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WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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FOUR LETTERS ON THE PROPOSALS FOR PEACE
WITH THE REGICIDE DIRECTORY OF FRANCE

Oxford

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INTRODUCTION.

THE autumn of 1795 opened a new scene in the great drama of French affairs. It witnessed the establishment of the Directory. Five years had now passed since Burke had published his famous denunciation of the French Revolution. Those five years had witnessed portents and convulsions transcending all living experience. The Revolution still existed: but it had passed through strange transformations. The monarchy had perished in attempting to compromise with the Revolution. The dethroned King had been tried and executed as a traitor. The Queen and the Princess Elizabeth had met the same fate. The Dauphin, a mere boy, had been slowly murdered in a prison. The King's brothers, with the remnant of the anti-Revolutionary party, had fled from French soil to spread terror and indignation through Europe. Meanwhile, the destinies of France had been shaped by successive groups of eager and unscrupulous politicians. Those whom Burke had early denounced had long disappeared. Necker was in exile: Mirabeau was dead: Lafayette was in an Austrian dungeon: Barnave and Bailly had perished on the scaffold. To their idle schemes of constitutional monarchy had succeeded the unmixed democracy of the Convention: and to themselves that fierce and desperate race in whom the spirit of the Revolution dwelt in all its fulness, and in whom posterity will ever regard it as personified—the Dantons, the Héberts, the Marats, the Talliens, the Saint-Justs, the Santerres, and the Robespierres. The terrible story of the Convention is summed up in a few words. The Gironde and the Mountain had wrestled fiercely for power: and the victory had fallen to the least moderate of the two. The ascendancy

of the Mountain in the Convention had produced the domination of Robespierre. The fall of Robespierre had been followed by the Thermidorian reaction, and the White Terror: and the Convention, rapidly becoming more and more odious to the people, had at length dissolved, bequeathing to France as the result of its labours the constitution of the Directory. In the midst of all these changes France had been assailed by all Europe in arms. Yet she had shown no signal of distress. Neither the ferocious contests of her leaders, nor their deadly revenges, nor their gross follies, nor their reckless policy, had wasted her elastic powers. On the contrary, France was animated with a new life. That liberty which she had purchased with so many crimes and sacrifices she had proved herself able to defend. Nor was this all. In vindicating that liberty, she had wrested from her assailants trophies which threw into the shade the conquests of the Grand Monarque himself. In less than three years she had become actual mistress of nearly all that lay between the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the ocean, and potentially mistress of all the rest. She had attained a position, which, if maintained, would prove the destruction of the old balance of power in Europe.)

In the eyes of outsiders, the establishment of the Directory was the most important incident since the abolition of the monarchy. It confirmed the republican form of government: and its filiation with the Convention justified the transfer to it of the epithet Regicide. The execution of Louis XVI, though of small importance in the internal politics of France, had been the turning point in the relations of the Republic to the European world. But European intervention, in a feeble and undecided form, had commenced long before the tragedy of January 1793. The King's treason had been the breach of his sworn fidelity to the new order of things, followed by an attempted flight to the camp of a general who was plotting the destruction of the Revolution by arms. Two months after that attempt, the Emperor and the King of Prussia had held the meeting of Pilnitz: in the following year the forces of the Armed Coalition were on the soil of France. The capture of Longwy struck terror into none save those who were profoundly ignorant of the state of the opposing elements. The invasion of Champagne, if such it can be called, acted on France like an electric stroke.

Longwy was taken on the 23rd of August, 1792. Before the end of the year, the generals of France had not only hurled the Germans back on the Rhine, but had sprung in all its parts that deep mine which was destined to shatter the ancient fabric of Europe. They had seized Spire, Worms, and Mentz. They had levied contributions on the rich city of Frankfort: they had incorporated Savoy with France, by the name of the Department of Mont Blanc: they had annexed the county of Nice. On the northern frontier they had been even more successful. A few years before, the Austrian throne had been occupied by a sovereign whose head was full of modern ideas. Joseph the Second was a man of progress and enlightenment. Relying on the alliance with France which had been cemented by the marriage of the French king with an Austrian princess, he had ordered the demolition of all the Austrian fortresses on the Flemish frontier, and transferred his military strength to the frontiers of Bavaria and Turkey. The consequences, as soon as France became an enemy, were obvious. The single fight of Gemappe laid Austrian Flanders prostrate. Mons, Tournay, Nieuport, Ostend, Bruges, and finally Brussels itself, threw open their gates to Dumouriez and Miranda: and the Convention, in defiance of the feeble Dutch, had decreed the invasion of Holland and the opening of the Scheldt. The forces of the Armed Coalition, consisting of Austria and Prussia alone, were scattered by the Republican armies like chaff before the wind.

The year 1793 opened a new phase of the struggle. France was no longer the helpless object of intervention and plunder. France had braced herself for resistance: she had proved her strength. Europe began to dread as well as to hate her. Meanwhile a fiercer element was added to the ferment. The dark days of December had witnessed the trial of Louis at the bar of the Convention: the 21st of January witnessed his execution. The attitude of England had for above two years been one of utter carelessness. Burke's voice had been raised almost alone in tones of alarm: and Burke had been unanimously laughed down. The English nation were not unlike the Spanish Admiral Don Alonzo del Campo, with his fleet peaceably riding at anchor in the lake of Maracaibo. Two days before the redoubtable Morgan destroyed that fleet, a negro, says the chronicler, came on board, telling him, 'Sir, be pleased to have great

care of yourself: for the English have prepared a fire-ship, with design to burn your fleet.' But Don Alonzo, not believing this, answered: 'How can that be? Have they peradventure wit enough to build a fire-ship? Or what instruments have they to do it withal?' The English parliament gave as little attention to the alarms of Burke. But as the year 1793 wore on, more and more came to light of the intrigues between French revolutionists and English sympathizers. English representatives now presented themselves in the Convention. The deepest anxiety filled those who feared the effect in England of the Revolutionary example: and some thought a civil war, in which France would be the ally of a revolutionary element, to be at hand. Without going beyond the actual, the system of plunder which the French pursued in Belgium excited English indignation: and when Holland was invaded and the Scheldt declared to be open, the unprincipled and reckless aims of the Convention became clear. They were boldly avowed by Danton: France intended to grasp all that lay within her natural boundaries, the Ocean, the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees. Since the abolition of the Monarchy, England had held no regular communication with the French government. The French Minister, however, remained in London: and through him, though unofficially, the English ministry endeavoured to recall the politicians of France to peace and moderation. But there was in truth no common ground of negotiation. Crediting the reports of English sympathizers, the Parisian politicians believed the English Monarchy to be on the verge of a dissolution as complete as that which had befallen their own. They showed no respect to Grenville's remonstrances: and by the middle of January war was known by diplomatists to be a certainty. The execution of the French King precipitated it. George III then broke off all negotiation with the French Minister, and ordered him to quit England in eight days. England was at war with France, and the Armed Coalition was thus reinforced by all the wealth, power and authority of the leading nation in Europe. The rest of Europe soon followed. Before the summer of 1793 Austria, Prussia, England, Holland, Russia, Spain, and all Italy except the Republics of Venice and Genoa, were at war with the French Republic.

{ Pitted against such a Coalition France might well expect

reverses. She could hardly expect to keep her bold and reckless conquests: she might well have been content to purchase the right to choose her own government with the loss of a considerable part of her own territory. Austria and Prussia were bent on dismembering her: England coveted her rich possessions beyond seas. Disaster after disaster befell the armies of the Revolution. The Austrian generals, better skilled in tactics and in command of veteran soldiers, quickly rescued Flanders from the undisciplined levies of the French. At Neerwinden the French were totally defeated: and before the end of March they were driven to their own soil. The Armed Coalition now seemed to have its way made plain before its face. The second invasion of France was a different matter to the desultory irruption of the preceding summer. The task, if achieved, was certain to accomplish its end: but it was no easy one. The famous Iron Frontier had to be forced. Condé and Valenciennes were invested: and the capture of Condé was the first-fruits of the invasion. On the 28th of July, 1793, Valenciennes was taken by the Duke of York. In every quarter the prospects of the Republic darkened. Mentz was retaken. From the lower Loire came the news of the formidable and famous insurrection of La Vendée. Toulon was occupied by Lord Hood, in the name of Louis XVII. British ships seized the French islands in the West Indies, and did not even spare the petty fishing stations of St. Pierre and Miquelon, which were all that remained to the French of their vast and rich titular empire in North America. British troops seized the poor remains of the once brilliant French empire in India. Greater ills than the loss of Tobago and Pondicherry were menacing at home. Famine stalked through the people. Bankruptcy threatened the treasury. In that dark hour France drew strength from her perils. Throughout the departments the people cheerfully gave up their all to the imperious necessities of the public cause. France became one vast camp. The cathedrals were turned into barracks: the church bells were cast into cannon. The decree went forth that all Frenchmen should be in permanent readiness for military service. Custine, the general who had surrendered Mentz, was executed. Meanwhile, the Duke of York was besieging Dunkirk; and the existence of the Republic depended on the defence of the Iron Frontier. On all sides, indeed, the defence of France aroused

all the energy and ingenuity of the French character. The French were now no longer in the hands of generals who hesitated between the Dauphin, the Duke of Orleans, and the Assembly: who had not decided whether to play the part of a Cromwell or of a Monk. They were led by stout and earnest republicans: by Carnot, Moreau, and Jourdan; Pichegru and Hoche defended the Rhine: Davoust and Labourdonnaye the Pyrenees: Kellermann and Massena the Alps. Before the end of the year, La Vendée was pacified: Toulon was recovered: while Moreau and Jourdan had not only stayed the progress of the Allies on the Iron Frontier, but had a second time effected a lodgment on the soil of Flanders. The end of the year 1793 found France, though surrounded by the whole world as an enemy, in a far stronger position than the beginning.

