

8 The Hanoverians 1714 - 1837

Although **George I** and his successors are generally referred to as '**The Hanoverians**' this is not a particularly accurate description of the family, a branch of the Guelphs who in the early Middle Ages became rulers of two German duchies, Luneburg and Kalenberg, with capitals at Zell and Hanover respectively. The two duchies were often ruled by different members of the family but George's father arranged for him to marry his first cousin, Sophia Dorothea, heiress of the duchy of Kalenberg. In 1692 George's father persuaded the Emperor to elevate his duchy of Luneburg to the status of an imperial electorate as a reward for helping the Emperor in a war against the Turks. Technically the Electorate of Brunswick-Luneburg, it was popularly referred to as the Electorate of Hanover and the new Elector took his place among the nine great princes of Germany who had the power to elect a Holy Roman Emperor when the need arose. George became Elector when his father died in 1698 and he succeeded his uncle as Duke of Kalenberg in 1705. The Electorate, thus extended, covered about 8,500 square miles in northern Germany, with a population of about three-quarters of a million. This made it comparable in size to the Principality of Wales.

Born in 1660, George was a capable soldier who had gone on his first campaign at the age of fifteen, and he subsequently served with distinction in Austria, Hungary, Greece, Germany and Flanders, reaching the summit of his military career as commander of the Imperial army on the Rhine between 1709 and 1712. His arranged marriage took place in 1682 and he sired a son and a daughter but never got on well with his wife, preferring his many mistresses. When she, in turn, dallied with a handsome Swedish Count he 'disappeared' while she was divorced in 1694 and confined in the castle of Ahlden, in Zell, where she remained a virtual prisoner until her death in 1726.

George's mother Sophia, heiress to the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, died in June 1714, thereby failing by only a matter of weeks to succeed Anne, who died on August 1st. In accordance with the Act of Succession, George was duly proclaimed King of Great Britain and Ireland, and, at the age of fifty-four, he had to face a major upheaval in his way of life. In September he arrived in England with his mistresses and a group of German advisers. Though he was fluent in French he could not speak English, he knew little of Britain and he even had doubts about the legitimacy of his title to the crown. In these circumstances he was content to appoint a ministry composed almost entirely of Whigs, the supporters of the Hanoverian succession, and to leave the detailed business of government to his chief ministers, Townshend and Stanhope.

In the autumn of **1715** the **Jacobites** launched an attempt to unseat George in favour of James Edward Stuart whom they had recognized as 'James III' since his father's death in 1705. Many Scottish people were already disillusioned with the Act of Union, feeling that they had been 'taken over' by the English, so the Jacobites expected to receive widespread support. Their most powerful ally was Louis XIV of France and it was a disaster for them when he died on September 1st 1715, just as the rebellion was about to get under way. The Jacobite Duke of Ormonde made two unsuccessful attempts to land troops from Ireland and a Jacobite force of about 4,000 was obliged to surrender at Preston on the 13th of November. On the same day 12,000 Jacobites under the Earl of Mar failed at Sheriffmuir to defeat a much smaller loyal force led by the Duke of Argyll and they withdrew to the country round Perth, where, rather late in the day, they were joined by James Edward. He proved to be an

uninspiring leader and support melted away. By April 1716 the rising was over, James Edward had fled back to the continent and the Government could afford to deal leniently with all but the most important rebels. Because many Tories were associated with Jacobitism, the 1715 rebellion had the effect of casting them even deeper into the political wilderness and for the next fifty years it was the Whigs who governed Britain. In 1716 they passed a Septennial Act, extending the life of a parliament to a maximum of seven years.

In 1720 Britain was convulsed by the effects of the '**South Sea Bubble**'. The South Sea Company, a successful trading enterprise, offered early in the year to take on about £30 million of the existing £51 million national debt, paying £7 million for the privilege and receiving from the government only 5% in interest, falling to 4% after 1727. This resulted in crazy speculation in the Company's shares which rose by over 1,000% at the end of June. By September the share price slumped and thousands were ruined. At this point **Sir Robert Walpole**, an experienced Whig politician and former minister, suggested that a proportion of South Sea Company stock should be transferred to two trusted institutions, the East India Company and the Bank of England. This helped to restore general confidence and brought Walpole to the forefront of politics once more.

Walpole was born in 1676 and inherited his father's extensive Norfolk estates in 1700. He became an MP the following year, associating himself with the Whigs. By 1708 he was Secretary for War, but, as a supporter of Marlborough he was dismissed in 1710 and accused of corruption by the Tories, as a result of which he spent six months in prison during 1712. His fortunes improved with the accession of George I and the renewed dominance of the Whigs. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1715 to 1717, resigning in protest at the dismissal from office of his friend and brother-in-law Townshend. After his part in reducing the panic caused by the South Sea Bubble he again became Chancellor and First Lord of the Treasury in 1721. Except for a break of a few weeks he held these offices until 1742, establishing a personal control over governmental affairs unprecedented to this point in British history. Hence he is considered the first British '**Prime Minister**' though that was never his official title. Leaders of administrations gradually came to be referred to as 'prime ministers' but the title was not legally recognized until 1905.

Walpole had the great advantage of enjoying the full support of George I, whose simple tastes he gave the appearance of sharing. He weighed twenty stone, spoke with a marked Norfolk accent and affected the manner of a simple country squire, despite acquiring great wealth, building himself a vast country house in Norfolk and filling it with art treasures. He decided not to accept a peerage and devoted his energies to creating a loyal following in the House of Commons, mostly by giving offices, pensions and privileges to government supporters. Benefiting from the work of Stanhope, who had established peaceful relations between Britain and her former enemies in Europe, Walpole made it a matter of policy to preserve peace and encourage the development of agriculture and trade. Meanwhile the king spent about half his time in Hanover, content in the knowledge that Walpole was governing wisely and well.

George's death in Hanover in 1727 brought to the throne his only son, **George II**. He had been born in 1683 and was reared mostly by his mother until her divorce in 1694, after which he was brought up by his grandmother, Sophia, who taught him some English. In 1705 he married Caroline, the daughter of the Margrave of Brandenburg-Anspach, a clever girl full of character, and he went on to pursue a military career, fighting bravely at Oudenarde under the

command of Marlborough. After his father's accession he was made Prince of Wales and, despite rather a quick temper, he became quite popular in England. However, his relationship with his father was poor - some thought because he sympathised with his mother - and it worsened after he was left as Regent when the king visited Hanover in 1716 because he was accused by his father of living in unnecessary splendour and interfering unduly in affairs of state. After a major row with his father in 1717 George and his wife moved to Leicester House where they set up a rival court which attracted young politicians and members of high society. The detestation felt by the king for his heir reached ludicrous proportions at times and caused considerable scandal.

