

ON the 15th of April, 1751, Dodington had an interview with Lord Shaftesbury about the project of union (i.e., between the independent Whigs and Tories), and the latter was able to report that the outlook was exceedingly hopeful. By the 23rd, however, events had changed. On that day he dined at Sir Francis Dashwood's, and learned from Lord Talbot that no probability of the union was likely. *The terms they propose to sign*, Dodington writes, *are of a sort that imply an exclusion of coming into office. Now, as no good can be done to this country but by good men coming into office, it is all over, and I give up all thoughts of ever being any further useful to mankind.* On May the 11th he announced to his friend Ralph his resolution of no more meddling with public affairs till some party worth appearing with, should unite in the service of the country. However, he consoled himself, *more suo*, by cultivating great men, and trying to hang on to them. A quaint little note in his book records how he was 'to wait on the Duke of Newcastle, to thank him for getting me permission to drive through St. James' Park, while the King is at Kensington. We parted very civilly. He next went to Kensington, and kissed the young Prince of Wales' hand, but did not see the King.

The endless catena of schemes into which Dodington now entered are too complicated and too numerous to follow. He was careful to keep on friendly terms with the Princess of Wales, with whom he joined in belittling the Pelhams, who now, of course, were in power. But he saw that his chance lay — and so far as he could see, lay only — through the Pelhams, and so he proceeded, without any beating about the bush, to lay vigorous siege to them. Dodington was never oppressed by sensitiveness. He was ever ready, if need should come, to embrace the powerful political leader whom he might have bitterly denounced and attacked the very day before. On February 6th, 1752, he heard through the Solicitor-General that the Pelhams had no indisposition to live well with Dodington, but, on the contrary, they were rather disposed to do so. At this, Dodington suddenly changed his course. He must ingratiate himself with the Pelhams. So he decided to fling himself, if they would have him, into their scale. His diary well shews the progress of events.

February 10, 1752. Mr. Ellis was with me. I told him that I thought my behaviour, both public and private, even in opposition, never could have given just cause for offence to the

Pelhams, or could have shown any indisposition to live personally well with them : that as I was now entirely free from engagements I was sincerely desirous of Mr. Pelham's favour and friendship, if he would accept of my friendship and attachment ; if then, he would accept of my services, he might, *under proper conditions* command my interest, and in that case nobody would be more welcome to me at Weymouth than he, Mr. Ellis. That this was in Mr. Pelham's breast, who best knew his own disposition, but that mine was entirely inclined to be his friend and servant, *upon proper conditions.*

Dodington could control the Weymouth seat, which Ellis wanted. How skilfully the Bridgwater member dangled the bait ! But there were difficulties still. The Solicitor-General interviewed Dodington, and told him that, although the Pelhams were well enough disposed towards him, the King (George II) was much prejudiced against him. *So we parted*, writes Dodington, *I taking it for a thing entirely broken off, but he saying that he did not yet see it in that light.* However, a few weeks later the Solicitor-General, who was probably behind the scenes, advised a meeting between Pelham and Dodington, which accordingly took place.

Saw Mr. Pelham, by appointment, in Arlington Street. I began by telling him that the applications I had received from Mr. Ellis about his election at Weymouth, I considered as giving me a handle to wait upon him ; for I was come to offer him not only that, but all the service in my power, and that I was authorised to say the same from all my friends. He said, he should willingly embrace it, were it not for fear that he should not be able to fulfil what he wished to do, on his part.

I then asked him if there was any real inclination, in the Duke of Newcastle and him, to accept of us into their friendship and protection, if objections could be removed; for I knew the different facility of removing them when there was a little good-will at the bottom, and when it was the work of importance, only — he would observe, that I did not arrogate importance, but if I had it, I would accept of nothing that was owing only to that — that at my time of life nothing would tempt me to come into any Court upon the foot of force and intrusion. I desired to live with him, and his, as their attached friend and servant. Mr. Pelham said that there were real good wishes and good-will, and for

nobody more. But, there were difficulties, and great ones, with the King, on account of my quitting his service for the Prince's.