The fortunes of France steadily rose from the hour when the Duke of York was forced to raise the siege of Dunkirk. During the winter, the army in Flanders was reinforced to the utmost: and early in 1794 the command of it was transferred from Jourdan to Pichegru. Meanwhile, the spirit of the Allies began to flag. There was little union or sympathy among them: and as for Austria and Prussia, they hated each other with their old hatred. Prussia, jealous of the aggrandisement of Austria, left her unsupported: there was no combined plan: and the spring was wasted in desultory fighting on the Sambre and the Meuse. The French gained daily: but it was not until the 26th of June that the decisive action was fought on the plains of Fleurus. The French now entered Brussels. Before the summer of 1794 was ended, the Allies were swept from the Austrian Netherlands and driven back on Holland. Here the reality of their success was at once tested by its effect on the Dutch. The party of the Stadtholder had long maintained with great difficulty a doubtful ascendancy. The French sympathizers now took fresh heart: and throughout Holland the approach of the French produced a powerful revival of the republican party. Everywhere the Révolution reproduced itself. Province after province of the United Netherlands gladly capitulated as the French advanced. While the Stadtholder fled to England, the British contingent was falling back on Gröningen and Friesland: and it at length retired to German soil, and sailed homeward. The French had conquered the key of Europe.

The policy of the Coalition throughout the war was so bad that no French patriot could have wished it worse. Union among them there was none: they had not even united plans for the Flemish campaign. Of the French royalists they made no account whatever. They did indeed consult, as advisers, the worthless emigrants: but they never sought by any practical means to gain as allies the strong anti-Revolutionary elements which existed within France. Early in the history of the Coalition, Burke had taken up his pen to expose these fundamental errors. He had predicted that the Coalition as it stood could be no match for French energy. 'Instead of being at the head of a great confederacy,' he wrote, 'and the arbiters of Europe, we shall, by our mistakes, break up a great design into a thousand little selfish quarrels. The enemy will triumph, and we shall sit down under the terms of unsafe and dependent peace, weakened, mortified, and disgraced, whilst all Europe, England included, is left open and defenceless on every part, to Jacobin principles, intrigues, and arms¹.' A provisional government, he insisted, ought to be formed out of the French emigrants, and this government should be formally recognized. The powers that were in France ought to be considered as outlaws. 'France,' he wrote, 'is out of herself. The moral France is separated from the geographical. The master of the house is expelled: and the robbers are in possession.' The Parliament of Paris should be organized, and it should recognize the Regent according to the ancient laws of the kingdom. Burke emphatically denounced that change which was fast transmuting a holy war into a war of mere plunder. France was, and always ought to be, a great nation. The liberties of Europe could only be preserved by her remaining a great and even a preponderating power. Yet England was foolishly bent on depriving her of her commerce and her marine, while Austria was bent on despoiling her of her whole frontier, from Dunkirk to Switzerland. This was enough to unite everything that was French within the boundaries of France; and to make an enemy to the Coalition out of every Frenchman who had a spark of patriotic feeling.

In little more than a year the predictions of Burke had been

¹ Remarks on the Policy of the Allies, 1793.

accomplished. The fortunes of the Armed Coalition now rapidly declined. In the eyes of the whole world it stood defeated: and its dissolution followed as a matter of course upon its defeat. A third-rate Italian State led the way. Tuscany is by nature indefensible; and the fact that its only commercial centre of any importance, the port of Leghorn, was at the mercy of the Toulon fleet, had hitherto kept the Grand Duke of Tuscany in subordination to France. Dreading the vengeance of the conqueror, he hastened to make his peace the moment victory declared for the French, apologizing abjectly for his desertion, on the ground that he had been compelled to it by threats. The defection of Prussia was more serious. The King of Prussia had only engaged in the war in the hope of adding to his Rhenish territories at the expense of France. Liberally subsidized by the English, he sent a few troops for show to the army of the Coalition, and employed the bulk of the loan in an expedition for the dismemberment of Poland. At Basle, on the 5th of April, 1795, the treaty of peace between Prussia and the Republic was signed by Von Hardenberg and Barthélemy. Prussia was to leave in the hands of the French, pending a general pacification, all her possessions on the left bank of the Rhine: for these she was to be indemnified out of the rich fund of the Ecclesiastical Sovereignities. Holland was revolutionized. The Stadtholderate was extinguished, and an alliance effected which practically annexed the United Netherlands to France as completely as the Austrian Netherlands, which had been formally incorporated with France by a law of the Convention. Spain was the next to make peace. Basle was the scene of Spanish humiliation, as it had been of Prussian humiliation. The rich island of St. Domingo, and the fertile tracts of Florida were ceded to France: and the favourite Manuel Godoy, already created Duke of Alcudia, was rewarded with the title of Prince of the Peace. Thus did Spain sow the seeds of which she reaped the fruit in the expulsion of her dynasty, in the loss of her American possessions, in her financial ruin, and in her exclusion from the number of the great nations of Europe. Thus did Prussia sow the seed of which she reaped the fruit in the bloody fields of Jena and Friedland, in her bitter servitude, and in a hazard, as near as nation ever escaped, of total extinction.

These desertions left nothing remaining of the Coalition, save

England and Austria. Austria had a substantial reason for standing out. Austria had great things at stake: she hoped for the subjection of Suabia and Bavaria, and she had set her heart on the annexation of Alsace. Even if she banished her dreams of conquest, she could not withdraw from the contest worsted and reduced in territory. The French had conquered the Netherlands, her richest possession, and indeed for their size the most populous and flourishing provinces of Europe. They did not merely hold the Austrian Netherlands as conquerors: a law incorporating these with the French Republic had been among the last acts of the Convention. The Convention had a passion for abolishing old names and substituting new ones in their place. They called their conquest by the name of Belgium, a name long appropriated to the Netherlands by Latin-writing diplomatists and historians, but henceforth exclusively applied to the Austrian Netherlands. It was worth the while of Austria to go on with the war if there were any prospect of recovering the Netherlands. But there was small prospect of this after the spring of 1794: and month by month that prospect had been diminishing. Austria, staggering under her reverses, was fast drifting into a peacemaking mood; and in April 1797, even while Burke was writing his famous Third Letter, England's only ally was arranging at Leoben the preliminaries of that 'Regicide Peace' which was consummated in the autumn at Campo Formio: a peace which yielded to the French everything for which Burke was urging England to fight, and diverted the whole force of the enraged French nation to her sole antagonist across the Channel. England had been slow to join the Coalition: she was now the only member of it who was in earnest. 'British interests,' as the phrase now goes, would have lost nothing by a peace. On the contrary, they would have gained: for what England had won beyond seas, she might, if she were so minded, have retained.

On the question of the war with France, English public opinion had been passionately divided. Fox had opposed it from the beginning with the utmost force of his eloquence and his authority. It was when this war was looming in the distance that Burke had formally confirmed his alienation from Fox, and finally broken with that great party to which he had formerly been bound by his convictions, his personal associations, and his public

acts during a career of nearly thirty years. Fox had denounced the war even before it began. On the 15th December, 1792, he had made his motion for sending a minister to Paris, to treat with the Convention. That motion, which was seconded by Grey, involved the entire question now at stake. Speaking on that motion in his most eloquent mood, and animating the majority by his usual arguments for an inexorable war with France, Burke had quoted some lines of Virgil which might serve for the key-note of his subsequent utterances:—

‘Tum vos, O Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
 Exercete odiis; cinerique haec mittite nostro
 Munera: nullus amor populis, nec foedera sunt.
 Litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas
 Imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique nepotes.’

Lansdowne had raised a similar discussion in the Lords; but in both houses the disposition to war predominated. When the war actually broke out, the question was debated with redoubled ardour. But the advocates of peace were nowhere. In vain did the calm, penetrating, practical statesmanship of Lansdowne, based upon his unrivalled knowledge of continental affairs, protest to the Lords against England being made the ‘cat’s-paw of Europe.’ Nor had the heated sympathies of Fox any more effect in the Commons. The nation was pledged to the war; and for a while it prosecuted the war with vigour.

In these early debates on the war Burke had brought the Ministry an important accession of strength. When he seceded from the Whig ranks, he carried with him a large and respectable section of the party: the Portlands, the Fitzwilliams, and the Windhams. Like Burke, these men served the cause of general liberty and good government with a firm and genuine devotion: like him, they believed that cause to be disgraced and profaned by the crimes committed by the French government in its name. Like Burke, they believed in an England flourishing at home, but so using her wealth and her power as to make herself potent abroad: in an England which would not tamely suffer by her side aggressors who defied the public law of Europe, insulted its diplomatists, and rearranged the relations of its peoples by the standard of their own rapacity, or convenience, or caprice. These were the most strenuous supporters of the war. The

original following of Mr. Pitt was less in earnest. Pitt never loved the war. He never bent to it the whole force of his powerful mind. Conceiving the war to be mainly the business of those great military powers who had been robbed of their territories by France, he thought his part done, so far as concerned Europe, when he had persuaded Parliament to vote them their subsidies, and equipped a small contingent to help them. He was for extending the power of England, on the old Whig principle, through its commerce and its colonies. Tidings of the capture of islands in the West Indies, and comptoirs in the East, were more welcome to his ear than tidings of the occupation of Toulon and the beleaguering of Dunkirk. Beyond seas, the war-ships of England were as irresistible as the legions of Pichegru and Buonaparte. As years went on, England gained one by one those rich and productive settlements whose growth had for a century and a half been her envy and her temptation. She left the French not a single colony. She stripped the Dutch, rejoicing in their new servitude, one by one of those famous possessions whence they had drawn the fatal wealth which had demoralized and blotted them out from the powers of Europe. Pitt lived to become master, according to a sarcasm then current, of every island in the world, the British Islands only excepted.