When he heard the news of his father's death, George's first reaction was to dismiss Walpole and replace him with Sir Spencer Compton, a member of his own circle. However, Walpole had taken the precaution of cultivating a friendship with the new Queen, Caroline, who saw that he was indispensable. Her influence, together with Walpole's promise that he would ensure that the king received a generous revenue from the Civil List resulted in his return to power within a few weeks. He continued to pursue a policy of preserving international peace and managed to persuade the king, despite his Hanoverian interests, not to become involved in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-38). At home he worked hard to improve the efficiency of the Treasury, especially in the area of tax collection, though he abandoned a tough Excise Bill in 1733 when he realized that it would be defeated in the Commons.

In 1737 Walpole lost the support of Queen Caroline, who died in that year, and he came under sustained attack from political enemies who by now resented his dominance. Against his better judgement he was forced to bow to popular demand for a war against Spain in 1739 over long-standing trading disputes in the Caribbean and elsewhere, and he resigned in 1742 when it became clear that he had no appetite for the role of a war leader. He accepted an earldom but died shortly afterwards, in 1745. There was no-one of his stature available to take overall control of government, which in the next few years was in the hands of a group of ministers led by George Carteret, Henry Pelham and his brother the Duke of Newcastle.

The war with Spain soon became engulfed by a much greater and more complex European conflict known as the **War of the Austrian Succession** (1740-1748). Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor and Head of the House of Habsburg, had no sons to succeed him so he persuaded most of the European powers to sign an agreement (the 'Pragmatic Sanction') recognizing his daughter Maria Theresa as the heir to all the Habsburg lands. When Charles died in 1740 the Habsburg province of Silesia was invaded by Frederick II, a young military genius (and son of George I's only sister) who had just become King of Prussia. Encouraged by Frederick's success, France, Spain, Bavaria, Saxony and Sardinia all ignored their signatures to the Pragmatic Sanction and claimed parts of the Habsburg empire. George II was one of the few rulers to honour the agreement and in 1743 he led in person a 'Pragmatic Army' of 16,000 British troops augmented by contingents from Hanover, Hesse and the Netherlands. When confronted by the French at **Dettingen** in June he succeeded in driving them in flight across the river Main, taking part himself in the thick of the fighting with notable courage. This made him quite a hero at home, though it proved to be the last time that a British king led his troops into battle. In May 1745 George's younger son William, Duke of Cumberland, commanded the British component of an allied army which marched to relieve Tournai from attack by the French but was repulsed by them at Fontenoy. However, Cumberland's troops fought tenaciously and retired in good order.

They were soon on their way home to deal with the **Jacobite Rebellion of 1745**. After the first rebellion in 1715 the Highland Scots had been disarmed and 250 miles of roads had been constructed across their territory. Moreover, James Edward had proved himself an uninspiring leader and had very little support either at home or abroad. However, by 1745 a new Jacobite star had arisen in the person of his dashing young son, Charles Edward, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'. Aged 25, he was full of character and charm and won friends wherever he went. In 1744 Louis XV of France equipped an expedition to take him to Britain, in revenge for George II's role at Dettingen, but the fleet was dispersed by bad weather. In July 1745 Charles chanced everything by landing at Moidart with only seven followers, but he soon persuaded hundreds of clansmen to support him and by September 17 he had taken Edinburgh.

Four days later Charles defeated a government force at Prestonpans, which encouraged even more to support him, and in October he crossed the border with 5,000 men, captured Carlisle and reached Derby on December 4. However, Englishmen showed no interest in joining his adventure and he was obliged to turn back on December 6. In Scotland he recruited more troops and received help from the French so that his force swelled to 8,000 and he defeated a British force at Falkirk in January 1746. But Cumberland, with twice his strength, resolutely pursued him northwards and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Jacobites at **Culloden Moor** on April 16. Charles escaped from the field, taking refuge in Skye before returning to the continent, creating a romantic legend as he went.

The Government was not lenient to the rebels on this occasion and 'Butcher' Cumberland earned his nickname by supervising the execution of 120 prominent rebels, including peers, who were beheaded, and the banishment or transportation of over a thousand more. Nearly all Charles' support had come from the clans, and after 1746 their fighting spirit was channelled into the Highland regiments of the British army which fought with great distinction thereafter. Interest in the Jacobites evaporated and James Edward died in exile in 1766, Charles (who left no male heir) in 1788.

Meanwhile the war continued in Europe and also in Canada, India and the Caribbean. British forces captured the French stronghold of Louisbourg in Canada, while in India the French took Madras. Peace was signed in 1748 at the **Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle** (or Aachen) by which these two colonial posts were returned to their original owners. In Europe Maria Theresa lost Silesia and some Italian territory but retained control of the rest of her Habsburg inheritance. From Britain's point of view eight years of war achieved comparatively little, to the intense frustration of a group of politicians centred on **William Pitt the Elder** whose inspiring speeches in the House of Commons urged his colleagues to seize the opportunity to make Britain a major force in the world, not merely in Europe, by expanding her colonies and her trade. Before the war of 1740-48 Spain had been seen as the great trading rival because of conflicting Anglo-Spanish interests in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, but after 1748 it became clear to many that France was the new commercial threat, with French traders and explorers laying claim to much of Canada, and the French and British East India Companies engaged in a race to control trade with India.

