

The Fox 251

Chapter 251: Debate

Amidst such debates, the subsequent installments of the travelogue continued to be published. This time, the content of the travelogue began to touch upon the healthcare system.

In this entry, Miss Crystelle first praised the charitable efforts of the Anglican Church in establishing hospitals. She compared this to the performance of the Catholic Church in France before the Revolution and called for the French Catholic Church to learn from the good practices of other churches, including the Anglican Church, to avoid repeating their past mistakes. (Marmon was a god from some ancient Middle Eastern religions, later demonized by the Jews after they had conquered Canaan. In the Bible, Jesus said that a servant cannot serve two masters at the same time, nor can one follow God and Marmon simultaneously.)

This part, of course, delighted some English readers, but it left others rather displeased. Especially when Miss Crystelle promptly donated 500 pounds to support the Anglican Church's good deeds, some of them felt like reaching through the newspaper to grab her hand, saying, "Kind and naive Miss Crystelle, you have no idea how treacherous people can be! When it comes to worshiping Marmon, they aren't any different from the pre-Revolution French Catholics. The only thing they've excelled at beyond the French Catholics is hypocrisy. Give them that money, and not a pound of it will reach the poor; the rest will be squandered on their mistresses. It'd be better to give it to me..."

However, the following part changed the mood of both groups completely. This was because Miss Crystelle began describing the unbelievably filthy conditions in British hospitals.

"The wards were damp and dimly lit, akin to a tomb. Even though it was daytime, it took me quite a while to adjust my eyes when I entered the ward. Once my eyes had adapted, my heart couldn't.

This was no hospital ward; it was more like a garbage dump. The floor was littered with sewage, and blood-soaked bandages were scattered everywhere. Clusters of green-headed flies clung to them, and when a nurse passed by, they buzzed up like a cloud of smoke.

Apart from the flies, rats scurried all around. There was one patient – dear Lord, it was horrifying – he had a large piece of his lower lip missing, supposedly bitten off by rats during the night. It was truly horrific.

But that's not the worst part. The doctors here seemed to have no concept of hygiene. Their work clothes were stained with blood and other unmentionable filth, and the rough fabric, due to the dirt, had taken on a leathery sheen.

If a doctor dared to show up in such a dirty state at a French hospital, what do you think would happen? Well, during our war with the Austrians, I volunteered to assist, along with other great women, in caring for the wounded in our military hospital. There, we wouldn't even let ourselves get as dirty as they appear, and if a doctor forgot to thoroughly sterilize his surgical tools in boiling water, Dean Hanmer might have used those tools on him.

So, I cautiously inquired whether there were many cases of infections, fevers, and deaths in the hospital. To my dismay, Mr. Owen, the Deputy Head of the Hospital, confirmed my suspicions. He told me that most patients brought to the hospital for treatment had little hope of returning home

healthy. Often, their families had already prepared their funerals before they even arrived. As for those who underwent surgery and bled, less than one out of ten was likely to survive.

Mr. Owen further informed me that the condition of hospitals in Britain, and indeed hospitals worldwide, was no different. He emphasized that the state of hospitals in Britain was among the best in the world.

After leaving Grace Hospital, I immediately sent Mr. Pierre to buy a copy of *The Lancet* and sent it to Mr. Owen. Mr. Pierre suggested that we buy several copies because the situation at Grace Hospital might not be an isolated case, and it was clear that *The Lancet* had limited influence in Britain compared to its prominence in France's medical community. Therefore, many doctors and hospital administrators had probably not seen the paper I referred to.

As it turned out, Mr. Pierre's concerns were well-founded. Over the following days, I visited several other hospitals in Britain, only to discover that each one was no different from Grace Hospital – and they were all unfamiliar with *The Lancet*'s influence."

After going around in circles, I believed that Dr. Owen should have finished reading the paper from *The Lancet*. An elder scientist wrote the introduction to this paper, stating that while it lacked theoretical evidence, it was a reasonable hypothesis. Because it had shown excellent practical results, it held significant value for promotion and discussion. I thought Dr. Owen would agree with this perspective and implement some improvements based on this experience.

However, when I returned to Grace Hospital, I found that nothing had changed from a few days ago. I, being impatient by nature, went to find Deputy Head Dr. Owen. He informed me that he had indeed read the paper from *The Lancet*, and despite the eminent Dr. Lavasie writing an introduction for it, the author of the paper was an unknown figure. He believed the entire paper was speculative and lacked theoretical evidence, and thus he couldn't place his trust in it.

We had a heated argument, and Dr. Owen told me that the decision was not in his hands but in the hands of Dr. James, the hospital director. Moreover, Dr. James was a director of the British Medical Association. If I wanted to change the rules in all of Britain's hospitals, it was best to convince Dr. James.

So, I went to see Dr. James, but he displayed immense stubbornness. He insisted that the paper in *The Lancet* was baseless and that our hospital's data was utterly unreliable. He even criticized the credentials of the esteemed Dr. Lavasie, who had highly praised the paper. It seemed he suspected that we were putting forth these 'heretical ideas' merely to damage the reputation of the British medical community...

In summary, Dr. James and I had a major argument, and he eventually threw me out. Admittedly, I must confess that I might have gotten a bit carried away during this encounter. However, Dr. James was just too obstinate, not even agreeing to perform a controlled experiment according to the French experience. I had heard many people say that the English were exceptionally stubborn, and today, it seemed that this claim might hold some truth...

This travelogue, upon its publication, sparked a debate far surpassing any previous entry.

Those in support of Miss Crystelle naturally attacked the Anglican Church, the Medical Association, accusing them of caring only for money and not the lives of the people. Those against Miss Crystelle and *The Lancet* attacked her from various angles.

Some accused Miss Crystelle of boasting, labeling her a young girl who claimed to have served in a military hospital and knew the great Lavasie – "Is her next story going to be that she dines regularly with Napoleon?"

Some even mocked The Lancet for believing in the sorcery of savages.

In essence, the newspapers of the "English News League" sided against Miss Crystelle, defending the 'medical dignity' of Britain, while the "English Freedom News League" stood in support of Miss Crystelle. However, they didn't seem particularly concerned about whether The Lancet's claims were accurate. They were more focused on the systemic issues that continually disadvantaged the common people in Britain.

Following this, "The Sun" newspaper joined the fray. In response to "The Times" questioning Miss Crystelle's identity, "The Sun" leveraged its expertise in digging up personal information and thoroughly introduced who Miss Crystelle really was to the British public.

Miss Crystelle's identity was not well-known in England, but in France, at least within artistic circles, many people were familiar with her. So "The Sun" quickly exposed Miss Crystelle's true identity.

Then the British people discovered that the notorious French author, "Crystelle," was even more legendary than she boasted. She was the sister of Napoleon Bonaparte, the First Consul of France, and the sister of France's greatest scientist, Joseph Bonaparte. She had once personally planted the victorious flag on a fortress newly reclaimed from the enemy on the battlefield and participated in nursing wounded soldiers as the sister of General Napoleon. The soldiers hailed her as the "Toulon Saint." As for her acquaintance with Lavasie, given her brother's friendship with Lavasie, wasn't that entirely normal? Some even quipped, "Miss Crystelle does indeed dine with the First Consul quite often."

