The Relations of Defoe and Harley

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has of late been written about Defoe, his life still contains many dark and doubtful passages. On some of these, however, a flood of light has recently been thrown by the labours of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, whose fifteenth report (appendix iv.) has made abundantly clear the relations long obscurely known to have existed between him and Robert Harley. It is the object of this article to discuss these relations in some detail, and to consider more particularly the period from 1703 to 1711. The son of a London butcher, Defoe comes before us as the foremost pamphleteer of the Revolution age, potent as the leader of that lower middle class whose mental outlook was so nearly akin to his own; high in favour with William III ever since he had laughed away the prejudice against Dutch favourites; trusted by the whigs, for whom he had asserted against a tory house of commons the ultimate authority of the people;¹ and yet soon to wreck his rising fortunes in the passionate discussion which raged round the occasional conformity of dissenters. From this wreck his relations with Harley directly began.

Defoe was a man of imperfect culture, who possessed much information but little real knowledge. He was ever swayed by an early nonconformist training; and his arguments on occasional conformity betrayed all the intolerance of aggressive, triumphant puritanism. To the dissenters who practised occasional conformity to qualify themselves for office he said, 'It is playing bopeep with the Almighty; it is damning one's soul to serve one's country: if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow

¹ See his tract *The Original Power of the People of England*. To speak more accurately, Defoe declared that a right of appeal always lay to the freeholders. All others lived in England by their sufferance. 'If the king,' he said, 'were universal landlord, he might be universal governor of right, and the people, so living on his lands, ought to obey him or else go off his premises. If any single man should at any time become landlord of the whole freehold of England, he could indeed have no right to dispossess the king till the present settlement of the crown failed, because it was settled by those who had a right to settle it. But he would be immediately the full representative of all the counties of England, and might elect himself knight of the shire for every county . . . and upon defect of the settlement would be king by natural right. He would be king by inherent right of property.'

him'—a rigid opinion, which allowed nothing for the hard conditions under which the dissenters then lived, and only alienated them and their friends the whigs. Yet, since William had died, Defoe might well have wished and almost expected their earnest support when, in 1702, his famous tract, 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,' daringly laid bare all the follies and wild threats by which the high churchmen, strong in parliament and ministry, were pressing forward a bill against occasional conformity. But both whigs and dissenters gladly left him to the pillory and the long imprisonment in Newgate, to which he was committed after he had lain some months in hiding.

Defoe bore himself both in hiding and in prison without constancy or sense of pride. He wrote most moving letters to the chiefs of the high church party; the quaker Penn pleaded for him; his wife endured insult for him;² and he himself besought a mercy that was sometimes extended to the most atrocious criminals, leave to purchase pardon by a year's service with the army in Flanders. The high churchmen met his weak entreaties with contempt, nor had he mercy to expect from them. But their power was now passing away; and Defoe with greater shrewdness soon turned to the man who rose by their decline. Robert Harley, with whom his long connexion thus began, was shifty, hesitating, and undecided, full of vague generalities, unable or afraid to express himself clearly, and wont to hide crooked designs behind contradictions and ambiguities.³ He had borne himself with credit in the speaker's chair; he professed moderate opinions; and, as he had so trimmed his conduct as to be yet approved by all parties, he was the man consulted by Marlborough and Godolphin when they could no longer work with the intractable high churchmen. Harley was one of the first English statesmen to understand the power of the press, and gladly endeavoured to secure so valuable an ally as Defoe. It does not seem that there had been any previous intercourse between the two men. Defoe's first appeal was not made direct to Harley, but through their common acquaintance

² She interviewed Nottingham in his behalf: '... a virtuous and excellent mother ... who, when my lord Nottingham first insulted her, then tempted, scorned so much as to move me to comply with him, but rather encouraged me to resist him' (Defoe to Harley, May 1704, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, 15th Report, app. iv. p. 88)—a curious story, since Nottingham was generally held to be very strait-laced.