So long as the Allies were successful, the war was popular enough. When the Coalition was defeated, and that process of defection began which ultimately left England standing alone against the victorious Republic, the tide of opinion naturally turned. Burke's idea of a war for the old régime, steadfastly and sternly waged until the old régime should be restored, had gradually fallen into disrepute: and in the end it may be doubted whether any one believed in it except himself and Lord Fitzwilliam. Europe had made a cat's-paw of England: but it wanted that convenient instrument no longer. And Pitt's real impulse to the war was counterbalanced by the damage it wrought on commerce and manufactures at home. (For in Pitt's view, the war against France was almost as much a war of plunder as in the view of the Emperor or the King of Prussia.) The French cared little for their colonies. 'Perish the colonies, rather than a single principle,' had rung through the Assembly, in a famous debate on the consequence of granting political rights to the

Haytian mulattoes: and the sentiment gained thunders of applause. (Pitt was for conceding to the French their beloved principles, so far as these tended to put England in possession of the French sugar islands.) He remembered the days, thirty years ago, when his father had annexed Dominica, and Grenada, and Tobago, amidst the applause of English merchants and politicians. But England in the present war had been less successful: so little successful, hitherto, that it was beginning to be thought that she had already gone quite far enough. She felt the loss of her trade with France, Holland, and Spain more than she felt the small advantages she had gained in the East and West Indies. In this third year of the war the mercantile interest of England, an interest on which Pitt greatly relied, began to protest against its continuance. The commerce of England with her nearest neighbours was paralysed. No sooner was the question of England's continuing the war, deserted by all her Allies, raised in Parliament early in 1795, than petitions in favour of peace poured in from all her seats of commerce, from Southampton, from Manchester, from Hull, and from Liverpool. It was now two years since Grey had first challenged Ministers to justify to the house their action in plunging the nation into an unnecessary war with the Convention. Now that the Armed Coalition had failed and dissolved, he returned to the charge. On the 26th of January, 1795, he moved 'To declare it to be the opinion of the House of Commons, that the existence of the present government in France ought not to be considered as precluding at that time a negotiation for peace.' In other words, England was invited to make a 'Regicide Peace'—a peace with that government which not only had murdered a mild and lawful monarch, but had declared war against monarchs and monarchies throughout the world.

Grey had stated his motion too categorically. Pitt was determined neither to accept nor to reject it. He honestly wished to end the war: but he did not wish to be driven to it by Mr. Grey. He did not wish to tie himself to negotiate immediately, or to negotiate at any definite distance of time. He wished to persuade the nation, at the same time, of his own willingness to end the war, and of his own fitness to decide on the time when, and the persons with whom, and the circumstances in which, any negotiations for ending it should be undertaken. (He therefore

carried an amendment, resolving to prosecute the war 'until a pacification could be effected, on just and honourable terms, with any government in France capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries.' This device neither helped nor retarded the disposition for peace in England. It only embittered the politicians of the Convention. It fixed in them a belief in the duplicity and the Punic faith of England. They had long believed extravagant falsehoods contrived to poison them against England. Here at least there was no room for doubt. England was still full of her old animosity: she was still resolved on an inexorable war with the Republic. The real meaning of this, in the eyes of France, was simply that England was determined to take every advantage afforded by her naval position for the reduction and impoverishment of France, on pretence of restoring that tyrannous and detestable government from which she had escaped. At the same time, England had not the honesty to confess this in the face of Europe. That England should be so nice and delicate, so anxious to avoid the contagion of Regicide, must have seemed ridiculous indeed. The sovereigns of Prussia, of Spain, and of Naples, not to mention lesser ones, were known to be willing to treat with the Convention, stained though it was with the blood of a king. The Emperor was on the point of negotiating: the Pope himself could not be regarded as irreconcilable. (England, a republic in all but name, ruled by men whose halls were hung with the portraits of Cromwell, of Hampden, and of Sidney, whose great grandfathers had seen their monarch perish on a scaffold, whose ministers had always feared the people more than they feared Crown or Assembly—England was making the Regicide Government a mere stalking-horse to cover her greed and her ambition, to gratify a jealousy pent up during twenty years, and to avenge on France the loss of that fairest empire an European nation ever grasped, now grown into the independent United States of North America.)

These considerations were not without an impression on thoughtful people in England. On the 6th of February, 1795, Grey again returned to the charge. The previous question was moved, and he was again defeated. It was not a full house: but the majority against him was numerically less. And it was less in

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moral weight by one vote, that of Wilberforce, who on this occasion divided with the minority.

When Parliament met for the Session of 1794-1795, though the failure of the Coalition was plain, its dissolution was only foreseen. It took place during the spring and the summer. When Parliament next met in October 1795, all Europe, save England and Austria, had made peace with France: (and Austria was only waiting to see if she could perchance make better terms through the help of England.) The defection of Prussia had produced one curious result. It forced that peace which Prussia had accepted on the smaller states of Western Germany. Those states hastened to make their peace, to save themselves from annexation: and among the rest, the King of England was forced to make peace as Elector of Hanover. Another ill-judged blow at the Republic had been fruitlessly attempted. The Quiberon expedition had failed, having served no other purpose than to deepen French hatred and distrust of England. And a change had taken place which tended to discredit the argument of Mr. Pitt, that no peace could be made with the blood-stained Republic. The Convention, with all its follies, all its crimes, and all its glories, was gone. It had not passed away in the throes of revolution. It had quietly expired in a time of comparative domestic tranquillity, bequeathing its power and its prestige, purged of the horror which attached to its name, to a new constitution of its own devising. This new constitution was the Directory.

The new scheme of government differed essentially from the mass of those paper-constitutions which Burke described Sieyès as keeping assorted in the pigeon-holes of his desk. (Ostensibly, it was a step in the direction of constitutional government on the English model: practically, it was the first stepping-stone to a military despotism. It was really an anarchy of the worst type. It was a despotism not strong enough to despise opposition, not bold enough to scorn vacillation, not quick and sagacious enough to efface the results of its inherent defects before they had wrought its destruction. It indulged freely in the safe and easy cant of republicanism. The republic was 'one and indivisible': the sovereignty resided in the universality of French citizens. There was universal suffrage, to be exercised in primary assemblies: these elected the secondary or elective assemblies; these elected

the legislative body. This legislative body consisted of a Council of Ancients, and a Council of Five Hundred, one third of each going out every year. So far all was in accordance with the first ideas of the Revolution. But added to, and overriding all this, was a power which discharged functions necessary to the well-being of France—functions which had been discharged by the Committee of Public Safety, and which in a very short time were concentrated in the person of a single man. France had need of a strong and legitimate executive power. Where was such a power to be found? Where but in her own best-approved citizens? Of these France had many: and that struggle for power which had hitherto led to so much rancour and bloodshed could easily be avoided by the method of divided authority, based on a system of secret voting. (The executive power was therefore vested in a council of Five Directors. They were chosen as follows. The Council of Five Hundred balloted for fifty candidates: and out of these, the Council of Ancients balloted the Directory. One Director was to retire every year, the retiring member during the first year being determined by lot. Each Director in his turn was to be President of the Republic for a term of three months. The Directors had official costumes, guards, military honours, messengers of state, a large annual salary, and a residence in the Palace of the Luxembourg. Given these preliminaries, it was easy to guess what would be the composition of the highest body in the State. If the chicaners and wire-pullers did their best, they could at least return a majority, let public worth and tried statesmanship, if such things existed, meet with what recognition they would. The ballot resulted in the election of five men not only unconnected with, but radically opposed to each other. The first lot for President fell upon Rewbell, a country lawyer, or rather land-bailiff, of Alsace, who had been returned to the Convention by that peasantry of whom he had been the hired oppressor. He was a Convention politician of the most reckless and sanguinary type. The same may be said of another of the Directors. Lareveillère-Lepaux, an ugly and deformed creature, the malignity of whose face, according to his opponents, did but reflect the depravity of his soul, had been bred to the law, like Rewbell. He and Rewbell stood and fell together. The third Director was the famous soldier Carnot. In the Convention,

Carnot had been a man of blood: in the Directory he proved himself a statesman and a man of peace. Letourneur, the fourth Director, a nonentity whose only known exploit was that of having made some bad verses, was the first to retire in twelve month's time. The lot was an unlucky one: for Letourneur, under the influence of Carnot, was in favour of peace on reasonable terms. Barras, the fifth Director, was a profligate and extravagant nobleman, one of whose mistresses, Josephine Beauharnais, had been married to an ambitious young officer of artillery, for whom he interested himself to procure promotion and active employment. This young man was Napoleon Bonaparte.

Those essential vices of the Directorial constitution, which soon wrought its disruption, remained for the present unnoticed. Except Carnot, the men who were at its head were little known beyond the circle of Parisian politicians. For Burke, the Directory was a mere Committee of the Regicide Convention, inheriting in all fulness its reckless policy, and its infamous principles. One fact amply justified him in extending to the Directory that hateful epithet 'Regicide,' which he had bestowed upon the Convention. The new law provided that no man should be a Director who had not given his vote in the Convention for the death of the King. All the Directors were thus in the strictest sense of the word Regicides. While Carnot was planning the restoration of peace, at the imminent risk of his own head, Burke was not altogether without justification when he described him as a sanguinary tyrant, sunk on the down of usurped pomp, not satiated with the blood of his own sovereign, but indulging his ravening maw in the expectation of more. Such a picture may indeed not misrepresent the party who had dominated in the Convention, and succeeded in dominating in the Directory. But it misrepresents Carnot, who resisted while resistance was possible, and at length fell from his elevation, and fled for his life.

Apart from the merits or demerits of its constitution, the establishment of the Directory was an opportunity not likely to be lost by those politicians, on both sides of the house, who whether openly or secretly wished to put an end to the war. It coincided with the end of the Parliamentary vacation of 1795. We have seen how fast the necessity for peace had meanwhile grown upon the allies. The Ministry now boldly reversed their policy. Their attitude hitherto had drawn no signs of a peaceable dispo-

sition from the French Government. With the view of doing so, a pamphlet was prepared by Lord Auckland, a noted and able adherent of the Ministry. Auckland, a man of liberal views, an accomplished diplomatist and a shrewd politician, had hitherto been one of the most strenuous supporters of the war. It was he who had penned the pregnant manifesto to the Dutch, dated from the Hague in January, 1793. In the early debates of this very year, he had opposed the weight of his authority to the arguments of Lansdowne and Stanhope in favour of peace. He now bent himself to the facts of the situation. The old dream of re-establishing the Monarchy, the Church, and the emigrant nobility, he pronounced to be at an end. France had undergone a radical and lasting change, of which the events of the past year were a guarantee. Robespierre and the Convention had passed away: the politicians of France were mending their ways, and had formed at last a constitution based on the time-honoured English principle of a separation of the legislative and the executive powers. France had sown her wild oats, and was seriously beginning a quiet and progressive national career. He had been of opinion, with Pitt, that peace could not be made with the Convention: with Pitt, he caught at every straw which pointed at the chance of a peace with the Directory. He quieted the alarms of those who dreaded the ambition of the French politicians, and the already portentous growth of France, by a venerable historical paradox. If the French were fools enough to build up too big an empire, it must before long fall to pieces by its own weight. France was fostering the smaller republics which she had created on her frontier: she was very likely to crumble into separate republics herself. Auckland had an argument or two to soothe the Whig adherents of Burke and Portland. (The continuance of the war could not but favour that coming despotism of which Pitt's Gagging Acts were a sign.) The longer it went on, the more powerful must the Crown become, and the more unpopular the Whig anti-Jacobins with the people. So far, the Revolution had been a wholesome lesson to headstrong kings. But it had been a wholesome lesson also to the upper classes of all political societies. Let the English landed interest take warning by the example of the landed interest of France. Let England wisely make the best of the past, secure what compensation she could get, save what remained of the independence of Western Europe, and think herself well

rid of her selfish and useless allies. Such were the views set forth in Auckland's pamphlet of the last week of October, 1795.