Chapter 252: The Order of the Holy Maidens

The expose in the "Sun Gazette" had an unexpected consequence - it brought about a curious surge in British fans of our very own Parisian saint, Paulina. A group of upper-class teenage girls, infused with youthful enthusiasm, started collecting Paulina's works. They imitated her by donning men's clothing and riding horses with regular saddles (since women at that time used side-saddles). They even took up fox hunting and ventured into entertainment establishments with their audacious behavior!

This trend led to some conservative British gentlemen grumbling, "Someday, when we march into Paris and capture the entire Bonaparte family, the girl named Paulina must be bound and burned as a heretic! Others, we can forgive, but that Paulina, she must pay!"

On the flip side, Paulina's sharp, sarcastic, and often melancholic articles, some of which were inspired by her elder brother's creativity, found their way into the hearts of young, upper-class British enthusiasts. Some even idolized her.

One particularly ardent teenager published a statement in a newspaper called "Voice of the People" (a small-circulation publication, so placing such a declaration there was quite economical). He declared his intention to establish a sacred order: the Order of the Holy Maidens, dedicated to defending the honor of Paulina, and waging a relentless war against those "unfit-for-humans heaps of vile filth" who dared slander their beloved "Holy Maiden."

To everyone's astonishment, this so-called "Order of the Holy Maidens" was indeed established, boasting some remarkably dedicated young enthusiasts. Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, those best of friends, had both joined the Order in their youth. Byron was a ripe old age of 11 at that time, and Shelley was a mere 8 years old. They yearned for a chance to join the fray, with Byron regretting his relatively late birth.

Paulina's newfound fame also brought her brother, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Joseph into the British spotlight. It wasn't that the British were entirely ignorant of Napoleon and Joseph, but the radiant aura surrounding Paulina allowed the British to see them from a different perspective. They realized, "By Jove, this is a true legend!"

However, this was all in the future. In the present, the revelation of Paulina's true identity only intensified the ongoing debate.

The conservatives seized this opportunity to accuse Paulina of having ulterior motives with her travel accounts: "Paulina is the sister of France's First Consul. Her actions must be influenced by Napoleon's scheming, intended to malign England or even divide it. Do some people still naively think that just because we are at peace with France, we are now good pals? Do they believe the French suddenly harbor warm feelings for us? This is a French plot!"

In response, the liberals retorted, "Just because the person raising this issue is French, does it mean the issue is non-existent? Does Miss Bonaparte believe that two plus two equals three, and if we disagree, it's unpatriotic? Facts are facts and they won't harm England. In fact, turning a blind eye and burying our heads in the sand, denying the existence of the lion, is the greatest harm to England. Do the gentlemen of The Times not grasp such a simple truth? Must we really bury our heads in the sand to protect our nation?"

Meanwhile, the more radical tabloids, driven by their high cover prices and small readerships, openly speculated that the upper echelons were attacking Paulina because she had uncovered their nefarious schemes.

"For years, England's reactionary rulers have relentlessly exploited the country's workers, both men and women, whether adults or children. The poor were ruthlessly bled dry, and when they lost their value as a workforce, they were seen as useless trash, eager to be eliminated efficiently. Hospitals, especially those hypocritical Anglican hospitals, aren't meant to help or save the poor. They're instruments for the systematic, effective extermination of the impoverished masses, who had lost their value as exploited labor and were now a destabilizing factor in England!

This is why Miss Bonaparte, by pointing out these problems and proposing improvements that don't even require much effort, had her ideas shot down and faced continuous attacks. She unearthed the truths that certain individuals had always wanted to keep hidden!"

This brings to mind Miss Bonaparte's earlier fairy tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes." Today, Miss Bonaparte is the child in her own story, boldly declaring, "The king is wearing nothing!" And there are those deceivers in England who wish to silence this child, hoping we'll believe that we're all fools. Yes, we were deceived before, but now, the people of England have awakened!

Some more proactive individuals, like Charles James Fox, the leader of the Whig Party, published an article in the "English News Review," stating, "I'm not entirely sure about Miss Bonaparte's claims and the theories in 'The Lancet.' But I strongly support Miss Bonaparte's statement, 'Experiment is the ultimate test of theory.' Therefore, we plan to call upon all those interested in

resolving this issue. We'll pool our resources to construct a new hospital. In this hospital, we'll strictly follow 'The Lancet's' recommendations and compare our results with those of traditional hospitals to determine the truth!"

Mr. Fox was a man of action. Following this call, within a matter of days, he transformed a rented warehouse into a French-style hospital. He was candid about the fact that many of his hospital staff were from continental Europe.

"I believe that Death doesn't retreat merely because a doctor is French, nor does he swarm forward just because a doctor is English. If someone thinks that way, they are truly discriminating against all of England. My decision to employ continental European doctors and healthcare workers in this hospital is purely to save time on staff training, to arrive at conclusions as swiftly as possible."

But the decisive blow came soon enough. Nearly a month passed since the heated debates, and it was time for the new edition of "The Lancet" to be published.

Contrary to the previously desolate state of its readership, in this month of debates, "The Lancet" had become a household name in England. So, as the new edition of "The Lancet" was about to be released, almost the entire English media watched with bated breath to see how "The Lancet" would respond to the earlier commotion.

However, "The Lancet" made an announcement: due to some "technical" reasons, the release of the new edition would be postponed.

This news immediately sparked a whirlwind of excitement and turmoil. Conservative media outlets seized the opportunity, ridiculing "The Lancet" for its delay, claiming that "their lies couldn't be spun any longer, and they're scared." On the other hand, liberal media outlets argued that the existing evidence was sufficient, and the fellows at the English News Alliance were grasping at straws. But, in terms of sheer volume, at this time, the voices of the English News Alliance clearly had the upper hand.

As for the "Seven-Penny Alliance," they positioned themselves as having no vested interest and claimed to be solely focused on the facts. However, their stance was also perceived by the English News Alliance's newspapers as a sign of guilt.

So, after almost two more weeks had passed, just when the folks at the English News Alliance were getting ready to celebrate, the new edition of "The Lancet" finally saw the light of day.

This edition of "The Lancet" was surprisingly thick, almost three to four times its usual size, resembling a thick book. In the preface of this edition of "The Lancet," the editor explained the reason for the delay:

"In this edition, we have the privilege of being the first to publish a groundbreaking medical treatise, 'A Study on the Relationship between Bacteria and Various Diseases.' This is a magnificent work, a pioneering piece that we believe to be the 'Principia Mathematica of Natural Philosophy' in the field of medicine. In this extraordinary piece, Dr. Carroll reveals the causes of a series of deadly diseases, including 'cholera' and 'typhoid fever.' To prevent contracting these diseases and others like them, as well as to effectively cure them, he has opened a crucial gateway.

However, the scope of this treatise (I prefer to call it a magnum opus) is quite substantial, and it delves into many areas of specialized knowledge. Reviewing it, translating it accurately into

English, is no easy task. This is why we had to postpone the publication of this edition of 'The Lancet.' But as Miss Crystelle said in her works, 'Many beautiful things are worth waiting for.'"

Chapter 253: We Must Surrender First

The prologue might say this or that, but what truly matters is whether the following paper lives up to the praise. So, an eager crowd of readers wasted no time flipping to the heart of the matter.