³ Harley's correspondence confirms the accepted estimate of his character. He seems to have been afraid or unable to speak clearly even to himself. His explanation for the use of his son, how he and his family came to be entangled in public affairs, is vague and incoherent (see *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, 15th Rep. app. iv. p. 451). Defoe had frequent reason to complain of his hesitation and dilatoriness. 'I confess it afflicts me to see the day appear and myself unfurnished with the main thing, the very substance of all the rest, your instructions. Methinks I look like the Muscovite ambassador at Constantinople, who appeared as envoy and had everything ready but his orders' (Defoe to Harley, July 1704, *ubi supra*, p. 106).

William Paterson, the founder of the Bank of England. 'Gaol, pillories, and imprisonments,' he confessed, 'with which I have been much threatened of late, have convinced me that I lack passive courage, and I shall never for the future think myself injured if I am called a coward.'⁴ While Harley and Godolphin discussed ways of binding him to their service he received sufficient money to relieve his worst necessities, and began to talk of papers which he had prepared to publish on his enlargement. But he had still to wait the end of the long intrigue which preceded Harley's admission to the ministry, and the queen had still to be convinced that he had intended no harm against the church. This task was undertaken by Godolphin at Harley's request;⁵ and at last Defoe left Newgate in the spring of 1704, just about the time when Harley became secretary of state.⁶

Whatever shame Defoe might have felt at his imprisonment he quickly lost in seeking to rebuild his fortunes on this new connexion. Merely to uphold the ministry by voice and pen—the sole condition of his release—was a vague and uncertain service; and he constantly urged Harley to give him a regular appointment, either a branch of the auditor's office, 'matters of account having always been his particular element, and what he was most master of,' or else a place in the customs, where 'he might train up his son to be serviceable to his father's benefactor.'⁷ But not one of Defoe's numerous applications for an assured employment ever met with the least success. Like his friend Paterson he was never more than a hanger-on of the ministry, an occasional agent of small account. Always pushed aside by luckier men, always poorly paid, whether from Harley's private purse or from the exchequer, he could often only compel a recompense for dangerous toil by long and bitter complaint. He never found in Harley such a

⁴ Defoe to Paterson (April 1708), in a letter which was forwarded to Harley a month later. He also says, 'Nay, even the dissenters, like Casha [sic] to Caesar, lift up the first dagger against me. I confess it makes me reflect on the whole body of dissenters with something of contempt, and makes me the more regret that I suffer for such a people.' He alluded to Harley as follows: 'If you should find room for my name in your conversation with the gentleman I mentioned—I suppose I need not name him—if you find him inclined to have compassion for one who offended him only because he did not know him, venture in my name in the humblest terms to ask his pardon' (p. 61).

⁵ Godolphin to Harley, 26 Sept. 1703: 'I have found it proper to read some paragraphs of your letter to the queen. What you propose about Defoe may be done, when you will and how you will.' Again on 4 Nov. 1703: 'I have taken care in the matter of Defoe' (pp. 68 and 75).

⁶ There seems to be some confusion about the date of Defoe's release from prison. Mr. Leslie Stephen in his life of Defoe in the *Dict. of Nat. Biogr.*, following Mr. William Lee, says it was in August 1704, but the Harley papers show that he was free by May of that year. On 12 May 1704 he wrote to Harley, 'It is a particular misfortune to me that I had not the honour of seeing you last night, and 'tis the more so in that I received no orders when to give my further attendance' (p. 88).

⁷ See a letter probably written in May 1704 (p. 89).

friend as William III, but rather a crafty master and ally, whose doles to him scarcely covered the expenses of his labours,⁸ who would sometimes lighten his debts but never entirely relieve him, for fear that he should grow too independent.

Openly to assist the writer of 'The Shortest Way' would have been to offend high churchmen and dissenters alike, a thing no prudent minister dare attempt. For this reason, as well as in order to make Defoe's services the more effective, it was resolved that no hint of them should reach the world. Defoe from first to last was to seem an honest man walking severely by his own light and judging men by measures alone. It was a service consummately rendered—perhaps because Defoe, as was easy for a man so embarked in secret courses, soon persuaded himself that the policy which he urged was that which he really approved of, and believed that he was in fact, as he styled himself, a constant advocate of peace and moderation.⁹ He communicated with Harley by the most approved methods of secret intrigue. Letters were left in various addresses, under different names, and were often written in disguised hands.¹⁰ Messages were most carefully and mysteriously conveyed either by Defoe's brother or by trusty officers of the customs. Meetings were rare and were only held with special precautions. It is strange to find on one page of Harley's correspondence information against Defoe as the author of a seditious libel,¹¹ while almost on the next Defoe remarks, 'I knew the duty lay on me to conceal the favour I had of your conversation'¹²—a duty so well performed that the full story can never be made known. Yet suspicion was rife from the very first. Defoe himself heard an account of his intercourse with Harley told with such circumstance that he imagined the intelligence was *ab inferis* and that next morning he should receive full particulars of their private conversation.