The attitude of Burke in this changed situation could not be to the Ministry a matter of indifference. He had swayed public opinion towards the war: he had strenuously supported it: and though now broken by sorrow and disease, no longer in Parliament, and living in strict retirement at Beaconsfield, he had given striking proof that the power of his pen had not abated. The failure of the Hastings prosecution had bitterly disappointed him: and after the acquittal, he ceased for a time to busy himself with public affairs, not even, as he declared to a correspondent, reading a newspaper for months together. A personal attack roused him: and his famous 'Letter to a Noble Lord,' which had surprised the world by its fiery and bitter eloquence, indicated that he was still a prominent man in the country. Lord Auckland, though never an intimate friend, and never until lately even a political ally, addressed to him a respectful letter, accompanying it with a copy of the October pamphlet. He preserved Burke's reply: and on the publication of Burke's posthumous works many years afterwards he supplied a copy of it for insertion among them. Burke's letter breathed no gust of passion at finding that the Ministry had at length deliberately abandoned that policy which had tempted him from his life-long allegiance. He employed to express what he felt no stronger terms than grief, dismay, and dejection. But he declared that the policy of Fox and Lansdowne, now advisedly embraced by the Ministry, could lead to nothing but ruin, utter and irretrievable. He declared that in that ruin would be involved not only the Ministry, but the Crown, the succession, the importance, the independence, the very existence, of the country. These expressions, however, were private. Burke still hoped that the Ministry had not come to their final decision. He still hoped that the English people would hesitate before casting in their lot with Jacobinism and thus taking, as he believed, the first step to the dissolution of their own established government.

The King's Speech at the opening of Parliament contained a passage which more guardedly foreshadowed the same conclusion. Should the crisis in France, it declared, terminate in any order of things compatible with the tranquillity of other countries, and affording a reasonable expectation of security and

permanence in any treaty which might be concluded, the appearance of a disposition to negotiate for a general peace on just and suitable terms would not fail to be met, on the part of the Government, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect. Briefly, if the Directory stood its ground, and wished for peace, Mr. Pitt would make peace with the Directory. Mr. Pitt spoke to the same effect in the Debate on the Address. Five months before, Mr. Pitt had declared his resolution not to acknowledge the then Government. The Convention, he said, was a government reeking with the blood of their sovereign. With the Convention, had it lasted, he would have waged an inexpiable war. But France had now seen the error of her ways. The Convention, after bringing France to the verge of ruin, had vanished. A new constitution, embracing, as far as the French politicians were able, the political principles of England, had been adopted. It had been ushered in with a solemn recantation of all the pernicious maxims hitherto in repute. Boissy D'Anglas, adopting the now trite philosophy with which Burke himself had familiarised the European world, had shown how that melancholy succession of crimes and blunders, which formed the recent history of France, had come about. Constitutions could not be built up anew from the ground. Men could not live by blotted paper alone: society was an organism, not a machine which could be altered and regulated at will. These invaluable truths had convinced the French of the folly of their *à priori* politics. They now resorted to the practical lessons of experience. All this time, however, no one in England knew what was the nature of the constitution, which had now been in existence a day and a half. No one knew who were the persons in power. And Mr. Pitt could not therefore speak in positive terms as to the particular measures the Government would be able to adopt. He took the opportunity, however, of solemnly affirming one of Burke's main arguments. He declared himself still in favour of a crusade against Jacobinism. If the principles of the Convention still swayed the French Government; if the Directory persisted in the policy of spreading their republicanism and irreligion throughout Europe by fire and sword; if France became the Rome of an atheistic Inquisition; then the war should be maintained, so far as the Ministry were able to maintain it.)

Six weeks passed. The Directory began with every possible

assumption of moderation, and every possible manifestation of a desire of conciliation both at home and abroad. They professed to maintain the war only as a war of self-defence. What more could be desired? The Ministry hastened to pronounce that the new government of France really was all that had been anticipated in the Royal Speech, and that they meant to make peace with it—if they could. A Royal Message, followed by an address from Parliament, embodied this solemn approval of the Directory: and Pitt vindicated his policy in one of his greatest speeches. The French, he declared, had adopted that grand panacea of all social difficulties, a mixed form of government. The pure democracy of the Revolution was at an end. In time, the course of events would suggest gradual improvements in the new constitution, and it would probably grow like the English constitution, every year more useful, more capable of being applied to the wants of the people, more intrinsically excellent. Such a constitution ought to be stable, and capable of supporting a stable peace with other nations. He could not presume to say this prospect was certain. It was enough, for those who had peace and the common welfare of Europe at heart, that it was reasonably probable. The Ministry would now negotiate. What the issue of their negotiations might be, depended on the views and the temper of France. If France wished for peace on reasonable terms, she could not now allege a contrary disposition on the part of England.

Lord Auckland's pamphlet had now reached a second edition. It had been translated into French. It began with a French motto: *Que faire dans une telle nuit? Attendre le jour.* The night of Revolution was now far spent: the daystar of peace and moderation was arisen. Such was the gay vision with which the Ministry dazzled the English people. But it created the deepest alarm in those who looked below the surface. England was now on the verge of the precipice: and the ghastly depth of that precipice was easily measured by a glance at Holland. Holland had made her peace: England was now on the verge of making hers. Negotiations for peace might at any moment be commenced and ended: and before England had realized what she was doing, she might find herself fast bound in a treaty with the Regicide Republic. Such a treaty would lead to an alliance: such an alliance to the fatal assimilation of the two

governments which had already taken place in Holland. The Stadtholder of Holland and his family were safely lodged in Hampton Court: where would be the asylum of George the Third, and the Royal Family of England?

Feeble and broken as Burke was, he did not shrink from taking up his pen for what could not but be a sustained controversy. He began with the pamphlet of October, which he examined, from beginning to end, in a letter addressed to the Earl Fitzwilliam. This letter he never published: he never even finished it. It was found by his executors among his papers, and published with other posthumous works in 1812 as the 'Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace.' It is so published in the present volume: but it is really the First. The task animated Burke to an extraordinary degree. Nothing more gay and vivacious than the first part of this letter ever came from his pen. It breathes at first that spirit of pure and good-humoured raillery which had so often won the author the ear of the Commons when it had been deaf to his deeper and more studied irony, to his prophetic warnings and to his lavished stores of knowledge and wisdom. But these elements were not wanting. As the writer warms to his subject, he opens the vial of that fierce and blasting contempt which none knew better how to pour forth upon occasion. Burke's representatives, in preserving this relic to the world, preserved to it a literary treasure of high value. Its interest, however, is little more than literary. Its scope does not extend beyond the four corners of the October pamphlet, except towards the end, where the first Editor has tacked on to it one of Burke's old philippics against Jacobinism. It proves that Burke was not deceived by the Directorial imposture. He, for one, saw clearly that the mantle of the Committee of Public Safety had descended on the Directory. He saw that France was still at heart Jacobin, and still bent on a war with the ancient political system of Europe; a war whose principle was fanaticism, whose object was conquest, and which was everywhere attended with insult, with plunder, and with destruction. This war could not be judged by any modern standard, or indeed by any single standard in the records of history. It resembled in some degree the wars of Attila and the wars of Mahomet. But adequately to shadow forth those who planned and conducted it, Mahomet and Attila must be rolled into one.

A peace with France would lay Europe prostrate at the feet of a horde of greedy, cruel, fanatical savages.

The grant of his well-earned pension had done something to restore the balance of Burke's powers. It assured him ease in his affairs during what he knew must be the short remainder of his career: and during the spring he now busied himself with his farm, with his pamphlet, and with the establishment of a school for the children of French emigrants at the village of Penn, a mile or two from his door. In this school he took a keen delight: he visited it almost daily; and he declared it to be the only pleasure which remained to him. Many a Frenchman who twenty years afterwards served the restored Bourbon dynasty, had worn the blue uniform and white cockade of the Penn school, and had eagerly turned his eyes to greet the worn face and emaciated figure of the famous Englishman who had stirred up Europe in their cause. At present, it was not Burke's policy to thrust the peace controversy into prominence. Time, unveiling slowly and surely the character of the new government, would do more. But the opposition still continued the agitation. Peace was no nearer than when the government, towards the end of the previous year, had signified their gracious approval of the constitution of the Directory. The opposition, pushing their success, demanded that the peace negotiations should be accelerated. Why did the Ministry delude the nation with the prospect of a peace, while nothing was done, and every day brought news of some fresh success to the arms of the French? Mr. Pitt could only reply that steps towards a negotiation were being taken. His situation was not without difficulty. Though his own imperious mind was set upon a peace, some of his best supporters were swayed by Burke's disapproval of it. Windham was against peace: Loughborough, the Chancellor, was against it: Fitzwilliam and Portland were against it. All these united in urging Burke to publish the pamphlet he was known to be writing: and the Ministry, yielding to the pressure of the opposition, now took a more decided step. Burke now hastened to finish his pamphlet. He laboured at it from time to time: sometimes he carried what he had written to the sick chamber of his wife, and read it aloud to the sole companion of his declining years. But before he had completed it, he was himself stricken down by a violent attack of his fatal malady, which compelled him to retreat at once to Bath.