In this paper, the author began by expressing gratitude to his mentor, Mr. Joseph Bonaparte, for providing guidance. Then, he delved into the intricacies of identifying various bacteria through staining techniques. Following that, he presented the analysis and categorization of samples collected from wounds, blood, saliva, feces, and more from different patients. Animal experiments were conducted, followed by a summary and future outlook. The paper culminated with the name of the first author, Carol O'Haff, and the corresponding author's names, including Joseph Bonaparte and Antoine Lavoisier.

The structure of the paper wasn't overly complex, but its content was rich and thought-provoking. If the English people were to validate the contents of this paper, it would likely take a considerable amount of time. However, when they laid eyes on this paper, even the members of the "England News Alliance" and, surprisingly, the British Medical Association, who had been vehemently against the French, realized that the results they sought were unlikely to align with their expectations.

In fact, when the speculative article from "Young Lord Chris" arrived in "The Lancet," Dean James had already been about 70% convinced of this hypothesis. His earlier strong opposition wasn't due to disbelief but because it threatened the interests of the British Medical Association.

If this viewpoint were acknowledged, it meant that their hospitals and these doctors should be held accountable for the deaths of patients within the hospital. While this responsibility didn't carry legal ramifications, it wouldn't be far-fetched for someone to send them to jail or have them compensate the deceased's families. However, even a mere moral responsibility would tarnish their reputation.

Moreover, the loss wouldn't be limited to just a "moral responsibility." If "The Lancet" viewpoint was acknowledged, it indicated that British medicine lagged far behind the European mainland. This was not merely a matter of prestige; it had direct financial implications.

Let's not forget that wealthy individuals who fell ill might not visit the hospitals, but they'd still summon doctors to their homes for treatment. However, if these revelations from "The Lancet" were accepted, and hospitals were improved accordingly, leading to better treatment outcomes, how would the wealthy perceive it?

Wouldn't they believe that British medicine had significantly fallen behind compared to France? When they needed medical attention, wouldn't they prefer to summon French doctors, followed by European mainland doctors and those who had studied in France, leaving native British doctors as a last resort? And without a doubt, the fees for medical visits would be arranged in the same order. This was tantamount to turning the esteemed British doctors into mere charlatans.

Such a scenario was unacceptable. If it occurred, who would be willing to pay for the qualifications of the British Medical Association? Therefore, even if the paupers in the hospital perished, such a situation could not be allowed!

So, Dean James immediately informed the British Medical Association and recommended that they convene a meeting to discuss countermeasures. In this meeting, everyone unanimously agreed that the speculations in "The Lancet" were groundless heresy, and any doctor daring to act upon its recommendations should have their medical license revoked.

However, now, all their efforts, all their resistance, in the face of this paper, crumbled like a beetle blocking the path of a carriage wheel.

The members of the British Medical Association weren't worried about how the paupers might react; most of them were illiterate and had no time to ponder these issues. Moreover, they were rather gullible and could be easily deceived. But the wealthy were a different story. They cared deeply about their health, were willing to spend on it, and, most importantly, possessed enough knowledge and intellect to understand this paper and make judgments that genuinely served their interests. And how would they choose? There was no need to ask.

So, when Dr. James saw this paper in "The Lancet," he felt a shiver down his spine. His legs grew weak, and he could hardly stand. He slowly moved to the edge of his chair, sat down cautiously, as if afraid that any sudden movement might break something.

Sitting on the chair, Dr. James tightened his coat and, with a tinge of hope, reread the paper, but his anxiety was so overpowering that his eyes blurred, and the words on the journal became hard to read. After a long while, he managed to make out a single word written all over the pages:

"Bankruptcy!"

Dr. James exclaimed in horror and flung "The Lancet" to the floor, startling his assistant, Emms, who rushed upstairs.

"Dr. James, what's wrong with you?" Emms' voice was filled with alarm.

"Nothing... nothing," Dr. James attempted to stand up, but his legs were devoid of strength. "I'm just a bit tired. Help me pick up the fallen book, will you?"

Emms quickly retrieved the book and placed it on Dr. James's desk.

"Dr. James, you don't look well. Are you feeling sick? Should I call a doctor for you?" Emms asked with great care.

"No need, Emms. I'm a doctor myself, and I know... well, could you fetch me a glass of water?" Dr. James replied.

Emms promptly poured a glass of water and handed it to Dr. James, who took a sip. A whole glass of warm water finally helped him warm up a bit.

"Emms, I need to rest here for a while," Dr. James said.

"Alright, Dr. James, I'll be outside. Just call me if you need anything," Emms replied.

Dr. James watched his assistant leave the study and carefully close the door. He couldn't help but think, "If he knew that my doctor's status, along with my position as a director of the British Medical Association, would soon be worthless, would he still treat me this way?"

Emms left the room. Dr. James took a short rest and then struggled to stand. He knew this was a crucial moment; they had to take action immediately, or everything would be lost.

As he attempted to stand, he heard a soft knock on the door.

"Is there something?" he asked.

"Dr. James, President Edward has sent someone to request your immediate presence at the association for an urgent meeting," Emms' voice came from outside the door.

"Alright, I'm coming," Dr. James replied quickly.

When Dr. James arrived at the association headquarters, he found most of the directors already present. Their faces were pale, and they were muttering quietly with fear and resentment in their eyes.

Soon, all the directors were gathered. Such a complete attendance was unusual, as meetings typically had at least one-third of the directors absent, and the rest were usually at least half an hour late.

"Now that we're all here, let's proceed," President Edward said. "You all know the reason for this meeting. The question now is, what should we do?"

"I think we should start by verifying whether there's any truth in it," someone hesitated to say.

"What do you all think?" President Edward asked.

"Verification is necessary, but I don't think we should have high hopes. A few days ago, I went to France on President Edward's request to investigate the situation in some French hospitals."

"How was it?" several directors inquired.

"It's just as they said. Their hospitals are much cleaner... and more importantly, the infection and death rates are much lower. So... concerning verification, we shouldn't set our hopes too high. The French wouldn't publish something like this without verification."

"So, what do we do?" someone asked in panic.

"We must take action. Find a way to have the police department ban 'The Lancet'?"

"What nonsense is that? The Jacobins would have a field day. Besides, it's too late for that now. Doing so will only make more people aware of all this... It's just... it's too terrifying!"

One useless guy even started wailing, and soon, others followed suit. The meeting room echoed with cries, as if the gathering was not a usual meeting but a farewell ceremony to their own bodies. Even President Edward was nearly brought to tears by this atmosphere.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," President Edward shouted twice, but no one paid him any attention. Everyone was busy shedding a few tears themselves.

"Clap! Clap!" In desperation, President Edward had to pick up his cane and vigorously pound it on the table. "Stop crying, stop crying! We're here to find a way to salvage our losses as much as possible, not to cry. If you need to cry, do it at home!"

Gradually, the sobbing subsided.

"President, it's up to you to come up with a solution now," a director, his voice quivering, said.

"Yes, yes, it's up to you," more people chimed in.

President Edward sighed with bitterness and said, "Alright, gentlemen, the fact is the fact, and we have already lost. Let's not dwell on the past. We need to admit defeat first and surrender to the

French, and we need to do it quickly. Just like in a war, the first to surrender always receives some concessions. The French should still need us..."