Pitt's father had made a fortune in India and William, born in 1708, was sent to Eton and Oxford. As a young man he became part of an active group of politicians opposed to Walpole and centred on the the court of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who was as much detested by his father as George II had been by his. From the king's point of view, therefore, Pitt was a

political enemy and he blocked his appointment to ministerial office until 1746, when he became Paymaster-General. He held this office for nine years and during this time built up a fund of information about the commercial activities of France and the state of her colonies in readiness for the renewed conflict that he considered inevitable.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had not satisfied its signatories, especially Maria Theresa of Austria, who was determined to regain Silesia. In a process which has been called the 'Diplomatic Revolution' the main protagonists in the previous war (except for England and France) changed sides, mainly because the rise of Prussia under Frederick ('the Great') had altered the balance of European power. England signed a treaty with Prussia, largely to protect Hanover, and Austria made an alliance with France and Russia against Prussia. When Frederick successfully attacked Saxony (an ally of Austria) in 1756 the **Seven Years War** (1756-1763) got under way. Britain made a poor start when the French captured Minorca and Admiral Byng failed to relieve it, while Frederick suffered a severe defeat at Kolin in 1757, after his invasion of Habsburg Bohemia.

Pitt, with his manic enthusiasm and head full of schemes to beat the French, was the obvious man to lead the war effort but it took months of negotiations and false starts before the king, together with a sufficient number of ministerial colleagues, could be persuaded to work with him. Supported first by the Duke of Devonshire and then the Duke of Newcastle Pitt was effectively in charge of the war effort from December 1756 until October 1761, a period of spectacular success for Britain which made Pitt's reputation as a great, if eccentric, war minister. His general strategy was to attack the French vigorously in Canada, India, the West Indies and West Africa, while pouring money into the Prussian war effort so as to keep French troops occupied in Europe.

In India the Nawab of Bengal attacked British colonists in June 1756 and locked up 146 of them for the night in a small chamber, the 'Black Hole of Calcutta', where most of them died. The following year **Robert Clive**, with 3,000 men defeated the Nawab's army of 50,000 at **Plassey**, thereby giving the East India Company control over Bengal. In 1758 there was success in West Africa where the capture of Fort Louis and Goree in Senegal destroyed French control over the gum and slave trades. During 1758 Pitt also organized a three-pronged offensive against the French in Canada and controversially chose a young general, **James Wolfe** (aged 32) to lead a daring attack on **Quebec** which he took in September 1759, though he was killed in the action. The same 'glorious year of victories' saw the capture of Guadeloupe in the West Indies and decisive naval successes at Lagos and Quiberon Bay which put an end to French plans to invade Britain, while a French attack on Hanover was thwarted by a predominantly British army at Minden. In India the French were routed at Wandewash in January 1760 and Pondicherry capitulated the following year.

In the midst of these outstanding successes George II died in October, 1760 to be succeeded by his grandson, **George III**. Frederick, Prince of Wales had died in 1751 having caught a chill after a game of tennis, and he left a family of five boys and four girls to be brought up by his widow. She continued to be out of favour with George II and was a focus for opposition politicians. Her chief friend and supporter was the **Earl of Bute**, a Scottish nobleman who acted as tutor and confidant to her eldest son who admired and respected him greatly. George grew to be tall and fair-haired with prominent blue eyes and a polite and graceful manner. He was also serious-minded, morally pure and determined to cleanse what

he perceived to be a corrupt and factious political system. Unfairly, no doubt, he regarded his grandfather as incompetent and his ministers as untrustworthy.

The new king made few immediate changes to the administration on his accession, though Bute became a senior minister in March 1761, joining Pitt and Newcastle. The king and Bute took the view that the war in Europe was no longer essential to British interests and that the colonial war had already been won, but Pitt was adamant that peace should not be considered until complete victory had been achieved on all fronts, irrespective of the expense. Incensed by opposition to his extended war plans, Pitt resigned in October 1761 and Newcastle followed in May 1762, leaving Bute head of the administration. He pressed ahead with negotiations for peace, despite the opposition of Pitt and influential merchants who were delighted with Britain's conquests in the Caribbean and America and looked for even more.

The Peace of Paris, 1763, was a triumph for Great Britain which gained from France the whole of Canada and much of 'Louisiana', as well as the Caribbean islands of Tobago, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Senegal in West Africa. In India the French retained their trading stations but effectively accepted the supremacy of the British East India Company there. From Spain, which entered the war in 1762 in support of France, Britain received east and west Florida. Frederick of Prussia was left in the lurch, though he was able to make his own peace with Austria and retain control of Silesia. After 1763, therefore, two important new forces emerged - Britain as the owner of a worldwide trading empire, and Prussia as a major power in northern Europe.

Despite these great gains, Bute was savagely criticised by Pitt and others for returning many other conquests and for abandoning Prussia. Even though he was immensely rich and had strong support in Scotland, he did not have the will to establish a political following in England and chose to resign in April 1763, leaving the king to call upon the services of **George Grenville**. In the same month **John Wilkes**, a wealthy MP who owned a newspaper entitled the *North Briton*, wrote in its 45th edition an article which was highly critical of the Peace of Paris and contained personal criticisms of the king. Ministers issued a general warrant for the arrest of all concerned with the production of the *North Briton* and Wilkes was held in the Tower of London. His cause of 'Wilkes and Liberty' appeared to triumph when one court ruled that his imprisonment had been unjust and another decided that general warrants (ie for the arrest of unspecified persons) were illegal. However, a counter-attack by the government accused Wilkes of printing pornographic verses and he was expelled from the House of Commons. He took refuge in France and was declared an outlaw when he did not appear at his trial for seditious libel in 1764.

To remain at the head of an administration at this time a minister needed to be chosen and supported by the king, to maintain a majority of followers in the Commons and the Lords and to persuade able and influential colleagues to serve under him. In Grenville's case he lost the support of the king by 1765 and was replaced by the Marquess of Rockingham, who fell after one year because of disagreements among his colleagues. In 1766 George turned to William Pitt, created Earl of Chatham, but his attempts to govern were wrecked by ill-health and bouts of insanity. He resigned in 1768 to be replaced by the Duke of Grafton who had to deal with a resurgence of popular support for John Wilkes who returned from exile and succeeded in having himself elected MP for Middlesex. The House of Commons refused to admit him even when he was re-elected three more times, with large majorities. This raised the issue of the rights of Parliament and the rights of the electors, eventually decided by the courts in

favour of Wilkes and the electors. By this time Grafton had resigned, unable to maintain agreement among his colleagues.

After ten years of ministerial instability, the king at last found someone with whom he could work and who was able to maintain support in Parliament and among ministerial colleagues. This was Frederick, **Lord North**, who sat in the Commons because his was a courtesy title held as the heir of the Earl of Guilford. North stayed in power for twelve years (1770-1782) partly because the king insisted that he should and partly because he was amiable and made few enemies. This, in turn, was the result of his being somewhat lazy and inclined to take the line of least resistance. Given peaceful times these qualities might have served him well, but he found himself having to deal with rebellion in the American colonies.