His services were perhaps most thoroughly rendered in the *Review*, a periodical which Defoe had begun in Newgate, and his connexion with which has given him the not very happy title of the founder of English journalism. So far back as the Great Rebellion

⁸ From October to December 1706 Defoe received about 100*l.* from Harley, a small sum, considering that he had much expense in printing pamphlets and maintaining his own subordinate agents. He was then, of course, engaged upon the Scottish business. In 1707 he seems to have been left almost entirely without supply.

⁹ 'I am spreading principles of temper, moderation, and peace through countries where I go, and persuading all people that the government is resolved to abide by those rules' (Defoe to Harley, 28 Sept. 1704, on his first secret journey, p. 187).

¹⁰ Especially during Defoe's visit to Edinburgh, 1710-1.

¹¹ 'If Dan Foe be the supposed author of the libel titled *Legion's Address to the House of Lords*, you will find him at Captain Rogers at the city of Canterbury' (letter to Harley, 14 June 1704, p. 98).

¹² Defoe to Harley, 12 May 1704, p. 83.

there had been the *Mercurius Politicus* and its short-lived rivals, all perhaps imitated from the *Gazzette* of Venice; but Defoe had also models, less rude and imperfect, in the numerous productions of Sir Roger L'Estrange, his own rascally rival Tutchin, and others; and he as much surpassed them as they surpassed those earlier efforts. With its secret policy of upholding Harley, unfalteringly maintained for near ten years; its vigorous discussions of trade, politics, and finance; its letters of threat and approval, sent by interested readers, and 'from time to time inserted by Defoe; its columns of small talk, which became so popular that for a while they were issued in a separate supplement; and its puffs of foul quacks and enterprising merchants,¹³—the *Review* contained every essential part of the modern newspaper, whose progress from it is simply one of specialisation. Nor is the *Review* inferior to the best of its successors. Although every word of it was written by Defoe himself amid the distraction of other services; although it was badly printed on coarse rough paper, and produced so hastily that its spelling and punctuation are a very chaos of error, the *Review* is in style and argument the model of what a newspaper should be. 'It is to be wrote,' explained Defoe to Harley, 'not as if the objectors were such as to whom the style should be unsuitable;' ¹⁴ and certainly nothing could have more artfully commended Harley to the small tradesmen, whom Defoe had in mind, than its plain homeliness and simplicity of argument. How far they believed in its seeming independence might measure their credulity and his success.

I am no party man (he declares), I care not who are ministers; I am indifferent who is put out and who is put in; I am in everything, without disguise, a plain, blunt fellow who will speak the truth to you; and he that will speak the truth to an unheeding generation can never be called an hypocrite.

Such constant asseverations merely point to that degradation of character which sprang from his relations with Harley, and is the central feature of his life henceforth.

To himself Defoe more subtly glozed his degradation with the thought that he was simply preaching moderation and peace, simply stilling factious opposition to the ministry—a comprehensive task, which demanded other and larger means of service. Chief among these were the secret journeys which he undertook under false names at Harley's request. Wherever he went he noted

¹³ In particular Brooke and Helliard, wine merchants, who unsuccessfully tried to combine the wholesale and retail trade. They were also puffed by Steele.

