

cumstances of the defeat, a defeat it was. After Yorktown there could be no other result than an acknowledgment of independence. The English people, who backed the King at the start, had grown weary of the war. The House of Commons declared for peace, the Ministry of Lord North fell, and the King could not find Ministers willing to prolong the war. In this way the Rockingham and the Shelburne Ministries came into existence. They lasted rather less than one year. Lord Rockingham died three months after the Government was formed and Shelburne, continuing as a Secretary of State, became also Prime Minister. All the negotiations for peace with America, therefore, passed through his hands. There are few instances in history where a far-reaching blunder in a matter of high policy is so completely attributable to one man. Lord Shelburne, having served in the army, held a place at court in the early years of George III's reign. In due course, he embarked in politics, and as a follower of the elder Pitt shared that statesman's opposition to the American war. Being an Irish peer, he was eligible for a seat in the House of Commons. As an upholder of "the trumpet of sedition", which was the King's epithet for Pitt, Shelburne was not in the good graces of his sovereign and he was selected as the agent of the court in forming a ministry in 1782 not because he was liked, but because he was less hated than Fox. Between Shelburne and Fox there existed an undying feud. Fox complained that on a previous occasion his vote had been secured—oddly enough on the peace treaty which closed the Seven Years War—through gross deception on the part of Shelburne who was generally distrusted by his contemporaries on grounds the justice of which cannot be easily determined. He was styled "Malagrida" after the Italian Jesuit who was accused of conspiring against the King of Portugal, and it is related that Oliver Goldsmith who,

we are told, "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll" made one of his maladroitness remarks respecting the nickname. "Do you know, my lord, I never could conceive why they call you 'Malagrida,' because Malagrida was a very good sort of a man." He meant to say, of course, that as Malagrida was a good man his name should not be used as a term of reproach.

It is a commentary upon the wretched state of the political situation at this time, that Fox and Shelburne, each jealous and mistrustful of the other, should have sat in the same cabinet when the dangers confronting the nation imperatively demanded unity. Fox was what would now be called Foreign Secretary and conducted the relations with foreign countries. Shelburne was Secretary of the Southern Department, which included all dealings with the colonies. The country was at war with France and Spain as well as with America, so that when the peace negotiations began in Paris, two sets of negotiations, proceeding apart, were set on foot. The agents of the two Secretaries did not confer together and were not in one another's confidence, being bound, as they properly enough believed, to keep secret the instructions given to them. The lack of co-operation certainly contributed to the final misfortune. Shelburne had secured from George III. an undertaking that if a treaty were presented to him he would sign it. Benjamin Franklin, who was in Paris as one of the American commissioners, had previously written to Shelburne, with whom he appears to have maintained friendly relations throughout the war, and this afforded an opportunity for opening informal communications. The person selected by Shelburne to approach Franklin was Richard Oswald. The choice of Oswald was entirely unsuitable. He is described as a Scottish merchant resident in London and known to the Government as an army contractor, possess-