The first British colony on the east coast of America was Virginia, founded in 1607, which became successful at cultivating tobacco with the help of slaves transported from West Africa. In 1620 about 100 Puritans, later called the 'Pilgrim fathers', sailed from Plymouth to Massachusetts in the *Mayflower* and established a colony there in order to escape the anti-Puritan policies of James I. During the course of the seventeenth century twelve colonies were founded on the east coast and a thirteenth, named Georgia after George II, was settled in 1733. The colonies were established by Royal Charter and the assumption was that they existed in order to create trading opportunities that would benefit the mother country. On the other hand many colonists, especially in the north, had emigrated in order to escape the authorities at home and were suspicious of interference. Up to 1763 they were dependent on British military support against the French, but after the Peace of Paris this was no longer the case.

Trouble first began with Grenville's **Stamp Act** of 1765 which imposed a stamp duty on a wide range of official documents, pamphlets and newspapers, intended to raise revenue to pay for the administration and defence of the colonies. It provoked a storm of protest in the colonies on the grounds that internal taxes should be imposed by the colonial assemblies and not by the Westminster parliament - 'No taxation without representation!' was the cry. Grenville's successor Rockingham backed down and repealed the Stamp Act, much to the disgust of the king. In Pitt's ministry the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, provoked trouble again in 1767 by imposing duties on all tea, glass, paint, lead and paper imported into the colonies. This resulted in rioting and disturbances on such a serious scale that Grafton's ministry decided in 1770 to abolish all the new duties except that on tea. Many colonists, in response, stopped drinking tea.

Relations between the colonists and British continued to be poor, with unpleasant incidents such as the death of five citizens in Boston in 1770 after a scuffle with soldiers (the 'Boston massacre'), and the burning of the revenue vessel *Gaspee* in 1772. In 1773 Lord North came to the rescue of the East India Company, which was in financial difficulties, by reducing the amount of tax it had to pay in Britain on the export of tea so that it could halve the price of its tea in the colonies. This well-intentioned plan was seen by the colonies as a subtle plot to entice them to drink more tea, and on the night of December 16th 1773 three ships were boarded by colonists in Boston harbour who threw their cargoes of tea overboard.

Prompted by the king, North's reaction to this 'Boston Tea Party', was tough. A series of **Coercive Acts** were passed, closing the port of Boston, demanding compensation and reducing the powers of the Massachusetts assembly. The colonists resisted, North sent out

General Gage to enforce obedience using British troops, and the situation became ugly. A 'Congress' of representatives of all the colonies met at Philadelphia in September 1774 and drew up a petition of grievances, but it was ignored by North, despite the fact that influential figures like Chatham and the philosopher Edmund Burke sympathized with the colonists' case.

In April 1775 Gage received orders to put down the rebellion in Massachusetts and he marched to the village of Concord, outside Boston. On the way he encountered resistance from colonial militia at Lexington, where the first battle of the **American War of Independence** (1775 - 1782) took place. In June British forces dislodged the colonists from Bunker Hill, near Boston, but only after suffering heavy losses. In July the colonists appointed **George Washington** as their commander-in-chief and the British replaced Gage with Sir William Howe. In London the conduct of the war was directed not by North, who had no appetite for the role of a war minister, but by Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In 1776 he hired 18,000 German mercenaries and sent them to swell the 10,000 British troops already in the colonies.

On July 4 1776 the second Congress of representatives from the colonies passed their **Declaration of Independence**, mostly written by Thomas Jefferson, which renounced allegiance to George III, produced a long list of his allegedly tyrannous actions and announced the formation of **The United States of America**. This went further than some of the colonists were prepared to go, and Sir William Howe spent much of the year trying to win over the support of 'loyalists'. Washington raised morale among the rebels at the end of the year, however, by defeating German contingents at Trenton. In 1777 disaster struck the British war effort when General Burgoyne was surrounded at Saratoga in October and forced to surrender with his force of 5,000 men.

The effect of Saratoga was to encourage both France and Spain, still smarting from their defeat in the Seven Years War, to recognize the independence of the United States and conclude a formal treaty of alliance with them. This meant that Britain was forced to declare war against France (1778) and Spain (1779), and also the Dutch (1780) who insisted on carrying supplies to Britain's enemies. Lord North begged George III to allow him to resign in favour of the great war minister Chatham, but the king refused, and in any case Chatham died in 1778.

After Saratoga the British were commanded by Sir Henry Clinton, who had an army of 28,000 men. He was able to take control of Georgia and give help to the British navy, which attacked the French in the West Indies with considerable success. In 1780 Clinton went north with part of his army, leaving a force under the command of General Cornwallis, whose task was to subdue the southern colonies. In May 1781 Cornwallis established himself at **Yorktown**, on the Williamsburg peninsula, where he was besieged on October 9th by Washington, with the help of a French fleet which sailed into Chesapeake Bay and prevented the British navy from assisting Cornwallis. The result was that on October 18th Cornwallis was forced to surrender. After this disaster North was again keen to resign but the king kept him on until the Commons passed an anti-war resolution in March 1782, after which the North ministry collapsed.

North was briefly succeeded by a group of ministers led by Rockingham, Charles James Fox and the Earl of Shelburne, and it was the latter who was chiefly responsible for the **Peace of**

Versailles which ended the war. Two separate agreements were made, one with the United States, and one with France, Spain and Holland. The vital feature of the first, signed in November 1782, was Britain's recognition of the independence of the United States. Peace negotiations with France, completed in January 1783, were made easier by a late naval success for Britain when Admiral Rodney defeated the French fleet at the battle of the Saints, in the West Indies, in April 1782. France handed back all her conquests in the West Indies except Tobago, and received only Senegal and the guarantee of fishing rights off Newfoundland. These were small returns for an expensive war which added to Louis XVI's financial problems, the fundamental cause of the French Revolution, now only a few years away. Spain received Florida and Minorca, while the Dutch gained nothing.