¹⁴ 'I confess myself also something impatient to have it from yourself that I had explained the *Review* to your satisfaction, and that in reading it you have been pleased to note the caution I mentioned that it was to be wrote not as if the objectors were such as to whom the style should be unsuitable' (Defoe to Harley, 7 July 1704, p. 98).

opinion and combated prejudice against the ministry; and in every town he visited he strengthened or established a correspondence, by which Harley was kept fully informed as to the state of public feeling. His first journey of this kind took him through the eastern counties just before the election of 1704, and its purpose was probably to help in deciding Harley's conduct towards his colleagues.¹⁵ His second, begun shortly after the famous high-church tumult raised in Exeter by Francis Gwynn in the spring of 1705, was intended to break up the 'western empire' of Sir Edward Seymour; but, before it was finished, Defoe had traversed not only the west but also a great part of the north and midlands. He wrote frequently to Harley on the way, and his letters give a very lively idea of the general restlessness and violence of party spirit. He was well satisfied with his success, although he confessed that he could do nothing in Crediton, where the dissenters 'sat too easy;' nor yet in Dorset, where there reigned a most surprising harmony between all parties. At Weymouth his letters were opened and he had much ado to escape the high-church justices. At Salisbury the clergy had so inflamed the gentry that the whig bishop had no interest in his own town. Manchester, Warrington, Bolton, Rochdale, and Halifax were scarcely worth a visit, having no magistrate nor any officer but a constable. At Leeds, Sheffield, and Wakefield the people, being undisturbed by elections, lived more at peace with one another than in other parts. Nottingham was a violently divided town. At Leicester the contending parties were daily by the ears. At Lutterworth a high-church justice rode into the meeting-house, and told the preacher he lied. Daventry was notorious for an infamous parson, who swore himself a freeholder, whereas he was not the incumbent but the curate only. Everywhere the greatest foes to peace and union—that is, to the ministry of which Harley was a member—were the clergy and justices. Where the justices were moderate men the people sat quiet, but their conduct was in most parts intolerably scandalous,¹⁶ and Defoe therefore advised the removal of the most factious among them and prudent additions to the rest. His reports, showing the great strength of high-church feeling throughout the country, doubtless prevented Harley from entirely falling in with the triumphant whigs. But he had already warned Harley that he had caressed both parties so long that both felt themselves offended, adding most characteristically that the whigs might always be bought with here and

¹⁵ On this first journey he wrote from Bury St. Edmunds, 'Sir R. Davers, who rules this town, carries matters very high.' 'Norwich I have perfectly dissected.' Both the first and second journeys were made by Defoe under the name of Alexander Goldsmith.

¹⁶ Especially in 'Wilts, Lancashire, Nottingham, Leicester, Warwick, Northampton Suffolk, Essex, and Middlesex.'

there a place, and that if Somers could be brought into the ministry, no possible combination could overturn it.¹⁷

Some months after his return from this second mission, Defoe was complaining that he had been forgotten and that the correspondence which he had established by Harley's order was ruined for lack of money and assistants.¹⁸ An earlier proposal which he had made, for a central information office in London, seems to have come to nothing.¹⁹ He was already weary of waiting for an appointment, and now declared himself fitter for a pension or a private apartment in Whitehall. Meanwhile he begged for a few hundred pounds that he might compound with his most pressing creditors, and would gladly have escaped them by undertaking another secret journey. It was probably with this idea that he sent to Harley the manuscript of a pamphlet which had been put into his hands, and in which an attempt was made to excite the English dissenters against the union with Scotland.²⁰ In any case

"The children of light were always darker in temporals than the rest of their neighbours, and we are willing to be fools to please our fancies, though to the destruction of our judgments; but above all they (the whigs) are the most implacable in censure, and they cannot believe Mr. H— true to the moderate interest, because they once thought him otherwise; but the principal reason, I find, because they saw themselves in the case of the disciples, who were disappointed when they found our Lord did not restore the temporal kingdom of Israel; or like the mother of Zebedee's children, who looked to have them all be lord chancellors and lord treasurers, and the one to sit on the right hand and the other on the left, and was angry our Lord did not grant it, though he declared it was none of his to give. . . . Besides, both sides are against him (Harley); he has trimmed so long on both sides and caressed both parties till both begin to see themselves ill-treated. All the whigs of King William's reign expected to have come in play again and had fair words given them, but they see it was but wording them into a fool's paradise: and now the two ends will be reconciled to overturn the middle way. If he is out of the chair, they will soon work him out of the seals. . . . Sir, the whigs are weak; they may be managed and always have been so. Whatever you do, if possible divide them, and they are easy to be divided. Caress the fools of them most, there are enough of them. Buy them with here and there a place. It may be well bestowed. If you have him not already, as all I can talk to that are friends wish you had, my Lord Somers, whom all allow to be a great man, must, if from them, weaken and distract all the party. Such a man cannot be bought too dear, and, if gained, would entirely secure your interest.' Defoe to Harley, 2 Nov. 1704, p. 146: an interesting criticism of the whigs and a good example of Defoe's fondness for scriptural illustration. It is curious to note that in this letter he proposed the bringing in of an occasional bill to break up the confederacy against Harley: 'T'would blacken and expose the party, yours are sure of giving it a toss at last. . . . To bring it in by trusty hands, and blast it at last, would confound the thing itself, ruin the confederacy, brand the party with the scandal of opposing the queen and breaking their promise in the address.'

