

## THOMAS WOLSEY

### MINISTER OF WAR

**I**T has always been the fond boast of the English that they 'muddle through,' however hard they are beset. The boast is not the boast of wisdom and courage. He, indeed, is foolish who would let his bravery outrun his prudence; and there is small merit in success which comes by accident. The truth is that the man who first made a virtue of carelessness deserved very ill of his country. Even if we praise the valour which refuses to acknowledge defeat, we must esteem yet more highly the foresight and design which make defeat impossible from the first. However, our vice and our boast find their origin in the very beginnings of our history. We have always thrown away wilfully our armies and our energies, and not always has a War Minister come in the nick of time to save us from the consequences of our folly.

One such Minister was Thomas Wolsey, a spiritual ancestor in the direct line of William Pitt, father and son, of Castlereagh, and of other stout contrivers of victory. Born to a great inheritance of wisdom, he was a natural Minister of State, as Shakespeare was a