Chapter 254: Passing the Buck

Surrendering can be a tricky business, but first, you need to know where to surrender. It's not like a real battlefield where the enemy is right in front of you, and you can just find a flag of some country, cut off the sides, and raise it high.

But in this battlefield, who should they surrender to in order to ensure the gentlemen's interests as swiftly and efficiently as possible? That's the big question. Making the wrong choice, even if it's just a waste of time, can be quite a nuisance.

Besides, not everyone on the French side is willing to accept their surrender. If they end up with someone who won't accept it, like when Ah Q approached a fake foreign devil and said, "I want to surrender to the revolutionary party," they might get a swift "get lost." If they're too slow to leave, they might even get a few blows to the head.

At this point, there's no time to list targets and analyze them one by one. They have to cast a wide net, reaching out to anyone who might accept their "surrender." English doctors are sending representatives to express goodwill to them. Of course, a more civilized way to put it would be to "express goodwill."

In addition to expressing goodwill to the French, they also need to reach a "friendly reconciliation" with those who already maintain goodwill with the French.

So, all the members of the council are mobilized. President Edward writes down the targets that need immediate visits on a piece of paper, and everyone claims a target to visit.

Dr. James, after carefully examining the list of targets, notices a name: Charles James Fox.

He happens to know this prominent Whig party leader, the famous ladies' man. (Rumor has it that he even led the Prince of Wales astray into becoming a ladies' man.) He had treated Mr. Fox before, and they had conversed. So, he decides to take on this target.

"Ah, James, you don't have to pick. You'll accompany me first to the 'Journal of Scientific Truth' to publish an apology to Miss Bonaparte. After that, we'll visit the British editorial office of 'The Lancet'..."

James knew that this was the most crucial action in this surrender, and, of course, the most difficult and embarrassing one. It was, in fact, initiated by him. So, for this embarrassing task, there was no one more suitable than him. Even if someone else were willing to replace him, he wouldn't feel at ease because they might end up throwing all the blame on him in his absence.

Thinking about this, he suddenly realized he had been in a daze just now and almost volunteered for something else, giving away this vital position to someone else. At that moment, his heart filled with gratitude towards President Edward.

With the targets set, they quickly agreed on a common tone. It was to acknowledge that the Royal College of Physicians had made an error, a misjudgment. They admitted they had been too proud and promised to correct this issue. But there were certain things they couldn't admit:

First, they couldn't admit that the Royal College of Physicians had opposed the French scientific hypotheses for reasons of self-interest.

Second, they couldn't admit that the Royal College of Physicians had made this mistake due to a lack of capability.

Now it was time for the actual surrender. Firstly, the Royal College of Physicians acknowledged the need to learn from European nations, especially France, in the field of medical technology. In the future, they would annually invite French experts to the UK for lectures and simultaneously send British doctors to France for further training. Though it was nominally called strengthening technical exchange, anyone could see that this implied recognizing France's authoritative position in medicine.

Additionally, the Royal College of Physicians would reorganize their structure, allowing foreigners to become members of the College to prevent arrogance and stagnation.

Lastly, the Royal College of Physicians strongly recommended that hospitals in England follow French standards and undergo reforms under the guidance of French doctors. If a hospital refused such changes, the Royal College of Physicians would advise doctors not to practice there.

In short, with these measures, the French could quickly establish their dominance in the medical community in the UK using the Royal College of Physicians.

The plan set, everyone hurried off to their respective targets. But as they say, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch." When President Edward and Dr. James arrived at the "Journal of Scientific Truth" to request an audience with the editor-in-chief, Mr. Mabbe, they were told that Mr. Mabbe was in a meeting and they would have to wait.

So, they were ushered into an adjacent lounge where tea was served. The waiter prepared to leave, but President Edward stopped him.

"May I ask who the editor-in-chief is meeting with right now?" he inquired.

The waiter hesitated a bit. President Edward discreetly slipped a banknote into his hand. The waiter, now motivated, whispered the name, "Bishop White."

"Uh-oh," President Edward thought to himself.

Clearly, the Anglicans had come here at this time to deal with the matter of 'The Lancet.' This is because most of the hospitals involved in the recent controversy had been founded by the Anglicans, and the rest had strong Anglican ties.

During the heated debate over the past month, the Anglicans had also been drawn into it. Especially when Charles James Fox, who had consistently advocated for the abolition of the Anglican Church's status as the state religion, joined the discussion. Under Fox's influence, many more radical individuals even directly claimed that the Anglican Church's hospitals were organized for the systematic elimination of the poor who no longer had any exploitable value.

The Whig party's 'English News Review' was a solemn broadsheet (at least it thought of itself as such) and couldn't publish speculative and unsubstantiated claims. However, it did publish letters from readers. After all, those were the readers' viewpoints, not the newspaper's viewpoints. So, the 'Readers' Letters' section of the 'English News Review' became a breeding ground for all sorts of

rumors. Although every sensational 'Reader's Letter' was followed by the paper's editor mildly advising and disclaiming it.

Once the 'English News Review' set the tone, other smaller newspapers quickly followed suit. They weren't the type to worry about maintaining their reputation or pretending to be 'impartial and objective' as the high-end broadsheets did. They were naturally opinionated media outlets, where attitude mattered more than facts. After all, reporting facts required resources, while showing attitude only required a conscience. Small newspapers, with their limited resources, naturally couldn't gather many exclusive news stories, and they already found it challenging to gather facts. If they lost their attitude and conscience, what purpose would they serve?

So, these newspapers churned out a slew of leading prophecies against the Anglicans. Of course, the Anglicans, who were adept at counterattacks, didn't stay quiet. Inclined toward them, newspapers started retaliating, and this inevitably extended to the French 'scientific conjecture.' The Anglicans naturally attacked these baseless 'scientific conjectures,' even raising the issue to the level of the piety of their faith.

However, God used facts to slap the Anglican heretics in the face. In today's era of growing respect for science, even the Catholic Church no longer dared to recklessly burn scientists at the stake. The Anglicans, too, didn't dare to directly confront scientific theories that were replicable and verifiable.

Generally, whenever science made any progress, delving into an area of the unknown, one could always find theologians who had already taken refuge in areas of science that hadn't yet been understood, proclaiming, "You see, we've been waiting for them here." Then, they'd slyly modify their doctrines, transforming their past truths into allegories and metaphors.

The Anglicans were no exception to this, but compared to the Royal College of Physicians, the Anglicans had a more complicated problem. They couldn't apologize, they couldn't admit their ignorance. The clergy and scientists were different; scientists never claimed to possess the ultimate truth, so making mistakes was normal. But clerics were different; they typically declared themselves to be messengers of revealed truths. People followed them because they believed they possessed the ultimate truth. So, they couldn't admit mistakes; doing so would be their undoing.

Since they couldn't admit mistakes and couldn't stubbornly deny them, there was only one choice left—passing the buck.

Clearly, the Anglicans had come to 'The Lancet' for one purpose: to pass the buck. But who could they pass the blame to? They certainly couldn't put it on the French. Because they couldn't say, "The French used magic to deceive us," after all, it wasn't the 14th century anymore. And claiming the French were too cunning, deceiving them, would be admitting their own foolishness.

