled in the mud or bowled on the cricket field. Not once did he meet his superior. The fact, the only fact that impressed his

contemporaries, was that young Pitt excelled in the classics. That was the recognized standard of excellence.

Hence Pitt remained aloof and in the words he himself applied to the Marquis of Buckingham, his cousin, "condescending in his pride." He went forth into the life at Westminister with a serious defect for a politician--an incapacity for making a wide circle of friends. The mass of his supporters who admired and obeyed him were not drawn to him personally. Men of highest rank found him stiff and unbending. Yet in an intimate circle of acquaintances Pitt could shake off his stilted manner and was welcomed for his graciousness and wit. One of his friends notes that "He (Pitt) was the wittiest man I ever knew." And the same individual, describing a certain gathering of associates, declared that "many professed wits were present, but Pitt was the most amusing of the party."[5]

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5. Wm. Wilberforce, Life of Wilberforce, I, 18.

Pitt took his degree in 1776 without an examination--the privilege of the sons of peers. After his graduation he stayed on at Cambridge, studying mathematics and the classics, reading Locke and Adam Smith, practicing public speaking, and attending lectures on law. He was present at his father's last speech in the House of Lords on April 7, 1778, and helped carry him from the chamber.[6]

6. Information concerning Pitt's sojourn at Cambridge summarized from P.H. Stanhope, op. cit., I, 10, et seq.; and George Pretyman, Memoirs of the Life of the Rt. Hon. Wm. Pitt, passim.

The elder Pitt's death made it necessary for the son to seriously consider a means of livelihood. It was to no court of law that his eyes were directed. To enter the House of Commons was his absorbing ambition. His first attempt to enter the sacred citadel was made by way of an appeal for a constituency to Lord Rockingham, the leader of the Whig Opposition. This was the very statesman whose own administration had been chimerically destroyed by the former Earl of Chatham. Naturally, Rockingham refused, albeit very courteously.

Pitt then turned to his Alma Mater in a vain hope to secure one of its seats at the next election. He expressed the reason for his choice of Cambridge as follows:

> "It is the seat of all the others the most desirable, and being free from expense, perfectly independent, and I think in every respect extremely honorable."[7]

7. Cited by P.H. Stanhope, op. cit., I, 31.

When the results of the election of 1780 were published, the name of Pitt did not prevent its appearance at the bottom of the poll. Now a Cambridge friendship stood him in good stead. The Duke of Rutland mentioned the talents of his

friend to Sir James Lowther, the most notorious borough patron of the generation. Lowther welcomed the suggestion that Pitt should enter Parliament from one of his seats. He offered the parliamentary aspirant Appleby unconditionally, save that Pitt was to resign his seat if his political views should in future become opposed to those of his patron. Although the connection with a "pocket borough" could not have been too palatable, Pitt accepted it. Had not his illustrious father first entered Parliament as a member for Old Sarum, one of the most noisome of the "rotten borroughs."

Pitt took his seat in the new Parliament of 1781, the year that was to see Cornwallis surrendering at Yorktown. Lord North, the Prime Minister of the Revolution, was still head of affairs. Opposed to him were two factions of the powerful Whig party. The first of these, somewhat larger in number, was led by the Marquis of Rockingham. This group considered birth and rank as the principal qualities of leadership. Burke, with all his ability, was not considered worthy of sitting in council with a Wentworth or Cavendish. Charles James Fox then in his thirty-first year was the spark-plug of this wing. With him were allied Burke and Sheridan. The smaller Whig faction comprised the old adherents of Lord Chatham. Since the latter's death, Lord Shelburne was recognized as leader of the party.

Into this atmosphere of fierce acrimony the novice parliamentarian was plunged. A mere three years passed before

he became First Lord of the Treasury. During this short period he rose from the status of a private member to Chancellor of Exchequer under Lord Shelburne, to one of the recognized leaders of the Opposition to the Portland ministry. How can one account for such a remarkable advance?

For one thing, the amazing reputation of his father's oratory in both houses and his own reputation as an infant prodigy had paved the way for Pitt's cordial reception in the House of Commons. But neither would have insured him the permanent respect of the House had he failed in his first speech and continued to be unimpressive.

Not unnaturally the House was curious to know how Chatham's son would speak. The first opportunity came at the debate on Burke's bill for economical reform. Mr. Byng, member for Middlesex, urged the young member from Appleby to reply and appears to have understood that he was prepared to do so. Pitt, however, had decided not to take such a chance and did not realize that Byng had told friends around him to expect his intervention. When, therefore, the previous speaker, Lord Nugent, sat down, the member from Appleby to his surprise was assailed by cries of "Mr. Pitt." "Mr. Pitt." It followed as a matter of course that no member rose to continue the debate. Every eye was directed to Pitt alone. He had to accept the challenge.

A tall, slim man arose. Not by gesture or by hesitation did he betray what he must have felt. To his poise was added

a voice, clear and musical. Pitt did not disappoint his listeners. The speech aroused the deeper astonishment because it was delivered ex tempore. According to the editor of his speeches, in this first speech

> "he displayed great and astonishing powers of eloquence. With a voice rich and harmonious; an easy and elegant manner; and language beautiful and luxuriant, he exhibited in this first essay, a specimen of oratory worthy of the son of the immortal Chatham."[8]

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8. Speeches, I, 1.

Lord North said at once that Pitt had delivered the best first speech he had ever heard. Fox hurried from his seat and warmly congratulated Pitt. Someone remarked to Burke that here was "a chip of the old block." Burke rejoined, "He is not a chip of the old block; he is the old block itself."

This first speech, together with his subsequent speeches on the nature of the English Constitution and against the American Revolution, caused Pitt to be acknowledged as one of the outstanding men in the House of Commons.

The defeat of Cornwallis disrupted Lord North's government. George III had to accept a ministry in which Whigs and Chathamites were combined under the leadership of Lord Rockingham, with Fox and Shelburne as Secretaries of State. "The boy" was offered the vice treasureship of Ireland with a salary of five thousand pounds. To the astonishment of all Pitt refused the office. The refusal was shrewd for it

emphasized his independence of action.

When Rockingham died after less than four months in office, the King asked Shelburne to form a ministry. Fox immediately resigned as Shelburne seemed to him to be the embodiment of royal encroachment. Even under Rockingham the relations between the two men had been strained. But neither Shelburne, Fox, nor North alone could command a majority.

Pitt received the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, a position that made him the leader of the Government in the House of Commons and that only eighteen months after his entrance into Parliament. To make their ministry stronger Pitt urged a reconciliation with Fox. After gaining Shelburne's reluctant consent he called on Fox at his house. When Fox heard the reason for the visit he asked one question--was Lord Shelburne still to be Prime Minister? On Pitt's answering in the affirmative Fox declined to rejoin the ministry. Pitt concluded the interview with the words, "Then we need discuss the matter no further. I did not come here to betray Lord Shelburne." From that time, it is said, Pitt and Fox were political enemies.[9]

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9. George Pretyman, op. cit., I, 89.

Since Shelburne had been unable to come to terms with Fox, his government had difficulty maintaining its position. Then the unforeseen, the incredible happened. Fox outraged

the nation by entering into a partnership with North against whom he had for so many years been addressing his heated Philippics. Shelburne had to resign and the coalition was forced upon the irate King. George III was infuriated at North for his desertion of the King's cause. His hostility to Fox was accentuated because of the latter's influence and intimacy with the Prince of Wales. The King was determined to dislodge the detested ministry as soon as possible.

Fox's India Bill gave George III his opportunity. The ostensible ground on which objections to the bill arose was that it violated the company's charter and vested the patronage in the existing ministry. This accusation laid Fox open to the charge that, having destroyed the King's system of corruption, he was substituting a system of his own. The House of Commons passed the Bill. When it went to the House of Lords the King sent word that all who voted for the measure "would be considered by him as an enemy." The pressure of the King caused the Lords to defeat it. George III immediately demanded that Fox and North send back the seals. Within twelve hours after the King dissolved the ministry Pitt had accepted the First Lordship of the Treasury and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Although Pitt had strongly opposed the King's personal government and the American policy, he was perfectly willing to make an alliance with the Crown on his own terms.

When the announcement of Pitt's acceptance of the

position of Prime Minister was proclaimed in the House, it was greeted with prolonged laughter. His action was considered a "boyish freak"; his ministry, a "mince-pie administration" that would end with the Christmas holidays. Whig satirists made merry over "A Kingdom treated to a schoolboy's care." But they soon found they had not a schoolboy but a master.

The Whigs might well make merry for Pitt's position was scarcely tenable. Extraordinary difficulties faced him. First there was the discredit attached to the King's unconstitutional action to which Pitt owed his ministry. Secondly, he found it difficult to form a ministry as few were willing to join him in a struggle in which victory seemed hopeless. Lastly, Pitt had leagued against him North with his Tories on one side and Fox with his Whigs on the other. With Fox were allied Burke and Sheridan. Thus, while Pitt had no one to depend upon in the House except himself, he had to meet what one biographer calls, "the most powerful artillery of debate ever directed against a treasury bench."[10]

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10. Lord Rosebery, Pitt, 99.

In the final analysis, though, it was a battle that had to be fought and won in what the House of Commons considered to be "the country." Pitt detected the decline of Fox's popularity due to the ill-fated coalition. He calculated that if he could defer a dissolution of Parliament for a time he

would be able to convert the majority against him into a minority. Furthermore, the King and the Lords upheld him. Gradually, too, in the House of Commons the Whigs and Tories who were dissatisfied with the Fox-North combination rallied round him.

On the whole Pitt had the sympathy of the country at large. People could not but admire the young Minister who unaided and alone met so resolutely the bitter attacks that assailed him. Addresses were sent to the King thanking him for dismissing the Fox-North ministry. Besides an incident occured that augmented Pitt's popularity. The death of Sir Edward Walpole, son of Sir Robert Walpole, left vacant a sinecure called the Clerkship of the Pells worth three tousand pounds a year and tenable for life. Pitt's private means at this time were only three hundred pounds a year. According to precedent he might have taken the office himself without scandal. But in spite of the uncertainty of his position Pitt gave the office to a certain Colonel Barre on condition that Barre resign a thirty-two hundred pound annual pension received from Rockingham. The substitution of this clerkship for an excess of corrupt jobbery was an act the entire country could appreciate.

For three months Pitt was defeated on every measure. Only when the opposition was finally reduced to a majority of one did he dissolve Parliament. Pitt's victory at the polls was decisive. To his satisfaction Pitt was returned

for the University of Cambridge, a seat that he held for the rest of his life. In almost all the larger constituencies the Opposition candidates were defeated. Even Yorkshire, so long the precinct of the Cavendishes, Howards, and Wentworths, returned Pitt's friend Wilberforce. However, this banker's son collected and spent over eighteen thousand pounds in "tearing the enemy to pieces."[23] The

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11. Cited in P.W. Wilson, Wm. Pitt, 144.

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rout was complete. Nearly one hundred sixty of the Opposition lost their seats. What emerged from the election was a solid majority for Pitt and the Government, faced by a minority for Fox and the Opposition. Rockingham Whig, Chathamite, and Tory were obliterated. On a test division the voting was 283 to 136, roughly a superiority of two to one.

To Pitt the results of the polling brought a complete and final indemnity. Whatever had been the constitutional irregularity attending his acceptance of office and persistent retention of it in face of frequent defeats in the House was forever condoned by the country. Thus in 1784 William Pitt, age twenty-four, entered upon a career that was to be unbroken for seventeen years.

The first decade of Pitt's premiership gained for him the reputation of a reformer. By a large number of detailed measures he reduced the financial system to order. Many

sinecures were abolished and the remaining offices rendered responsible. Three times the Prime Minister brought up the question of regulating the "rotten boroughs" only to meet defeat. Perhaps he wasn't too insistent on their passage as many of his party owed their seats to patrons of decayed boroughs. During this period Pitt also introduced a measure to suppress the slave trade. In the light of the liberal measures thus sponsored by the Prime Minister need one be too surprised to see the Catholics emboldened to petition Pitt to procure legislation for their relief?

CHAPTER III

The Relief Act Of 1791

In the years between 1780 and 1788 the fortunes of Catholics in England seemed to have reached their lowest ebb. Only the squires and lawyers dared to hope for better days. Their petition had led to the Relief Act of 1778 and they were aware of no reason why, again acting independently of the vicars apostolic, they should not resume their mediations with the Government.

Hence, in 1782--the year in which Chatham's son was nonchalantly writing to his mother to inform her of his recent appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Shelburne--about thirty distinguished laymen elected five of their number to undertake the management of Catholic interests in England. That the aristocracy should seek to speak for the Catholics of England, including the clergy who depended so directly upon their generosity and loyalty to the Church, was not only natural but to a certain extent just. But it was unfortunate that a few earnest men who were most active in the Committee as Lord Petre, Sir John Throckmorton, and to a lesser extent the indefatigable secretary, Charles Butler, were tinged with the reaction against the central authority of Rome which was rampant in Western Europe at the time. From Throckmorton's "We don't want bishops" it was

but a step to intervening in matters over which the bishops alone had jurisdiction. The result was a long and disedifying struggle between ecclesiastical authority and lay independence before mutual confidence was again restored. The Committee did not at the outset dispute the authority of the vicars apostolic; they simply ignored it. In an honest and sincere effort to rescue the Catholics from the intolerable strain which was leading many to conform, they were prepared to go to great lengths to convince the Government of their loyalty to the House of Hanover and their strong hostility to papal interference in matters not strictly spiritual. Thus, they desired to weaken and minimize the importance of Rome in the Catholic sphere and to emphasize the national characteristics of Catholicism in England. Such a policy seemed to them to be the only course which offered reasonable hope of the further removal of the penal laws.

After a long delay of six years, during which there were doubtless a large number of meetings and conferences, the laity took action. In May, 1788, the Catholic Committee presented a memorial to Pitt calling upon the Government to grant a new measure of toleration.[1] The Prime Minister re-

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1. Text of the memorial given in Chas. Butler, His. Mem., IV, 6.

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ceived the deputation graciously and expressed genuine sympathy with their claims. There was no objection on his part to the introduction of a bill for the relief of English

Catholics into Parliament early the next session. To introduce a resolution of this nature into the present session, he felt, would be an abortive attempt. A delay was imperative in order "to prepare the minds of some of the leading interests of the country."

The Prime Minister further requested the Committee to obtain statements from the Catholic Universities on certain questions that primarily concerned the existence and extent of papal deposing power. Obviously, Pitt was anxious to consider the petition on its merits. Official statements would allay the Protestant prejudice that there is something inherent in Catholicism that is necessarily hostile to the civil power. Pitt reiterated that the postponement of Catholic relief to the next session did not arise merely from motives of delay, for the Government did seriously intend to consider the situation and grant the relief it could prudently give.

In consequence of Pitt's suggestion inquiries were sent to the Universities of the Sorbonne, Louvain, Douay, Alcala, Salamanca, and Valladolid. These institutions, of course, were unanimous in their answers--Louvain with a polite raising of the eyebrows "that such questions should, at the end of the eighteenth century be proposed to any learned Body, by inhabitants of a Kingdom that glories in the talents and discernment of its natives." The Universities asserted that neither Pope nor Cardinals, nor any assembly or individual

of the Catholic Church has any civil authority, power, jurisdiction or pre-eminence in the Kingdom of England. They cannot release the subjects of Great Britain from their Oath of Allegiance nor dispense them from obligations inherent in that oath. Moreover, the obligation of keeping contracts and promises binds all men equally, but it binds Catholics more cogently still as it is confirmed by the principles of their religion.[2]

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2. The answers from the Universities are given in Chas. Butler, ibid., I, Appendix D.

A few months later Pitt's brother-in-law, the "liberal" Lord Stanhope, suggested that the Catholics would gain more if they would officially disclaim the various objectionable tenets ascribed to them, and even prepared a disclaimer for their use. This Protestant peer was interested as he himself was attempting to procure a modification of the statutes of uniformity.