When his labours were thus interrupted, the long-promised steps towards pacification had been taken: the vista of those negotiations which his pen was to make famous, and which were to be its last employment, was opened. At Basle, the scene of the humiliating peace made by Prussia, and of the more humiliating one made by Spain, in the previous year, an English diplomatist had been deputed to open negotiations with Barthélemy, who, on the part of the Directory, had conducted both negotiations on the part of France. Mr. Wickham was deputed to propose a Congress, and to enquire upon what terms France was willing to make peace with England. The proposal for a Congress was at once viewed with suspicion: and the Directory in the clearest and promptest manner declared that if England made the restoration of the Austrian Netherlands a necessary condition of peace, negotiation must be at an end. The Netherlands were now part of France. They had been incorporated with the Republic by a law which the Directory had not the power, even if they had the will, to alter. The French government thus took a stand which they unswervingly maintained throughout the whole business. Nor can there be any question that they were right. Every argument of policy, almost of moral right, justified the French in maintaining this trophy of the famous campaign of '94.

In adding the Belgian Netherlands to France, French statesmen were not guilty of the gross folly of annexing the ancient territory of a neighbouring nation, inhabited by a patriotic and high-spirited population. Flanders and Brabant had no more to do with Ducal Austria than Hanover had to do with England. They had descended to its reigning family by an accident: they were the remains of a once-flourishing kingdom, itself nearly allied to France. The people were unanimous for the French incorporation. It was here that the aggression of the Allies had commenced. Belgium was the gate of France: its surrender would be the surrender of her hard-won guarantee for the security of her territory against future invasion. The surrender of Belgium involved the loss of another inestimable advantage. The possession of it was the sole guarantee for the independence of Holland. Cut off Holland, to France or to England an equally desirable ally, by surrendering Belgium, and a counter-revolution would have brought the Stadtholder back to the Hague in a month.

The Basle negotiations thus put an end to all hope of restoring peace, unless by surrendering the principle of a balance of the European power in which France should not disproportionately predominate. For above a century the maintenance of this principle had been a primary maxim of English politics. England had never even sanctioned a negotiation into which entered any contemplation of its surrender. For that principle William had organised the Grand Alliance: for that principle the war begun by him had been steadily maintained and brought to a glorious end by the great ministers and generals of Queen Anne. At the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, at the first treaty of Paris in 1763, it had been triumphantly affirmed. Even at the peace of 1783, when England retired in defeat from an inglorious and disastrous contest, it had not been assailed. Advocates of peace in England were thus confronted by a serious dilemma. Peace on the French terms meant, in Burke's words, nothing less than the surrender of Europe, bound hand and foot, to France. But out of this dilemma the advocates of peace contrived to make new capital. What had produced the failure of the negotiations? Simply the absence of full authority on the part of the ministerial delegate. The whole transaction was informal: and besides, on many other grounds, the French had reason to distrust the sincerity of the English Ministry. Nor were the English Ministry in truth really desirous of peace. The negotiation was a mere trick to take the wind out of the sails of the Opposition: a trick to persuade the country to go on granting useless supplies and squandered subsidies. If a peace were to be made, France must see a complete change of men and measures in England. She would make no peace with Mr. Pitt: but it did not therefore follow that she would not cheerfully confide in the sincerity of Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Grey. But Mr. Pitt dexterously converted this identical version of the affair to his own use. The proposals of Basle could indeed hardly be said to amount to a negotiation. They indicated only a perverse and suspicious temper on the part of France, which had prevented the negotiations from being matured. Some power among the former Allies, which had already made its peace, might yet by interposing its assurances of the honesty, good faith, and ultimate reasonableness of the English Ministry, if only a serious and formal negotiation could be arranged, bring about the desired end, without throwing

England into the hands of Mr. Fox. With this view, Mr. Pitt sought the mediation of Prussia. But this attempt came to nothing also.)

But fortune suddenly put a new resource into Mr. Pitt's hands. A war of aggression carried on on every frontier could not be long carried on without reverses: and the French arms in the summer of 1796 sustained a serious check. Secure on the side of the Netherlands, France was pushing to the utmost the advantages she had gained on the Rhine and in Italy. The plan of the war was bold and simple. On the Rhine were Jourdan and Moreau: in Italy Bonaparte had established a base of operations by the submission of Sardinia. Jourdan and Moreau were to unite and push on by the valley of the Danube, while Bonaparte, after sweeping Northern Italy of the Austrians, was to force the passes of the Tyrol, unite with Moreau and Jourdan, and pour the whole forces of the French Republic on Vienna. Fortune steadily attended the French arms in Italy: and nothing in the world seemed more unlikely than reverses in Germany. Once more Frankfort was occupied and pillaged: the important princes of Baden and Wirtemberg, and the nest of petty sovereigns who were included in the Circle of Swabia, hastened to buy peace by submission and contributions. The defence of the Empire had been entrusted to the Archduke Charles, a young general not wholly unworthy of the praise which Burke bestows upon him. Placed between the two armies of Moreau and Jourdan, he was compelled to retreat before them step by step, until a blow well-directed on the former general at Donauwerth separated him from his artillery and stores and compelled him to a temporary pause. Turning his success to instant advantage, Charles left a small force to keep Moreau in check, and drew off the bulk of his army to fall with crushing force upon Jourdan. After a few days' skilful manœuvring, he completely defeated him in the battle of Amberg. This victory completely frustrated the plans for the German campaign. Jourdan was obliged to flee in disorder to the Lower Rhine, losing in his retreat, if it could be dignified with the name, nearly half his army. Moreau pushed on into Bavaria: but the disaster sustained by Jourdan, and the daily reinforcements poured into the Imperial ranks, made it necessary to commence a retreat, which he effected in so masterly a manner as to entitle it to high celebrity among military exploits.

Jourdan's failure naturally kindled fresh hopes in those who believed the French might yet listen to reasonable proposals of peace. So severe a blow could not but tend to bring the Directory to reason. The English Ministry at once seized the opportunity. As soon as the news reached the Cabinet, a note was despatched to the Danish Minister in London, enclosing a request to be delivered to the Directory through the Danish Minister at Paris. The enclosure was brief, and intended to bear in every line marks of plainness and sincerity. It requested a passport for an English envoy, who was to proceed at once to Paris, and ascertain, by direct consultation with the French Government, if any base of pacification could be laid down. Such an application, at such a moment, could not but prepossess the French in favour of English sincerity. It would show that in spite of the favourable turn taken by the war, England was anxious to put an end to it.

Unfortunately for the salutary effect which might have been wrought in the French mind by Jourdan's disaster, it had been more than counteracted by the extraordinary advance of the French in their second line of attack on Austria. In Italy a campaign more rapid and more brilliant than anything on record had been made by the youthful protégé of Barras. A force of forty thousand picked French troops, well inured to a hot climate by service against Spain in the Pyrenees, was set free for further operations by the peace which had been made by Godoy. Early in the year these troops were sent to reinforce the French army in the maritime Alps: and the command of the whole was given to Bonaparte. Hardly had the first blow been struck, when the King of Sardinia sued for peace, and opened to French garrisons those famous fortresses which made Piedmont the key of Italy. The Duke of Parma followed his example. Bonaparte was in a week or two in possession of Milan, and overrunning the whole of Lombardy. Before the end of May, he had passed the Mincio, forcing the Austrians partly into Mantua and partly into the uplands. Not a single disaster stayed his progress. News of the great victories of Castiglione and Arcola, of the siege of Mantua, of the submission of Naples, and of the formation of the Cispadane Republic, came like a succession of thunderclaps to Paris and to London. The young Corsican adventurer had brought to pass the favourite dream of French ambition. He

had conquered Italy. He had done far more: he had almost revived the Empire of Charlemagne.

After some formal parley, the French Directory at length granted a passport for an English envoy to be sent to Paris. But this double issue of the year's events complicated the negotiation at the outset. The English based their hopes of the abandonment of French military ambition on the successes of the Archduke Charles, on the failure and mismanagement of the internal resources of France, prominently insisted on by the moderate party in the debates of the two Assemblies, and not least on the pacific disposition of one or two of the Directors themselves. They believed it to be worth the while of the Directory to sacrifice the Austrian Netherlands to secure a peace which should ensure the stability of the new constitution. But had the Directory no reason to suppose that the renewal of the negotiations by England indicated a disposition to concede this very point? Barthélemy's answer to Wickham had been explicit enough. The conquest of Italy far outweighed the disasters in Germany: and the Directory might very well imagine that the latter rather than the former had suggested the initiative now taken by England. Had Lord Grenville hinted through the Danish Minister the grounds which induced him to offer peace, and made it known that his terms would be substantially the same which had been rejected at Basle, there can be no doubt that the Directory would have indignantly refused to treat. The new negotiation was thus based from the very outset on mutual misunderstandings.

A few months had so changed the situation that scarcely a line of all that Burke had written before his compulsory retreat to Bath was now applicable to it. Peace with France was no longer obscurely hinted at. It was openly avowed as a foremost object of policy: it was sought by every possible means, at the sacrifice of ministerial consistency, almost of national dignity and honour. Twice, at Basle and Berlin, had the British Ministry held out the hand of conciliation, and each time they had been met with a haughty rebuff. Yet the experiment was about to be repeated at Paris. All this was so much gain to those who opposed on principle all dealings with the Regicide Republic. Every repetition of the experiment weakened the cause of the peacemakers. If the present negotiation could be made to end in failure, all peril

of a French alliance would be nearly over. Should the French Government only maintain its insolent attitude and arrogant demands, and the British plenipotentiary therefore return unsuccessful, a great step would have been gained. The old war-cry might then be effectually raised. The British public might then be roused to an indignant enthusiasm: the fortune of war might turn: a new Armed Coalition might be formed: and the troubles of France might be ended at some distant period by a Restoration.

Such were the hopes with which Burke began, before the name of the British envoy was known, to write his First published Letter on a Regicide Peace. The contemplation of the past vicissitudes of France suggested that brilliant historical phantasmagoria with which the volume opens. In the mutable scheme of human events, all things were possible. That terrible and unnatural spectre which now stalked over paralysed Europe was liable to the same fate which had befallen the murdered French Monarchy. The ends of Providence were often accomplished by slight means. Nearly four centuries ago the power that was then devastating France had been broken by a poor girl at the door of an inn. Who should say that Providence had no second Joan of Arc, to save France from an enemy a thousandfold more cruel and hateful?