Although everyone in England knew that there were quite a few fools in the Church, the Church couldn't admit it. It was like the king who had been duped by con artists. Even if he knew he was stark naked, he had to carry on with the procession.

So, President Edward immediately thought that he, along with the Royal College of Physicians, was the best target for passing the blame. The reason the Anglicans made a mistake was all because they had been deceived by them. Yes, everyone knew that the French were the opponents, and if the Anglicans were deceived by the French, that meant the Anglicans were naive. But if it was their own people who turned traitor, they could only blame the Anglicans for being too kind.

"Maybe they're all prepared to accuse us of secretly worshipping the devil when necessary?"
President Edward couldn't help but think.

Chapter 255: An Apology

The two individuals had been waiting in the side room for nearly an hour, and President Edward was growing increasingly anxious. If the representatives of the Anglican Church and the French hadn't come to an agreement, their conversation should have concluded quickly. However, they had been talking for over an hour. It appeared as if they were haggling, negotiating their terms. The fact that they were haggling implied that there was room for discussion.

Thankfully, there was no one else around, so President Edward quietly expressed his concerns to Dr. James.

Dr. James understood that President Edward was seeking an advantage for their side by sharing his worries. After some thought, he responded, "President, I believe there's one thing the Anglican Church can't change."

"Go on..."

"They can't genuinely change their stance," James replied.

"Exactly!" President Edward exclaimed, slapping his thigh. "You're absolutely right. No matter how much they exchange interests, the Anglican Church and the French will always be adversaries. The Anglican Church cannot genuinely side with the French, and the French cannot truly trust the Anglican Church. In fact, the benefits the Anglican Church can offer in exchange are quite limited. Moreover, in a situation like this, I think, given our current scale, we shouldn't be the real target of the French. They've gained such an advantage, whether through precise calculation or sheer luck, this advantage shouldn't be used against small organizations like us. So, who is the real target of the French?"

Both men fell silent, but they had answers in their hearts. For France, England was far from a friendly nation, and the feeling was mutual. Whenever there was an opportunity to weaken the opponent, both countries would eagerly seize it. If this entire situation had been orchestrated by the French from start to finish, they had gone through great efforts, and their conspiracy couldn't have been solely aimed at their small organization.

Of course, it didn't mean they were safe. It was like the target of a wagon wheel was never a presumptuous dung beetle, and that didn't mean the wheel wouldn't crush the beetle right in its path. Well, it was called, "Destroy you, what's it got to do with you?"

So, for the English Medical Association, the most crucial thing was not to be right in the wheel's path. However, the trouble was that they seemed to be right in front of the wheel now.

The wheel was already rolling and coming fast, and there was no time to hide. Their only hope was to make the wheel willingly change its course. To do that, they had to show their value, to make the wheel see them as allies. In other words, in the struggle between England and France, they had to become de facto turncoats to ensure their own survival.

However, neither of them felt much guilt about it. Or rather, they quickly convinced themselves, "France's strength has already proven the correctness of France's path. We're not betraying England, but pushing the stubborn English onto the right path."

At this moment, the door to the side room was gently knocked on. Then, the waiter who had just received President Edward's money gently pushed the door open.

"Mr. Marbeuf requests the presence of both of you," the waiter replied.

The two followed the waiter out and entered Mr. Marbeuf's drawing-room.

Mr. Marbeuf welcomed their arrival graciously, taking the initiative to greet them and leading them to the sofa. They all sat down together, and he politely asked, "Can I get you both something to drink? Tea or coffee?"

"Tea will be just fine," President Edward said.

"Well, as expected, I've never met anyone in England who would choose coffee between these two," Mr. Marbeuf chuckled. "Actually, if you had chosen coffee, I don't have any good coffee here."

President Edward and his companions joined in the laughter. However, Mr. Marbeuf's laughter was genuine, while theirs seemed forced.

"In the midst of your busy schedules, you suddenly came here," Mr. Marbeuf said, "Is there something I can assist you with, gentlemen?"

"It's like this," Edward considered his words and then said, "You must be aware of the recent controversy caused by Miss Bonaparte's travelogue."

Mr. Marbeuf remained silent, nodding to indicate his awareness of the matter.

"You see, initially, we, especially Dr. James here, said some impolite and excessive things to her without knowing Miss Bonaparte's identity," Edward continued.

Dr. James hurriedly added, "So, we hope to convey our apologies to Miss Bonaparte through you, respected Mr. Marbeuf."

"Oh, there's no need to worry too much," Mr. Marbeuf replied. "You don't know Miss Bonaparte, but even though she's a lady, she has a broad mind. She won't hold these trivial matters against you. You've probably read her travelogue; she mentioned saying some excessive things at the time and admitted that her own excessive words may have led to misunderstandings. So, you see, Miss Bonaparte doesn't blame you..."

"No, no, no," James quickly interjected. "It was my fault in this matter, not Miss Bonaparte's. She didn't say anything wrong. Any kind-hearted person, when confronted with the appalling conditions in the hospital, would naturally get emotional. It was my own stubbornness and arrogance that prevented me from heeding Miss Bonaparte's sound advice. Looking back, I'm truly ashamed..."

"Mr. Marbeuf, President Edward continued, "The mistake wasn't just Dr. James's, but the entire English Medical Association, including myself. We were so proud and stuck in our old ways that if it weren't for the recent article in 'The Lancet,' we might still be unaware of our mistakes. To minimize the harm we've done to countless patients... my goodness... if only we had listened to Miss Bonaparte's advice from the start, if only we weren't so proud, how many lives could we have saved?"

At this point, President Edward couldn't hold back his tears of remorse, and his voice became choked with emotion.

"Mr. Marbeuf," he said, "I'd like to publish an open letter through your newspaper, publicly apologizing to Miss Bonaparte and expressing our regret. Additionally, we've noticed that French medicine is far ahead of the rest of the world. If we don't want to be left behind as barbarians, we must seize this opportunity to learn from France. You have significant influence within France, and I wonder if you could help us establish contact with French medical institutions. We're planning to send some doctors to learn from their French counterparts. We'd also like to invite French experts to come to England to deliver lectures and serve as advisors for our association, guiding us in improving our hospitals and training our personnel."

Mr. Marbeuf smiled and replied, "President Edward, the pursuit of scientific truth is never too late. I see your passion for science, and I admire it wholeheartedly. Your open letter can be accommodated, and I believe Miss Bonaparte will see it. As for sending your doctors to study new medical practices and hiring French experts..."

"This matter is very important and concerns the well-being of numerous patients," Edward said fervently. "If you have any connections, Mr. Marbeuf, please help us. We're grateful people..."

"Well, President Edward, you should know that the media with the closest ties to the medical and academic community in France is not us but 'The Lancet' magazine," Mr. Marbeuf explained. "They have many avenues for such arrangements. However, 'The Lancet' is quite scholarly, and not many can fully understand it, which limits its circulation. They can't support the magazine's expenses through sales alone, and they are also reluctant to commercialize it too much—scholars are usually a bit idealistic, you know."

"That's entirely appropriate," Edward exclaimed. "That's how scholars devoted to their craft should be, and it's truly admirable. Mr. Marbeuf, please continue."

"Well, you may or may not know that 'The Lancet' magazine sustains itself solely through the generous contributions of experts who love science and are dedicated to public welfare. It's precisely because of this that they maintain close relationships with those experts. If you want to arrange for English doctors to study new medical practices and the like, it's much easier to do so through them than through us. After all, they are the experts, aren't they?"