The Committee accepted the Lord's preliminary draft, made a few alterations and corrections, and launched a campaign to procure signatures. They succeeded so well that the Protestation, which repudiated the infallibility of the Pope and any ecclesiastical power to dispense from the duty of allegiance to the king, received the signatures of fifteen hundred of the laity, two hundred forty priests, and three vicars apostolic; the fourth vicar, Bishop Gibson of the Northern district, gave a qualified consent. Father Charles

Plowden alone categorically refused. The vicars apostolic were reluctant to sign because of the Cisalpine tone of the document, but it seems they yielded in consideration of the fact that the majority of the Committee were the mainstay of the Church.

On the whole, though, the Protestation caused the rise of Catholic sentiment against the Committee. Consequently, in order to give more official recognition to their activities, the Committee elected three of the clergy to join them, the most significant being Dr. Charles Berington, co-adjutor of the Midland District. James and Thomas Talbot, bishops of the Lond and Midland Districts, also kept in touch with the leading laymen and prevented the acerbity that developed later with Bishop Milner.

It was hoped that a formal bill drafted by Butler would be passed in the session of 1789. Before the next session opened, however, the King became insane. Debates on the nature and extent of the powers to be entrusted to the Regent occupied the minds of the politicians to the exclusion of everything else. The Committee considered that the introduction of the bill at the time would be out of taste.[3]

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3. Cf. letter of Charles Butler to Bishop Walmesley in B.H. Ward, The Dawn of the Catholic Revival, I, 153.

Another important reason for delay was the well known fact that Pitt's ministry would end if the Prince of Wales became Regent.

The unexpectedly rapid recovery of the King gave Pitt a new lease of office, and there seemed after all a possibility of the Catholic bill being taken through Parliament that year. Within a few weeks the Committee was confidently girt for further action. They had a draft of a bill embodying their proposals; they were furnished with replies from the Universities to Pitt's questions; they had the Protestation denying the anti-social doctrines with which Catholics were falsely credited. The latter they presented to Parliament in the form of a petition.[4]

4. The text of the petition is given in the Annual Register, XXXI, 324-326.

Shortly after this application to the Government, affairs took a more serious turn. It seems that Pitt or some other official requested more assurances of loyalty.[5] The

5. Cf. Chas. Butler, op. cit., IV, 27.

Committee accepted the suggestion and without consulting the bishops or anyone outside their group proceeded to frame an oath to be taken by all Catholics wishing to avail themselves of the new privileges. The Oath was incorporated as an integral part of the bill and officially published in Woodfall's Register, June 26, 1789. A copy was sent to Bishop Walmesley, the senior vicar apostolic. This was the only official announcement received by any of the bishops.[6]

6. As early as April 30, 1789, the prominent Catholic, Thomas Weld, had written to Bishop Walmesley warning him that a new adjuration was forming, the terms of which were unfortunate. Weld had received this information from London. Clifton Archives, III, cited in B.H. Ward, op. cit., I, 156.

Very naturally the bishops closely scanned the new bill and Oath. Examination of its contents revealed that the form in which the measure was now cast was deplorable, for it discriminated among Catholics. Those who subscribed to the new Oath were to be known as "Protesting Catholic Dissenters." Those who refused it were to be designated as "Papists" and were to receive no benefit under the Act. Hence, to educate a child as a "Papist" was to remain penal; to educate him as a "Protesting Catholic Dissenter" was to become lawful.

The bishops unanimously condemned the oath and asserted themselves against the acceptance of any such proposals. This discrimination of the Committee launched a protracted controversy. Gradually the Catholics rallied to the support of their appointed leaders, for the position of the Committee had already been altered somewhat by the death of Bishop Talbot. The Committee exerted every pressure it could muster to procure the appointment of Bishop Berington as his successor, but their efforts were defeated chiefly through the influence of Bishop Walmesley. On the Bishop's recommendation Father Douglass of York was elevated to the episcopacy. This consecration marked a new trend in the Catholic policy.

The dominance of the prelates of the squirearchy--the Talbots, Beringtons, Hornholds, and Petres--was gradually diminishing.

In various other quarters opposition to the veiled Gallican attitude of the Committee was growing. The bulk of the northern Catholics agreed with the bishops and considered the London Committee singularly unrepresentative of their strength. Their delegate, Sir John Lawson, was himself unsympathetic to the standpoint of Petre and Throckmorton. Other influences were that of Fathers Charles Plowden and John Milner, as well as eminent laymen such as Lord Arundell, Lord Clifford, and the great landowner, Weld. Milner had behind him the Catholics engaged in commerce who opposed a movement based on privilege, impatient of Rome, and remarkably amenable to the views of the English government.

The support of these various groups plus the favorable sentiments of Pitt, Grenville, and some of the Anglican peers helped the bishops eventually to counteract the measures undertaken by the Committee in its misguided zeal.

The year of 1790 was spent in an endeavor to reconcile the views of the Committee and their ecclesiastical superiors. Finally in January, 1791, the vicars apostolic issued a second formal condemnation of the oath and emphatically repudiated the designation of "Protesting Catholics." The Committee retaliated with a scurrilous manifest and appeal.

The inability of the Committee and the bishops to come to an understanding seemed for the moment to preclude any mutually satisfactory settlement.

While affairs were in such an imbroglio, John Mitford moved leave to introduce the Committee's Bill on February 21, 1791.[7] Pitt approved of Mitford's introduction of the

7. Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII, 1261. Mitford, later Baron of Redesdale, was a bitter opponent of Emancipation at the time of the Union and subsequent administrations.

bill and commented that the House seemed to be unanimously in favor of it. Fox immediately protested that there was not the unanimity on the matter that the Prime Minister supposed. He for one objected because the bill was too exclusive. The imperative need was to repeal the statutes against all Roman Catholics, "Protesting" or not. Fox thereupon indicated that he contemplated amending the measure.[8]

8. Ibid., 1267-1268.

As soon as the newspapers carried a notice that the initial steps had been taken toward the passing of the act, Bishop Walmesley wrote to Weld, who was a personal friend of Pitt and the King. The prelate begged Weld to use his influence, to inform the Prime Minister of the actual state of affairs, and to induce him to procure the amendment of the bill. The layman immediately wrote to Pitt explaining the situation and followed up the letter by going to London for

a personal interview. Pitt received his friend graciously and promised that there would be no precipitance in the matter.

Meanwhile the Catholic laymen in the North organized a formal petition protesting against the passage of the act in the form in which it had been drafted. Similarly letters of disapproval streamed in to the more prominent members of Parliament.

Milner, acting as the personal representative of the bishops, also hastened to London. Burke presented him to Fox and Windham and advised him to confer with Dundas. Milner acted on this suggestion and conferred with the Home Secretary in the presence of Pitt. The energetic priest also contacted three of the established bishops, Wilberforce, and the Dissenter, William Smith. He tried to convince all these liberal statesmen that the great body of Catholics looked to their bishops for guidance and not to the Committee. Milner was gratified with the outcome of his interviews and believed that these men sincerely desired to pass a bill that would embrace all Catholics.[9] To further rein-

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9. Based on Milner's Supplementary Memoirs, 77, as given in B.H. Ward, op. cit., I, 267.

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force his arguments Milner composed a tract in which he explained the objections to the Oath on the part of the bishops. Copies of the essay were given to the Members of Parliament.

March 1, the "day of trial" as Milner called it, arrived.

In the course of the debates Mitford still persisted in differentiating between Protesting and non-Protesting Catholics. Fox, in accordance with his notice to abolish all distinction between Catholic and Catholic, amended the bill by inserting "and others" in the title. Then he added:

> "Keep in, if they (are so) pleased, all their statutes for the establishment; the test and corporation acts if they liked; but let the statute book be examined, and strike out all the others which relate merely to opinion."[10]

10. Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII, 1367-1368.

Pitt spoke on behalf of the Government. He stated that his views did not entirely coincide with those of Fox "though he most readily concurred in much of his reasoning." It was his wish that in this bill or in some other many of the harsher statutes would be repealed. He was willing to assist both classes of Catholics. To relieve one party and to let the laws remain against the other group would be the equivalent of re-enacting them. Whether the aid was given in one bill or two was a matter of indifference. In concluding Pitt appealed to Fox to withdraw his amendment, at least for the present, as it would obstruct the passage of the measure.[11]

11. Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII, 1373-1374.

Fox graciously acquiesced. He rejoiced that his proposal had evoked such statements from Pitt, since Pitt must know better than he what bill or bills were likely to pass

without much objection.

The vicars apostolic were now anticipating success. Bishop Douglass writes at the time:

> "The reports are much in our favor, and I am credibly informed that the Gentlemen of the Committee, with their abettors, talk now with great moderation on the bill and Oath, that they are sensible we are in favour with Ministry..."[12]

12. Clifton Archives, IV, in B.H. Ward, op. cit., I, 281.

On April 1, 1791, the bill came into the committee stage. Mitford at once moved that the title "Protesting Catholic Dissenters" be omitted and that the caption "persons professing the Roman Catholic Religion" be substituted. He affirmed that this amendment was the wish of the persons he represented, i.e., the Catholic Committee.[13]

13. Parliamentary Debates, XXIX, 115.

It was, however, of little use for the name to disappear as long as the main source of contention remained. Everything now depended upon whether the Oath might be rendered such that all Catholics could take it. But the House of Commons made only several alterations in the provisions and some slight improvements in the Oath before it passed the measure. Unfortunately, these modifications now caused the bishops themselves to be divided on the issue.

The bill still had to pass the House of Lords, and here the peers proved the friends of the vicars apostolic. Unex-

pected aid came from one of the Anglican bishops, Dr. Samuel Horsley of St. David's. It was curiously enough due to the persuasion of Joseph Berington, a strong sympathizer with the Committee, that the bishops communicated with this prelate. Berington sincerely desired that the new law would be acceptable to both parties in the dispute. As he was a personal friend of both Dr. Horsley and Bishop Douglass, the priest drafted a letter for the latter to sign and had it conveyed to the Anglican bishop.

The assistance Dr. Horsley gave exceeded the most sanguine hopes of the vicars. According to some writers his speech in the House of Lords was long afterwards spoken of by Catholics as having definitely turned the scale in their favor.[14] Horsley referred to the matter in dispute among

14. B.H. Ward, op. cit., I, 288.

Catholics, viz., the propriety of the oath. He adverted to the fact that three of the four Catholic bishops in the country had promulgated encyclical letters in which they reprobated the oath as it stood in the embryonic legislation. As for amending the Oath, he did not consider the House competent to do it. By way of alternative the Bishop suggested the substitution of the Oath of 1778.[15] The Lords complied with his

15. The contents of Dr. Horsley's speech are summarized from Parliamentary Debates, XXIX, 676-678; 678 n.

recommendation. On June 3 the oath was expunged from the bill and the oath taken by the Irish Catholics in 1774--with some slight alterations--was substituted. The Commons accepted the amendment of the Lords and the bill received the royal assent.

On June 24, 1791, the Relief Act went into operation. Catholics were at last free to exercise their religion in England without incurring legal penalties. By a remarkable coincidence this date was the anniversary of the day on which two hundred and thirty-two years before the celebration of Mass had been prohibited by Queen Elizabeth. In addition legal sanction was given to the building of churches and the founding of new missions that in very recent years had been more or less openly conducted in defiance of the obsolete laws. This freedom from restriction stimulated the expansion of Catholicism. Bishop Douglass in 1796 commented on the numerous conversions and attributed them to the fact that the open profession of the Catholic religion was now lawful and that public sermons, to which non-Catholics came, could be given in the chapels.[16]

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16. Cited in B.H. Ward, op. cit., I, 300.

The Act also removed some of the social disabilities under which Catholics labored. Peers were allowed once again to come into the presence of the King. However, by 1791, the barring of peers from the presence of the sovereign had fallen

into disuse, so that the Act did not affect the social status of the peers. The professions were liberalized. Charles Butler was the first Catholic to be called to the Bar since the fall of the Stuarts. The townspeople appreciated the cessation of the petty prosecutions that formerly tormented them.

Pitt felt that this Act of 1791 was, in effect, emancipation. At the debate on the Catholic question that occurred in his brief second ministry he referred to the benefits the Catholics gained under the Act and stated that he did not think "the term emancipation was applicable to the repeal of the few remaining penal statutes to which Catholics were still liable."[17]

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17. Speeches, III, 421.

However, by those "statutes" Catholics were still excluded from Parliament and denied the parliamentary franchise. They could neither hold commissions in the Army and Navy nor discharge any office of trust under the Crown. Catholic marriages had to be celebrated in a Protestant church, and a Protestant service had to be read by a Protestant minister at all funerals. As long as these disabilities remained, the Catholic question could not be considered solved. But for the moment they were effaced in the satisfaction at the substantial relief afforded by the new Act. When the Catholic question would again present itself to Pitt, it would be in its Irish setting.

CHAPTER IV

The Irish Relief Acts

From the time of the Norman invasion Ireland had to resist English efforts at conquest, colonization, and absorption. But the shackling of the Church of St. Patrick had its inception in the lust of power and money which burned with other lusts in the heart of Henry VIII. The colonial parliament in Dublin in 1536 yielded to his aggression, and Henry found willing mercenary agents to suppress the Irish religious houses and to hand over the possession of the Irish treasury.

Dramatic and disastrous as this policy was, yet it was Henry's illegitimate Elizabeth who gave what she thought was the coup de grace to the Irish Church by her Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity passed in 1559. Under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts the prosecution of these acts initiated open and bloody persecution. On the whole until the reign of William and Mary the public exercise of the Catholic religion and the position of the Catholic clergy in Ireland were matters depending precariously on the whim of the Crown.

With the revolution a still more stringent epoch begins. After the breaking of the Treaty of Limerick of October 3, 1691, a new series of laws were passed, justly described as penal.

Just to enumerate them takes Burns seventy pages in his Ecclesiastical History. This code was utilized as a deliberate system for the degradation of the Catholic people in order to secure a small Protestant ascendancy in its position of privilege. In writing of the penal code as it applied to England Edmund Burke could say "a handful to torment." In speaking of its effects on Ireland he had to write "a nation to be enslaved."[1] Burke's assessment of

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1. Burke expounds his views on the penal laws in a speech to his Bristol constituents in 1780, Works, II, 394-405, and in a letter to his friend Sir Hercules Langrishe, one of the more liberal Protestant landlords of the Irish Parliament, ibid., IV, 241-307.

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the Irish position was very true. The Irish were practically reduced to the status of helots. They had nothing left. Land? They were allowed to own none. Property? They might have a horse if it was worth less than five pounds. Protection? They might not even possess a gun. Education? By law they could enter no schools. They were allowed no episcopacy or church organization, except what they were able to preserve underground. For nearly one hundred years they had to smuggle their priests from abroad. They had no parliament, no vote, no papers, virtually no books, no leaders. They had but one thing--their religion. That was their inheritance and to that did they cling.

On reviewing these cumulative oppressions laid upon the Catholics, it is possible to understand what a weight

of opposition the Irish would encounter in their struggle to organize an influential body of resistance to regain their rights.

However, by 1760 a resistance movement was beginning to crystalize. The rise of a new Catholic merchant class became the means of liberation. An indirect result of the penal laws had been the ingress of Catholics into the field of commerce. Debarred from owning land and deterred from improving it for fear of eviction or extortionate rents, the Catholic tenants took to grazing instead of tillage. As a result there was a growing export trade in cattle and other foodstuffs during the eighteenth century. From this trade arose the wealthy class of Catholic merchants who became the organizers of agitation on behalf of the Irish.

A physician, Dr. Curry, and two merchants, Thomas Wyse and Charles O'Conor pioneered in the movement. These men, endeavoring to discover and develop some means by which the Catholics could unite and obtain their liberation, formed a Catholic Association. The merchants responded to their appeals. But the aristocracy, fearful of government reprisals and jealous of the assumption of leadership on the part of the merchants, boycotted the organization. The clergy, also fearing government action, opposed it likewise. As a result of the dissensions between the groups the Association disintegrated.