¹⁷ Defoe to Harley, 6 May 1708, p. 800.

¹⁸ 'I had a design to propose your settling a private office for the discussing matters of this nature, so directed as neither in general to be suspected what it should act, and yet be as publicly known as any other. That in this office, openly, and without the help of Mr. St. John's back stairs, a correspondence may be effectually settled with every part of England, and all the world beside, and yet the very clerks not know what they are a-doing' (Defoe to Harley, July 1704, p. 106).

²⁰ 'There is a letter or manuscript . . . brought . . . to be printed here. 'Tis unhappily written, and full of mischief against the union, but particularly addressed

he was soon on his way to Scotland, on the most instructive of all his missions, as one of an army of secret agents who assisted the commission of union then sitting in Edinburgh.

Of Defoe's artifice in Scotland—how he feigned to have fled from England for debt, how he paraded his wish to write the history of the union, how he projected a new version of the psalms, in these and similar ways amusing the world—there is no need to speak at length.²¹ Such means were indispensable among a nation so maddened and so fearful of the union as the Scotch. But the work itself was more than mere electioneering or secret probing of opinion, thus far the sum of his employment. It is not to be measured by persuasive pamphlets or successful disputes with powerful presbyterian ministers, who thought the union a sinful breach of the National Covenant; nor yet by assiduous attendance on the royal commission, nor by dangerous journeys among the gloomy Cameronians or the barbarous highlanders, both ready to revolt—all of which, though performed at utmost risk of life, were but the accidents of his degrading compact. Its worth is more truly seen in his unwearied attempts to explain and justify the Scottish demands, and his anxiety that the English government

to the dissenters' (Defoe to Harley, 23 Aug. 1706, p. 323). Defoe started for Scotland on 18 Sept. On that day he wrote to Harley, 'Just taking horse' (p. 328).

²¹ (a) 'To-day I am going into partnership with a member of parliament in a glass-house; to-morrow with another in a salt-work; with the Glasgow mutineers I am to be a fish-merchant, with the Aberdeen men a woollen, and with the Perth and Western men a linen manufacturer; and still at the end of all the union is the essential, and I am all to every one that I may gain some' (Defoe to Harley, 26 Nov. 1706, p. 358).

(b) 'Now, I give out, I am going to write the history of the union in folio, and have got warrants to search the registers and parliament books, and have begun a subscription for it. I tell them it will cost me a year's time to write it. Then I treat with the commission to make them a new version of the Psalms, and that I'll lock myself in the college two years for the performance' (Defoe to Harley, 27 Jan. 1707, p. 385).

(c) 'Here is a church dispute started in private by some ministers to me, for they take me to be their friend, and I am so, more to their interest than their management; but it is serious and considerable, and I entreat your private judgment for my government, for a committee of the assembly are to meet privately upon it. Their request is honest, and if I can have a favourable answer to it, they will depend much on it, and it will reconcile a great many to the union; and they believe I have interest enough in England to lay it before the queen, and before such great people (they do not guess who) as may be of service to them. If the union goes on, they say, the queen is declared queen of Great Britain, the coronation oath is altered, and the subjects must renew their oath. If the oath is imposed on us ministers, half of us will be turned out of our livings, if we cannot swear to a queen of Great Britain as on the union, for that is swearing to an episcopal magistracy and the union' (Defoe to Harley, 16 Dec. 1706, p. 368).

(d) 'Defoe's letter is serious and deserves reflection. I believe it is true and ought to guide us very much in what we are doing here' (Godolphin to Harley, 18 Jan. 1707, p. 382). Defoe had continued to press the subject.

