

WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Infant Terrible of England

By Frederick James Gregg

ON one of the gloomiest days of last November a party of three—two women and a man—stood on the platform of a London railway station. The man wore the service uniform of a British Major, and there was nothing about him, or his companions, to distinguish them, to the casual spectator, from similar groups, to be found waiting for trains all over England, Scotland and Ireland. Yet the quiet, unemotional departure of this personage, to join his regiment at the front, marked the close of another chapter in the career of one of the most interesting figures in the history of our time.

Only a few hours before, Winston Churchill had got up, in a partly friendly, partly hostile, and a largely indifferent House of Commons, to make what seemed to some a rather superfluous explanation of his resignation from the Coalition Cabinet. Before he had finished, the indifference and hostility of the Commons had disappeared. It had gradually become clear to his hearers that this statesman, who had sat tight for months under the charge that he was responsible for some of the great, the admittedly great blunders of the war, had been bearing alone a load of blame which ought to have been shared by others of high eminence and popularity; that the Antwerp fiasco was not "Winston's folly" but had French backing, and that the Gallipoli expedition, described as "another case of Churchill's rashness," had received the approval of naval officers of high rank and experience.

THE speech was not a plea in confession and avoidance. It was straight from the shoulder and thoroughly justified by the situation—that of a man who had a reputation to keep and a future to look to. Next day the newspapers which had been most hostile agreed with the House of Commons that nothing in the public service of the *enfant terrible* of the Government became him like his leaving it—for the time being. He went home quietly, set his affairs in order and prepared to serve the Empire and the Allies as a practical soldier.

To have been ruler of the King's Navy, and then to take a subordinate place in a trench in Flanders, involved a considerable change even for one whose life had been full of startling and dramatic moments. The spectacle of Bishop Polk putting off his vestments, and putting on his sword, in the American Civil War was hardly more striking. In each case the sense of immediate duty prevailed over all other considerations.

There is, however, something much more American than British in Winston Churchill's adaptability. This he owes no doubt to his New York mother. In his early army days he took part in a number of England's little wars, and, in one, the Boer affair, which,

through its results, immediate and ultimate, was by no means little. As a war correspondent in the later days in South Africa, he was captured by the Dutch, but made his escape. He got into Parliament as a Conservative, like Gladstone before him, and soon became a hope of the stern and unbending Unionists. But his pace soon became too hot for his associates.

IT was as a Liberal that he came speedily to place and power; grew to be trusted by Asquith and to be in great demand by party leaders, as a vigorous debater in Parliament and a first-class man for the platform at big



WINSTON CHURCHILL AND LORD MORLEY
OF BLACKBURN

In Privy Counsellors' Uniforms

meetings. At forty he had put a long life behind him, as events go. He had held three cabinet places; Trade, Admiralty and the Duchy of Lancaster. He left the second to make way for Balfour in the reorganized Government. The quarrel with Lord Fisher will be cleared up only when the war is over. People took sides. Many could not forget, that it was owing to "Jack Fisher," beloved of the service, that the Dreadnaught type of ship was adopted which scrapped a large part of the Navy that the Kaiser had been building with feverish energy against "the Day." It was suspected that the natures of the two men were too much alike, too positive and too impetuous for them to work together, that it

was another case of Kitchener and Curzon in India—the professional men of energy against the Statesmen, with both determined to hold on to his authority. But if Churchill is out so is Fisher, though the works of the latter live after him in Teutonic impotency on the high seas.

As she saw her son off for the continent, Lady Randolph Churchill must have thought of the other resignation in which her immediate family was involved. It was in the early days of the Salisbury Administration which followed the defeat of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. Lord Randolph Churchill had been getting on badly with his colleagues, though it was not generally known. One night he drove down to the office of the *London Times*, and gave to the editor a copy of a letter he had just sent to the prime minister. Guards were placed on the doors of the building after Churchill's departure, and nobody was let out until the paper was on the street with the news "Churchill is out," which threw the Unionists into consternation and the Liberals and the Irish Party into spasms of delight. Lord Randolph thought to break up the Cabinet. He risked all on one throw, and lost. Salisbury repaired his trenches and the Government lasted out the full life of the Parliament. It helped to kill Churchill who was never again anything but the ghost of his former self, without influence in the Imperial Legislature, or in the country at large.

BUT Winston Churchill did not resign because he wanted to injure the Administration which is responsible for carrying on the British end of the war. Unlike his great relative, the Duke of Marlborough, of Blenheim fame, he could not hold an ornamental place like the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, virtually a sinecure and draw a big salary for doing nothing. If he could not help to direct in the Cabinet room, he was going to do things in the line of his original profession. So he became one of the numerous members of Parliament whose faces will not be seen at St. Stephen's until the Germans are out of France. There has been another contrast between father and son. It was Lord Randolph who, when he went to Belfast to rouse the Orangemen against Gladstonian Rule, gave them the slogan "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right." It was his son who, as First Lord of the Admiralty, threatened to send a squadron of warships into Lough Swilly in 1914, to put down the threatened rebellion against the later form of Home Rule, stirred up by Sir Edward Carson. The war which has made many strange bedfellows ended quarrelling over Ireland, and in Ireland, and Churchill and Carson found themselves in the same Cabinet, which they both were to leave for almost identical reasons.