Ten years later, 1773, Lord Kenmare organized a second

Catholic Association. Its first activities were of no serious importance, but circumstances soon gave it strength. A new factor in Anglo-Irish relations was entering the picture as echoes of the splashes of chests of tea and diverse other protests of the American colonists were reaching England. England needed recruits for her coming struggle with the colonies. The Irish took advantage of England's need and skillfully pressed their demand. Consequently, the Relief Act of 1774 was passed which did no more than give the Catholics a legal right "to testify their loyalty and allegiance to His Majesty, and their abhorrence of certain doctrines imputed to them." In addition the Act formally committed to the statute book the fact that it was solely "on account of their religious tenets" that they were "prevented from giving public assurances of such allegiance." That very admission was an irrevocable act of retreat from the penal code. The mere acknowledgement of the right of Irish Catholics to be treated equally as citizens was a charter of liberty which they proceeded to use to the utmost.

The success of the first English Relief Bill four years later caused the passing of a similar measure for Ireland. Those who took the oath of 1774 could now take a perpetual lease (999 years) on property and could inherit and transfer land.[2]

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2. 17 and 18 George III c. 49, Annual Register, XXII, 25.

The same year, 1778, Henry Grattan and his Protestant Volunteers, who had originally enrolled for defense against France, strategically capitalized on the difficulties of Great Britain and wrested from her legislative independence for Ireland. Grattan wished to proceed to full Emancipation for Catholics and admit them to the franchise, parliament, and all offices except the highest. This step, he thought, would enlist the leaders and merchants on the side of the new Constitution, the Protestant basis of which they would be bound to accept and observe. Grattan's generous attitude, however, met with opposition from the majority of the Irish ascendancy. Grattan's Parliament, it is true, passed a relief act in 1782 that allowed the clergy freedom of movement and removed some restrictions on education--privileges that the English Catholics did not receive until 1791. An Irishman might again own a decent horse; he could once more reside in Dublin or Cork instead of being zoned in the surrounding "Irish-town." These were restrictions no one could defend. But to abolish the clauses that excluded Catholics "from the state" was a different matter. The ascendancy of the Protestant minority depended completely on the political disabilities of the Catholics. Hence, the Irish Government would take no step toward rescinding them.

By 1790 the democratic elements in the Catholic Committee had already begun to watch the progress of the

revolution in France with growing sympathy. Its continued success gradually strengthened their own courage in demanding justice. The more active members of the Committee determined to organize an immediate application to Parliament to request the repeal of the remaining restrictions. The Catholic hierarchy and aristocracy who viewed events in France with disapproval were at once alarmed. Though the Committee carried the motion for an address to Parliament by a majority of six to one, Lord Kenmare and his friends refused to accept the decision. Sixty-eight of the Catholic gentry, with Lord Kenmare at their head, seceded from the Committee. Its control then passed into the hands of a Dublin silk merchant, John Keogh, a man of public spirit, courage, and generosity. Addresses from most of the towns approved the policy of this plebeian leader of Irish Catholicism. With this backing Keogh proceeded with his plans. The petition was drawn up, but there was not a single member of the Patriot Parliament of 1790 who dared to present it on behalf of the Irish Catholic majority.

Undaunted the Catholics sought other means to advance their claims. They invited Richard Burke, to become the secretary and regular political agent of the Catholic Association. At the time this seemed a shrewd move for Edmund Burke had for years been recognized as an exponent of Catholic rights in England and was also the foremost propagandist against the French Revolution. The appointment

of his son as their accredited agent gave sufficient proof that the Catholics repudiated Jacobinism. Unfortunately Burke's son antagonized all with whom he had to negotiate and eventually exasperated the Committee itself to such an extent that after one year they paid him the enormous fee of two thousand guineas to go home.

The Committee also sent Keogh to London to interview Pitt and ascertain the English Government's attitude on the matter. Pitt gave a gracious promise that the British ministry would offer no objection if the Irish Parliament proceeded further in emancipation.

Fortified by the Prime Minister's assurance, the Catholics then applied to the Irish Opposition. The latter, finding that they did not have enough influence to carry a measure in Parliament, decided not to take up the Catholic cause as a party question. This stand taken by the Opposition was followed with good consequences for it afforded Pitt and his ministers the opportunity to come forward in support of the Catholics.

The situation in Ireland at this time indicated to the English Government that a struggle against its power might be forthcoming. The members of the colonial aristocracy, except those in the pay of the government were hostile and had pledged themselves to initiate an electoral reform that would overthrow the English influence. The Presbyterians, still more truculent, were slowly turning to "enlightened"

doctrines and political methods currently arising to prominence in France. Furthermore, they were trying to obtain an alliance with the Catholics. Theobald Wolfe Tone's pamphlet urging such an alliance was selling widely.[3] As

3. Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Protestant barrister, founded the society of United Irishmen in October, 1791, with the aim of winning a reform of the Irish Parliament.

yet the Catholics were not inclined to contest the English connexion. But Pitt realized fully the truth of Burke's warnings that the Catholics would become influenced by revolutionary principles if their growing agitation was not reasonably met.

To the Catholics then the English ministers were ready to turn. On December 26, 1791, Dundas, the minister in charge of Ireland, sent an important communication to Westmorland, the Lord Lieutenant. The Home Secretary urged the Irish Government to consider the claims of the Catholics on grounds of justice as well as of expediency and recommended the repeal of specific sections of the penal laws: those that hindered the Catholics in the exercise of any profession, trade, or manufacture; those that restricted the marriage of a Protestant and a Catholic; those that interfered with the actual authority of the Catholic father in the education of his children; those that made a distinction between Protestant and Papist in the use of arms;

those that prevented Catholics from serving either on a grand or petit jury; and, finally those that restricted suffrage.

Dundas indicated that the English ministers did not wish to be autocratic in the matter. Pitt wrote in a similar strain. The Ministers had no wish to press the measure if the Protestants strenuously resisted it. But no declaration should be made that would deprive the Catholics of hope.[4]

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4. Summarized from the letters of Dundas and Pitt to Westmorland as given in W.E.H. Lecky, History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, III, 38-40, 45.

In accordance with his instructions Westmorland consulted with his colleagues, the Chancellor Fitzgibbon, the Attorney-General, John Beresford, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Prime Serjeant, and Sir John Parnell--in other words, the ruling junta in Dublin. Burke, who knew them all, wrote that these men were steeped in a ferocious hatred of everything Catholic.[5] On January 14, 1792, Westmorland

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5. Works, VI, 343.

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reported the tenor of the meeting to Dundas. The junta gave a hesitating and reluctant consent to the wishes of the Government regarding professions, intermarriage, and education. A reservation was made with reference to grand juries, while the unlimited right of carrying arms was

pronounced to be completely inadmissible.

The junta practically exploded when it came to the question of conceding the suffrage to Catholics. The Irish government not only strenuously objected to it but expressed apprehension and discontent that such a proposal had been as much as considered by the British cabinet. Westmorland strongly intimated that any further attempt at concessions on the part of the English ministers would be vigorously resisted and hinted at repercussions should the policy be insisted upon. He accused Pitt of playing "a Catholic game" and warned that further proposals for Catholic suffrage would antagonize all Protestants without distinction and would militate against the interests of the English Government.[6]

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6. Westmorland to Dundas, W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., III, 41 - 45.

Pitt, though not the minister officially in connection with Lord Westmorland, was evidently the dynamo of the movement and his judgment would ultimately prevail. Consequently the Lord Lieutenant addressed to him a long letter in which he reviewed the whole Catholic question in its relation to the government of Ireland and appealed to the Prime Minister to maintain the Protestant Ascendancy.

Pitt's reply of January 29, 1792, endeavored to placate the irate Viceroy. At the same time Pitt apprised him that a more liberal policy on the part of the Irish politicians

would be fully supported by England. He disavowed any idea of playing a "Catholic game" and asserted that he only contemplated a plan that would be compatible with preserving the security and tranquillity of a British and Protestant interest. Pitt, however, was adamant on one point. He refused to pledge himself against additional concessions.[7]

7. Cf. W.E.H. Lecky, ibid., III, 56.

On January 20 Sir Hercules Langrishe moved leave to bring in a bill to relieve the Irish Catholics. Significantly Hobart, the Secretary for Ireland, seconded the motion. Surprisingly the measure, which removed the remaining restrictions on education, rescinded the statute prohibiting intermarriage, and admitted Catholics to the bar, passed without too much opposition.[8]

8. Text of the Relief Act of 1792 given in Parliamentary Register, XII, 58-62

Despite the apparently easy passage of the bill the Irish Government triumphed in this conflict with the English ministers since the question of franchise was left untouched. Pitt and his colleagues relied on their Irish confreres for their knowledge of the situation. Naturally they did not wish to precipitate a campaign in which dangerous results were predicted. But Grattan and Burke maintained that the representations of Irish Protestant opinion sent over to

England at this time were either false or enormously overstated.[9]

9. Cf. Grattan, op. cit., IV, 72, and Richard Burke to his father, December 26, 1791, Correspondence, III, 462.

The Catholics did not consider the Relief Act of 1792 as being the definitive termination of their activities. They proceeded to organize a national scale in a manner for which the Irish Parliament was itself responsible. While Langrishe's Bill had been in progress, this body had openly stated "that the Catholics were proceeding on a principle of indecent menace and intimidation." To eradicate such suspicions the Committee had presented a petition to Parliament which respectfully recalled the loyalty and obedience that Catholics had manifested throughout the past century. With incredible insolence Parliament removed the petition for the table and denounced the petitioners as "rabble of the town." The insult naturally aroused the Catholics to a fury of resentment and stimulated them to redouble their efforts. These parliamentary sneers at the Committee's representation furnished a clear pretext to organize a new Committee on a national scale. When the plans for this organization were being laid, the Committee invited Wolfe Tone to replace Burke's incompetent son.

Wolfe Tone's industry as a political organizer and his immense enthusiasm helped Keogh produce immediate results.

But in his activities as the official agent of the Irish Catholics this young barrister was out of sympathy with all Catholic tradition. Only the political fortunes of Catholics interested him. Again and again in his diaries Tone reiterates the hope that as soon as the Irish Catholics have achieved political liberty they will proceed to emancipate themselves from religious superstition. Priests he despised and distrusted; bishops he considered as serious obstacles to the democratic revolution for which he was striving. The Catholic Committee provided him with a career that enabled him to exert all his ingenuity and energy in overthrowing an unjust code of laws and at the same time advanced the project that inflamed him--the uniting of all classes and creeds in Ireland in a demand for complete separation from England.[10]

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10. Cf. Wolfe Tone, Autobiography, 36, ed. Sean O'Faolain

Under Keogh's leadership, then, and Tone's guidance, in collaboration with Grattan and other Irish statesmen who were outraged by this callous treatment of a burning question, the Catholics proceeded to teach the landlord Parliament a lesson they would not soon forget. Tone issued invitations to every priest to call a meeting of the parish at which some local resident would be appointed a delegate to the ensuing Dublin Convention. This plan for the enlargement of the Committee on representative lines thoroughly alarmed

the Government. Grand Juries fulminated against the new attempt at treason. But Keogh refused to be intimidated.

The elections were held in the autumn of 1792 and the Convention assembled at Dublin in December. The success of the group meeting for the first time as a national assembly was immediate. The Convention voted to petition for a complete restitution of the rights of Catholics. As a further act of defiance, the Convention decided to address the petition directly to the King. By passing over the administration of their country in this studied and deliberate manner the Catholics demonstrated to the world that his Majesty's ministers in Ireland had so lost the confidence of his subjects that they were not even to be entrusted with the delivery of their petition. Keogh and four of his colleagues were selected to present the petition to the King.

Meanwhile the English Government again indorsed the Catholic claims. The decisive word against the Catholics for which Westmorland waited, was never uttered. Instead there came a clear intimation that the English ministers were resolved to insist on the liberal policy they had formerly recommended. In November Pitt had written to the Viceroy to express his anxiety as to the consequences of any opposition to the holding of the Catholic Convention. Then he continues:

> "but the more I think on the subject the more I regret that firmness against violence

> is not accompanied by symptoms of a disposition to conciliate, and by holding out at least the possibility of future concession in return for a perseverance in peaceable and loyal conduct...If the Protestants of Ireland rely on the weight of this country being employed to enforce the principle that in no case anything more is to conceded to peaceable and constitutional applications from Catholics, that reliance, I think, will fail, and I fairly own that in the present state of the world such a system cannot ultimately succeed."[11]

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11. Cited in W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., III, 126.

This letter and a similar one from Dundas could not have been very palatable to Westmorland, but he declared himself ready to execute the wishes of the ministers.

On January 2 Dundas introduced Keogh and his companions to St. James, where they presented the petition to George III. Tone, who accompanied the delegation to London, exulted over the reception. At these receptions the words spoken were of little interest; the manner in which they were delivered was the important thing. King George was very gracious and the delegates had every reason to be content with the manner of their reception.[12]

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12. Cf. Wolfe, Tone, Autobiography I, 89, ed. by his son.

The success of the deputation was beyond all doubt. The mere fact of their having achieved their purpose of presenting the petition to the King in person was an unprecedented advance. The King's Speech at the opening of the

new session in January 1793 revealed their triumph. The pertinent clause in the Speech from the Throne was as follows:

> "...and I have it in particular command from his Majesty to recommend it to you, to apply yourselves to the consideration to such measures as may be the most likely to strengthen and cement a general union of sentiment among all classes and descriptions of his majesty's Catholic subjects, in support of the established constitutions. With this view, his Majesty trusts, that the situation of his majesty's Catholic subjects will engage your serious attention; and in consideration of this subject, he relies on the wisdom and liberality of his parliament."[13]

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13. Parliamentary Register, XIII, 3.

After such a message the Irish Parliament had no alternative but to submit a bill for the relief of the Catholics. The result was that the Parliament which would not permit the Catholic petition to be laid on their table now passed the broad Relief Act of 1793. This act gave such wide concessions to the Catholics that about thirty years later the English Catholics procured the introduction of a bill that asked no more than they be given the same liberties and rights as the Catholics in Ireland. The Catholics could again bear arms; they might serve on grand and petit juries without distinction; they could take commissions in the army and navy and could hold offices in the state with the exception of some of the highest, as Lord Chancellor; they

might endow schools, colleges, and universities, and take degrees in Dublin University. Most surprisingly of all the Catholic forty-shilling freeholder was granted the franchise. The Catholics had merely asked for a qualified franchise, but Pitt insisted that the suffrage be given to the same extent that it was held by the English electorate.[14] Tone

14. Hobart's Relief Act of 1793 is printed in the Parliamentary Register, XIII, 199.

was disgusted that the leaders had given way on the question of allowing Catholics to enter Parliament, but at the same time he rejoiced over the gains made. Grattan, too, regretted that the upper classes of the Catholics had not been admitted to a full voice in the state.

Nevertheless, the Catholic Committee felt they had secured the substance of practically all their request. It expressed its gratitude to the Government, rewarded Tone and the deputation, and dissolved itself as a mark of satisfaction at what had been accomplished.

CHAPTER V

The Fitzwilliam Episode

It would seem that with the passing of the Act of 1793 the battle of the Irish Catholic was virtually won. The Ascendancy, however, lost no time in endeavoring to minimize the effect of the Relief Act by using all their existing privileges to keep the Catholics out of places they were entitled to hold. The rapid and alarming development of foreign affairs furnished a new excuse for the passing of repressive measures against every form of popular agitation.

Pitt, on the other hand, was still determined to pursue a policy of conciliation. In the North of Ireland enthusiasm for republicanism was spreading like wildfire among the Dissenters, while the United Irishmen were becoming more and more active in trying to foster a union with the Catholics in order to overthrow the existing regime. The Prime Minister, who was aware of the seriousness of the war with France, desired the loyalty of the Irish Catholics at all costs.

A breach in the Whig faction at this time strengthened his hold on the situation. The difference between Fox and Burke over the French Revolution disrupted their friendship. Burke and his friends seceded from the party and gave their

support to Pitt. This secession enabled Pitt to bolster his government by reconstructing it on a basis of coalition. However, the rapprochement necessitated some "logrolling." The Duke of Portland took office as Secretary of Home Affairs with the understanding that the Earl Fitzwilliam would replace Lord Westmorland as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Fitzwilliam had been offered this position by the Prince of Wales and Fox during the Regency crisis. Naturally the junta did not approve of Pitt's thus incorporating into the ministry men who had been their strongest opponents in 1788.