This was certainly a home truth, and Dodington richly deserved it. But the astute man was equal to the occasion. He represented that he could be of some use to his Majesty's service, by his own weight and by the weight of his friends, particularly in choosing several members. This might remove prejudices. He hinted again at the Weymouth bait.

The long conversation between Pelham and Dodington is one of intense interest, since it reveals so thoroughly the political methods of those days. Pelham told Dodington about the King's indignation against him. *Here is a fine end of civilities*, the King had said to Pelham. *Here is Dodington ; you made me give him, the other day, a great employment, (Treasurer of the Navy, in 1749) and now he has thrown it at your head and is gone over to my son.* Pelham then opened out his own plans to Dodington a little more openly. The bottom of all his politics, and his brother's too, was to choose a new Parliament that should be all of a piece ; such a one as might serve the King if he lived, and be steady to put the new King in the right way if the old one died. He meant, a thorough Whig Parliament. Dodington concurred, *con amore*. He thought that the offer he now made to Pelham, from himself and his friends, might contribute to facilitate that end. *That is why*, said Pelham, *I have told you about it.*

Mr. Pelham renewed the assurances, at the end of this notable conversation, of his sincere wishes and endeavours in a very decent manner, and added that he was restrained from saying what he wished out of the regard he owed to Dodington. He would not say anything he was not sure to perform, and concluded by inviting himself, *in a most gentlemanlike and obliging manner* to Dodington's house at Hammersmith.

September 28, 1752. Went to Mr. Pelham's. He gave me an account of Earl Poulett's correspondence with him about the vacancy at Bridgwater. I mentioned that I had written to his Lordship, to make it a means of reconciling the family. He seemed much indisposed towards Mr. Vere. There was company, and so we could not talk fully.

Vere Poulett had been elected member for Bridgwater, with Dodington, in 1741, and Peregrine Poulett succeeded him in the seat

in 1747. The latter had died. Dodington promptly went to see Mr. Pelham, on October 4th. Our member looked upon Bridgwater as his own private preserve, and it was pleasant to show Pelham his power by discussing his Bridgwater interests with the great man.

October 11, 1752. I received an account from Bridgewater that, at the Mayor's feast, Mr. Balch, who was present, was declared candidate to succeed Mr. Poulett. I sent an abstract of the letter, with one of my own, to Mr. Pelham.

October 13. Saw Mr. Pelham, and spoke to him about this sudden event at Bridgewater. He agreed that it was wholly Earl Poulett's fault in not determining and recommending somebody sooner. He seemed to be well enough satisfied, from the character I had given him of Mr. Balch.

The King was still obdurate as regards Dodington, but this did not hinder the latter from pressing his suit with Pelham.

March 16, 1753. Mr. Pelham, Mr. Vane, Mr. Furnese and I dined together, by appointment, at Mr. Vane's. The offer of our thorough attachment, in return for Mr. Pelham's thorough friendship and protection in bringing us into court, was renewed, and my views of meaning to support their power, and not sharing it as a Minister, was explained. Mr. Pelham, in a very frank and honourable manner, declared his real desire and inclination to accept our friendship, and return his own ; that, if his friendship was sufficient to effect the whole, he would with pleasure engage for the whole : but, that he could not answer for the King, whose prejudices were very strong against me, chiefly for my having quitted his service for his son's ; but that everything in his power he (Pelham) would do to remove them, to make way for a measure so truly agreeable to him.

Dodington now determined to press matters home with Pelham. It was time, he thought, to clench affairs. In the very same interview he showed his entire hand to the great Minister.

All I desired him (Pelham) to say to the King was, that though it was never in my intention to offend his Majesty, it was sufficient that he was displeased for me to think myself to blame, and that to induce him to forgive me I humbly offered him my services and all the interest I had in the House, and out of it, for the rest of my life. I added that I thought this submission, and this

offer of five members at least, should be sufficient to wipe away impressions, even if I had been a declared Jacobite.

All I wished of the King was, to make me over to Pelham, to let him dispose of me as he thought fit, and suffer him to receive my friendship, attachment and services, that I desired by no means to encroach upon his Majesty's time, or thoughts, or behaviour, provided he would give him (Pelham) leave to employ me for his Majesty's service in the way that was most agreeable to him.