The thirteen American colonies were lost partly because a significant number of colonists had a historical dislike of Britain and British interference, and partly because Britain did not have the military resources to defeat a determined local population in a vast country two thousand miles away. Moreover, when France and Spain entered the war, Britain crucially lost naval superiority, which proved fatal at Yorktown. However, although the loss of the colonies was a setback, the war was not a complete disaster for Britain, which managed to retain control of Canada and her West Indies colonies, all of which had been seriously under threat. Moreover the American loss stimulated the British to look for colonial gains elsewhere, especially in India, as well as in Australia and New Zealand, whose coasts had been mapped by Captain **James Cook** in the 1770s.

Shelburne lasted in office only until February 1783 when he was brought down by a coalition between followers of North and his former opponent Charles James Fox. The king strongly disapproved of this arrangement and in December 1783 he took the controversial step of appointing **William Pitt the Younger** as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was remarkable because Pitt, the son of Chatham, was only twenty-four years old. His elevation was treated by some politicians with derision but Pitt soon demonstrated that he had exceptional abilities and he remained the dominant personality in British politics for more than twenty years.

Pitt's appeal to George III was that he stood above party politics, which the king still considered the greatest weakness of the constitution. Pitt's main aim during his first few years in power was to improve the efficiency of government and administration, making economies where possible and reducing the number of sinecures. He was a disciple of the economist Adam Smith and wherever possible introduced measures to encourage free trade. His **India Act** of 1784 reduced the authority of the East India Company and gave more power to a Governor-General and advisory Council appointed by the Crown. His **Canada Act** of 1791 retained the loyalty of French Canadians by creating two provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, based on racial divisions between the French and English and governed by assemblies modelled on the British parliamentary system. Pitt's common sense approach to problems and his ability to master complex issues and explain them simply to others, together with his apparently inexhaustible capacity for hard work, gradually won him support in both Houses and ensured stable government..

In 1788 Pitt's ascendancy was threatened by an alarming deterioration in the king's mental health. As early as 1765 George suffered a three-month period of temperamental instability but he recovered and was free from other serious attacks until the autumn of 1788 when quite clearly he became delirious and Pitt had to consider a **Regency Bill** which would give power

to the king's heir, George, Prince of Wales, a bosom companion of Pitt's chief political foe, Charles James Fox. In fact the king recovered in February 1789 and the crisis passed for the moment. George's 'madness', once ascribed either to the strain of having to remain faithful to his very plain German wife, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (who bore him fifteen children) or to the shame of losing the American colonies, or even to the debauchery of his eldest son, is now thought by medical experts to have been caused by a hereditary disease known as porphyria.

While politicians grappled with the pressing political issues of the day, profound economic changes took place in England between 1760 and 1800. Though the term '**agricultural revolution**' is now considered misleading, it is beyond doubt that during these forty years most of England's cultivated land, hitherto mainly consisting of large, open fields, was subjected to 'enclosure' by walls and hedges to create much smaller fields in which landowners and farmers were able to make better use of improved methods of soil cultivation and animal breeding. These had been advocated for many years by men such as Jethro Tull who pioneered more efficient ploughing methods, Viscount Townshend who advocated the cultivation of turnips and Robert Bakewell who successfully bred 'modern' sheep and cattle from their much scrawnier ancestors. The result was that the countryside changed dramatically in appearance, with farms surrounded by fields dominating the landscape, while the production of cereals and fatstock provided a greater variety and quantity of foodstuffs both for home consumption and for export. However, the rural population fell into decline as many labourers moved to the rapidly growing towns in search of work

Why the **Industrial Revolution** (another contested description) should have first established itself in Britain rather than elsewhere in Europe or the wider world is a matter for considerable debate, but the fact is that it did and the result was that Britain became the leading world power for a considerable part of the nineteenth century. The origins of change are to be found in the inventions of James Hargreaves whose 'spinning jenny' (1765) enabled one operative to spin multiple cotton threads while Richard Arkwright's cotton frame (1769) was driven by water-power. Samuel Crompton's 'mule' (1779) made use of both these inventions to design an efficient machine that produced strong cotton cloth. By 1792 there were about 100 cotton mills in England, most of them sited alongside rivers, and almost half in Lancashire. However, these advances would not have caused phenomenal change without the development of the rotary action steam engine.

An atmospheric steam engine had been invented by Thomas Newcomen before the end of the previous century but its use had been limited to pumping water out of mines. **James Watt**, the son of a merchant from Greenock, near Glasgow, started his career as a highly skilled maker of mathematical instruments. Using the discoveries of James Black, a professor of medicine at Glasgow who undertook research into steam and latent heat, Watt patented a condenser in 1769 and went into partnership with the ironmaster Matthew Boulton of Birmingham to produce successful rotary action steam engines which were gradually installed in cotton mills in the north of England. The next decisive stimulus to the growth of industry in Britain was provided by war on a grand scale, which began in 1793.

The **French Revolution** was caused by the bankruptcy of Louis XVI of France who was forced to abandon absolute rule, summon the defunct States General (a sort of parliament) and ask for money. This gave the rich middle classes their opportunity to attack the power of the monarchy and aristocracy but in so doing they removed restraint from the rural peasantry

and urban poor who destroyed the Bastille in Paris on July 14th, 1789 and terrorized the countryside. Some influential observers in England, such as Fox, initially hailed this as a welcome blow against despotism, but the failure of Louis to give decisive leadership and to accept modification of the constitution led to the rise of increasingly extreme political factions. When Austria and Prussia declared war on France in 1792, intent on destroying the gains of the revolution and restoring the authority of Louis, the resultant fear of invasion led to the rise of extremist groups who tried and executed the king in January 1793 and declared France a republic. Knowing that this would provoke a hostile response from other nations, the revolutionary French government, already fighting Austria and Prussia, also declared war on Britain and Spain early in 1793. Thus began a long contest between Britain and France which did not end until 1815.

Pitt's initial approach to the war was to hope that France would collapse in the face of concerted attack from her continental enemies while the English navy pursued a campaign against French colonial possessions. Accordingly Britain joined in a coalition which included Russia, Austria, Prussia and Spain, with Pitt undertaking to help finance the allies. However, the French resisted successfully and by 1795 the coalition was under threat, though Admiral Howe won the naval victory of the 'Glorious First of June' in 1794. In 1796 Spain changed sides and declared war on Britain while in 1797 the young French general, **Napoleon Bonaparte**, showed his military genius by driving the Austrian armies out of Italy. Austria then made a humiliating peace, leaving England to face France alone.