Although his appointment was still in the offing, Fitzwilliam appointed his chief secretary in July and openly entered into communications with Grattan and the Ponsonbys to obtain their cooperation with the policies he planned to execute. The Earl admitted that the appointment was pending and that his present bid for support was premature.[1]

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1. H. Grattan, Memoirs, IV, 173-174.

This unofficial overture to Grattan caused a resurgence of hope among the Catholics that Fitzwilliam was unwarranted in giving, for it was believed that the future viceroy planned to carry full emancipation and to remove the junta that opposed all liberal measures.

Pitt, however, did not intend to hand Ireland over to Portland and Fitzwilliam carte blanche. Between the surrender to Whig demands, though, and the bitter opposition in

his own party Pitt saw the coalition threatened with dissolution. In order to arrive at some understanding Pitt and Grattan held a conference. According to Grattan's account of the meeting Pitt would not have Catholic Emancipation brought forward as a Government measure, but if the Government "were pressed" would "yield it."[2]

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2. H. Grattan, ibid., IV, 177.

About the same time the matters in dispute were talked over in another conference attended by Pitt, Grenville, Portland, Fitzwilliam, Spencer, and Windham. It was indecisive. Reading the private letters of those who participated one can only be amazed that the coalition survived. Fitzwilliam grumbled that he had to "step into Lord Westmorland's old Shoes...the men, and of consequence, the system of measures (were) to remain the same." Windham asserted that if the Prime Minister's support of the Ultra-Protestants at Dublin led Portland to resign, he would relinquish office, too.

Pitt reserved in express words to his colleagues and himself full liberty to consider and decide on any measure that came to them from the Parliament of Ireland. He emphatically declared:

> "Besides the impossibility of sacrificing any supporters of Government, or exposing them to the system, I ought to add that the very idea of a new system as far as I understand what is meant by the term, and

> especially one formed without previous communication or concert with the rest of the King's servants here, or with the friends of Government in Ireland, is in itself what I feel it utterly impossible to accede to; and it appears to me to be directly contrary to the general principles on which our union was formed and has hitherto subsisted."[3]

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3. Cited in Stanhope, op. cit., II, 289.

It was not until November 14 that the King received Lord Mansfield's acceptance of the Presidency of the Council, an arrangement that allowed Westmorland to become Master of the Horse. Fitzwilliam was not sworn in as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland until a month later.

On the eve of Fitzwilliam's appointment in December another consultation was held. After the Viceroy's recall in February, 1795, Grenville committed the results of this meeting to writing. According to his memorandum Fitzwilliam received precise instructions before his departure. Fitzgibbon on no condition was to be removed from his office as Chancellor. Of Beresford no mention was made. In fact there was to be no complete change of personnel, although the government was to be strengthened by the introduction of the Ponsonbys. The question of further concessions to Catholics was discussed "though not much at length." It was unanimously agreed that Fitzwilliam should inform himself in Ireland as to the state and disposition of the country in this respect, and should send on his information;

that he should do his best to prevent agitation of the question during the present session, and that he should not commit the King's government without fresh instructions from the Cabinet.[4]

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4. Summarized from Dropmore Papers, III, 31-38.

Fitzwilliam, it seems, acted precipitantly. On arriving in Ireland his first act was to dismiss Beresford, who for years had dominated the Protestant administration. The new Viceroy had no conception of the coherence of the Ascendancy. His dismissal of Beresford back-fired immediately. In Dublin Castle Fitzwilliam was henceforth surrounded by sullen subordinates who sat in silence through every meal, while Beresford undertook to undermine his influence in London.[5]

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5. Cf. John Beresford, Correspondence, II, 44.

In regard to the Catholic claims, Fitzwilliam found the country seething with excitement. The premature announcement of his appointment had given seven months during which the Catholic agitation revived at full blast. Victory, at last, seemed within their grasp. Pitt, the Prime Minister, was favorable to their claims; the new ministers were their friends. The confirmation of Fitzwilliam's office in spite of the bitter criticism of the junta seemed to demonstrate that again, as in 1792 and 1793,

the opposition had been overcome. For the first time since the Treaty of Limerick a pro-Catholic Viceroy was to rule the Castle.

Almost immediately Fitzwilliam and Parliament were deluged with addresses and petitions from every county in Ireland. By the middle of February the signatures exceeded half a million.[6] Grattan, even if he had wished it, had no

6. Cf. Burke, Correspondence, IV, 277.

power to hold back. On the twelfth of February he moved to bring in a bill abolishing all remaining restrictions on Catholics.[7]

7. Parliamentary Register, XV, 98.

On perceiving the urgency of the Catholic question, Fitzwilliam wrote to his chiefs in London explaining that though he did his best to keep clear of any engagements, he found the Catholic question already in agitation and a committee appointed to bring forward a petition on their behalf. The Lord Lieutenant pressed for the approval of his action by the Cabinet on the ground that this repeal of the disqualifying laws was necessary in order to secure the pacification and loyalty of the country.

For about three weeks Fitzwilliam received no reply from England in answer to his urgent pleadings.[8] Then on

8. Some historians consider the delay in responding to the Viceroy's communications an act of inexcusable negligence on the part of Pitt and the Cabinet. Cf. W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., III, 288. However, J. H. Rose, Pitt and Napoleon, 31, presents a different aspect of the question. He attributes the so-called negligence of the Ministry to climatic conditions that delayed the dispatch of the mails for England from the tenth to the twenty-third of January. The basis of his statement is a letter from Beresford to Auckland. On the nineteenth of January Beresford wrote that no packet had been able to sail and that all his letters written since the tenth were still lying in Dublin. Correspondence, II, 61.

February 8 the Duke of Portland sent the Lord Lieutenant a repetition of his former instructions and a declaration that no steps should be taken at the present time in the interest of the Catholics. Pitt also wrote censuring the dismissal of Beresford. The view of the Cabinet appears to have been that to attempt a radical change in the Irish Parliament which the admission of Catholics would involve was too much of a risk when the European scene was so threatening.

Meanwhile, the Ascendancy continued to give vent to rage and alarm. If the granting of rights to Catholics was to cause them a loss of power, they would not concur in it. Furthermore, they well knew that the King was the Achilles' heel to the situation. To George III they planned to turn. Two days after the motion of Grattan the Chancellor was writing to Beresford that the King could not give his assent to the measure "without a direct breach of his

Coronation Oath." He added that when Grattan's Bill was printed he intended to send it to the King with comments in reference to British statutes that bound the King on this subject.

But the King had already expressed his disapproval of Fitzwilliam's measures. On February 6 he sent Pitt a statement of his strong objection to Emancipation, both as a matter of policy and on religious grounds. He was astonished at a proposal calling for the "total change of the principles of government which have been followed by every administration in that kingdom since the abdication of James II" and that "after no longer stay than three weeks in Ireland." He was opposed because it adopted "measures to prevent which my family was invited to mount the throne of this kingdom in preference to the House of Savoy." George III emphatically stated that the subject was beyond the decision of any cabinet of ministers. They should give no encouragement to such measures, and if the continuance of the new administration in Ireland depended on the success of these proposals, it should be changed.[9]

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9. Summarized from a letter of the King to Pitt, Stanhope, op. cit. II, xxiii-xxv.

So decided a stand on the part of the King undoubtedly played an important part in Fitzwilliam's recall. One biographer believes that both Pitt and Grenville welcomed such support because they felt Fitzwilliam had broken his

agreement on both patronage and concessions to Catholics.[10]

10. D.G. Barnes, George III and Pitt, 344.

Consequently, acting with entire unanimity, although with regret, the Cabinet on February 19, 1795, came to the decision that Fitzwilliam should be recalled.

The news of the Viceroy's recall surprised and angered Ireland. When he departed on March 25, 1795, shops were closed and no business of any kind was transacted. The greater part of the citizens put on mourning and some of the most respectable drew his coach down to the waterside.[11]

11. Annual Register, XXXVII, 226.

Naturally, the Irish hurled charges of ill faith at the English Government. However unwarranted his action, Fitzwilliam had excited hopes not of emancipation and reform alone, but of a completely new system. These hopes had been shattered by his pre-emptory removal. Ireland, of course, did not know that Pitt was by no means averse to emancipation and that Fitzwilliam had exceeded his instructions. Moreover, one strong refutation can be made to the accusations against Pitt. Portland, Spencer, and Windham had long been friends and allies of Fitzwilliam. They took office on condition that he receive the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland and had threatened to resign when that appointment was delayed. Consequently, their failure to support

him at this time is noteworthy. They concurred in the necessity of his removal and remained in office as colleagues of Pitt. Their attitude is best revealed in a letter of Windham to Fitzwilliam:

> "With respect to disapprobation of measures, I know of none, to which your Excellency can allude, except an opinion, which I cannot but distinctly avow, that a great part of your Excellency's measures have been in direct opposition to what I had understood to have been agreed upon, either directly or by implication, in the conversation which took place in Downing Street, a little previous to your Excellency's departure; I mean particularly in the appointment of Mr. W. Ponsonby, the appointment of Mr. C. Ponsonby, the removal of Mr. Beresford, and in the bringing forward the Catholic question, so far as your Excellency approved of, or was concerned in that measure, before a communication could be had with this country.
>
> If in this opinion I have the misfortune to differ with your Excellency, I have the consolation, I believe, of agreeing with every other person, who was present at that conversation."[12]

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12. Wm. Windham, The Windham Papers, II, 288.

Undoubtedly, much of the failure of 1795 was due to an imperfect understanding between Pitt and Fitzwilliam. Fitzwilliam acted over hastily and unadvisedly, expecially in regard to his dismissals. Pitt, on the other hand, should have taken as firm a stand in the fall as he took in December. If he desired to postpone emancipation until an uncertain date, the Prime Minister should not have

excited the expectation of the Irish by an appointment they interpreted as a sign of impending acquiescence.

It is possible, too, that the emphasis given Fitzwilliam's recall as a predominant factor in the movement toward the rebellion of 1798 may be somewhat exaggerated. If Fitzwilliam had not been recalled, if he had been allowed to pass Grattan's Bill, and, as was most unlikely, the King had given consent to Catholic Emancipation, would the United Irishmen have desisted from their attempts to overthrow English control? From Tone's writings and the activities of the society, the supposition is that the rebellion would have occurred just the same.

After the Fitzwilliam episode the crisis began to approach fast. Ireland entered upon that period which saw the Republican organization of Ireland, attempted French aid, the Rebellion of 1789, and the Union.

CHAPTER VI

Negotiations For The Union

When quiet was restored after the Irish Rebellion of 1798, definite plans for a union with England were formulated. The idea of a legislative union between England and Ireland was not new in 1798. There had been earlier supporters of the project who considered a Union as the best means of abolishing the restrictions on Irish industry and trade. Later more than one harassed official considered the abolition of the Irish representative body the simplest way out of the old problem of "managing" the colonial Parliament "in the interest of England." Buckingham as viceroy in 1780 and Carlisle in 1781 had been sounded as to its possibility. The Duke of Rutland, the first of Pitt's viceroys, was equally convinced in 1784 that "without a union Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain in twenty years longer." Later, when the movement for Catholic relief was agitated in 1792, Pitt himself referred to a union in a letter to Westmorland. He had long thought of a union of the two countries, but scarcely dared hope for its realization. Such a plan would undoubtedly solve the recurring difficulties. In a united parliament Catholics could be given a share in the govern-

ment because they would form a minority compared to the rest of the Empire. The Protestant interest in power, property, and Church Establishment would thereby be secure.[1]

1. Letter of Pitt to Westmorland given in W.E.H. Lecky, History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, III, 74.

Again, before Camden's departure, the Prime Minister speculated on the matter of a Union. And when Cornwallis was appointed viceroy, the King wrote to Pitt that the new Lord Lieutenant must not "lose the present moment of terror for frightening the supporters of the Castle into an union with this country."[2]

2. Quoted from Clement Transcripts, IX, 021, cited in D. G. Barnes, George III and Pitt, 362.

Fitzgibbon, now known as the Earl of Clare, also favored the union. In his fanatical Protestantism the Earl hoped that under a United Parliament the question of reform would become infinitely remote; then the prospect of being overwhelmed in the Irish Parliament by the Catholic representatives would no longer be a menace to the privileged position of the Ascendancy. Pitt definitely was not motivated by any such rancorous hatred of "Papists." He pursued a broader, more statesmanlike policy. The overwhelming danger with which England was faced by the war

with France made him determined to strengthen the hold of the English Government on Ireland, and to eliminate the possibility of independent action by the Irish Parliament.

Thus, for various reasons, the King, Pitt, the most important ministers in England, and officials in Ireland favored the Union. But the question was, "How to get it through the Irish Parliament?" The support of this measure would depend in no small manner upon whether or not it provided for the admission of Catholics to the imperial Parliament of Westminster. The Protestant oligarchy would support it only if Catholics were not admitted; the Catholics would support it only if Catholics were admitted.

Cornwallis from the beginning hoped that Catholic Emancipation would be included as a part of the Union. The progressive decline of his hopes is seen in his letters from September 30 to November 15, 1798. He was convinced that there would be no tranquillity in Ireland until the Catholics would be given their full rights. And, if emancipation was not to be a part of the Union, he was determined that no clause should be included as an integral part of the Union that would make exclusion of the Catholics permanent.

The implacable Fitzgibbon suspected the liberal principles of Cornwallis. In October, 1798, the Chancellor sailed to England to personally urge his point of view--that, while the Union was necessary, the Protestant

Ascendancy in Ireland must at all costs be maintained. Pitt yielded for the time being, yet he resolved that the union was eventually to be the means of Catholics obtaining their political rights.[3]

3. Wm. Wilberforce, Life of Wilberforce, II, 318, 324.

In November, 1798, the Government's scheme reached Cornwallis. According to this first draft the Catholic clergy were to receive a salary from the state, the tithe question was to be arranged, reforms were to be made in the Established church, but Catholics were not to be admitted to the new United Parliament.[4]

4. Charles Cornwallis, Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, II, 434-435, ed. C. Ross. Hereafter referred to as Cornwallis, Correspondence.

Would the Catholics give their support to a projected union that did not provide for their emancipation? Of the negotiations of the last five months, of the favourable disposition of the Government in London, of Clare's mission, they were ignorant. There seemed to be in the measure the indication of a definite good will in the proposed financial help for the clergy, and in the proposal to lighten the burden of tithes that was one of the chief grievances of the Irish. Nor were the victims of the Castle victories in 1792 and 1795 likely to protest against a scheme which, apparently, would end the Castle forever. Cornwallis at first thought that the plan would not be opposed by the

Catholics. Leading Catholics were anxious for nothing so little as a discussion of the Catholic claims "in the present temper of the Irish Parliament." They could hope for a less prejudiced hearing in the Imperial Parliament. Archbishop Troy was approached; he was well-disposed and willing to do all he could prudently do to assist the scheme.

But Grenville was dubious as to the extent of the influence of the "leading Catholics." His anxiety was justified for soon Cornwallis' letters reveal another aspect of Catholic opinion. He wrote that he had been too sanguine in hoping for the good will of the Catholics, and the principal Catholics in Dublin were "disposed to think that, in this part of the Kingdom at least, the greater number of them will join in opposition to the Union."[5]

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5. Based on Cornwallis, Correspondence, II, 434, 443, 444, and a letter in W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., V, 206-207.

The Government had by now publicly announced its plan in a propaganda pamphlet written by the Under-Secretary Cooke, and the expected general opposition showed itself immediately. The weeks that intervened between its publication and the opening of Parliament were filled with expostulatory meetings and counter-pamphlets. The Patriot group that had led the movement for legislative independence twenty years before rallied against the scheme. The Irish

Bar denounced it, as they saw the prospect of losing much of their old prestige and their professional occupations. The merest hint of relinquishing their lucrative hereditary power alarmed the great borough proprietors. Dublin Catholics at a protest-meeting declared that the Union would mean the extinction of Ireland's liberty. Daniel O'Connell here made his maiden speech and passionately asserted he would rather have the penal laws back than lose the national parliament.