"Thank you so much," President Edward said while taking out a large envelope from his coat pocket and handing it to Mr. Marbeuf. "Mr. Marbeuf, this is the open letter of apology from the English Medical Association to Miss Bonaparte."

Mr. Marbeuf accepted the unusually thick envelope but didn't open it immediately. He said, "Gentlemen, rest assured, we will arrange for its publication as soon as possible."

"It would be best if it could make it to the front page," President Edward said as he stood up. "We're willing to cover the cost of publishing the letter on the front page. Now, I must head to 'The Lancet's' editorial office immediately. I won't trouble you further, Mr. Marbeuf."

Mr. Marbeuf also stood up and escorted the two men to the door. He watched as they got into their carriage before turning back inside. Edward and James proceeded directly to 'The Lancet' editorial office.

Chapter 256: Standards and the Chain of Interests

The English Medical Association was not the primary target of the Ministry of Truth. Therefore, as soon as they showed "remorse" and took practical actions, such as immediately issuing an appeal to

all hospitals in England to align with The Lancet's standards, sending doctors to France for training, and hiring experienced French doctors as association directors, the Ministry of Truth no longer pursued their issues.

When President Edward proposed that the English Medical Association donate £10,000 annually to The Lancet to support scientific research and public outreach, and creatively introduced "The Lancet Certification," many in the Ministry of Truth felt that these individuals were practically part of their team.

The "Lancet Certification" first involved the certification of hospital environments and the qualifications of medical staff. Those hospitals with healthy environments, well-trained personnel, and outstanding treatment outcomes could, under their application, obtain different levels of certification from The Lancet.

Clearly, with The Lancet's newfound reputation, this certification would significantly boost the credibility of the hospitals that received it. Any hospital capable of donating money would undoubtedly strive to obtain The Lancet's certification mark. Hospitals with this certification would naturally align with The Lancet, or more explicitly, they would stand with the Ministry of Truth to protect their interests.

"In this way, the entire British medical community becomes ours. It's just as Joseph said, we have more of our people and fewer of the enemy's! Edward, you're a talent! Of course, Polina, you did a great job this time! So, tell me, what do you need as a reward?" Lucien asked proudly.

"What can you give me, whatever I want?" Polina inquired.

"As long as it's within my means."

"Very well," Polina said decisively, "give me Haidee."

"Polina," Lucien furrowed his brows, "you should spend more time with those young men and not dress as a man all day, competing with me for mistresses. Truly, I can't believe I have someone like you..."

"So, are you giving Haidee to me or not?" Polina raised an eyebrow.

"Haidee is not a possession; she's a free person with full autonomy. How can I..."

Polina suddenly put on a very gentlemanly smile, "So, you won't compete with me for Haidee? Well, that's enough. I don't believe this girl can escape my grasp."

"Alright, Polina!" Lucien said, "About that 'Lancet Certification,' do you have any other suggestions?"

"No, for this matter, you should ask Joseph. He has plenty of clever ideas. I'm busy!" Polina replied, walking towards the door. Midway, she suddenly turned around, looked at Lucien, and smiled, "Lucien, do you envy that I can dress as both a man and a woman? Well, if you're not satisfied, I'll give you a dress to try on..."

After driving away the mischief-maker Polina, Lucien had someone seek Joseph's opinion on the recent matter. In the afternoon, the messenger returned with Joseph's reply.

"Polina was right; Joseph does have many tricks up his sleeve!" Lucien exclaimed after reading the letter.

"The 'Lancet Certification' for hospitals can be divided into three major levels, with each major level further divided into three minor levels. This results in a total of nine levels. In addition, a top-level 'special' certification should be established above the first level of the third major level. This totals three major levels and ten minor levels.

As for the division and certification of levels, they can be determined based on the hospital's size, technical level, equipment level, management level, and research level (the latter is not required for first and second-level hospitals). Each aspect should be evaluated with a certain weight, and the certification standards must be made public for self-assessment by hospitals.

When developing the standards, the requirements for first and second-level hospitals can be relatively relaxed, as long as they ensure environmental hygiene and can handle common diseases. However, third-level hospitals, especially those of the first level and the special level, should have high standards and strict requirements. It's better to have no third-level special certification hospitals in the world and none in a single country than to allow third-level hospitals to be everywhere.

At regular intervals, The Lancet or relevant institutions should conduct audits for certification applications and already certified hospitals. Those meeting the standards will receive the relevant certification. The certification levels are not permanent.

Every year after the audit, The Lancet should publish a special supplement announcing the results to the public.

Additionally, similar measures can be implemented in France..."

"Joseph truly lives up to his reputation," Lucien said. He could see the bigger picture behind this plan. Once implemented, the entire UK, no, even all of Europe, would be tied to their medical system.

For a hospital that had painstakingly obtained "The Lancet Certification," this recognition became a precious intangible asset. Naturally, they would actively protect this asset, and any attack on France that could potentially threaten the value of this intangible asset would be viewed as an attack on them. Those initiating such an attack would become their enemies.

Once someone possesses an asset, they hope it appreciates. "The Lancet Certification" was no different; it was an asset, albeit an intangible one, and it could depreciate or appreciate. Those with this asset would undoubtedly want it to appreciate, so they would promote this honor, seize every opportunity to emphasize The Lancet's authority, and shout at anyone who dared to doubt it, saying, "Idiot! French medicine is the best in the world!"

"In addition to hospitals, we should also provide corresponding technical certifications for doctors, such as assistant doctors, resident doctors, attending physicians, associate chief physicians, and chief physicians. The number and proportion of doctors with the relevant qualifications in a hospital will also affect their score in 'The Lancet Hospital Level Certification,'" Joseph's plan continued.

Seeing this, Lucien couldn't help but exclaim, "This is so devious!"

This way, almost all doctors' interests would be tied to the Ministry of Truth. They would essentially become friends of the Ministry of Truth. Doctors had extensive connections with various strata of society. If this group leaned toward pro-French sentiments, they could influence more people to do the same. Their ranks would grow while their enemies would diminish.

"No wonder Menzies said, 'Those who possess the truth receive widespread support; those who oppose the truth receive very little support.' No wonder Joseph insisted on naming our department the Ministry of Truth. I think the campaigns we've conducted through propaganda are almost as significant as the victories Napoleon achieved on the battlefield," Lucien thought, patting himself on the back and self-awarding the title of "Grand Marshal."

"Unfortunately, that rascal Napoleon probably won't grant me the rank of 'Grand Marshal,'" Lucien shook his head and then picked up a piece of paper to draft a new document.

Meanwhile, in the UK, the storm caused by the latest issue of *The Lancet* was growing.

The newspapers under the English Free Press Alliance had been under attack by the English News League for a while, with various titles and labels continually being hurled at them. Gentler major newspapers referred to them as "friends of the French" or "English supporters of French theory." In more caustic, nationalist tabloids, they were called "traitors," "traitorous spies," or even "French agents." Rumors about them accepting French francs abounded.

However, the tables had turned entirely now. The media under the English Free Press Alliance began a comprehensive counterattack. Especially after scholars at Cambridge University confirmed that the content in *The Lancet* was verifiable, replicable, and discovered even more pathogenic bacteria, the entire situation had changed dramatically.