The British navy had achieved success early in 1797 when Jervis and **Horatio Nelson** defeated the Spanish fleet at Cape St. Vincent, but in April and May the fleets mutinied in their bases at Spithead and the Nore, complaining of poor conditions. The Nore fleet returned to discipline just in time to defeat the Dutch (allies of France) at Camperdown in October. In 1798 Pitt worked hard to construct a second coalition against the French which included Russia and Austria and in August 1798 Nelson destroyed the French fleet which had carried Bonaparte's troops to the invasion of Egypt, at Aboukir Bay, off the mouth of the Nile. Bonaparte abandoned his army and returned to France where in a political coup he seized power and was proclaimed 'First Consul' in November 1799. He then invaded Italy again and defeated the Austrians at Marengo in June 1800. The second coalition collapsed and Denmark, Sweden and Russia announced their 'Armed Neutrality' against Britain, which prompted Hyde Parker and Nelson to destroy the Danish fleet at Copenhagen in April 1801.

A couple of weeks before this success, Pitt resigned, mainly because of events concerning Ireland. In 1704 a Test Act forbade anyone to hold public office who was not prepared to receive communion according to the rites of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. This excluded not only Roman Catholics, but also Presbyterians and other Nonconformists - more than 90% of the population. The Irish parliament was not very active, with MPs elected only at the beginning of a new reign or on the death or resignation of a sitting member, and in 1720 the British parliament's Declaratory Act re-affirmed Britain's right to legislate for Ireland. Most of the land was owned by Anglo-Irish aristocracy and gentry, many of whom were absentee landlords even though during the century they built themselves magnificent country houses on the English model. Unfortunately very few of them were sufficiently interested in their Irish estates to introduce the new methods of agriculture that had been so successful in Britain, and desperate poverty was widespread in the Irish countryside.

For the first half of the century **Ireland** remained subdued, though voices were raised against British dominance, especially over the monopoly granted in the 1720s to an Englishman, William Wood, to mint Irish coins. From 1750 onwards there was increasing opposition in the Irish parliament to Britain's control over Irish affairs and this led in 1768 to the passing of an 'Octennial Act' which provided for elections every eight years. The American colonists' Declaration of Independence in 1776 and their subsequent success in breaking away from British rule inspired many Irish patriots to campaign for a free Ireland. British troops were removed from Ireland in order to serve in America and this led to the formation of the Protestant Irish Volunteer Corps which was intended to defend the country from possible French attack though it was also influential in agitating for political reform.

In the Irish parliament **Henry Grattan**, an outstanding orator, made use of Lord North's preoccupation with the American war and his fear that the Irish might go the same way to spearhead a successful campaign for reform. The 1720 Declaratory Act was repealed, Roman Catholics were allowed to inherit property and hold long leases, free trade between Britain and Ireland was encouraged, and, in 1782, Poynings' law was amended so that the Irish parliament could at last enact laws without the prior consent of Britain. Pitt therefore inherited a situation whereby the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland were linked constitutionally only by the fact that George III was the sovereign of both.

As leader of the king's ministers it was Pitt's task to steer government policies not only through the British parliament but also through the newly independent parliament in Dublin, and to do this he worked through a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland who was effectively part of his ministerial team. The outbreak of revolutionary fervour in France encouraged political malcontents in Britain as well as Ireland, but the Irish clearly had the stronger case. For this reason both Grattan and Pitt argued that the Roman Catholics in Ireland - most of them poor, disaffected and capable of mob violence - should be appeased by concessions, and in 1793 the Irish parliament's Catholic Relief Act restored to Catholics some civil liberties including the right to vote. In 1795 a young and liberal Lord Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam, seemed to favour full Catholic emancipation, though he was recalled after a few months. Protestants saw the coming threat, however, and late in 1795 they founded the **Orange Order**, named after William of Orange, vanquisher of the Catholics, and dedicated to the preservation of the Protestant Ascendancy.

Yet by 1795 the desire to be independent of Britain rose above religious divides, and, following the example of revolutionary groups in France, the '**United Irishmen**' were led by Wolfe Tone, a former lawyer who had experienced revolutionary activity at first hand both in America and France, and Napper Tandy who organized patriots into armed battalions. Fearing the possibility of Irish collaboration in a French invasion Lord Camden, the Lord Lieutenant, managed to achieve the disarming of Ulster using volunteer troops, many of whom were 'ascendancy' protestants. Rebel activity switched to the south where in 1798 some 15,000 men captured Wexford and other towns, only to be defeated in June by General Lake at Vinegar Hill. A French invasion force landed in August but was forced to surrender by Lord Cornwallis, recently appointed Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

With the rebellion defeated, Pitt, together with his chief secretary for Ireland, Viscount Castlereagh, and also Cornwallis, was of the opinion that two measures were needed to ensure the future peace of Ireland. One was an **Act of Union** which would merge the British and Irish parliaments, and the other was the granting of full civic and civil rights

(‘emancipation’) to the Catholics. Irish MPs, (all Protestants) were persuaded that they could not hope to maintain their position now that Catholics had the vote, and also that Ireland would benefit from free trade with Britain after a Union. Moreover they were all offered £7,000 each in compensation. The result was that, after negotiating terms that it considered acceptable, the Irish parliament, after a life of over 500 years, voted itself out of existence by a comfortable majority early in 1800.

The Act of Union thus agreed created ‘**The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**’, with one parliament sitting at Westminster, and it came into force on January 1st 1801. Thirty-two Irish peers, including four bishops, had seats in the House of Lords and there were a hundred Irish MPs in the Commons. For more than 120 years the Irish vote at Westminster would be a major factor in British politics, as would the increasing demand of the Irish to recover their lost parliament. In Britain Union with Ireland had few influential opponents, but the emancipation of Catholics was an issue which prompted widespread dismay, not least from the king who regarded it as a contravention of his coronation oath to preserve the rights of the Church of England. Pitt was able to win over many of his own political colleagues, but the king, regretfully, proved immovable, and faced with this Pitt felt that he had no choice but to resign. As the king considered that Henry Addington, the Speaker of the House of Commons, had the ability to succeed Pitt, he accepted his resignation in February 1801.