In such a situation the Catholics acquired an immense political influence. The Opposition sent an assurance to Lord Kenmare that if the Catholics would present a petition against the Union, a motion would be made in favour of Catholic Emancipation as soon as the Union project was disposed of. Alarmed the English Government declared that it would never grant emancipation "as long as the parliament of Ireland remains in its present state."

Attempts were then made by the Government to work the Catholics into some kind of united support under the inspiration of the pro-union Catholic aristocrats, but these efforts failed miserably. Finally in January, 1799, Castlereagh set himself privately to negotiate an alliance with the bishops. A meeting of the trustees of Maynooth College was his opportunity. He was so far successful that the ten bishops who acted as trustees, reversing their previous refusals, tentatively accepted in principle the offer

of State provision and the right of the government in return to confirm the papal appointment of bishops.

Meanwhile at Dublin and at Westminster the Parliamentary campaign had opened. Pitt's speech on the Union emphasized the necessity of establishing honest, impartial authority in Ireland and stressed the anomaly of the Irish position. Here was a nation that had to support an established church to which few of the inhabitants belonged, a nation in which most of the landed property of the country was in the hands of a minority. Racial and sectarian divisions of this nature the Irish Parliament by its very composition was unable to end. After giving an exhaustive survey of the ills of Irish society, Pitt referred to the admission of Catholics to Parliament. This question he knew alarmed many. But in an imperial parliament the Catholics would be a minority. Full concessions could be made to them without endangering the state. Thus, all considerations being taken together, the Prime Minister felt that the best solution to the problem of maintaining harmonious relations with Ireland was "in the formation of a general imperial legislature."[6]

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6. Summarized from Pitt's Speech on the Union in Speeches, III, 47-49.

In spite of Pitt's eloquence the Union was bitterly fought in Ireland when Parliament met on January 22, 1799. Grattan and his followers immediately took up the glove.

After a fierce debate which lasted twenty hours the votes were equal. The debate was resumed and a fresh division taken. The Government was defeated by a margin of five votes, and the paragraph in the King's speech that referred to the desirability of the union was expunged from the record. Great was the exultation of the Anti-Unionist at the results of this first encounter in the Irish Commons. Realizing full well that the English Government would not consider the defeat as final, the Opposition again renewed its overtures to the Catholics.

To thwart and counteract this "hand of friendship" policy Cornwallis sent his secretary to England in the autumn of 1799. The Viceroy directed Castlereagh to inform Pitt and the Cabinet regarding the state of affairs in Ireland and to ascertain what was likely to be the ultimate decision in regard to Catholics. Cornwallis did not want the Catholics later to feel that he had deceived them.

At this time the political alignment in Ireland on the question of the Union was as follows: the Protestant group was divided pro and con with the Dublin and Orange societies definitely against the measure; the Catholics were holding back as they were skeptical whether the Union would impede or facilitate their object. Castlereagh believed that the measure could not be carried if the Catholics actively opposed it.

The Cabinet considered the situation in a meeting at

which Castlereagh was present. The latter was commissioned to instruct Cornwallis that as far as the Cabinet was concerned, "he need not hesitate to call forth Catholic support." However, it was considered expedient not to give a direct assurance of emancipation as this might completely alienate the Protestant groups in both countries.

Armed with this authority Cornwallis and his aides "omitted no exertion to call forth the Catholics in favor of the Union." Though no definite promise or assurance was made a general hope was raised and, according to Castlereagh's testimony, the support the Catholics gave because of this hope made the carrying of the Union possible.[7]

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7. Negotiations with the cabinet summarized from Castlereagh's letter to Pitt, Jan. 1, 1801, in Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, IV, 8-12, ed. Chas. Vane. Hereafter referred to as Castlereagh, Correspondence.

In the end, though, to secure the Union, Pitt had to buy it out. The energies of Castlereagh, Cornwallis, and Clare were directed toward the manipulation of the members of Parliament and the powerful interests which controlled the seats. They "justified" the means which they employed on the ground of disagreeable necessity. To Cornwallis it was particularly "dirty work" for which he despised himself, and he often longed to kick those whom he was obliged to court.

According to the proposed Act of Union Ireland would have one hundred seats in the United Parliament. This arrangement would cause two thirds of the Irish seats to disappear. In the Irish Parliament at this time out of three hundred members in the House, one hundred twenty-four were nominated by fifty-two peers and sixty-four were nominated by thirty-six commoners. Both in England and in Ireland those who controlled boroughs considered them as property to be bought and sold. Compensation would be the only method that could possibly win these borough owners to acquiesce in a project that would deprive them of profit and influence. This principle of compensation was recognized in 1785 when Pitt proposed to reform the parliamentary system there. Accordingly these proprietors of Irish boroughs were granted fifteen thousand pounds apiece for each constituency. Lord Ely, for example, received forty-five thousand pounds for his six seats. The total sum paid to borough patrons was one million, two hundred sixty thousand pounds. To provide for the payment of the money this sum was added to the Irish National Debt.

However, to guarantee compensation to borough owners was not the only job on the agenda. Votes had to be obtained in Parliament in order to assemble the majority needed to pass the Act. Consequently the patronage and terror of the Crown was employed to arouse public opinion

toward the Union and to pack Parliament. The people were wheedled, coaxed, threatened, and bribed into signing petitions in favor of a union with England. Everyone holding a government job in the country had not only to sign a petition himself but was compelled to make his relatives sign it also. Moreover, to every man who hoped eventually to hold a position under the government, it was plainly intimated that he and his relations must become signers. New and lucrative jobs, offices, government appointments were created for bestowal on those who rendered "services." A briefless barrister might find himself a judge, while a rich man ambitious for social distinction would receive the "ribbons" or "gilt potato." Within the year twenty-eight new Irish peers were created, twenty received promotions in the Irish peerage, and six were rewarded with English peerages. No one denies that the transaction involved wholesale corruption. The purchase of the Irish Parliament to pass measures desired by England was habitual and invariable. Only this time it was done on a scale of unusual magnitude.

By these various devices the English Government at length managed to secure the required majority--one hundred sixty-two out of three hundred three members. But Cornwallis knew the mettle of the men with whom he had to deal. He wrote, "I believe that half of our majority would be as much delighted as any of our opponents, if the measure could

be defeated."[8]

8. Details of the pressure brought to bear on the Irish Parliament given in Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 34, 151, 156, 184; Castlereagh, Correspondence, III, 260, et. seq.; elaborate details are related by H. Grattan, op. cit., V, Chapter V; W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., V, Chapter XIII. F. Plowden, op. cit., I, 3-4, lists the peerages and promotions granted.

The Act of Union received the royal assent August 1, 1800. The Government buildings in the capital sported a new flag, and the Bank of Ireland purchased the House of the Irish Parliament.

CHAPTER VII

Pitt's Attempt To Gain Emancipation Fails

As soon as the Act of Union became a reality Pitt with the aid of Grenville immediately began to plan the details of complementary legislation to procure Catholic Emancipation. They felt that the removing of the remaining disqualifications from Parliament and from office would be the best pledge the United Parliament could give of its general good disposition towards the Catholic body. Moreover, the measure seemed wise when considered with reference to the present state of Europe and to the great probability of an attempt at the invasion of Ireland in the course of the year.

Hence, the two ministers drew up the following plans. Catholics were to be admitted to Parliament and to offices in the Government. The Test Act was to be repealed and a political oath substituted that was to be imposed indiscriminately on members of Parliament, officeholders, ministers of religion, and teachers. This political oath was to contain a declaration of loyalty to the King, fidelity to the Constitution, and a renunciation of Jacobin principles. There was also to be a financial endowment for Catholic and Dissenting clergy. Finally, a provision was to be made for

the commutation of tithes.[1]

1. On February 2, 1801, Grenville communicated the details of the plans for emancipation to his brother, the Marquis of Buckingham. Cf. Courts and Cabinets of George III, III, 128-129.

Pitt said nothing to the King on the subject. Doubtless he thought it would be less difficult to gain his consent if a complete plan was presented to him as the policy adopted by the cabinet. In pursuing this line of action, as he later acknowledged, he was to blame. The risk was great, for Pitt was fully aware of the Sovereign's relentless opposition.

In 1795 George had shown that he considered emancipation to be a breach of his coronation oath. In 1798 when Cornwallis first went to Ireland the King reminded Pitt that religions other than the established one might be tolerated, but this toleration did not include a share in the government of the state. Hence, "no farther indulgence" must be granted to the Catholics. Likewise, George III informed Cornwallis that though he was a "strong friend to the Union of the two Kingdoms," he would become "an enemy to the movement" if it were to cause any change in the situation of the Catholics.[2]

2. George III to Cornwallis, January 31, 1799, in D.G. Barnes, George III and Wm. Pitt, 362, cited from Clement Transcripts.

Nevertheless, when the Cabinet reassembled at the end of September after the summer recess, Pitt unfolded the design which, in conjunction with Grenville, he had so carefully prepared.

Unexpected opposition appeared in the Cabinet. Its source was the Chancellor, Loughborough. He took decided exception to the proposal to remove the Oaths of Supremacy and Abjuration as a test for Catholics holding office. So strongly did he protest that the Cabinet adjourned without making a decision. The question was not broached again until the January meeting. The delay in reaching an agreement during these months seems to have been due to Pitt's illness during October, to his personal financial worries, and to the attention given to the more pressing problems of the war and the scarcity of supplies.

But Loughborough in the meantime was most active. It is not known for certain whether Loughborough, seeing an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the King, betrayed the Prime Minister or not. There seems to be no doubt, though, that he was engaged in opposing further concessions to Catholics. He wrote a lengthy memorandum which maintained that "A Protestant government cannot recommend to a Protestant Parliament the repeal of all the laws to which both owe their being and security." A copy of this memorandum was found in the Sidmouth Papers. On the envelope George III had written, "The Chancellor's reflections on

the proposal from Ireland of emancipating the Roman Catholics received December 13, 1800."[3]

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3. Henry Addington, Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth, I, 500, ed. George Pellew. Hereafter referred to as Sidmouth Papers.

This seems positive proof that Loughborough was opposing concessions and that the King was aware of it in December; it does not prove that the Chancellor informed the King of Pitt's plans. George III said that he was unaware of them until a short time before he spoke to Dundas at his Levee on January 28.

It is probable that Loughborough's most effective work consisted in winning members of the Cabinet to his view. The Duke of Portland, for example, is alleged to have changed his stand after reading Loughborough's memorandum. When the Cabinet met in January, Loughborough, Portland, Westmorland, Liverpool, and Chatham, Pitt's brother, appear to have offered various degrees of opposition. This opposition and division in the British cabinet on the Catholic question came as a distinct surprise to Castlereagh and Cornwallis. Castlereagh immediately wrote to Pitt to recall the fact that in the autumn of 1799 a serious effort had been made to ascertain the opinion of the Cabinet on this very question. His letter, which summarizes the history of the negotiations on the subject, indicates that Dublin Castle

and the British Ministry were aware of the determined opposition of the King. It shows that not only Pitt, but the Cabinet as a whole, was responsible for the procedure of Cornwallis, viz., that he solicit the support of the Catholics on the tacit understanding that Emancipation would receive the support of the English Ministry in the Imperial Parliament.

While affairs were at this stage, the first imperial Parliament convened on January 22, 1801. Pitt, intent upon setting the question at rest, inserted in the King's Speech a passage expressing confidence that Parliament would seek to improve the benefits already secured by the Act of Union. The phrase was smooth enough to leave the King's conscience unruffled; on the twenty-third he assented to the Speech.

However, on January 28, at the King's Levee, the crisis came. The King walked up to Dundas and referring to Lord Castlereagh said, "What is it that this young Lord has brought over which they are going to throw at my head?... The most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of! I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure." "Your Majesty will find, " answered Dundas, "among those who are friendly to that measure some whom you never supposed to be your enemies."[4]

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4. P.H. Stanhope, Life of Pitt, III, 274.

The extraordinary outburst naturally led the ministers to confer together the next day. Grenville was requested to prepare a paper explaining the proposed changes in the form of oath for members of Parliament; he declined. Pitt himself then undertook the task. In a masterly letter of January 31, 1801, he attempted to present his case to the King as he should have liked to present it before George III showed himself so highly agitated over the question. The Prime Minister probably realized that his opportunity of having the King study his proposal with an open mind was lost. Nevertheless, Pitt presented his point of view as he owed it to himself and his colleagues at least to state what their program actually was.

Pitt's letter shows that he was convinced of the justice of the cause. He maintained that the admission of Catholics and Dissenters to office and of Catholics to Parliament now involved little or no danger to the Established Church or Protestant interest. The political circumstances under which the exclusive laws originated were no longer applicable to current affairs. There was no apprehension of a Catholic successor to the throne nor danger from an invasion by a foreign Pretender. Furthermore the Catholics had disclaimed by oath the more "obnoxious tenets" attributed to them. In addition, the pensioning of the Irish clergy would win their gratitude and support. These measures would afford to a large class of the Irish subjects

a proof of the good will of the United Parliament and would help to give the full effect to the object of the Union--the tranquilizing of Ireland and attaching it to England.

The King, fortified by the legal arguments of Loughborough and by the ecclesiastical protests of the Archbishops of Canterbury and Armagh, did not hesitate in his reply. He informed Pitt that his Coronation Oath made it impossible for him to discuss any proposition that would "tend to destroy" the groundwork of the Constitution, and particularly that one now proposed by the Prime Minister which was "no less than the complete overthrow of the whole fabric that the wisdom of our forefathers esteemed necessary" as he euphemistically described the penal laws. Pitt's plea that the pacification of Ireland was indispensable in time of war was wholly unavailing. Again the King reiterated that his interest in a Union with Ireland was based on a trust that the union of the two Established churches "would forever shut the door to any further measures with respect to Roman Catholics."

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5. Communications of Pitt and the King summarized from P.H. Stanhope, ibid., Appendix, xxiii-xxxi.

On receiving this definite refusal to consider his proposals Pitt sent in his resignation, at the same time assuring the King of his support and assistance to the new government. George III accepted his resignation, but re-

quested that Pitt keep office until all the new appointments were made. Addington was persuaded to undertake the formation of a new ministry.

In the meantime Cornwallis was waiting to hear of the developments in England. A letter from Castlereagh dated February 9, 1801, written under the direction of Pitt, soon informed him of the unfavorable aspect affairs had taken. Cornwallis was requested to inform the Irish of the failure of the movement, to calm them and assuage their disappointment.

The Viceroy accordingly drew up two letters. The first he based on Pitt's sentiments as conveyed in the letter from Castlereagh; the second expressed his own thoughts.

In these letters the Irish were appraised that the ministers had found insurmountable obstacles to the granting of concessions to the Catholics while they were in office. In consequence, they had retired, considering this line of conduct as "most likely to contribute to the ultimate success" of the measures planned. The Catholics were to feel assured that they could rely on the support of all who retired when it could be given with a prospect of success, that Pitt would do his utmost to establish their cause in public favor. However, they were cautioned that Pitt would oppose any unconstitutional behaviour on their part. They were requested to be "sensible of the

benefit they possess by having so many characters of eminence pledged not to embark in the service of Government, except on the terms of the Catholic privileges being obtained." It was hoped, that on balancing the advantages and disadvantages of their situation they would pursue a quiet and peaceable line of conduct.[6]

6. Castlereagh, Correspondence, IV, 38-41; Cornwallis Correspondence, III, 347-348.

Cornwallis gave the notes to Lord Fingal and Dr. Troy and requested them to forward the letters to the principal Catholics in different parts of Ireland. These communications were received with mixed sentiments. Cornwallis felt that they accomplished their purpose, but a contemporary noted two Catholic meetings at Dublin that treated the concessions and excuses in Pitt's letter with the "greatest contempt."[7]

7. Lord Carleton. Quoted by P. Hughes, The Catholic Question, 236.

Moreover, there was one word in Cornwallis' letter that occasioned a great deal of misunderstanding--the word "pledged." Cornwallis himself realized this and wrote to a friend that the only meaning it was meant to convey was that "persons who had gone out of office because the measure could not be brought forward, would not take part in any administration that was unfriendly to it." He did not mean

that any definite measure was pledged. Pitt, too, foresaw a misunderstanding and prepared a statement to be made in Parliament if the letters were alluded to. In regard to the pledge, he would decline upon principle making "any other pledge than his past conduct." What his future conduct might be would depend upon what he felt due to the question itself as well as to the public interest. He did not accept the Lord Lieutenant's declaration as constituting anything like a binding pledge. With the "sentiments generally expressed in those papers" he was in agreement.[8]

8. Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 346.