Upon the whole Mr. Pelham behaved in so open and noble a manner as to choose to make it plain that I should rather see that he wanted power, than have any doubt of his sincerity, if it did not succeed ; and that the doubt of his strength and power alone, hindered him from promising positively to effect it ; and therefore, if I judge this right, I am obliged to him, and am determined to be his friend, whether it succeeds or not.

August 11, 1753. I was at Bridgwater, and, with Mr. Balch, canvassed near half the town. The people did not choose to speak out, though very few declared they were engaged to Lord Egmont.

Dodington's next note refers to his constituency. He considers the electors there, it is evident, merely as pawns to be moved in the great political game. His great fear is, clearly, as to the chances of his rival, Lord Egmont, in the next year's election. One wonders what this last visit to the town cost him. How many sneakers of punch ; how many barrels of October? How much in coin of the realm ? For he could be — he was — lavish in his expenditure when he had a pet object in view. Now he had two objects. First, to inflict a crushing defeat upon Egmont ; secondly, to clench his political bargain with Pelham, to whom he had promised five seats at least.

August 18, 1753. We returned home to Eastbury. The excessive badness of the roads and weather, with the nature of the business, made it much the most disagreeable journey, and the most fatiguing week I ever passed. All this trouble, vexation, and expence, as well as that to come, flows from a set of low, worthless fellows, who finding they shall not be bribed without an opposition, have prevailed on Lord Egmont to lend his name, to whom they will give one vote, that they may be able to sell the other. And notwithstanding, as things now appear, his Lordship has no chance of making his

election. This he does not see, nor that the Tories (though partly for other reasons) make his greatest strength ; so that he is setting up an interest, which, if it should succeed, he could never sit in quiet in that place. But though I think he has no chance at present, yet the uneasiness and expence will be the same to me, as if he was sure of success.

October 9, 1753. I went early to Mr. Pelham, and talked with him about Bridge-water : he gave me the strongest assurance of his assistance, and promised to write immediately to Philip Baker, * to convince everybody of his friendship for me ; and that the Custom-house officers should be properly taken care of. I am convinced he is sincere.

October 22, 1753. I was with Mr. Pelham again, who has done all that can be expected hitherto, and promises to continue all his endeavours to support my election at Bridgwater against Lord Egmont's opposition. In this affair he has acted, and, I am convinced, he will act the part of a real friend. But I do not find that he has made any progress in the great point of smoothing my way to the King.

Dodington was getting thoroughly uneasy, with some reason, about the prospects of retaining his seat for Bridgwater. He had now promised all sorts of things to Pelham. He had made out that he was a man who could control seats in Parliament, and could influence hosts of friends. His plan was to convince the great Minister of his weight. But Dodington's insincerity was beginning to find him out. Lord Egmont was a very powerful rival, and was by no means a man to be despised. Born in 1711, he was the eldest son of John Perceval, first Earl of Egmont. In 1731 he had been returned to the Irish House of Commons for a constituency in County Kerry, which he had represented continuously until his succession to a peerage in the kingdom of Ireland. Through Pelham's interest he had gained a seat at Weobley in 1747. Now he had set his heart upon gaining Bridgwater, and his great reputation in the English House of Commons, with his interests in Somerset, marked him out as one who possessed great local interests, as well as a high Parliamentary reputation. It was in the year 1750 that he set to work to build the famous Enmore Castle ; an enterprise which had made him known throughout all the countryside. Dodington perceived the reality of the crisis, and proceeded to take precautions.

November 7, 1753. I saw Mr. Pelham ; he told me that Lord Poulett went immediately out of town from waiting, and that he had had no conversation with him, but a broken one, while he was waiting to be called in by the King. His Lordship had told him he had seen his letter, and denied that he had ever said Mr. Pelham was for Lord Egmont, but that he (Lord Poulett) was for him, and would fairly own it. Mr. Pelham replied that it was not material, but that he (Lord Poulett) should have publicly declared at the Mayor's (i.e., the Mayor of Bridgwater's) feast, that he (Pelham) was indifferent between the three, when his lordship knew he had so explicitly declared himself in favour of me (i.e., Doding-ton) and his friend, was very singular.