In an exordium of greater length than he commonly allowed himself, before reaching the main question of argument, but turning with such life and swiftness to almost every element contained in the question, that it seems unusually brief, Burke went on to sketch out the true position of England and the Allies, and the true relation of France with the rest of Europe. He then turned to the history of the overtures for peace. Omitting the Auckland pamphlet, and dating the negotiations from the King's Speech which accompanied it, he pictured with bitter irony the crowned heads of Europe patiently waiting as suitors in the antechamber of the Luxembourg, and among the rest, the proud monarchy of Britain bidding for the mercy of the regicide tyrants. He next states the result of the Basle negotiations, which was briefly this. All that the Republic had incorporated with itself, by a 'law' which it arrogantly assumed to be irreversible, it meant to keep. The Austrian Netherlands in the North, Savoy in the East, Nice in the South, had been thus in-

corporated. The possession of the Austrian Netherlands, provinces in themselves of the highest value and importance, had a secondary operation. It fettered at the feet of triumphant France, with links of steel, the captive republic of Holland. The possession of Savoy threatened a similar degradation for Switzerland. The possession of Nice threatened a similar degradation for Italy. When Burke was writing, Italy had actually been trampled under the iron heel of Bonaparte: and only two years passed before the prediction was fulfilled to the letter in Switzerland.

The conquest of Italy, together with the over-running of half Germany, came in opportunely for Burke's argument. Here was the best commentary on the pacific professions of the Directory. In the counsels which projected this crusade against the liberties of Europe there was no halt or hesitation. Europe might sue for peace: the Directory could afford to refuse it, and ultimately to impose on Europe its own terms. From the previous conduct of the Directory, from its ascertained character, and from the present situation of affairs, Burke drew the conclusion that no terms which England could accept would be offered. He then passed on to consider how far the minority, in proposing peace, could be considered as expressing the public mind of England. None but regicide sympathizers could really desire a regicide peace: the rest of the nation, if once roused to a full consideration of the question, and to a sense of its enormous moment, must be in favour of maintaining the war. What proportion did the Jacobins, with Lansdowne, Fox, and Grey at their head, bear to the English nation? Burke was ready with an answer: and his answer, based as it was on data which he thought sufficient, is a curious and valuable piece of statistics. He estimated the number of Englishmen and Scotsmen capable of forming political opinions at four hundred thousand. One-fifth, or eighty thousand, of these he reckoned as Jacobins. The remainder he assumed to be supporters of the ancient and natural policy of England.

How, then, was the present unpopularity of the war to be accounted for? How was it that the English people, a people of sympathies easily kindled into a warlike flame, and in general only too ready to support a policy of action, were petitioning on all sides against a war in which England and her Allies had every-

where been worsted, a war which, in an age of prolonged wars, had not lasted four years, and in which the strength of England had not yet been half put forth? How was it that the English people were willing to surrender everything for which the war had been declared—the independence of Holland, the right of their Austrian allies to the Netherlands, the cause of monarchy, religion, and property, in France, and on all the borders of France? To see a republican propaganda securely established in the heart of Europe, destined to work what changes none could foresee, not only throughout Europe, but throughout the civilized world? The answer was obvious. In order that a war may be popular, it must affect British interests. In other words, it must be a mercenary war: a war either to gain plunder, or to protect from spoliation, or both.

In contrasting the mercenary war of 1739 with the War of the Grand Alliance a generation before, and tracing the analogy between that famous struggle and the present one, Burke employed a method which the reader of his works has already seen well exemplified in the Speech on Conciliation with America. It was the method of applying reason to historical example: and Burke's natural examples were the wars which Britain had waged during the preceding century. Wars, he maintained, must not be judged by the impulse which leads to them, or by the spirit with which they are first prosecuted. A popular war is generally a mercenary war, and therefore, as likely as not, an unjust war. That famous war of 1739, in which the English nation had been roused to an enthusiasm so memorable, Burke pronounced, after a careful examination of the original documents of the times, to have been an extremely unjust war. In that other great war for the balance of power, which had been waged in the preceding generation by William III at the head of the Grand Alliance, the conditions were reversed. That war was a righteous and necessary one, if any ever were such. But was that war a popular one? Was it even carried on with spirit and vigour when the break-up of the hollow peace of Ryswick called the British people to redoubled exertions? On the contrary, all classes of the people, sodden with ignorance and toryism, detested it. The great Whig ministers themselves despaired of it. 'The sober firmness of Somers, the undaunted resolution of Shrewsbury, the adventurous spirit of Montagu and Orford, were

staggered. They were not yet mounted to the elevation of the King.' The ministers begged the King to reconsider his policy. Strong in his wise determination, the King refused: and as time rolled on, his policy was amply justified. The march of events gradually animated the Lords, the Commons, and the people at large.

This fine historical argument is stated by Burke in his happiest manner—a manner which irresistibly recalls his arguments on Conciliation with America. He naturally changed his style in passing on to his next task, that of animating the English people by exhibiting to them a picture, painted in the most glowing colours, of their abominated enemy. Macaulay, in a clever *jeu d'esprit*, has described Burke as a merry, good-natured Irishman, who liked to go out at nights to a children's party carrying a magic lantern, with which he alternately amused and terrified them. Such a picture of the effect upon England of a Jacobin Peace concludes the Fourth Letter. In such a spirit he had astonished the House by flinging the Birmingham dagger on the floor. Very different is that calm analysis of the French Republic which concludes the First Letter, and is continued in the Second. Keen of eye, and firm of hand, like some skilled anatomist, he gradually lays bare the structure of this political monster. Less, however, is now made of the natural and inborn atrociousness of the French republic, less of the crimes and follies of the Assembly and Convention. The main point insisted on is that France, once a scene of chaos, a proverb for anarchy, has become a vast, united, sagacious, and terrible power: a power which Europe must boldly face, but to face which Europe has hitherto been totally lacking in resolution. (The exposure of the true aims and the actual character of the new French ambition is the main point of the present letters: and in this great and central point it may safely be said that Burke was perfectly and invariably right. How the spirit which animated France was aroused, of what elements it was compounded, whether its prevalence might have been prevented, what might and ought to have been the policy of the leading men in France, were questions that had really passed into the limbo of chroniclers. On these subordinate questions we think that Burke was often wrong: on the main question we are sure that he was right. He was as right as he had been

in arguing upon the Double Cabinet, upon the Taxation of America, upon the Irish Penal Laws, upon Economical Reform, upon the wrongs of India, and upon almost every real question, that is, upon every practical question, staring the world in the face and demanding solution, with which he was brought in contact. Here was a new power repudiating not only law and diplomacy, but moral right, aggressive in its nature, powerful in its resources, served by sagacious minds and iron sinews, avowedly warring against the rest of the world to make it like unto itself, or in other words, to conquer it. Such a pest ought to be resisted, and such resistance ought to be continued, through failure and through discouragement, until the tyranny should be overpast. In this general conclusion the events of the next fourteen years proved Burke to have been right, as fully and as clearly as events are capable of proving anything.

We have said that the French were in the right to keep fast hold on the Austrian Netherlands. Had it been clear that the French merely wished to retain them for purposes of defence, as a compensation for the outrage attempted upon the French nation by what was really a war of plunder, and as a recognition on the part of Europe of the great alteration which the Revolution had wrought in both the outward and the inward aspect of the French nationality, we think that England ought to have made peace. But it was not so: the Belgian annexation, as the sequel soon proved, was but the beginning of a policy of Conquest. And in any case, England could make no peace yielding up the Netherlands to France, unless her Austrian ally assented to it. To have made such a peace would have been to drink of that cup of humiliation which had been eagerly drained by Spain and Prussia, and to have yielded that position the firm maintenance of which in succeeding years sufficed to save the whole of Europe from the all-levelling despotism of Bonaparte. In any case, no equitable peace could be made in haste. The changes we have related, few and simple in themselves, had penetrated to the very base of all European relations: and the reparation of the strains and fractures they had wrought was a task demanding in the highest degree patience, moderation, firmness, and good sense. These were not wanting on the side of England. They were totally wanting on the side of France.

The messenger of peace whom Pitt despatched to Paris in

October 1796 was James, first Earl of Malmesbury: a diplomatist who had well earned his honourable rank by public services. None of the politicians at Pitt's disposal knew Europe better: none could have dealt with the Directory more wisely. Malmesbury was a thorough Englishman. His frank manners and commanding presence, added to a fine face, piercing eyes, and abundant white hair, had gained him among his friends the byename of 'the Lion.' No man was better calculated to restore French confidence in England, and to satisfy the Directory of the sincerity of England's desire for peace. As soon as it was known who was to be the envoy, it was felt that in his person the cause of the peacemakers must stand or fall. In due time Lord Malmesbury set out on his mission. The anxiety which prevailed as to its result suggested the remark that his journey to Paris was a slow one. Burke contemptuously replied that this was not wonderful, seeing that he went all the way on his knees. His journey thither may have been tardy: but his return to England was precipitate. Among articles of less importance, Lord Malmesbury was to offer to France equivalents from among the English conquests, in exchange for the restoration, on the part of France, of Belgium to Austria. This restoration England still insisted on. The Directory, through their negotiator, Delacroix, declared that this was impossible. No publicist could possibly construe the Act of Constitution so as to admit of it. Belgium was annexed to France by a law which was of the very essence of the constitution. The Emperor, if he pleased, might take his equivalent elsewhere in Europe. France proposed to secularise the three Ecclesiastical Electorates, and to seize the rich bishoprics which filled up the nooks and corners in the geographical mosaic of Germany and Italy. If there must still be the same number of Electors, the Stadtholder, the Duke of Brunswick, and the Duke of Wirtemberg would be convenient substitutes for the Prince-Bishops. The objections to all this were obvious. It still left France in a dominant military position, which there was no reason to suppose her indisposed to abuse: and it would have been accomplished, not at the expense of France, but at the expense of all that remained of Austrian influence in the Empire.