It is apparent that other members of the ministry interpreted the statements in a similar light. Grenville and Windham in the May debate of 1805 said there was no pledge; Castlereagh in 1819 denied that, during the discussion of the question of union, any promise of the nature of a pledge had been given. And Canning in the debate of 1827 maintained that Pitt did not give a pledge but that transactions connected with that period, being put together, "calculated to excite, in the minds of the Roman Catholics, a hope, which has been deferred until the heart is sickened."[9]

9. Hansard, IV, 659; 1022; XI, 589-590; XVI, 1005-1006.

Unfortunately the papers were never alluded to in Parliament. Pitt's explanation remained a private communi-

cation. The Catholic leaders, on the strength of the letters issued by Cornwallis, had some reason for thinking their cause was not hopeless. They looked forward to Pitt's return to office and to the completion of his work.

Some writers claim that Pitt did not make a sincere effort to overcome the King's opposition.[10] On previous

10. W.E.H. Lecky, op. cit., V, 442; D. Gwynn, The Struggle for Catholic Emancipation, 131.

occasions he had been confronted with the stubbornness of the King and forced him to yield. Why not now? One strong reason why Pitt did not attempt it in this instance seems to be that he realized that he could never sway George III when his religious convictions were at stake.

It was evident that the King was greatly affected by the matter. At Windsor George III read his Coronation Oath to his family, asked them if they understood it, and added, "If I violate it, I am no longer legal Sovereign of this country, but it falls to the house of Savoy." And on another occasion he said to one of his attendants:

> "Where is that power on earth to absolve me from the due observance of every sentence of that oath, particularly the one requiring me to 'maintain the Protestant reformed religion?' Was not my family seated on the throne for that express purpose? And shall I be the first to suffer it to be undermined, perhaps overturned?"[11]

11. Sidmouth Papers, I, 285-286 n.

Under the strain the King's mind gave way and he suffered a recurrence of his insanity. On his recovery he attributed his illness to Pitt's attempt to bring up the question of Catholic Emancipation. Pitt was touched when the statement was repeated to him. In a moment of weakness he yielded to the King and sent him a message promising not to bring up the subject of Catholic relief again.[12] Shortly

12. Pitt's message was sent to the king through two channels: a verbal message through the King's physician, Dr. Willis, and a letter from George Rose direct to the King. P.H. Stanhope, op. cit., III, 304; G. Rose, Diaries and Correspondence, I, 360, ed. L.V. Harcourt.

after he intimated that, should the King desire it, he was prepared to withdraw his resignation and remain at his post. But by this time Addington had completed his cabinet and, with Pitt's support assured, both he and the King were satisfied with the arrangements made. On March 14 Pitt relinquished his office. Of his colleagues, Grenville, Dundas, Spencer, and Windham sent in their resignations, as well as Cornwallis and Castlereagh in Dublin.

Over the real motives of Pitt's resignation, over its sincerity, its meaning, much controversy has spent itself. Did he intend to bluff the King into capitulation?[13] Did

13. J.H. Malmesbury, Diaries and Correspondence, IV, 3, 8, maintained that Pitt wanted to show his strength.

he think himself indispensable? Was this the easiest way

to disembarrass himself of an awkward question that had never aroused his personal enthusiasm? Was it a means of avoiding making a peace with Napoleon?[14]

14. Criticism of the Edinburgh Review, cited in P.H. Stanhope, op. cit., III, 309.

An examination of the basis of some of these allegations is, perhaps, in order. Was the real reason for Pitt's resignation an aversion to be personally concerned in concluding peace with France, which he foresaw could not be much longer delayed? The suddenness and the manner in which his resignation occurred would seem to attest to the fact that the European war did not enter the affair. It was the King's decided opposition that forced the issue.[15] Reading

15. J.H. Malmesbury, op. cit., IV, 2, noted in his diary, February 5, 1801, that the dissension was still very great. "The King will not give way, and Pitt maintains his opinions. If this continues, a change must take place. And the idea seems to be not to call in Opposition, but to form an administration of such of Pitt's friends who do not think as he does on this particular point."

the correspondence that passed between Pitt and the King in early February, one can but conclude that Pitt resigned very reluctantly. It is most probable that Pitt would have undertaken the work of the peace if the King had been willing to do justice to Ireland.

Others assert that Pitt's resignation was a sham as he urged his friends to support the new ministry, which would

be an anti-Catholic one. According to them, Pitt should have declared war on the administration, harassed it with Catholic resolutions, and held his friends aloof.[16] How-

16. Donald J. McDougall in his article, "George III, Pitt, and the Irish Catholics," declares that Pitt had neither interest nor sympathy for Catholic Emancipation as a matter of principle. Cf. Catholic Historical Review, October, 1945, 31: 272.

ever, the political situation in Europe at the time left Pitt with scarcely any alternative except the support of Addington. England was at war and needed a strong government. Fox, as leader of the Opposition, could not take over the reins for he was a fierce opponent of the war and was in addition anathema to the King. Pitt could only be followed by a government of his own party, one he could support putting the Catholic question aside. Before quitting office he left means and preparations likely to insure success both in the expedition to Egypt then pending and in the proposed attack of the newly formed Coalition of the Northern Powers. Otherwise, he would have been reproached with deserting his post at an hour of distress and of abandoning war measures when they were in an improvident situation.

The fact that he was willing to keep his office in March when he had resolved on resigning in February is also cited as proof of his insincerity. It would seem that the intervening illness of the King is sufficient explanation.

Some writers contend, too, that Pitt's feeling for the King was simulated.[17] But Pitt had served George III for more

17. D. Gwynn, op. cit., 131; F. Plowden, op. cit., I, 56.

than seventeen years and had been on intimate terms with him. It was natural that he should be disquieted on hearing that the King attributed to him the cause of his illness.

Subsequently other ministers, some of whom were not at all on cordial terms with the Sovereign, felt that they should refrain from bringing forward a measure for Catholic relief out of consideration for George III. It was in this understanding that Castlereagh took office in 1803 and Canning in 1804. Then, in 1804, when Pitt was trying to form his second ministry, even Grenville sounded Fox as to the possibility of making a Government without Emancipation. Fox replied that if there was a ministry cordially united on giving the Catholics their full share in the government of the country, some "consideration, as far at least as delay went, might be had of the King's prejudices, especially in his present state."[18]

18. Charles J. Fox, Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, IV, 45, ed. Lord Russel.

However, on this occasion, Fox worked on the Grenville pride and persuaded Grenville to keep the measure and to join him in opposition to Pitt. Yet, in 1806, Fox

acted on the answer he had given to Grenville. When he took office, contemporaries noted that Fox had assured the King he would not bring on measures that were offensive to him such as Catholic Emancipation.[19]

19. Cf. Wm. Wilberforce, Life of Wilberforce, III, 256; Sidmouth Papers, II, 435.

Thus, all factors considered together, Pitt seems to have been sincere. On February 16, 1801, he explained his motive in resigning to Parliament:

> "I and some of my colleagues in office, did feel it an incumbent duty upon us to propose a measure on the part of the government which under the circumstances of the union, so happily effected between the two countries, we thought of great public importance, and necessary to complete the benefits likely to result from the measure. We felt this opinion so strongly, that, when we met with circumstances, which rendered it impossible for us to propose it as a measure of government, we felt it equally inconsistent with our duty and our honor any longer to remain a part of government. What may be the opinion of others I know not; but I beg to have it understood to be a measure, which, if I had remained in government, I must have proposed."[20]

20. Parliamentary History, XXV, 970.

Why should his statement not be accepted as true? He would not continue in office when thwarted by the King on a question of great importance, nor would he consent to disappoint hopes which he had encouraged and by which he had benefited. He did not insist on a struggle with the King

which might have had disasterous consequences. He insisted on his policy in the only way open to him--he resigned. He gained nothing personally thereby. He lost power to which he had been so long accustomed; his income was reduced to less than that of a country gentleman and necessitated the sale of his estate, Holwood. But claims of honor required that he do all in his power to requite the services of a great body of men who had shown remarkable patience and fidelity.

With all his outward composure, Pitt must have felt deep distress at his failure to complete the Union by the act he had in contemplation. He desired to vivify the Union with Ireland by a concession which would come with all the more graciousness because he had not introduced it into the legal contract. But the outcome of it all was resignation for himself, and a continuance of the agelong feud for the two people.

CHAPTER VIII

Pitt's Second Administration

In the ensuing years before Pitt's return to office the Catholic question attracted little public attention. Considering the circumstances under which Addington's ministry came into being, it was evident that the Catholics had not much to hope from it. Moreover, the affairs in Europe engrossed the attention of the government. The situation was so threatening that, after three years of office, Addington resigned and Pitt formed his second administration.

That George III would demand a fresh guarantee from his First Minister before again accepting his services was to be expected. Probably on no other condition could Pitt have returned to office. Rightly or wrongly he was convinced of the necessity of his doing so in the interest of national security. The King took full advantage of the situation. Pitt's idea was to form a coalition government to meet the crisis. But the King indignantly rejected the proposal that Fox should be included in the ministry and also forbade any further consultation with Grenville's group. Furthermore, he demanded a pledge that Pitt would resist all efforts to alter the Test Act--"The Palladium of

our Church Establishment"--or to secure further concessions for Catholics. These points understood, George III was ready to consider any plan Pitt might propose. However, the King independently asserted that if Pitt wouldn't be able to undertake the premiership under these circumstances, he would have to call for the assistance of men "truly attached to our happy Constitution."

Pitt accepted the King's conditions but not before he had reaffirmed his belief in the propriety of the measure which he had proposed in 1801, and in the salutary results which might have followed its enactment at that time. However, he acknowledged that other considerations and "sentiments of deference to your Majesty" had convinced him of his duty to abstain from bringing the measure before him again. He had previously given that assurance to the King, and at the present time would adhere to it.[1]

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1. Summarized from letters of Pitt and the King on the matter of Pitt's retaking office, P.H. Stanhope, *op. cit.*, IV, Appendix, vii-xii.

Under such restrictions then Pitt was allowed to resume his old office and to undertake the difficult task of organizing the country's defenses and finding allies for the coming struggle with Napoleon. His colleagues, with one or two exceptions, were titled mediocrities who owed their positions less to their ability than to their readiness to support the king in defending the Establishment and

the constitution against the designs of would-be-innovators. From such a government the Irish could hope for nothing. With the exception of Pitt himself, Castlereagh and Dundas, now Viscount Melville, were the only members who could be regarded as friendly. The convinced advocates of emancipation, Fox, Grey, Fitzwilliam, Grenville, Spencer, and Windham, were excluded, not only by the King's veto on the Whig leader, but equally by the conditions imposed on Pitt for those who were to enter the ministry.

It was natural that in spite of the unfriendly personnel of Pitt's ministry his return to power should be the signal for raising the hopes of Catholics again. During the autumn the Irish Catholics held a number of meetings, sometimes at the home of Lord Fingal, sometimes at that of James Ryan, a wealthy merchant. The Catholics, of course, were ignorant of the actual conditions under which the administration had been formed and of the position in which Pitt was now placed. Fingal and Scully in particular were desirous of avoiding anything that might be a source of difficulty or embarrassment to Pitt's government, but they were not prepared to accept a policy of indefinite postponement. Many of their associates, however, were more aggressive. Consequently in Dublin on February 16, 1805, the Catholics adopted a petition asking for the removal of all remaining disqualifications. A deputation was named to present it to Pitt, with a request that he lay it before

the House. The petition was signed by the peers, representatives of the landed gentry, the mercantile and professional classes.

The delegation was received by Pitt on March 12. Castlereagh had warned them that the moment was inopportune, that the ministry could not carry a relief bill even with the help of the opposition, that discussion on the subject at this time would help no one.

Pitt took the same ground. He received the delegates with every mark of courtesy and consideration. He agreed that the proposed measure would be very beneficial "whenever the proper time should arrive;" he informed them that his opinion on the justice of their cause was unchanged. But there were reasons that rendered it impossible for him to support their petition. Moreover in justice he must inform them that, not only must he decline to present their petition himself, but that under existing circumstances he must oppose it should it be introduced by another member.

Lords Fingal and Kenmare were reluctant to abandon hope of Pitt's support. They would have been content that he should introduce the petition, and simply lay it on the table, with a statement that the petitioners did not ask for immediate legislation. But, in view of his promise to the King, Pitt could not concede even this.[2]

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2. Buckingham wrote an account of the meeting to his brother, Dropmore Papers, VI, 263-264.

Such an issue had been foreseen by the committee in Dublin. The delegates had been instructed, in case Pitt refused, to seek the aid of another member. Accordingly, the delegates entrusted the presentation of their petition to Fox and Grenville. Fox welcomed the opportunity. Evidently he saw an occasion to incommode his political rival for he wrote to Grey that the "repeal of his foolish bill" and "the Catholic Question" would make two questions at the opening of Parliament as embarrassing and mortifying to Pitt as could be conceived.[3]

3. C.J. Fox, Memorials and Correspondence, IV, 64.

But the followers of the two men were not as enthusiastic. Thomas Grenville cautioned his brother that the whole Whig party was against the measure, and the Prince of Wales was irritated by it. He warned Grenville that if they persisted they might "make the future possessor of the Crown as adverse to it as the present." And Fox lamented that the cry of almost all their friends was so strong against bringing on the question that he was afraid they would be forced to put it off until the next session.[4]

4. Cf. Dropmore Papers, VII, 268, and C.J. Fox, op. cit., IV, 78.

Despite the opposition of his friends Fox adhered to his intention of championing the Catholics and in the end had his way. He undertook the introduction of the petition

in the House of Commons while Grenville presented it in the House of Lords.

The debates on the petition began May tenth and lasted until the fifteenth. Some speakers, as Lord Redesdale, Lord Sidmouth, and Duigenan, indulged in a polemic abuse of religion. However, the advocates of emancipation carried the weight of the debating power. Fox placed the question solely on the basis of rights. Grattan and several others supported him, declaring that they had voted for the Union chiefly with a view of facilitating the settlement of this question and bringing some measure of peace and internal unity to Ireland.

In the upper House Grenville led the debate. He dismissed the matter of a pledge supposed to have been given to the Catholic leaders. "The expectations which the Catholics entertained...arose, not by any assurances given by persons authorized or unauthorized, but from the nature of the subject itself." The Union he regarded as absolutely necessary; but its value would be sacrificed if its benefits were withheld from so large a part of the Irish people. So far the Union was only partial in its operations; it was necessary that there be a real and essential union of all the inhabitants. The first step in attaining this was the admission of Catholics to the constitution which they were called upon to support and defend.[5]

5. Hansard, IV, 652-660.

Pitt, of course, was handicapped. During his statement he took occasion clearly to dissociate himself from the fears and prejudices of his more reactionary followers. He made no serious effort to meet the arguments of Fox and Grattan; probably, he agreed with most of what they said. He limited himself to repeating in various forms one general idea--the present time was inexpedient. Therefore, he threw his weight against the petition and against the proposal to continue the discussion in committee.

The petition was rejected by large majorities: the Lords, by a vote of 178-49; the Commons, 336-124. The King was "most extremely rejoiced." He hoped that the great majority against the petition would be taken as an indication of the opinion of the Kingdom and that it would never be brought forward again.