Dodington professed the profoundest determination to try and retain his Bridgwater seat, come what might.

I added [writes Dodington] that when I did things, I never did them by halves ; I professed attachment to him, and that where I had any interest, I meant to exert it against those who opposed his (Pelham's) administration, that therefore I desired him humbly to assure his Majesty in my name that my election was not the object, for that I would undergo the same trouble and the same expence to keep out any body that differed with his ministers, as I would if my own seat was in question. Mr. Pelham promised me he would make the kindest use of my declarations.

The next entry is worth reading, if only for its absolute frankness. We can picture these two men, Dodington and the Duke of Newcastle, two absolutely unscrupulous politicians, discussing the situation. How was Bridgwater to be captured? One way was open — one way only — to the minds of these patriots. There must be unstinted bribery. The occasion, they felt, was a great one. They must rise to it. The money-bags must be opened wide, and the more scrupulous, who could not be tickled with ten-pound notes, must be more delicately approached with daintier fare.

December 11, 1753. I saw the Duke of Newcastle, and convinced him that my trouble and expence at Bridgwater was only to keep out a man who opposed those to whom I attached myself : that my own seat was not concerned in it : that the maintaining the interest there was to me nothing, having nobody to bequeath it to. I then told him that, in these matters, those who would take

money, I would pay, and not bring him a bill : those, that would not take, he must pay, and I recommended my two parsons of Bridgwater and Weymouth, Burroughs and Franklin : he entered into it very cordially, and assured me that they should have the first Crown livings that should be vacant in their parts, if we would look and send him the first intelligence.

I then just touched upon what had passed between Mr. Pelham and me. He professed his knowledge and approbation of the whole. I said, I must think that so much offered and so little asked, in such hands as theirs, and at a time when boroughs were a commodity particularly marketable, could not fail of removing, at least, resentments, and of obtaining pardon, which language I was willing to hold to my own Sovereign, but to no other.

His Grace was very hearty, and cordial, and protested that everything should be done to show their true regard and friendship for me. He did seem to lay no great stress upon difficulties with the King. I concluded by telling him that I had no desires of being in favour with the King, or even well with him, or about him : that all I desired was that he and his brother might be able to say, that the King left me to them — that was all my price. He answered very cordially — to appearance.

On December 18th Dodington went to see the Princess of Wales, with whom he had a long conversation. She appears to have opened her difficulties very freely to him. Early in the New Year (1754) he was closeted with Lord Barnard (formerly Mr. Vane) who promised to do everything possible for him with the King, but *nobody dies to make room, and we cannot turn out*. Fox had asked Mr. Pelham for the first vacancy in the Treasury for Barrington, but had been refused. Dupplin was to have it, and Lord Northumberland was to have the first blue ribband.

Dodington was not backward in claiming performance of the promises made to him. Bridgwater occupied his mind greatly, and he must not neglect it.

January 29, 1754. Went to the Duke of Newcastle, and got the living of Broadworthy for Mr. Burroughs.

It does not appear who Mr. Burroughs was, save that he had a vote for Bridgwater. In the election sheet for 1754 there occurs the name of the Rev. Benjamin Burroughs, and he gave one vote to Dodington and one to

Balch. No doubt this was the man. One is glad to know that he was not the Vicar of the Town, and one wonders what the people of Broadworthy thought of him when they got him. A disgraceful transaction, truly! *Arcades ambo*, the Duke and the parson! That, however, was the Duke of Newcastle's way. And it is to be feared that there were other parsons of the Burroughs calibre, too, in those venial and degenerate times.

On March 6th Henry Pelham, Head of the Ministry as First Commissioner of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, died suddenly, thus further complicating Dodington's plans. He was succeeded as Premier by his brother, Thomas Pelham, Duke of Newcastle, to whom, of course, Dodington quickly went, on March 21st, to secure himself. He promised to give the Duke *all the little interest he had* towards the electing of the new Parliament, and further reminded his Grace that he (Dodington) was pledged to do all he could to exclude Lord Egmont from Bridgwater. Again the Diary must be quoted. It reveals, indeed, many things.