The history of the failure of the negotiations is amply detailed in the Second Part of the Third Letter. Malmesbury's last

interview with Delacroix, during which the whole proposal of England was amply exposed and discussed, took place on the 17th of December. Next day, the two memorials containing the English proposals, the one relating to France, the other to Holland, were returned by the Directory to him on the ground that they were not properly signed, and that they contained no ultimatum. The Directory wished for an ultimatum: they did, in fact, with indecent haste and utterly undiplomatic manners, demand of Lord Malmesbury an ultimatum within twenty-four hours. Malmesbury must then have seen that the negotiations were all moonshine, and that the Directory were determined on war. He complied, however, as far as he was able, with this peremptory demand. He affixed his signature to the memorials. He pointed out that they contained no ultimatum: that they represented nothing more than a basis of discussion: and that to ask for an ultimatum, at the present stage of affairs, was to snuff out the negotiation. He therefore invited the Directory to produce, if they were so disposed, a counter-project. Immediately on receiving this temperate reply, and without an hour's delay, the Directory gave him notice to quit Paris within eight and forty hours. The pacific intentions of the Directory may be estimated by the fact that on the evening of the 16th, the day preceding the final conference between Malmesbury and Delacroix, a fleet set out from Brest for the Irish coast, carrying a force of eighteen thousand men, the command of which was entrusted to Hoche.

The British Ministry lost no time in publishing their comment on the failure of the negotiation. In a long and laboured Declaration, dated December the 27th, they evinced the strongest disappointment, and cast the whole blame on the French. They 'lamented' its abrupt termination, and solemnly engaged, 'in the face of all Europe,' to renew negotiations as soon as the French should be disposed to recommence them. This undignified attitude had at least the merit of consistency. It sealed and confirmed that abject apostrophe to the French in the name of Pitt and his colleagues, which Burke in his contemptuous mood had already penned—'Citizen Regicides! . . . Nothing shall hinder us from renewing our supplications. You may turn us out at the door: but we will jump in at the window' (p. 26).

Burke had foreseen the failure of the negotiations: and it was

'When I look,' he wrote, 'at his inveterate consistency, even to this hour, when all support of men and things has been withdrawn from him: when I compare him with those who took up his errors only for their own convenience, and for the same convenience laid them down, he rises to such a deceptive height in my imagination, that, with my eyes fixed upon ministers, I view him as upon an eminence too high to be approached'.¹ This estimate was not Erskine's alone. Those who wish to see to what intellectual eminence it is possible for a man to attain in his life-time, should read the Parliamentary debates of this time. Burke's opinions, on all subjects, are there quoted, like Scripture, by all parties, and in the most opposite senses.

The composition of the great fragment of a Third Letter on a Regicide Peace was spread over the last six months of Burke's life. It was begun in January, and the rest was probably written during the short intervals of ease which he enjoyed, while his incurable malady was slowly hastening his end. Burke spent the early part of the year partly at Beaconsfield and partly at Bath. To the latter place he went much against his inclination: for his sincere wish was to die as quietly as might be at home. His political allies drove him to the crowded pump-room of Bath in hopes of prolonging a life so necessary, as they thought, to the welfare of the country. 'Your life,' Windham had written on the 22nd of January, 'is at this moment of more consequence than that of any other man now living.' The cause of the Regicide war had now become indeed precarious. The hopes of those who wished to reanimate the nation rested, as Windham put it, on Burke's pen and Hoche's sword. The events of April added new force to the latter argument. Bonaparte, at the gates of Vienna, had driven Austria herself to sue for peace: and England now stood alone. In full expectation of speedy invasion, Windham turned anxiously to Burke. Unwilling as he was to tax Burke's declining powers, he begged him to write only a short letter indicating the measures necessary to be taken for the immediate safety of the country. 'The danger,' he wrote, 'is coming thundering upon us. We are miserably unprepared, in means, and in spirit, for the crisis.' But while the need was

¹ View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France, p. 119.

which appears, to any other mind becoming for the first time familiar with it, almost a revelation.

The 'Regicide Peace' Letters form a natural complement to the two volumes of Burke's Select Works already issued in the present series. The main topic of the Tract and Speeches contained in the first volume is the relation of Government to the people in the mass, whether at home or in the colonies. The main topic of the famous work contained in the second volume is the relation of the present generation of men, viewed as a political body, to those which have passed away, and to those which are to come. The question in the present volume is the almost equally inexhaustible one of the relation of separate nations to that great family of nations which is called the civilized world. Of this question the interest is inexhaustible because it is perpetual, and because the conditions which surround it are perpetually changing. It is one which is passed on from one generation of Englishmen to another, with the continuous life of the great community itself which they compose. The duty and interest of England as a member of the European family of nations is indeed a large subject. We have it in the present volume discussed by a large and forethoughtful mind. In times when the duties of nations to their neighbours are as little settled, so far at least as belongs to practice, as were the duties of man in the Hobbesian state of nature, and when political conditions all over the world are rapidly becoming such that the attitude of nations to each other is practically determined, and determined in a very short space of time, by the capricious impulses of a majority told by the head, the mature conclusions of one so wise and so well-informed as Burke on this subject should possess some interest. Let us see, as briefly as possible, to what those conclusions amount.

In the preface to a previous volume of Burke's works¹ we have sketched out Burke's doctrine of the position of the individual man in relation to mankind at large. Man is so formed as to be entirely controlled by instincts arising from intercourse with his neighbours. Severance from his fellow-men means the extinction of those controlling instincts, and the extinction, in and through them, of all the power that gives to man's natural eminence in the

¹ Select Works of Burke, Vol. II. p. xl. (Second Edition).

animal world its natural extent and significance. Now the common intercourse, the mutual relations and interests, the jealousies, the gains, the losses, of men in society, as well as the sentiments and the reasonings which practically guide them, each and all have their parallel in the relations of the nations. No nation can isolate itself from the rest of the world, without committing moral suicide. No nation can cast off its responsibility, whether to its neighbours, or to its own children, or even to its yet unborn descendants. The nation that shows any signs of this betrayal of its inherited trusts is on the high road to dissolution.

But how far does this analogy between the human individual and the body politic hold good? Limits it unquestionably has. The human individual, for instance, presuming him to escape casual causes of death, is absolutely certain of dissolution in the ordinary course of nature within a space of time not exceeding, except in the rarest cases, a well-ascertained limit. But it is false to argue from this to similar conditions in the body politic. The body politic, well says Mr. Mill, may indeed die: but it dies of disease or violence, not of old age. Again, that grand and beautiful relation which subsists between an old country and the offshoots from its own flesh and blood which it has settled beyond seas, has been the subject of misconception more pernicious, because more influencing practice. What business, Burke had heard it gravely argued in Parliament, has a child to rebel against its parent, and therefore, what business have the Colonies to resist taxation from home? It is clear, therefore, that the analogy has its limits; perhaps very narrow ones.

The general question to which Burke's arguments belong is, When is a nation bound to go to war with its neighbour, and having once gone to war, when is it justified in making peace? Wars, said Burke, using the words of Bacon, are suits to the tribunal of God's justice. That fearful tribunal is not to be lightly invoked. *Justa bella quibus necessaria*. A war is only just when it is also necessary: and it only becomes necessary when all other means of accomplishing its object have been tried, and have failed. Seeing that war is to the community of nations what the ordinary means of justice are to single societies, it is clear that whatever conditions may attend it we may be sure of this—that nothing can banish it from the world which does not also banish international justice. Those who say otherwise can

scarcely impose even upon themselves. When diplomacy has failed, war is the sole means of obtaining redress among nations: and nations, in their own suits, fulfil the functions both of advocate and judge. In civil society, a man has ceased to be judge in his own cause as soon as he has emerged from the Hobbesian state of nature. Here, then, the analogy of the state and the individual terminates. A state makes war, after it has itself decided upon the justice of its cause. On the question of that justice itself, the analogy is still valid. Justice is either civil or criminal. To obtain his civil rights, a man has recourse to the law; he has recourse to the same law to protect himself from wrong by punishing the malefactor in such a way as shall deter generally from the commission of the offence. Criminal justice, in its true aspect, is strictly preventive: the murderer is sent to the gallows, not because he has murdered a man, but that men may not be murdered. Of vindictive or avenging justice, fully civilized society knows nothing. That form of justice, in its strict sense, has long been left by legislators to other and not less potent instruments; to social penalties, to the guilty conscience, and to the awful Power which says 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' Both these forms of justice have their analogies in that transcendent justice which a nation demands by making war. But England stands with regard to the appeal to war in a different relation from the rest of Europe: in a relation, indeed, so far as relates to offensive war, which may be described as intermediate between that of the rest of Europe and that of America. So far as relates to defensive war, the case is otherwise. Here England must fully realize and amply guard against the strategic dangers which are peculiar to her position. The relations of England with the rest of Europe differ widely from the relations among themselves of the nations which compose the rest of Europe. The physical cause, in Burke's phrase, is 'a slender dyke of five and twenty miles.' This insular position has been the occasion, while other powerful elements have been the efficient causes, of England's vast commerce, and of England's naval superiority. England's interests lie less on the continent than on the sea-shore: her neighbours inhabit the coasts of the whole world. New York and Bombay are nearer to her than Paris and Vienna; disturbances in the highlands of India and China, war in the Drakenberg or the Rocky Mountains, touch

her more nearly than such events at her own door as the annexation of Holstein, or the separation of Belgium and Holland. But her navy and her purse are tempting objects to the designing politicians of Europe: and happy is the European schemer who can make a cat's-paw of Great Britain. And there are a mean sort of Englishmen who are anxious that England should be ever huffing and swaggering in the councils of Europe, as if this great kingdom, with her six hundred years of national glory, with her splendid offshoots and dependencies on every habitable shore of the globe, were in peril of being cast into the shade by some brand-new Republic or Empire of yesterday. The difference between England and the rest of Europe is a difference in kind. The deduction which in Burke's time was unhesitatingly drawn from this, and which in a modified form has survived all subsequent changes in the European system, was well expressed by Waller, in his famous comparison of the situation of England to that of the mysterious powers of the air:

' Angels and we have this prerogative,
That none can at our happy seats arrive:
While *we* descend at pleasure to invade
The bad with vengeance, and the good to aid.'