Toward the end of 1805 Pitt's health began to fail rapidly. A collapse followed and on January 23, 1806, broken by the strain of his responsibilities, he died--the very day on which twenty-five years earlier he had entered Parliament. The King commissioned Lord Hawkesbury in his place, but without the genius of its dead leader the weak ministry fell to pieces. Reluctantly enough the King four days later sent for Grenville. On February 5 his arrange-

ments were completed and the ministry of "All the Talents" followed. It was composed of a curious amalgam of Whigs and Tories held together in personal loyalty to Grenville. The diary of the Speaker gives six of the cabinet posts to Fox and his party, two to Sidmouth, and three to Lord Grenville. The "Catholics," then, were in the majority, but the Sidmouth wing of the coalition was anti-Catholic on principle. Perhaps the most wonderful feature of all was the inclusion of Fox himself.

The Catholics, with such a favorable ministry in existence, again expected that their relief would come. But Fox took office as Pitt had done by agreeing not to bring up the Catholic Question. When Ryan appealed to him to present a petition Fox advised him that to do so might cause the fall of a friendly ministry which would be replaced by a hostile one. He then took the stand adopted by Pitt the previous year. It should not be presented because "for the interest of the cause, such a measure ought to be deferred to another session."[6]

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6. Fox to Ryan, February 18, 1806, in Grattan, op. cit., V, 295.

Grattan, in an attempt to justify Fox, writes:

> "The position, also of Mr. Fox, and his declining health, depressed him; the hand of death was upon him, and another more chilling and more deadly still,--a king sworn against his people."[7]

7. Grattan, loc. cit.

Change Fox to Pitt and the statement would have been just as true in 1805.

Fox died in September of that same year, and Grenville was left to drive the coalition and negotiate with the King. In a short time his administration fell.

The question that brought its downfall was one of administrative reform. Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz made more recruits necessary. Grenville hoped to augment the enlistment by making it more attractive to Catholics. He planned to secure the free exercise of their religion for Catholic soldiers and sailors who then had to attend Protestant services. In addition he wished to allow Catholics to hold commissions. Irish Catholic commissions became null and void when their regiments touched English soil; English Catholics could not hold commissions.

The King had provisionally given permission for these reforms. But after Malmesbury and Portland had influenced him behind the scenes he veered round, vetoed the bills, sent for Grenville, and demanded a promise that he would n never again introduce a measure for Catholic relief. Grenville refused to give this promise and resigned. The Duke of Portland accepted the office and dissolved Parliament. In the elections that followed the Catholic question was

the main issue. A Parliament was returned that gave Portland a decisive majority against any concessions to Catholics.

In the eyes of the Protestant Ascendancy of both islands the Catholic demand for political rights continually reappeared like the Hydra of Hercules. Three times in the past twelve years, 1795-1807, the Catholic question had embarrassed ministries to the point of crisis. Now it faced aligned in defense of the ban, the great majority of the ruling aristocracy and, leading them actively, the head of the state. From 1807 on opposition to the Catholic claims was the first condition of office, and the party that so pledged itself was to dominate English politics for another three and twenty years.

CHAPTER IX

Emancipation At Last

Since the Irish effort had miscarried, the English Catholics in 1808 determined once more to organize themselves. They might reasonably expect to obtain results as they were on the scene of action and possessed men of position and influence. Working in close consultation with members of Parliament who favored Catholic claims, as Grenville, Grey, and Canning, and also with Grattan and a small group of Irish reformers at Westminster, the Catholic Board attempted to formulate a compromise that would be acceptable to Catholics and to the enemies of Emancipation who feared for the Anglican Establishment. Most of the discussion on the nature of compromise centered around the question whether the English Government should be given a veto on the appointment of bishops. Thus began a series of disputes that caused serious dissension in the ranks of the English and Irish Catholics. Gradually there arose a double movement for Emancipation. The one, represented by the lay leaders in England and the aristocratic element in Ireland, indicated a willingness to accept what became known as "securities"; the other, represented by Milner and the mass of the Irish, was for unqualified emancipation.

These dissensions among the Catholics to which the defeat of Grattan's Bill in 1813, in particular, gave rise, and the long drawn out disputes that for the next three years centered around the Quarantotti Rescript, brought to an end the activities of the English Catholics.[1] The alli-

1. While Pope Pius VII was a prisoner of Napoleon, Monsignor Quarantotti had been entrusted with the ordinary powers required to carry on the business of the Church. The English Catholic Board in their conviction that Grattan's Emancipation Bill would bring advantages which would compensate for the Government veto endeavored to obtain Quarantotti's approval of the Act. The prelate, who was ignorant of English and Irish affairs, addressed a rescript to Bishop Poynter which declared that the Catholics "ought to receive and embrace with content and gratitude the law which was proposed last year for their Emancipation." The Irish bishops refused to accept the statement and a bitter controversy ensued. When the Pope returned to Rome after the fall of Napoleon, he asserted that Quarantotti did not have the power to issue the document and disavowed the Rescript.

ance of Catholic wealth and liberal politicians gradually fell to pieces; a period of stagnation set in that was to continue through the next ten years. In 1821 they made one more attempt to settle the problem with the bill sponsored by Plunkett. The bill did pass the House of Commons, but it was thrown out by the Lords. The same year the English Catholic Board ceased to function.

So, once more it was with the varying phases of the problem of governing Ireland that the fortunes of the Catholic question was to rise and fall. Since the Catholic Relief Act of 1793 the economic and social conditions of the

Irish had improved from year to year. Accordingly they became more conscious of the injustice involved in their exclusion from Parliament. Their demand for political independence became more and more identified with the vindication of Catholic claims. Eventually it was the enfranchisement of the forty-shilling landholder that won Catholic Emancipation.

A question immediately presents itself. If the Ascendancy so completely monopolized the Irish estates, how did it happen that there were so many forty-shilling freeholders in the 1820's? The Relief Act of 1793, by bestowing enfranchisement upon the freeholder, gave the peasant a new value in his master's eyes. To secure votes Protestant landlords almost universally changed the terms of their tenants, which were before in terms of years, into freehold leases of twenty-one years. Thus one finds Lord Palmerston writing to the Chief Secretary of Ireland, Robert Peel, in August, 1817:

> "Could you tell me generally whether you think there is any probability of a contest for the county of Sligo at the next election. I could, at the present moment, make from 280 to 290 voters by giving leases to tenants who are now holding at will. If there is any chance of their being of use next year, I will do so forthwith, and register them in time. If not, I should, perhaps, postpone giving twenty-one years' leases until matters look a little more propitious to the payment of rent."[2]

2. C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel from His Private Papers, I, 256.

These voters were wretchedly poor and, in the days of open voting, utterly dependent on the will of the landlords for they were still subject to a cheap and easy mode of ejectment. But in their right of franchise lay a possibility of change.

Change would come with a leader who had political genius to inspire and organize them. That leader was at hand and in the period when the older Catholic movement--the movement of the Parliamentarians--was rotting away, he emerged in full stature--Daniel O'Connell!

In the reorganized Irish Catholic Committee Daniel O'Connell from the first had been a force. He turned the Board into a thing of such boldness that the Government suppressed it in 1811. Beginning the legal and political strategy that was later to be his staple manoeuvre, O'Connell reformed the association under the name of a General Committee of the Catholics of Ireland. Henceforth throughout his career when his organization under one title was suppressed he would re-start it the next day under a new name.

O'Connell's action from the beginning also was apparently governed by his statement "that our first duty seems to be to procure emancipation as Catholics, if we can, and

if we cannot, then, as Catholics, to remain unemancipated. In either event to remain Catholics in discipline as well as in doctrine."[3]

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3. O'Connell to Conway, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, I, 69, ed. W.J. Fitzpatrick.

By the 1820's O'Connell had attained great popularity with the peasantry and, with the prestige of numerous court-room victories over the Ascendancy, he had become a legendary figure. Free from any tie or obligation binding him to a particular English faction, he was bold in language and skillful in speech.

Growing tired of the dissension inspired by the Veto question, this rollicking barrister devised a daring plan to unite all sections of the country in a revitalized Catholic Association. The clergy were to be members ex-officio while regular memberswere to contribute a guinea a year. Most amazingly of all, O'Connell resolved to enroll the entire peasantry as associate members who would pay a penny a month. This "rent" was to be used primarily for parliamentary and legal expenses and to expand propaganda in the press. The parishes were to be the centers of the new organization and the clergy were to supervise the collection of the diminutive subscriptions. At first people mocked and snobs roared at the scheme. But in a short time the pennies amounted to several hundred pounds per week and the sum

steadily advanced. From all sides--bishops, peers, merchants--O'Connell received support. But it was the enlistment of the peasant that was his "supreme achievement." This monthly collection commenced the Irish people's political education. The newly interested peasantry was potentially a political force of the first order. Opportunity showing itself, this army might show fight. The dissolution of Parliament and a general election in 1826 presented the opportunity.

O'Connell decided to test the issue where the enemy was most powerfully entrenched. No family in Ireland had greater influence than the Beresfords of Waterford. This family had represented Waterford in the Irish Parliament almost continually during the eighteenth century. In 1826 Lord George Beresford, who had the seat for twenty undisputed years, was seeking re-election. Lord George was an unswerving opponent of Catholic Emancipation. On the other hand his father was a popular resident landlord who had on his estate nine hundred Catholic voters who were attached to the Marquis by many acts of consideration in the past. Was it possible to overthrow this Beresford stronghold? The Catholic Association determined to attempt the task.

Villiers Stuart, a younger son of the Marquis of Bute, undertook to disturb the dishonorable tranquillity and challenged Beresford's seat. There was little hope of his

success even among his most ardent supporters. His nomination was to be at most a defiance to the Beresford insolence; even O'Connell hoped for little more. Fearing the reprisals of the powerful family, more than one priest refused to urge his parishoners or to lend his chapel for the propaganda. O'Connell threw all his energies into the campaign. If the Catholics failed here against such overwhelming odds, no one would be unduly discouraged. If they should win, there would no longer be a safe constituency in the whole of Ireland for any opponent of the Catholic claims.

The first day of the voting the excitement in the town was intense. According to the customary procedure, a show of hands was taken. The results were decidedly in favor of Stuart. Thereupon Beresford indignantly demanded a poll.

The polling proceeded slowly. On the first day there was already a substantial majority against Beresford composed almost exclusively of the freeholders of the Curraghmore estate--the Beresford residence. These tenants claimed the privilege of being the first to record their votes for "Stuart and Emancipation." For six days voters, bedecked with green ribbons or carrying green branches as banners of revolt, singing and cheering as they marched, arrived in procession to cast their votes defiantly for Stuart. Every tenant who thus came was risking his whole livelihood. Their freeholds gave them security for twenty-

one years so long as they paid their rents. Should they cease to be docile and reliable voters, the role in which alone they were of value to the landlords, their freeholds would not be renewed; they would again become tenants-at-will subject to high rents and speedy ejectment. Indeed, even under the freehold system they were not wholly safeguarded. In order to nullify the security of the twenty-one year tenure the landlords allowed the peasants to run into heavy arrears of rent. If these were not paid on demand there could be immediate eviction. For the sake of their religion the tenants faced all the material risks of their revolt against the landlord.

Beresford retired from the contest when his rival polled 1,357 votes against 528 for himself. "The Beresfords are gone! Gone for ever!" exulted the Dublin Evening Post when the news was made public. Such a breach in the walls of the ascendancy citadel was completely unexpected. For thirty years the Catholic forty-shilling freeholders had possessed the vote but never before had they dared to use for their own cause.

The Association lost no time in following up the amazing victory. There was still time to contest the elections at several other constituencies such as Louth, Monaghan, Westmeath. Landlords who resisted the Catholic claims were driven from a seat hitherto considered impregnable. With only a few days in which to organize the

candidature of one of its own Protestant supporters, the Catholic Association carried all before it when it entered the field.

As had been foreseen, reprisals against the peasants followed. The Association immediately took steps to alleviate the hardships of the evicted tenants. A "New Rent" was arranged for the relief of those evicted and to provide payment of rent for those who were being threatened with eviction. Gradually, however, the landlords themselves at last admitted the justice of this assertion on the part of their Irish renters. They stopped their persecution and frequently through the intervention of the priests came to terms with their tenants.[4]

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4. The organization of O'Connell's revitalized association and the Beresford election summarized primarily from D. Gwynn, The Struggle for Catholic Emancipation, Chapter XVIII.

The new Parliament met in November, with Lord Liverpool still Prime Minister. Sir Francis Burdett brought forward a motion in favor of the Catholics; it was again defeated. Early in the same year Lord Liverpool died. The King commanded Canning to reconstruct the administration--Canning, the disciple of Pitt and long the supporter of Catholic Emancipation. Canning accepted the invitation and the Catholic question immediately came to the fore. Peel, the

Home Secretary, would not hold office under Canning owing to the conflict between them in regard to Emancipation. "My opposition is founded on principle," he declared. "I think the continuance of those bars which prevent the acquisition of political power by the Catholics are necessary for the maintenance of the Constitution and the Established Church." Peel therefore retired from office and was followed by Wellington, Eldon, and other strong Anti-Catholics. Deserted by his colleagues, Canning entered into an alliance with the Whigs. Of the twelve members of his cabinet three only were opposed to Catholic claims. Naturally the formation of Canning's ministry gave confidence to the Catholics, but again they were doomed to disappointment. After a premiership of only four months Canning followed Liverpool to the grave in August, 1827.

Wellington subsequently became Prime Minister and Peel resumed his former office. Of all the statesmen of the time these two men were the staunchest opponents of Catholic relief. With Peel leader of the House of Commons and Wellington presiding over the government, there was no prospect of any relief measure being introduced.

A week after the formation of Wellington's ministry the Catholic Association leaders met in Dublin and pledged themselves to oppose any supporter of Wellington's government. Shortly after Vesey Fitzgerald, a member of County Clare, took office in the Wellington Cabinet and consequently

had to retest his constituency. Fitzgerald was a liberal landlord and a supporter of the Catholic claims. The seat had been in the family for a generation; his re-election was considered a mere political formality. While writing his memoir on the Catholic question several decades later Peel commented on Fitzgerald's candidacy as follows, "No Protestant candidate could hope to contest a Roman Catholic county in Ireland with greater advantages in his favor."[5]

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5. Robert Peel, Memoirs, I, 106, ed. Earl Stanhope and E. Cardwell.

His defeat by the Catholics was therefore all the more devastating.

The Association invited Major McNamara, a Protestant, to contest Fitzgerald's seat, but he refused. It was then proposed that O'Connell himself should be nominated. No law stood in the way of a Catholic's nomination; no law forbade his election, and the fact of a duly elected representative's being refused recognition solely because of his religion would be the most powerful of all arguments against the tradition.

At Clare the scenes that had two years earlier accompanied the triumph in Waterford were repeated, amid an enthusiasm even more intense. Once more armies of voters and their dependants headed by their priests marched in from every parish in the county; once more the amazing orderliness,

the utter absence of intemperance and riot; and once more, too, the spectacle of the thousands of soldiery dragged in to keep the peace standing by amazed spectators of a discipline that overcame their own.

The nominations were made on the thirtieth of June; six days later the polls closed, "the people's Dan" an easy victor. To his opponents votes of 982 he had 2,057. It was this victory of O'Connell that finally convinced Peel and Wellington that a settlement of the Catholic question was a political necessity.

During July and August Wellington gradually became convinced that the days of neutrality were over, that decision must be given against all his traditions and principles in favor of the Catholic claims, else the same state must continue--"a divided Cabinet, a divided Parliament, the strength of political parties so nicely balanced as to preclude any decisive course."--a disasterous situation for a Parliamentary manager.[6]

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6. C.S. Parker, op. cit., II, 53.

The Duke, determined to do his duty by his country, and still puzzled as to where his duty lay, was guided by Peel who wrote to him, August 11, that an attempt should be made by the Government to settle the Catholic question and the settlement should be a complete one. Peel hastened to

assure his chief that his views had not changed. But whatever his views were, he preferred the prospective danger of Catholic Relief to "the actual danger...the union and organisation of the Roman Catholics and the incessant agitation in Ireland."[7]

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7. C.S. Parker, Ibid., II, 55.