March 21, 1754. I proceeded (with the Duke of Newcastle) to the article of Bridgwater, which I said was thus — Long after my mutual engagements with Mr. Pelham, when Lord Egmont made that unfriendly attempt, Mr. Pelham asked me, what would become of it? I said that it need not affect my election, though it might destroy the Whig interest there for ever: that the interest was very indifferent to me, as I did not expect to live to see another Parliament, and had neither succession, relation, nor friend, that I could or wished to leave it to: but I asked him if it was indifferent to him that Lord Egmont should come in there. He said, no, to be sure; and hinted, besides his public opposition, great distaste to him personally.

The Duke was very serious and dejected during the whole conversation, and threw in several warm expressions of approbation, and then said that he was loaded with too many things at once for one man to bear: that he had seen, and his brother had told him, how handsome my proceedings had been. He begged me to say, what his brother had engaged to do, and to tell him all that had passed. I said I could not talk about advantages to myself, that were to take their rise from my own assertion only, when there was nobody to contradict me. He pressed me still more strongly.

Dodington then, according to his own

showing, gave the Duke a long and rambling account of his (Dodington's) noble intentions. Pelham, it was understood, was to bring Dodington into the service when he could, *in a proper manner*, but no particular day, or particular office, was settled upon. The Duke proceeded to ask that as there would be many changes, and that as they were obliged to cut the cloth into as many pieces as they could, did Dodington think he could come in (i.e., to office under the Government) before the election? The Duke was surely, thought Dodington, coming to something definite at last.

I said, I did think I could. He replied, he knew I might be trusted, and would talk very freely to me. The Secretary's office was settled, and he had four positive engagements, which were to Lords Hillborough, Dupplin, Harrington, and to Mr. Nugent. (Then followed much conversation about vacant offices, the Duke eventually asking Dodington which post he would like.) I said, there is my old place. Treasurer of the Navy; that must be vacant: I should like that better than anything. But, I added, why should I enter into these things, I leave it wholly to your Grace.

The interview seems to have ended somewhat dramatically. The Duke apparently implied profuse promises to Dodington.

He took me in his arms, and kissed me twice, with strong assurances of affection and service. I told him, I would go to Mr. Ellis, and acquaint him with his nomination to Weymouth; he desired I would, and from him to tell him, that he agreed to his brother's nomination, but not to say anything by way of compliment.

N.B. When I came in, the Duke had a quire of paper before him, upon which, at the top, I saw my name. He took notes of all that passed: called in Roberts, shewed him the paper, and told him, he must write it fair, the notes in one column for his use; the other, blank, to take the King's pleasure.

March 23, 1754. The Duke of Newcastle resigned the Seals, and Sir Thomas Robinson received them, and the following day those gentlemen kissed the Princess's hand.

March 27. Dined at Lord Carrington's, and found that notwithstanding all the fine conversation of last Thursday, all the employments were given away.

March 31. Lord Barnard kissed hands at

Leicester House as Earl of Darlington, Mr. Charles Townshend for the Admiralty ; and the Lord Chancellor, as Earl of Hardwick.

April 1. Waited on the Princess, in the evening, by her order. Musick. Sir George Lyttelton as Cofferer, and Mr. George Grenville as Treasurer of the Navy, kissed the King's hand.

April 2. Went to the Cockpit. Short talk with the Solicitor (i.e., the Solicitor-General) who is extremely hurt, dejected and dissatisfied with the proceedings.

April 3. Arrived at Eastbury.

April 11. Dr. Sharpe and I set out from Eastbury at four o'clock in the morning, for Bridgwater, where, as I expected, I found things very disagreeably framed.

April 12. Lord Egmont came, with trumpets, noise, etc.

April 13. He and me walked the town ; we found nothing unexpected, as far as we went.