Although the title **Prime Minister** was still an unofficial one it was by now in common use and it was certainly an accurate description of the role of the Younger Pitt, who had dominated the British political world for the past seventeen years. Moreover, under him there developed a stronger concept of ‘Cabinet’ government whereby about a dozen ministers were, by virtue of the senior posts they held, members of an inner committee chaired by the Prime Minister. Pitt himself had held the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Cabinet contained the Lord Privy Seal, the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Secretary of War, First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and President of the Board of Trade as well as one or two others.

Addington’s policy was to make peace on the grounds that the worst excesses of the French Revolution had long ago been contained, and that continued war would damage the trade which was Britain’s life-blood. It happened to suit Bonaparte to call a truce at this stage, so Addington was able to negotiate the Treaty of Amiens which came into force in March 1802 and returned to Britain’s former enemies all conquests except Trinidad and Ceylon. Addington was able to claim a saving of £25 million, and he also instituted an annual survey of the national finances, the beginnings of the modern budget. However, by 1803 it was clear that Bonaparte nourished ambitions for the further expansion of France, and to prevent this Britain re-opened the war in May 1803. As Bonaparte, hitherto ‘First Consul’ proclaimed himself ‘Napoleon, Emperor of the French’, in 1804, the conflict which lasted until 1815 is generally referred to as the **Napoleonic War**. Whereas the previous war had been fought against a new republic which was a threat because of its revolutionary philosophies, this war was a struggle against a military genius who had made himself master of France and who was determined to make France the mistress of Europe.

Addington was much criticized for the muddled arrangements made by his government to recruit troops for the new war and he resigned in May 1804 to be replaced by Pitt, who

formed his second administration and addressed the pressing problem of a threatened French invasion. Napoleon was massing about 90,000 men in the Channel ports and he intended to ferry them over in transport ships protected by the warships of France and her ally Spain. By 1805 Pitt had constructed another coalition, this time with Russia and Austria, which threatened France's continental frontiers and prompted Napoleon to march his army from Boulogne into the heart of Germany where he forced an Austrian army to surrender at Ulm on October 20.

The next day the British fleet of 27 ships under Nelson went into action against the 34 ships of the combined French and Spanish fleets near Cape **Trafalgar**, off the south-west coast of Spain. Eighteen French ships were captured or destroyed and the rest never saw action again, but Nelson died from a sniper's shot aimed while he stood on the deck of his flagship, *Victory*. Though this was a great national triumph, it was soon followed by the disastrous news of the battle of Austerlitz on December 2, where Napoleon routed the combined armies of Russia and Austria and destroyed Pitt's coalition. The news also destroyed Pitt, a bachelor aged forty-six whose health had been undermined by a lifetime of excessive hard work, worry and port, and he died in January 1806 to be followed before the year was out by his long-term political foe Charles James Fox.

Pitt was followed by short-lived administrations headed by Lord Grenville and the Duke of Portland until **Spencer Perceval**, a former lawyer who was highly respected both for his integrity and ability, became Prime Minister in 1809. The following year George III, who by now was almost blind, suffered a severe attack of his mental illness and seemed unlikely to recover. Early in 1811 an Act was passed transferring his constitutional powers to his eldest son, George, Prince of Wales, who remained '**Prince Regent**' until the old king's death in 1820. In May 1812 Perceval was shot dead in the lobby of the House of Commons by a bankrupt who nursed a grievance against the government, the only assassination so far of a British Prime Minister. He was succeeded by the **Earl of Liverpool**, an able statesman who remained Prime Minister until 1827.

In addition to the continuing war with France, Britain was soon dragged into a conflict with the **United States of America** which had taken grave offence at the high-handed measures adopted by the Royal Navy in searching American ships, blockading American ports and impressing American sailors. American forces made unsuccessful attempts to invade Canada, while in 1813 British troops set fire to Washington and the White House. Peace was made in 1814 with little constructive achievement on either side.

Meanwhile Napoleon was at last in difficulties. Having followed his success at Austerlitz with another great victory over the Prussians at Jena in 1806, he made a treaty with Russia at Tilsit in 1807, in many ways the high point of his career. After another French victory over the Austrians at Wagram in 1809 Britain alone remained a powerful enemy and as Trafalgar had rendered an invasion impossible, Napoleon decided to wage economic warfare by forcing his allies as well as all those European states under his control to cease trading with Britain. This caused serious hardships in those states and when Russia refused to co-operate Napoleon made the serious mistake of leading an army of nearly a million men to attack Moscow in 1812. He captured and burnt the city, but the government and population had fled to safety and Napoleon's army was destroyed on its return by the harsh winter and constant Russian attacks.

Britain's main military contribution to the defeat of Napoleon after 1805 was the **Peninsular War**, a campaign waged in Portugal and Spain between 1808 and 1814. Napoleon had placed his brother Joseph on the throne of Spain but there were many patriotic rebels against the French regime whom Britain decided to support by sending out an army in 1808 under Sir Arthur Wellesley who won an early victory at Vimiero in Portugal. Another general, Sir John Moore, was forced to evacuate his troops from Corunna in January 1809 but three months later Wellesley won a victory at Talavera and then remained entrenched for two years behind the fortified lines of Torres Vedras. In 1811 he led a combined British, Portuguese and Spanish force into Spain and defeated the French at Salamanca (1812) and Vittoria (1813), driving them back to a defeat on French soil at Toulouse in 1814. Though Wellesley (created Earl of **Wellington** and Duke in 1814) never fought Napoleon himself during these campaigns, the presence of his effective allied force in the Peninsula made it necessary for Napoleon to maintain more than 250,000 men there, troops that he could ill afford to spare.

Encouraged by Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign, Britain's foreign secretary Lord Castlereagh played a major role in constructing a fourth coalition against France, including Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sweden, and several German states. Napoleon managed to raise another army but, outnumbered by two to one and deserted in the field by his Saxon allies, he was defeated at Leipzig in October 1813 by the combined armies of the coalition. Napoleon abdicated in April 1814 and was allowed to retire to the Island of Elba as its sovereign, while a great Congress of the victorious powers met in Vienna to discuss the details of the dismemberment of his empire. In the middle of this Napoleon escaped from Elba early in 1815 with a few followers and persuaded the French army and people to rally to his cause. On June 18 he attacked Wellington's army at **Waterloo**, eleven miles south of Brussels, but he was unable to break the British ranks and when the Prussians under Blucher arrived later in the day the French army was overwhelmed. Napoleon was captured and exiled to the remote island of St. Helena where he died six years later.