O'Connell, meanwhile, masterly inactive, made no attempt to claim his seat--and kept the Government wondering. September passed and October, and still no sign from O'Connell. Wellington was panicky and "very much perplexed what to do about Ireland." Finally the Prime Minister admitted his submission to necessity. If something wasn't done, they would have to suffer the consequences of a practical democratic reform in Ireland. Concession and disfranchisement was the only solution--concession, to satisfy the Catholics, to scuttle the Catholic question once and for all after thirty years of agitation; disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders, to destroy the arm by which concession had been extorted.

Thus Peel and Wellington were practically forced to yield principle to expediency. No one doubts that it was a painful experience for them. Peel lost the seat of Oxford University which he so highly prized, and both foresaw the alienation of friends and the rage of the party. However,

they maintained that statesmen were bound to put aside conviction should the welfare of the nation demand it. "Emancipation is a great danger, but civil war is greater still" Peel said to Wellington, and the Duke agreed.[8]

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8. Cf. Robert Peel, Memoirs, I, 184, 187.

Fear of the consequences in Ireland and not the injustice to the Irish Catholics was then the reason offered for granting Emancipation. On March 6 Peel arose as leader of the House of Commons to explain the situation that forced the Government to capitulate and the provisions for Emancipation that were to become effective. Since the Bill was a Government measure and the official opposition was wholeheartedly in support, it went rapidly through all its stages. The measure passed the House of Commons with a vote of three hundred twenty to one hundred and forty-two.

Wellington, speaking for the Bill in the House of Lords, made no secret of the fact that it was the condition of Ireland alone that had moved him. The Prime Minister reminded the House of Lords that when the Irish rebellion of 1798 had been suppressed, the legislative union had been proposed in the next year mainly for the purpose of introducing this very measure of concession. He intimated that further refusal might involve a civil war. On the third reading the Act passed with a majority of one hundred nine. Finally, on April 13, 1829, it received the royal assent.

Peel describing the circumstances said, "The Bill has now passed its last and most difficult stage."

The Emancipation Act of 1829 conferred on Catholics their additional civil rights. One of the most important clauses of the bill removed the two obnoxious declarations of allegiance and supremacy which had hitherto debarred the entree of Catholics into either House. Likewise, most of the great offices in the State were thrown open to them, the exceptions being that of Chancellor, Viceroy, and Commander-in-Chief of the armed and naval forces.

A few specific exclusions remained unrepealed. Marriage before a priest continued to be illegal; Catholics soldiers and sailors were not yet exempt from attendance at Protestant services; Catholic charities were still without legal protection. An attempt was made to prevent the extension of religious and monastic institutions, but in practice these provisions were inoperative.

In fact, there seems to be a general consensus of opinion that as far as ecclesiastical freedom was concerned the English and Irish Acts of 1791 and 1793 granted more religious liberty than the Act of 1829.[9] It has been shown

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9. Cf. W.J. Amherst, S.J., History of Catholic Emancipation, I, 181-182.

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that Pitt, too, believed that those Acts were really the emancipating ones. However one of O'Connell's personal

triumphs lay in the fact that the bill contained no veto or other provisions for Government interference with the Church.

On the whole the Catholics welcomed the Bill wholeheartedly. To them it signified an unconditional surrender to their demand for full political rights. The recovery of the right to sit and vote in Parliament was the consummation of a struggle that had lasted the lifetime of a whole generation.

CONCLUSION

Estimate of Pitt

In retrospect, what was Pitt's role in this struggle that culminated successfully for the Catholics in 1829.

The removal of the penal code insofar as it affected religion was mainly his work. The first English Catholic Relief Act of 1778 left many grievances unremedied, the chief of which was that it was still a punishable offense to practice the Catholic religion. When finally a bill was promoted in Parliament with the assistance of Pitt, Catholics became hopelessly divided among themselves as to its terms. Had Pitt not been genuinely favorable to the Catholic cause, he could easily have taken advantage of their differences to shelve the whole question. Instead he seriously attempted to reconcile their divergent plans. The resulting relief act was of great advantage to the English Catholics, as their churches were now legal. A similar act for Scotland followed. The Irish Relief Acts of 1792 and 1793, which Pitt practically forced the bigoted Dublin Parliament to pass, exceeded the others in generosity as it conceded the franchise to Catholics and admitted them to offices.

Pitt took an active part in welcoming the French clergy

exiled on account of the Revolution. With Wilberforce and others the Prime Minister joined a private Committee that undertook relief work for the emigre clergy. When the violence of 1792 and 1793 caused an unending stream of refugees to pour into the country, private relief was unable to raise sufficient funds to cope with the demand. Consequently, Pitt arose in Parliament and moved that the indigent refugee clergy be supported by sums taken from the national exchequer. The House of Commons accepted his motion without a dissentient vote. This gift was renewed annually; the clergy received it as long as they remained in England and needed the bounty.

The state of Ireland during the last half of the 1790 decade made the union seem inevitable. Pitt gave no pledge to the Irish Catholics in return for their support but there definitely was a "gentleman agreement." Moreover, the Prime Minister provided that no clause was inserted in the Act of Union which might preclude the admission of Catholics to the British Parliament. In fact, Article four of the Act of Union provided that the oaths excluding Catholics were retained only "until the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall otherwise provide." Furthermore, within a few weeks after the Act of Union he had drawn up his plan for Catholic Emancipation. When the King refused his consent to the measure, Pitt resigned. A knowledge of Pitt's character as well as available evidence tends to confirm Pitt's

good faith in the matter.

Although William Pitt failed to obtain Catholic Emancipation, the impetus that the movement received from his favorable dispositions could not be checked. Aided and encouraged by the gains already made, the Catholics pushed on until they achieved victory in 1829 in an act that probably was better than Pitt's, for it was free from "securities." But, as Wellington reminded the Lords, the legislative union had been proposed for the very purpose of introducing this measure of concession which was finally given in 1829.

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The first edition of Tone's Autobiography to be collated with the original manuscripts since 1826. It contains material suppressed by Tone's son that no other edition has. However, the notes on the Catholics are extremely abridged in comparison with the 1826 edition.

Wilberforce, Wm., Private Papers of Wm. Wilberforce, ed. A. Wilberforce, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1897.

Wilberforce was an admirer of Pitt but not a partisan. He frequently disagreed with Pitt's measures and voted against him. This work contains an interesting character sketch of Pitt that Wilberforce wrote sixteen years after Pitt's death. Some of the early letters of Pitt are also included in the book.

Windham, Wm., The Windham Papers: The Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Wm. Windham, 1750-1810, ed. H. Baring, London, H. Jenkins, 1913, 2 vol.

Windham was a friend of the Earl Fitzwilliam and one of the Portland Whigs who entered Pitt's Cabinet. His papers cast an interesting light on the Fitzwilliam episode and the attitude toward the Earl's actions taken by his supporters.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Amherst, W.J., S.J., History of Catholic Emancipation, London, Paul, Trench, and Co., 1886, 2 vol.

This was one of the first histories of Catholic Emancipation to come from the press. It covers the development of the movement from 1774-1820. In the text political arguments and moral exhortations occupy almost as much space as the narrative of events. The study is almost entirely confined to the history of the agitation of the English Catholics. The chief sources used by Amherst were Charles Butler, Historical Memoirs, and John Milner, Supplementary Memoirs. The author states that he had difficulty testing the opposite conclusions of the two men.

Barnes, D.G., George III and William Pitt, 1783-1806, London, Oxford University Press, 1939.

This book purports to be a new interpretation of the relations that existed between Wm. Pitt and George III based on their unpublished correspondence. The author wishes to illustrate the fact that the

"commonly accepted thesis of the loss of power by the King and of the rise of Pitt to the position of a modern prime minister and the headship of the Tory party was in accord neither with the facts nor with the opinions then held by the ruler and his men." The appendix contains the quotations from other historians who, as Barnes states, give the conventional interpretation. The author gives as his main authorities the Clinton Archives at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the letters and manuscripts at Windsor. The material found at Ann Arbor is in the works at Newberry Library in Chicago. It seems that the material at Windsor is the only source not hitherto well explored.

Broughham, Henry, Historical Sketches of Statesmen of the Time of George III, London, C. Knight and Co., 1845, 6 vol.

Broughham's Sketches are general essays on the leading figures of the political scene at the time of George III. The essays describe the oratorical abilities of the men and their cultural background. There is little analysis of the political acumen and activity of the statesmen. The sketch does not attempt to give a full chronological portrait, but does reveal the author's personal bias toward each character.

Curtis, Edmund, A History of Ireland, London, Methuen and Co., 1937.

The scope of this volume covers the history of Ireland from prehistoric times until the ratification of the treaty with Great Britain by the Irish Dail on January 7, 1922. The book is pleasant reading and at the same time gives evidence of scholarship. Numerous quotations are woven into the text, but the footnote references are not cited. The tenor of the work is fair and objective.

Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, London, Oxford University Press, reprint, 1921-1922, 22 vol.

Biographies of all men and women who have made notable contributions to the life and history of the British peoples are included in this scholarly work.

At the conclusion of each biographical study a bibliography is listed. For statesmen of renown such as Pitt and Fox the bibliography is quite comprehensive.

Gifford, John, A History of the Political Life of the Rt. Hon. Wm. Pitt, London, Cadell, 1809, 6 vol.

Gifford is definitely a Pitt panegyrist.

Grattan, Henry, Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan, ed. by his son, London, H. Colburn, 1839-1846, 5 vol.

The references to Pitt are not too favorable. When writing of the Prime Minister's negotiations with the Irish, Grattan's son used meaningful italics or annotated footnotes calling on posterity to judge or asking what opinion they can form of his conduct. The memoirs are valuable for the sidelights they reveal on Catholic activities in Ireland, particularly after 1790. They also portray the persevering efforts of Grattan in trying to obtain equal rights for Catholics.

Gwynn, Denis, The Struggle for Catholic Emancipation, 1750-1829, New York, Longmans, Green, 1928.

The struggle for Catholic Emancipation in England and Ireland from the climax of the penal system in both countries until the final triumph of O'Connell is here narrated. The book is good for a reader who wishes a direct presentation of the problem without a survey of the historical sources. The author's interpretation is based primarily on Bernard Ward's volumes on Catholic Emancipation and Lecky's History of Ireland. He follows the latter particularly in the discussion of the Union in which he takes the attitude that Pitt practiced duplicity.

Hughes, Philip, The Catholic Question, 1688-1829, New York, Benziger, 1929.

An analysis is given of the vicissitudes that the movement for Emancipation encountered from one British Ministry to another until it was an accomplished fact. A formidable array of facts and

cited documents exposes the domination of the Government by the English landowning oligarchy and its Irish counterpart. The book is a fine example of research and summary but is written in a somewhat obscure style.

Hunt, Wm., Political History of England, 1760-1801, New York, Longmans, Green, 1930.

This text is Volume X of the Hunt and Poole Series on English history. It was serviceable for the general political background. The book is supplemented with a briefly annotated bibliography.

Lecky, W.E.H., History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, New York, Appleton, 1893, 5 vol.

Lecky is considered a standard authority on eighteenth century English and Irish history. However his interpretation is frequently awry and is not always consistent. His work is valuable for various quotations from unpublished materials in the British and Irish archives. It is about the only secondary source that gives a detailed discussion of the English political activity connected with the Irish Relief Acts of 1792 and 1793.

Mathew, D., Catholicism in England, 1535-1935, New York, Longmans, Green, 1936.

For those who believe that the Catholics played an inconsequential role in the culture of the post-reformation era in England this book is a delightful disillusionment. It shows that there was a continuous tradition and constituent Catholic culture that has been largely neglected. The book is witty, vivid, and terse in style.

Newman, John H., The Second Spring, ed. by Francis P. Donnelly, S.J., New York, Longmans, Green, 1928.

Newman's speech on the occasion of the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England recalls the glories of the pre-reformation era, the contempt and misery into which Catholics subsequent-

ly fell, and concludes on a triumphant note that indicates the vistas again extending before the Church in England.

O'Faolain, Sean, King of the Beggars, New York, Viking Press, 1938.

The life of O'Connell is here presented as a study in the rise of modern Irish democracy. O'Faolain is a highly skilled literary craftsman. However, one frequently takes issue with various theses the author presents, particularly when he digresses into the fields of morality.

Plowden, Francis, History of Ireland from the Union to 1810, Dublin, John Boyce, 1811, 3 vol.

A very partisan account.

Rose, John H., Pitt and Napoleon, London, Bell and Sons, 1912.

The first part of this book consists of a series of essays. The second essay, "Pitt and Fitzwilliam," was of special interest in this study. In the second part of the volume is grouped the correspondence of Pitt that Rose considered hitherto unpublished.

_____, William Pitt and National Revival, New York, Harcourt, 1911.
William Pitt and the Great War, New York, Harcourt, 1911.

These two volumes were printed under one title, Life of William Pitt, in 1924. The biography is considered one of the best on Pitt. The first volume discusses Pitt's remedial and constructive efforts in his domestic policy. The second volume describes his foreign relations from 1783 to 1806. Rose is favorable to Pitt but is not indiscriminate in his support.

Rosebery, Archibald P., Pitt (Twelve English Statesmen), London, Macmillan, 1891.

A brief appreciation of Pitt's work and character portrayed mainly in the light of his domestic policy. The interpretation is not always sound and the research indicated is limited. The author's style is smooth and his delineations of character have a deft, human touch.

Russell, Lord John, The Life and Times of Charles James Fox, London, Bentley, 1859-1866, 3 vol.

A large section of this biography discusses the politics of the period. The interpretation is from a strongly Whig point of view.

Stanhope, Philip H., Life of Wm. Pitt, London, Murray, 1861-1862, 4 vol.

Stanhope's Life is regarded as the standard biography of Pitt, although the book needs to be supplemented by works based on more modern research. The work is comprehensive and is valuable for extracts from unpublished correspondence and other manuscript material.

Trappes-Lomax, Michael, Bishop Challoner, New York, Longmans, Green, 1936.

This book is a biographical study based on Edwin Burton's The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner--a work that is considered the standard life but which is difficult of access at the present. The author has adapted the book in an effective way. Challoner's dates are 1691-1781, a time that is called "the dreary desert that lay between the Red Sea of martyrdom and the Promised Land of toleration." For this period the book is valuable.

Ward, Bernard N., The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England, 1781-1803, London, Longmans, 1909, 2 vol.
The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, 1803-1829, London, Longmans, 1911, 3 vol.

These five volumes embody the results of years of research among unpublished documents in the British Museum and diocesan archives. For a study of

Catholic Emancipation they are indispensable. The first work deals almost exclusively with England. It follows the controversies that developed between laity and hierarchy over the content of the Relief Act of 1791. The second set describes the efforts made to procure Emancipation after 1808 when the English cause was gradually overshadowed by the Irish struggle.

Wilberforce, Wm., Life of Wm. Wilberforce, ed. Robert and Samuel Wilberforce, London, Murray, 1838, 5 vol.

Like so many of the early nineteenth century biographies of prominent statesmen, this Life is composed mainly of a series of letters and extracts from private journals. It is the chief authority for information on Wilberforce. The first three volumes contain frequent allusions to Pitt.

Wilson, P.W., William Pitt, The Younger, New York, Doubleday, Doran, 1930.

This book gives an engrossing picture of the social atmosphere and parliamentary life of England in the eighteenth century. Writing in an engaging style, the author makes Pitt's life dramatic and absorbing. The statesman is not unduly eulogized; his limitations are revealed. The main defect of the book is oversimplification.

PERIODICAL

McDougall, Donald J., "George III, Pitt, and the Irish Catholics, 1801-1805," Catholic Historical Review, October, 1945, 31: 255-281.

The main theme of this article is that Pitt was never interested in Catholic Emancipation on principle but that it was a mere tool in his hands to obtain other objects. Upon Pitt's resignation and pledge to the King is affixed the ignominy of all subsequent pledges and Anti-Catholic administrations. Primary sources are used extensively. The main weakness of the study is lack of perspective. Pitt's dealings with Ireland are distorted by signalling out just this period of his history. No cognizance is taken of his relations with the Irish Catholics during the early 1790's .