(e) 'It gives a great distaste here that the officers of the excise are obliged to guage on the Sabbath day' (Defoe to Harley, 19 July 1707, p. 427).

should make every possible concession to secure the union. It was thus a sincere work, a glimpse of the real man, himself aiding the design that he approved, and here at least needing no specious arguments of self-consolation; and it connects with the earlier and better days when with heartfelt words he had urged a closer political union between England and Ireland. And yet it was not wholly real or wholly sincere. He was still striving as much for place as for the union; he had often pressed his claims upon Harley and Godolphin, and bitterly complained of their neglect; but while other men, who had done less and dared less for the great enterprise, were satisfied, he only received such an offer as he declined, preferring his present precarious service. At the last he was left in Scotland without maintenance or orders to return, and wrote dejectedly to Harley:

I had the honour to come hither in a figure suitable to your design . . . if you were to see me now, entertained of courtesy, without subsistence, almost grown shabby in clothes, dejected, and what I care not to mention, you would be pleased to hasten to my relief in a manner suitable to that regard you were always pleased to show for me.²²

He was soon after this enabled to come back to England, but with such an experience he might almost tire of his constant task, of using the *Review* to advocate the war which the ministry of Harley, Godolphin, and Marlborough was carrying on amid factious opposition from the high-church Tories.

And yet—so bent was he on thus rebuilding his fortunes—Defoe paid this wretched service through every change of ministry and fluctuation of party. His friend and patron Harley might fall awhile from power; but this only drew from him formal terms of indignation and wary proffers of future service.²³ Meantime he attached himself to Godolphin, for whom he went another journey into Scotland; and though his complaints were deep and constant as before, the Whig ministry, which Godolphin led after Harley's exclusion, had no more loyal agent than Defoe, and the war no stouter champion than the *Review*. But when affairs became again uncertain and Sacheverell raised a storm against the Whigs, Defoe resumed his correspondence with

²² Defoe to Harley, 11 Sept. 1707, p. 444.

²³ 'I think verily you are delivered from a fatigue which never answered the harassing you in such a manner, and the wasting your hours in the service of those that understand not how to value or reward in proportion to merit. . . . I persuade myself you are delivered from a tottering party that you may not share in their fall. . . . I entreat you to use me in anything in which I may serve you' (Defoe to Harley, 10 Feb. 1707, p. 477). Harley had for some time been anticipating his dismissal. 'I have set up my rest, and therefore it is not in their power to disappoint me. I count upon all that impotent malice, inveterate spleen can do by misrepresentation and notorious forgeries to do me hurt. . . . If God spares me life, I think I shall be able to pull off the mask from the real atheists and pretended patriots' (Harley to Defoe, 12 June 1707, p. 418).

Harley; and when Godolphin's power hung in doubt, he expectantly wove dull allegories on public credit in the *Review*, or bemoaned the violence of party strife; till at the last, by the strangest chance of all, he found himself ranged on the side of a new high-flying administration in which Harley held the supreme position. But of this ministry, which advocated every principle that Defoe had yet opposed, which would have undone the revolution and enthroned the Pretender, which ended the war that William had begun and renewed the excesses that the 'Shortest Way' had once decried; of this unhappy ministry, torn first by secret, then by open strife among its chiefs, Defoe rather assisted the fall than raised the credit. Harley, whose sole interest he served, now as ever moved darkly and alone; kept his counsel hid from all; temporised with the court of Hanover, while his colleagues were hot for the Pretender; made approaches to the leaders of the whigs,²⁴ while they discussed imprisonments and impeachments; and, though this failed and he was forced to rely on tory help, retained to the end some vague idea of uniting under him the moderate men of all parties.