The crisis was now close at hand. For Dodington it must, indeed, have been a time of the most intense anxiety. He had boasted to Pelham, who had since died, and to the Duke of Newcastle, and to all his party, of his strong electoral interests, and only three weeks before he had stated that he was able to command six seats, including Bridgwater. He had pledged himself to keep Lord Egmont out, and this he desired to do quite as much from personal as from political reasons. Moreover his chances with the Government were all dependent upon what he could do for them ; his aim and his plans were to make himself indispensable. The man who cannot be done without is one who occupies a very strong position, and this role was the one which Dodington had played all along. Then, too, he had represented the town since 1722, for thirty-two years. That he had used his ample means freely in purchasing votes, is well known. He had made no secret of it. Boroughs, in his view, were marketable commodities. He had bought Bridgwater. He had, no doubt he thought, a right to keep it. His motto was *Je paye*. Egmont's attack upon his citadel irritated and piqued him. He must win this fight, cost what it might.

The next entry in his Diary is the most disgraceful one he ever wrote in it. Mr. Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, in his well-known preface, pillories it. *I cannot patiently forgive*, he writes, *the violent declamation of his Lordship against the low and venal wretches of*

Bridgwater, as if a bribe, taken by a miserable voter, and possibly for the support of a numerous and indigent family, was more dishonourable than a place or pension enjoyed or coveted by the opulent, for the sole purposes either of accumulating riches, or of extending the pomp of pride and power."

April 14, 15, and 16, 1754. Spent in the infamous and disagreeable compliance with the low habits of venal wretches.

April 17. Came on the election, which I lost by the injustice of the Returning Office. The numbers were : for Lord Egmont one hundred and nineteen ; for Mr. Balch one hundred and fourteen ; for me one hundred and five. Of my good votes, fifteen were rejected ; eight bad votes for Lord Egmont were received.

April 18. Left Bridgwater — for ever. Arrived at Eastbury in the evening.

April 24. Arrived at Hammersmith in the evening.

Dodington had now, one would have imagined, received his quietus, and in one sense he had. But although he had lost the election, he was still full of schemes. On April 26th he went to the Duke of Newcastle, who received him joyfully because the Weymouth election had gone right ; sympathetically because the Bridgwater one had gone wrong. Dodington, of course, was full of excuses and of reasons. The Mayor of Bridgwater had been against him ; Lord Poulett had acted openly against him, with all his might ; and so strongly did the electorate in the town feel that no encouragement was given to him by the Government, that five out of the Custom-House officers gave single votes for Lord Egmont. The election had cost him £2500. A little later on he declared he had spent £3400 over it. For a while he wearied the Duke of Newcastle and every one else about getting up a petition to unseat Lord Egmont ; then he endeavoured to get the recalcitrant Custom-House officers punished. But it was all to no purpose. Finally the Duke told Dodington bluntly that he had no mind that the Bridgwater petition should be proceeded with, and that the matter had better be let drop. Dodington, of course, at once agreed that it was no cause of his, and that he would do all he could, with Mr. Balch, to quiet the town. The town, by the way, was perfectly quiet and content. Dodington made one final suggestion to the Duke. He was keenly anxious to punish the Custom-House officers, who, obviously, as he considered, should have voted for him. Would the Duke

agree not to punish the town for its evil deed, simply by insisting upon punishing the officers for the way in which they had voted. They should be dismissed. *A good thought*, said the Duke, who went away and promptly dismissed the matter from his mind.

Bridgwater was allowed to rest in peace, with the Earl of Egmont and Mr. Robert Balch as its members, vice the Right Honourable George Bubb Dodington, beaten by his colleague by nine votes, and by his detested rival. Lord Egmont, by fourteen. The five single votes given by the Custom-House officers, if they had been transferred from Egmont to Dodington, would have made Egmont and Balch equal. But even then, Dodington would still have lost his seat.