As a result of more than twenty years of war, Britain acquired several islands that had either strategic or economic importance - Heligoland, Malta, Mauritius, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Tobago and Demerara - as well as the Cape of Good Hope, where British influence in southern Africa subsequently took root. In India there was no European power after 1815 to stand in the way of the British East India Company's steady, if in theory accidental, acquisition of more lands, and by 1815 British forces had taken possession of Ceylon. Not only had British warships swept other navies from the seas during the conflict, but British naval blockades had seriously damaged the economies of France and her allies. After 1815, the crucial factor, recognized by all nations, was that Britain emerged from the war the most powerful naval force in the world, a situation that remained unchanged throughout the century. British policy in foreign affairs remained constant - to preserve naval superiority and control over vital sea routes, and to maintain a 'balance of power' in Europe to prevent the emergence of any state that might threaten the security of the others.

Domestic effects of the war included an expenditure of some £850 million and a death toll of about 250,000 fighting men, but the need to provide war materials for British troops and the opportunity to export them to other nations greatly stimulated British industries, in particular the production of iron and steel. Fear of popular revolution on the French model led to legislation such as the Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800 which aimed to prevent working men putting pressure on their employers, and the mood of most politicians during the war years was inevitably reactionary despite their awareness of much needed political and social

reforms. With the end of hostilities came mass demobilisation of soldiers and sailors who began looking for employment just as factories began to lay off men because of the introduction of new machinery. This led to 'Luddism', named after 'Ned Ludd', a mythical worker who smashed machines because they had taken his job, and there was widespread demand for reform of the parliamentary system so that the new industrial towns could be properly represented.

In August 1819 troops fired on a crowd of about 60,000 which had assembled at St Peter's Field, near Manchester, to hear 'Orator' Henry Hunt, an enthusiast for parliamentary reform. About four hundred people were injured and eight killed, enabling agitators to denounce the 'Peterloo Massacre', while the government passed a series of measures to clamp down on unrest. In 1820 George III at last died and the Prince Regent became **George IV**. His vanity, extravagance, lack of morals, selfishness and unwieldy bulk had already rendered him unpopular, but the prestige of the monarchy fell to an all-time low with a very public quarrel between George and his estranged wife Caroline, technically the Queen, who was refused entrance to Westminster Abbey for the coronation ceremony in 1821. She died shortly afterwards and the king continued to live with his mistress. Though George can claim credit for architectural successes such as Regent Street and Regent's Park in London, as well as the rebuilding of Windsor Castle and the creation of the Brighton Pavilion, as a constitutional monarch he was a liability and a constant embarrassment to his ministers.

Lord Liverpool, Prime Minister since 1812, suffered a stroke in February 1827 and was replaced by George Canning who died a few months later, and then Viscount Goderich. He proved unable to hold the essentially 'Tory' administration together in the face of increasing demands for parliamentary reform from the whig opposition, and in 1828 the king asked the Duke of Wellington to become Prime Minister in order to give some stability to the political scene. Threatened with serious unrest in Ireland, Wellington saw the need to pass a bill for catholic emancipation in 1829, thereby splitting the tory party into those who voted for and against this highly contentious measure. In 1830 the king died, and as his only child Princess Charlotte had died childless in 1817 the throne passed to his younger brother the Duke of Clarence, who reigned as **William IV**. Aged sixty-five, he was a bluff, well-meaning individual who had spent eleven years of his youth as a naval officer, retiring from active service as a rear-admiral at the age of 24. He had a large brood of illegitimate children by various mistresses before contracting a happy marriage with Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Coburg-Meiningen at the age of 53. She was 25 and bore him two daughters, both of whom died in infancy.

Within weeks of William's accession Wellington resigned because he felt unable to withstand the popular demand for electoral reform, a movement of which he disapproved. The king appointed the leader of the Whigs, **Earl Grey**, as Prime Minister, and he set about his declared aim of passing a Reform Bill. Advocates of reform were deeply critical of the existing system because only a small proportion of the population were entitled to vote and some so-called 'rotten boroughs' with very few inhabitants were still entitled to be represented by one or even two MPs while newly developed industrial towns had none. Opponents of reform tended to be tory landowners whose control over the election of MPs was threatened.

The Government's first bill was defeated by the Tories in April 1831 and the king agreed to dissolve parliament. After the general election the next bill passed the Commons but was

defeated in the Lords on 8 October. There were ripples of unrest around the country and on October 29 serious riots broke out in Bristol and lasted three days, with a mob causing serious damage to both public and private buildings. When it became known that the king was prepared to create enough new peers to ensure a majority for reform in the Lords, the bill was passed there by nine votes, but the Lords insisted on making amendments and Grey and his ministers resigned, causing a serious crisis. There was political stalemate, and many feared revolution. In the end the king again announced that he would create as many peers as were necessary to ensure the bill's unimpeded passage through parliament, and it eventually became law in June 1832.

Despite all the excitement, this '**Great Reform Act**' was a comparatively modest measure. It increased the number of voters in England and Wales from 435,000 to only 652,000 in a combined population of about 14 million. Forty-one newly industrialized towns such as Manchester, Birmingham and Bradford were given MPs for the first time, but there were still plenty of boroughs with very small electorates. In separate Acts the number of Scottish seats was increased from 45 to 53 and the electorate in Scotland leapt dramatically from about 4,500 to about 64,500 while Ireland's quota of MPs was raised from 100 to 105. The Act of 1832 did not bring about revolutionary changes in the composition of parliament, but it marked an important step towards further electoral reform.

Grey's ministry was also responsible for the Factory Act of 1833, chiefly the work of Lord Shaftesbury, which forbade the employment of children under the age of nine in factories and limited the hours of work of children under thirteen to nine hours a day. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which resulted from the efforts of the social reformer Edwin Chadwick, set up workhouses throughout Britain to which the poor and unemployed were obliged to go to obtain food and lodging in return for their labour. Lack of sufficient support from colleagues led to Grey's resignation in July 1834 and his replacement by another Whig, Lord Melbourne. He lasted only until November when the king appointed first the Duke of Wellington, who lasted a month, and then the Tory, Sir Robert Peel, who suffered many defeats in the Commons and resigned in April 1835, whereupon Lord Melbourne and the Whigs took office again.