While, then, Swift was writing against the whigs, Defoe, at Harley's instigation, strove to reconcile them to the new turn of affairs.²⁵ The *Review* declared that men might have been changed but not measures; that the management was still the same and must be so of necessity; that the new ministry as well as the old had come in 'upon the foot of the revolution,' and must maintain revolution principles; that they dared not, for their own sakes, support the Pretender, whose first act, if he became king,

²⁴ Harley was urged to come to an accommodation with Marlborough by his correspondent at Amsterdam, John Drummond. 'I am confident you would strengthen your party more by gaining that one man than by any other thing imaginable, and I believe he is sensible of the intolerable measures which others urged him to go into. . . . I believe he would abandon his old friend so as never to desire to have him in play again. . . . Well do I know all his vices . . . yet his success in the field, his capacity or rather dexterity in council or in the cabinet, and his personal acquaintance with the heads of the alliance, and the faith they have in him, make him still the great man among them' (Drummond to Harley, 1 Nov. 1710, p. 619). But Harley's overtures were rejected. 'A great duke, a friend of mine . . . pressed Lord Treasurer to send to the duke and that all matters might be adjusted. Presently after another duke, a relation of my own, pressed it more earnestly. . . . 10 Aug. last the Commission of the Treasury passed, Lord Poulett wrote to the duke that very post; I desired an addition to the letter to make my compliments and to desire leave to write. The following week this was repeated again by Lord Poulett at my desire, and was absolutely rejected by his letter in answer' (Harley to Drummond, 7 Nov. 1710, p. 623).

²⁵ 'I can assure you by experience, I find, that acquainting some people they are not all to be eaten and devoured up will have all the effect on them could be wished; assuring them moderate counsels are at the bottom of all these things; that the old mad party are not coming in; that his Grace the Duke of Shrewsbury and yourself, etc. are at the head of the management; and that neither have been moved, however ill-treated, to forsake the principles you have always owned, that toleration, succession, or union are not struck at' (Defoe to Harley, 28 July 1710, p. 552).

would be to supplant them by tried friends of his own ; that, though they might begin as tories, the ministers of a revolution queen must become whigs in policy, if not in conviction. What, he asked, had been the action of the October club, that furious band of tory squires who loved the Pretender only next to their own October ale ? Had they not expected a general proscription of the whigs ? Had they not come to parliament full of fiery zeal against the revolution ? Had they not embarrassed the ministry by the wildness of their support and the folly of their demands ? And had they not soon discovered that they were but tools, that there was no change of policy, and that the whole scheme amounted only to putting out and putting in ? Had they not then opposed the ministry as fiercely as the most factious whigs of them all ? And had not many wise whigs, who had seen all this, grown easy in themselves and helped to calm the fears of others ? ²⁶

A policy of this sort, unsuited to such a passionate time, almost justified Bolingbroke's subsequent complaint that his colleague Harley might gain but could not use power. Defoe's surprising argument ineffectually strove to cover up the subtle change in the politics of the *Review* itself. Some now said that he received a thousand pounds in a single year from Harley ; many believed that he was preferred even to Swift. The whigs concentrated on him a most passionate malignity. Whig merchants would not trade with him, nor whig seamen carry his goods. A whig magistrate refused him common justice. His house was beset by gangs of hired ruffians. He imagined that his life was daily endangered. He had written several pamphlets on the vexed question of the succession, and, as was not unusual with him, had prefixed ironical titles ²⁷ to them which might perhaps convey a momentary impression that they were designed in the interest of the Pretender. The titles gave the whigs a pretext to prosecute him before the court of queen's bench, and even brought about his imprisonment ; but he was soon released by the interference of the ministry.

His appeal to the whigs was varied and enforced by every art that Defoe could wield. In the early days of the ministry, while their policy was still uncertain, he had declared :

If the Grand Seigneur's Muffy were to come hither and be prime minister ; if the four Indian savages we called kings were to be com-

²⁶ From the *Secret History of the October Club*, a pamphlet written by Defoe to cajole the moderate whigs. The October men were afterwards reconciled to the ministry by Swift.

²⁷ (a) *Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover.*

(b) *What if the Pretender should come ? or some considerations of the advantages and real consequences of the Pretender's possessing the crown of Britain.*

(c) *An Answer to a Question that nobody thinks of—What if the Queen should die ?*

missioners: yet, if these applied themselves diligently and faithfully to carry on the war, support the confederacy, and defend us against the Pretender, God forbid any whig should be found that would not join with them because he did not like the men. No, no, gentlemen, the nation must not be given up to France, the Jacobites must not have their ends of us so. . . . The whigs have as great a share in the public vessel, the government, as anybody; they are embarked in the same ship with you all; tho' the managing the helm is taken from them, and they are not pleased, yet shall they refuse to hand the sails and work the pumps? The ship must be sailed, the voyage must be performed, or else all is lost; when she springs a leak, every man's life is in equal danger; the sea, if it comes in, will drown all alike; shall any say to the commander, You took me from the steerage, or me from the great cabin, and have turned me among the common sailors; and therefore, sink or swim, I'll not pump?²⁸