July 18, 1754. I went to the Duke of Newcastle's. After his Grace had talked indecisively about Bridgewater, of which I gave him the hearing, I desired to know positively what I was to expect : he replied, and told me that he had laid all my services before the King in the fullest manner, but it did not satisfy him ; that his Majesty endeavoured to lessen my credit at Weymouth — that the Duke replied that he thought his Majesty himself had told him that the borough was put into my hands, at the renewal of the charter, on condition of his naming two members for that time only. The King could not deny it ; but upon the whole, he would not receive me to any mark of his favour. I said, that as it was so, I received his Majesty's displeasure with that respect and resignation which became me towards my Sovereign : that after such offers received, and suffered to be carried into execution, at the expence of nearly £4000, I did not believe such a conclusion had ever happened : but I submitted, and must act as opportunely as accidents should direct. The Duke expressed much sorrow ; protested the sincerity of his endeavours, and said, that what would not do one day might do another. I replied that I could not judge of that ; but if he imagined that I would remain postulating among the common herd of suitors, and expose myself to suffer twenty unworthy preferences more, to get, perhaps, nothing at last, certainly nothing that I wanted, — it was impossible. I would as soon wear a livery, and ride behind a coach in the streets. I repeated these words again in the course of the conversation. We parted very civilly.

October 10, 1755. I went first to Lord Hallifax, and then to Newcastle House. I was much pressed to join his Grace, but I absolutely refused being for the Russian subsidy on any account.

December 17, 1755. I went, by desire, to Newcastle House. His Grace, with many assurances of confidential friendship, told me, that he had the King's permission to offer me the Treasury of the Navy, which I accepted.

December 19, 1755. I waited upon the Princess to acquaint her with what had passed — but her Royal Highness received me very coolly.

December 22, 1755. I kissed the King's hand as Treasurer of the Navy.

At last Dodington had schemed himself into office ! He was now serving under Newcastle and Fox, and he had got a seat in Parliament from his pocket borough of Weymouth. In the next year, however, he lost his post when Mr. Pitt came into power under the Duke of Devonshire. *I declined*, he writes in his Diary on March the 9th, 1757, *being Chancellor of the Exchequer* ; but on the 6th of the following month *Mr. Fox and I were ordered from the King, by Lord Holderness, to come and kiss his hand as Paymaster of the Army, and Treasurer of the Navy.* This did not last long. At that time the shuffling of the cards of the political pack was exceedingly frequent. When Pitt formed his great administration with Newcastle Dodington was given no office, neither did he obtain any during the King's life. But on October 25th, 1760, George the Second died suddenly. To Dodington this was doubtless an intense relief. George never trusted Dodington after the day when he relinquished service with the King in order to feather his nest with the Prince of Wales. In spite of the persuasions of many Ministers, and much cajoling from Dodington himself, George remained adamant.

During the year 1760 Lord Bute was becoming a more important person, and Dodington cultivated him diligently. Bridgwater again came into the counsels of the great. Dodington, towards the end of 1760, offered to secure Lord Egmont's election at Bridgwater if the King wished it ! In December of that year he told Lord Bute that if only the King would keep Egmont out of the English House of Peers, he (Dodington) would make his return for Bridgwater an assured thing. Lord Bute remarked, *It is too much for you to give up family interest.* Dodington replied, with

exquisite irony yet with the calmest assurance, *Nothing is too much that is useful, where friendship is real and mutual.*

In 1761, after many years of almost ceaseless struggle, plotting, and infinitely hard work, he attained at last the summit of his ambition. The Calendar of Home Office Papers for that year records how that George Dodington, of Dodington in the County of Somerset, Esquire, received the grant of dignity creating him Lord Melcombe, Baron of Melcombe Regis, in the County of Dorset. Dated 14th March, 1761. Thus ends his connection with Bridgwater. He enjoyed his honours but a short time, dying at his house at Hammersmith on the 28th of July, 1762. There is a brief note on him in the short chapter on The Bridgwater Poll Sheet for the Year 1754. Dodington did much, it is well known, to lower the tone of political morals even in that degenerate time. Men, and their votes, were in his estimation things to be bought and sold. His plotting so infected his nature that he, probably unconsciously, became an absolutely insincere man. Thus he never inspired any man's confidence, or, if for a moment he inspired it, he was unable to retain it. His wholesale bribery in Bridgwater helped to drag the place down, and to degrade whatever ideals it may have had. Possessed of many gifts, and endowed with abundant resources, he might have shaped a splendid course, and have died beloved of all men. But *the meridian of evil is for the most part left unvexed ; and when human creatures have chosen their road, they are left alone to follow it to the end.*



p. 3

* Philip Baker had already been three times mayor, and was a personage of considerable importance in the town.