The more respectful newspapers had merely offered mild criticism, suggesting that the Tory party and their media needed to improve their scientific literacy and embrace the rigorous scientific attitude of scholars at Cambridge University. They praised Cambridge University's scholars for their scientific approach and dedication to truth. They also pointed out that the actions of Cambridge University's scholars had elevated England's scientific and civilizational level, making them the true patriots. As for those who blindly sang the praises of the areas where England was lacking without any reflection, they were merely tarnishing the sacred term "patriot."

The less principled tabloids, however, were less forgiving. They followed the lead of the major newspapers, labeling the Tories and the English News League as "patriotic rogues." Some propagated their prior conspiracy theories, claiming that the British government was using this method to "deal with people who had no more exploitation value." Some tabloids even announced, "Today's England isn't the England of the masses, but rather the 'Axis of Evil' composed of nobility and big businessmen!" In their subsequent reports, wherever the word "England" appeared, they replaced it with "the privileged country." A newspaper called "The English Liberation" even declared: "'The English Homeland' is a fraud because the working people have no homeland!"

Chapter 257: The Underwater Explosion

While newspapers in London were still busy attacking each other over "The Lancet" incident, a secret experiment was underway on a small island near Scotland.

A small boat slowly made its way from the island's shore, dropping a bright orange iron sphere into the sea, its surface covered with short steel tentacles attached to an anchor chain. The iron sphere initially floated on the sea's surface, rising and falling with the gentle waves. Then, under the pull of the anchor chain, it plunged beneath the waves, leaving only a small buoy bobbing on the surface.

Immediately, the boat that had released the iron sphere sped away and signaled two other waiting ships.

"We're going over there. Be cautious," Captain Kevin shouted to his sailors on another ship. The side wheels on both sides of the ship started turning, and the steamship headed toward the buoy.

Behind the steamship, a ship was being towed by a cable. This ship had no masts or wheels, only a rudder at the stern, which a person used to control the direction.

Captain Kevin knew that just under that buoy, at a depth of only two meters, lay the iron sphere covered in tentacles. Even through the seawater, he could still see it clearly. This was because the lighting was good at that moment, the water was clear, and the iron sphere was painted a bright orange color.

Kevin also knew that the tentacles on the sphere were special naval trigger mechanisms. Inside these lead tentacles was a small glass bottle filled with sulfuric acid. Upon impact, the tentacles would deform, shattering the glass and releasing the sulfuric acid, initiating an electrochemical reaction, which would then trigger the electrical detonator (replicated from war spoils in Ireland), setting off the explosives inside the iron sphere. Just one of these experimental mines was enough to destroy a battleship. However, for this experimental mine, the amount of explosives had been significantly reduced.

Even so, if this mine were to explode, it could easily destroy Kevin's small steam escort ship. This was precisely why all the crew members who could be on the deck were already there, and those who couldn't access the deck had cleared the escape routes to the deck.

In the rear, the ship being towed by the steamship had Captain Anderson gently steering toward the buoy. His ship served as the target vessel for testing the mine's effectiveness, and he was the only one on board controlling the direction. Considering the detonation point should be at the bow, his safety was somewhat guaranteed. He had already donned a life jacket, and nearby ships were on standby to rescue him at any moment. If he could successfully complete the experiment, he might even earn a promotion.

The bow of the ship hit the buoy, and the ship continued forward, followed by a massive explosion.

On the steamship a few hundred meters ahead, Kevin felt as though the entire ship had jumped, and he saw a tremendous column of water shoot into the air, completely obscuring the ship behind it.

After a while, the column of water dissipated, and droplets fell from the sky, landing with a pattering sound. Even Kevin, who was several hundred meters away, had his fair share of water droplets. Looking back, he saw that the target ship had been blown in half, and the remaining half was rapidly sinking.

"Turn around, turn around! Let's go rescue them!" Kevin shouted, though he couldn't hear his own voice.

Nonetheless, the ship did turn around—it had been prepared in advance.

When the steamship turned around, the target ship had already sunk completely, and various pieces of debris were floating on the sea's surface. Everyone looked around and eventually spotted a floating object in bright orange.

"It's over there! Get closer!"

A small boat was lowered from the steamship, and two sailors rowed it toward the object. They pulled Captain Anderson, dressed in an orange life jacket, out of the water. He had lost

consciousness from the shock of the explosion and would have likely drowned if not for the life jacket. However, judging by his current condition and the twisted angle of his leg, it was clear that he had suffered a severe compound fracture.

"What the hell? Wasn't the explosive charge reduced? How could it still be so powerful?" Kevin exclaimed in amazement.

In fact, this wasn't surprising, as the explosives used by the British were also based on the technology of nitrocellulose purchased from French merchants. One of the most glaring issues with nitrocellulose was its unstable quality. The power of one batch of the product could differ significantly from another. The most powerful ones could be 1.3 to 1.4 times more potent than TNT, while the weakest ones might not even be half as powerful. This water mine may have had its explosive charge reduced, but it had coincidentally encountered an extremely potent explosive, leading to the...

However, regardless of the circumstances, this experiment was an immense success.

Following this successful test, the Navy immediately proposed to the Cabinet that this weapon could be used to block the Irish coast, cutting off the rebels' access to assistance and ultimately annihilating them.

If this experiment had succeeded several months earlier, Prime Minister Addington would have readily approved such an action, but now he hesitated because authorizing such a move might lead to war.

When Britain and France initially signed a peace agreement, neither party had genuine intentions of peace. They were both ready to catch their breath and resume the fight. If this kind of weapon had been available at the time, it's likely the British would have dealt with the Irish rebels first before making any other moves.

But the situation was different now. After the peace agreement was signed, European markets reopened to Britain, and the country's economy began to show signs of improvement, particularly in industries like textiles and steam engine manufacturing. These industries were bringing in more profits and providing political and economic benefits to the Tory Party.

At this point, if war broke out, everything would undoubtedly come to a halt.

Prime Minister Addington was aware that the prosperity of the textile industry had led to a rapid expansion. The number of spinning machines had increased by nearly one-third in the past few months, and the textile industry's scale was still growing.

Such rapid expansion naturally involved financial investments. Factory owners had borrowed significant sums from banks, and some had raised funds through the stock market. In the event of war, these investments would be lost. Many factories would go bankrupt, and the loans given to them by banks would never be recovered. This could potentially lead to banks being troubled or even bankrupt. Furthermore, many industries, including steel and machinery manufacturing, had profited from the expansion of the textile industry. To meet the growing demands of the textile industry, they had expanded their own production capacity. In the event of war, they would also suffer losses. Add to that the internal problems caused by a large population becoming unemployed, and the entire British economy might face immediate and severe issues. This made Addington seriously reconsider taking any action at this time.

So, Addington sought the advice of former Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger.

Even after stepping down from his position, Pitt remained one of the most influential figures in the Tory Party, thanks to his experience and talent. His influence within the Tory Party was still significantly greater than that of Addington. Even the King, who had played a pivotal role in Addington's ascent and Pitt's resignation, tended to trust Pitt more. Therefore, when faced with such a troublesome situation, Addington had to seek technical guidance from Pitt.