When the whigs thought to weaken the ministry by withdrawing their money from the public funds, Defoe showed them that they were only enriching the tories, who were eager enough to buy, and ruining the strength of the nation, which was entirely bound up with its credit. He reminded them that they, the moneyed party, were at least as much in need of funds as the government of loans; and projected, if he did not actually write, an essay to prove that the government could do more easily without the whig bank than the bank without the government.²⁹ Ever since his first journeys at Harley's request, he had maintained a general correspondence with all parts of the country; and on his receiving ill news about Harley's affairs from Scotland, he hastened to Edinburgh to watch events and to stop the mischief which, under colour of a religious dispute, was there working against the union.³⁰

When Godolphin was in power, Defoe had been a most unswerving advocate of war; but now, when Harley declared for peace, his thoughts took a similar turn, and he gave them shape in such a way as least to commit himself and offend his readers. The *Review* first merely noted the burden which the war was casting on English commerce. Then it asked how long the danger and expense would last, and recorded lost opportunities of making peace. It began to hint that the war was now carried on to gratify a few particular interests. It spoke much of the barbarities of warfare,

²⁸ From the *Review*.

²⁹ 'I am vain of saying the first step I took has been successful, and has done more service than I expected, in which the town does me too much honour in supposing it well enough done to be your own. I mean the essay upon credit. If you think it proper, I would offer another piece of the same kind, which I would call an essay upon loans; in which I think it may be of service to take a certain people off a certain notion they have that they can bring the government to do what they please by refusing to advance their money. . . . After this I would offer an essay upon banks, in which I would attempt to bring those men of paper to know themselves a little' (Defoe to Harley, 5 Sept. 1710, p. 584).

³⁰ He travelled under the name of Claude Gullot.

pointing to the recent savage examples of Sweden and Russia. It observed that all men desired a good peace, and that the difficulties were merely those of definition; and at last came forward with the proposition:

We are not in such a necessity of peace as to be obliged to stoop to dishonourable terms; but if honourable conditions may be had, though it may not be all that we may have expected, we ought to consider whether or no we should accept it.

This was a subtle and disingenuous departure from his former attitude; and yet it must be admitted that Defoe was only reviving the policy of his old master, William III. If William had lived, he said, this bone of contention, the Spanish monarchy, would long ago have been broken up so as never more to disturb the peace of Europe: and he therefore now proposed that those parts of it should be given to Austria which were most dependent on France, and those parts to France which were most dependent on England and Holland. He declared that William had always stood by the partition treaty and had regarded it as a fair and prudent arrangement, and that, though he desired to humiliate the power of France, he would not, like Marlborough, have abandoned negotiations for want of an answer in writing. Those, he said, who still favoured war, now that the English candidate was emperor, were simply trying to revive the days of Charles V, and replace French by Austrian exorbitance. With the peace that was made he safely and prudently declared himself dissatisfied, confessing that more might have been obtained from France, and yet still urging moderate men to support the ministry by whom that peace was wrought.³¹

The *Review* for some time longer confronted a gibing and contemptuous audience; but before considering its last stormy days it will be best to await the further evidence of letters which are promised in a forthcoming report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. It is unlikely that these will alter present estimates of Defoe and Harley, but they should help to disentangle a most perplexed period in the lives of both; and in particular they should show with what excuses Defoe finally abandoned Harley for the whigs, and under what circumstances he composed that persuasive defence of Harley which is known as the 'Secret History of the White Staff.'³²

THOMAS BATESON.

³¹ *The Review*, *passim*, from 1711 to 1713.

³² This article owes much to Mr. J. J. Cartwright, who, taking up the task that ill-health compelled Mr. Richard Ward to abandon, has ably calendared the Harley papers from 1700 to 1711; much too to Mr. William Lee, whose laborious investigations first revealed the true Defoe to us, but he rather suspected than understood Defoe's secret dealings with Harley.