England was the natural arbitress of Europe. This position had been aspired to by Henry the Eighth: it had been seized by Elizabeth: it had been gloriously held by Cromwell: it had been extended and confirmed by William of Orange: within living memory it had been pushed to the utmost, amidst the plaudits of the world, by Chatham. To most Englishmen in those days the doctrine of Waller's lines was a matter not only of belief, but of sentiment. England believed herself, and not without reason, the supreme court of appeal in the transcendent lawsuits of Europe. Moral causes alone could put her mighty forces in motion: and these moral causes might lie not only in wrongs attempted on herself, but in those attempted on others. As to what England should construe as a wrong to herself, it was unnecessary to examine; it was sufficient that England was always able to make up her mind on the question when the contingency occurred. The question of the wrongs of others was more difficult. Now, both these questions were united in the case of the war with France. (England had at her door a political nuisance which

was fast spreading over Europe, and even propagating itself within England's own limits. Was England justified in going to war? In the circumstances, according to the standard maxims of eighty years ago, unquestionably she was.)

By which of the different forms of justice enumerated by the philosophers was England's war with France justified? Burke answered, in the first place, by the civil law itself. Suppose your neighbour's house to have been seized by a gang of thieves and assassins, who after murdering the owner, and driving out his family, settled into an organized gang of marauders, infesting the whole neighbourhood. From an obvious point of view, this is what France might be said to have done. Even if such a gang of thieves and assassins abstained from molesting yourself, and confined themselves for a time to attacking those who occupied a less defensible position, was it a wise policy to let them go on confirming their position and adding to their strength, instead of doing your utmost to crush them at the outset? And intervention in France was, he thought, justifiable on much more limited grounds. Put the case in a much more modest way. Suppose your neighbour to have set up at your door a new erection in the nature of a nuisance. Were you not justified in taking immediate steps to abate it? Clear as might be his right to do what he would with his own, the rights of ownership are regulated and restrained by the rights of vicinage. The court-leet of Christendom, the grand vicinage of Europe, were therefore bound to ascertain and to prevent any capital innovation which might amount to a dangerous nuisance. This was the ground that had been taken up in the famous Whitehall Declaration. All the surrounding powers, it was there said, had a right, and felt it a duty, to stop the progress of an evil which attacked the fundamental principles by which mankind was united in civil society.

Burke readily admitted great limitations to this right of making war upon a neighbouring nation for misgovernment. The evil to be attacked must have declared itself by something more than casual or temporary manifestations. It must be shown to be radicating in the nature of the thing itself: to be permanent in its action and constant in its effects: to be progressive, and not stationary; and to be curable by no other means than the knife. Burke had remarked that such communities existed in Europe long anterior to the French Republic. In one memorable

passage in his book on the Revolution, he had denounced to the whole of the Christian world the 'barbarous and anarchic despotism of Turkey.' Here was a power more barbarous and anarchic, more destructive, in its policy and in the tendency of its whole being, to the human race, than even the monstrous despotism of Turkey. It enjoyed a less advantageous position. It was a new wrong, and could plead no prescription. It had destroyed a great nation: that nation ought to be reinstated. It had discomposed Europe: Europe ought to be rearranged in its old relations. Of its doings, if left to itself, none could foresee the end: let another end then be put to them, and that right speedily.

Such had in a great measure been the grounds on which war with France had been resolved upon by the English cabinet in '92. But that resolution had beyond question been leavened by a less controllable element. Still more did that same element leaven the resolution with which England maintained her warlike attitude after the execution of Louis in '93. That element was the impulse to vindictive justice: the demand for the actual punishment of the regicides, the atheists, and the levellers. This fact Burke took small pains to conceal. When in '93 the fortunes of the Allies had given delusive hopes of success, he had even sketched out the limits to which retribution should proceed. He was totally opposed to an amnesty. He was for executing a stern vengeance on the regicides who had sat in the Convention: on those who had composed the Revolutionary Tribunal: on those who should be proved to have taken a leading part in acts of sacrilege: on all the leaders of the Jacobin Clubs. Not one of these, he said, should escape his due punishment. He was not, indeed, for taking the lives of all. Justice ought to be tempered with mercy. 'There would be deaths—but for the number of criminals, and the size of France, not many.' The rest was to be done by transportation, by the galleys, in some cases by mere exile. And in fortifying this opinion by the example of the English restoration, Burke half apologized for the treachery of the monarch who after granting a general amnesty had sent more than one true English patriot to a cruel death. Here, then, we see what Burke regarded as one object of the war. The restoration of the monarchy and the church was to be followed by a Bloody Assize.

Was the war with France really justifiable on these grounds? British public opinion soon cooled down to the conviction that it was not: and these 'second thoughts' are confirmed by the verdict of history. When these Letters were written, the war, in whatever spirit commenced, was not being waged as a Regicide War: the objection to peace was not Burke's repugnance to a Regicide Peace. It would have been as easy to reanimate the King's corpse, as to expel the Republic from France, and to reinstate the monarchy. The war was maintained on other grounds. It was maintained because the robbers in possession had carried on and improved upon the policy of the old master of the house; because the Republic and the demon of French national ambition had so readily coalesced; because under the Republic that demon had started to new life and formed more audacious plans; and because these plans were actually being executed, and that with extraordinary vigour and persistency. The character of the war had completely changed. The change had begun with the victory of Fleurus; it was clearly perceived in the last six months of Burke's life: and in the year which followed it was made plain to the dullest of politicians by the unprovoked seizure of Switzerland and the merciless sack of Rome. Had Burke lived to see '98, he would have seen the fullest confirmation of the main principles he had laid down. He would then have seen his character of the rapacious, conscienceless Republic amply verified: he would have seen England once more animated by a determination to crush its dreadful force, and placing herself resolutely at the head of a second coalition armed in defence of the public rights of Europe. But he would also have seen that the English people were no longer filled with that burning hatred of 'Jacobinism' and 'Regicide' which animated him, and with which he had done his best to animate them. And in such a case the people are generally in the right.

Burke has provided us, in one short sentence, with a gauge of the varying soundness and hollowness of his argument. 'France,' he wrote in '93, 'is not formidable as a great republic, but as the most dreadful gang of robbers and murderers that ever was embodied.' Burke was wrong. Whether the particular citizens who moulded its destinies were robbers and murderers, or patriots and philosophers, it was as a great republic, if at all, that France was formidable. She had forced the whole of Europe to acknowledge

her as a great republic. Even England, though she had not made peace with her, had virtually acknowledged her as a great republic ever since the negotiation at Basse. But although the old Regicide argument, so far as European public opinion was concerned, had thus been cast into the shade, it did not follow that Burke was bound to cease from employing it. For him, at least, it was as valid and cogent as while the guillotine was still wet with the blood of the Son of St. Louis. It was equally valid and cogent for thousands of English men and women, who read in the recent events in France the doom of the old political system of Europe. That doom had been pronounced by a decree which no war could reverse, though waged in the name of Chivalry and Christianity, supported by all the religious philosophy of both Churches, and by the wealth of both Indies. That political system of Europe, which Burke loved so much, was rotten to the heart; and it was the destiny of French republicanism to begin the long task of breaking it up, crumbling it to dust, and scattering it to the winds. This is clear as the day to us. But the spectator of eighty years ago might well be excused for averting his eyes from that which indicated it.

Not only was the scheme of which the author speaks at the end of the First Letter never completed, but not one of the four Letters of which the present volume consists, can be considered a finished work, complete in all its parts and members. The First most nearly approaches completion: and the Second was hastily written as a supplement to it. The First and Second Letters may really be considered as a first and second part of the same work. The Third and Fourth are merely grand fragments, running in each case into a continuation patched up by another hand out of the author's remains. The book on the Revolution (Select Works, Vol. ii.) similarly consists of one or two colossal fragments of a whole that only existed in Burke's vast imagination. The reader unavoidably compares the Reflections on the Revolution with the Letters on a Regicide Peace. Difficult as the comparison would in any case be, this condition of incompleteness and mutilation renders it more difficult than ever. But one thing will be abundantly clear to any one who reads the present volume through. Utterly wrong were those contemporary critics, chiefly among the Foxite Whigs, who saw in the 'Reflections' the beginnings of a distorted view of things which in the 'Regicide Peace' letters

culminated and amounted to lunacy. The intemperate heat, the factious preoccupation, and the precipitate judgment which vitiate so much of the 'Reflections' are indeed to be traced more or less in the 'Regicide Peace.' But the question is altered: and a far bolder, wider, more accurate view of its elements predominates. It is a view which reminds us strongly of the writer's arguments on the American question. In the 'Reflections' Burke was avowedly writing in a partial and prejudiced sense. He took upon himself to expound on the spur of the moment the unreasoned creed and the traditional sentiment of the ordinary Englishman of his day. In the present volume Burke relinquishes this 'John Bull' masquerade, and writes as a statesman, a scholar, and a historical critic. The reader will find more than one of his early arguments repudiated. This was the natural result of wider and more prolonged experience. In the 'Reflections,' for instance, he had declared it to be the tendency of the new French state to crumble into separate republics. That argument was blindly adopted by Lord Auckland: and in the present volume it is treated with the greatest scorn, and directly confuted by a reference to facts. In the present volume, though Burke writes with opinions in the main unchanged, he also writes with knowledge vastly enlarged. He writes, moreover, with a deeper and more sustained sense of the importance of the question at issue, both to England and to Europe: and with a solemn sense of personal responsibility natural in a veteran statesman consciously taking his leave of the world. These qualities, combined with a degree of eloquence and logical ability which is to say the least equal to that displayed in the earlier work, have been thought by some to entitle the Letters on a Regicide Peace, fragmentary as they are, to rank even before the 'Reflections,' and to be called the writer's masterpiece.

LONDON, February 21, 1878.

TWO LETTERS
ADDRESSED TO
A MEMBER OF THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT,
ON THE
PROPOSALS FOR PEACE
WITH THE
REGICIDE DIRECTORY OF FRANCE.

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE.

[SECOND EDITION. RIVINGTONS, 1796.]

LETTER I.

On the Overtures of Peace.

[ARGUMENT.]

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