Pitt's stance was quite resolute. He believed that true peace between Britain and France was impossible unless the French abandoned their ambitions. Ireland was of vital importance to Britain.

"Ireland is different from North America. Giving up North America has limited damage to our reputation. But if we give up Ireland or have to acknowledge their independence, how will other countries view us? Reputation loss aside, once Ireland gains independence, they will surely become our enemies. Those fellows in North America still hold malice against us, but the Irish will hate us even more. Ireland is so close to us, and if they hate us to this extent, they could easily become a tool for other countries, let's be more explicit, the French, to threaten us. Once the French and independent Ireland form an alliance, once French troops begin deploying in Ireland, can we still sleep at night? Compared to this, temporary economic difficulties mean very little. And if we guide it properly, we're not entirely unable to mitigate some of the losses. Moreover, we have also opened up markets to the French, which, to some extent, has caused losses to some of our other industries..."

However, Prime Minister Addington remained hesitant. His situation was different from Pitt's. After achieving peace, his approval ratings had gradually increased, thanks to the peace dividend. Those supporting him were primarily the textile factory owners and those who had profited from trade with Europe. If he were to choose to support the naval plan for laying mines, it would mean betraying his own supporters. A politician who betrays his supporters is likely to lose all future support. This would almost certainly jeopardize his political future.

Thinking of this, Prime Minister Addington began to doubt Pitt's advice, as well as an undisclosed goal behind it: to remove him from power and return to the position of Prime Minister.

Chapter 258: Time for the Mad Genius

Returning from Sir Peter's place, Addington immediately sought out the Minister of the Navy for a comprehensive, well-thought-out plan to blockade the Irish coastline, which he could use as a reference.

He then wrote a letter to the Duke of Norfolk to understand his stance. The Duke naturally supported the blockade of Ireland, but he suggested that the ideal time should be one or two months before the harvest season. Nonetheless, preparations should begin immediately.

Two days later, during a gathering at the Royal Society, a secret was whispered by Addington's secretary to Matthew Bolton, who was present: "The Navy has developed a new weapon for blockading the Irish coast..."

To many, Matthew Bolton's membership in the Royal Society was largely attributed to Watt's influence. While he was indeed a capable engineer, the level of his actual ability fell somewhat short of the Royal Society's standards.

But if you were to talk about trading skills, Bolton was genuinely deserving of saying, "I'm not targeting any of you in this circle." After all, in this business, "nobody understood trade better than me."

Bolton's face changed as soon as he heard the news. After confirming it once more, he found an excuse to leave the gathering with Watt.

In their carriage ride back, Bolton informed Watt of this news. Watt immediately exclaimed, "How can this be? We've just... and our..."

"James, keep your voice down," Bolton advised. "Don't get agitated. I believe Mr. Addington's intention is that the government has not yet made a final decision. Think about it; this is such a huge matter, not only involving us but also affecting many others, such as those in the textile industry. Once we truly resume hostilities with France, you can imagine the losses they'd incur. It's quite possible that we'd see numerous factories shuttering immediately. In such a case, London Bridge might be filled with people trying to jump into the Thames, and it might even collapse under the sheer weight. You know, it reminds me of a nursery rhyme my mother used to sing to me when I was a child: 'London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down...'"

Saying that, Bolton actually started singing.

While Watt wasn't pleased that Bolton would indulge in such humor at this critical moment, Bolton's nonchalant attitude did help relieve some of Watt's tension.

"Matthew, don't act like a child," Watt urged. "The current issue is how we should handle this."

"Of course, the first step is to spread the word, so everyone knows," Bolton replied.

...

Almost simultaneously, in other places, some businessmen with close ties to the Admiralty also received similar information. Some even had detailed news, including technical specifications.

Two days later, in the inaugural issue of a newly established small newspaper, an article titled "Royal Navy Develops Secret Weapon, French Left Astonished" was published. What made it even more damning was that the article straightforwardly declared that the weapon leaving the French "astonished" was a naval mine.

The London police department immediately shut down the newspaper and arrested every individual associated with it, including the editor-in-chief, reporters, printers, and the newsboy - a Mr. Anderson Sobie. They subjected him to an interrogation. During the questioning, Mr. Sobie claimed that his source of information came from a divine revelation. He asserted that God had appeared to him in a dream and granted him this revelation.

Naturally, such a statement left the police officers feeling insulted, believing their intelligence was under attack. As a result, a few policemen took the liberty of giving Mr. Sobie a good beating, leaving him unrecognizable. But Sobie remained unyielding, and whenever he found a moment to catch his breath during the police's efforts to fix him, he continued to preach to them:

"God says the day is near, and you must repent! God is the Almighty, and I am His messenger. You are all going to hell for this! Merciful, omnipotent God, please have mercy on them and forgive their sins because they do not know what they're doing..."

This persistent behavior baffled several police officers; it seemed like this guy really had some mental issues. But could a madman operate a newspaper? And the Navy's representatives were getting increasingly anxious to find out who was hiding behind this person.

However, it didn't take long before representatives from the London Lunatic Asylum came knocking. According to their claims, this individual named Sobie was their patient.

"Ah, Chief John, this man is indeed one of our patients. He has been suffering from delusional disorders for a long time. About six months ago, some patients went missing during our hospital's relocation. We even published a missing persons' notice in the newspaper and reported it to your department," said Mr. Woolf, one of the asylum staff.

"Then how did you find your way here?" Chief John inquired.

"You know, we never gave up searching for them, especially Anderson Sobie. His uncle is quite wealthy and visits him every year... his visit is imminent. Well, he is one of the hospital's major donors. So we've been searching for him, even through private detectives."

A few days ago, Detective Sherlock Moriarty informed us that he had received news of a man who appeared to closely resemble the described Anderson Sobie and was active in the area, so we tracked him down..."

"Are you sure this person is Anderson Sobie? Do you have any proof?" John, the police chief, inquired.

"Of course, we do," Woolf replied. "Chief, we've brought along a complete set of records about Anderson Sobie from the time he entered our hospital five years ago, including his handprint records from five years ago."

"Can we see them?" Chief John asked.

After verification, the handprints on the records from five years ago matched those of the detained Anderson Sobie. Chief John promptly informed the Navy of this development. However, the Navy considered it a conspiracy and believed that there must be spies and saboteurs behind this person.

"So, you're saying that the madman's claims have some basis?" Chief John questioned.

"Chief, I have to remind you that you've crossed a line by asking questions you shouldn't," said Charles, an official from the Admiralty.

"Ah," Chief John was taken aback but quickly composed himself. "Well, it seems there's only one possibility then."

"What possibility?"

"Someone knows a secret, and for some purpose, they want to leak it. However, they know it's dangerous, so they've found this madman and used some method to influence him, insinuating that he received a divine revelation, and then orchestrated this drama. Well, Mr. Charles, I believe that's the most likely scenario."

"So, can you catch the person who influenced him?"

"That's likely to be very difficult," Chief John decided to be frank. "Firstly, this guy is genuinely a madman, and anything he says could be delusion or nonsense. It's hard to obtain any valuable information from him, and even if we do, we can't use his confession as evidence in court. In fact, if

you insist on continuing the investigation, I'd suggest you directly consult the London Lunatic Asylum. They might have more experience in dealing with such individuals."

Originally, this matter should have ended with some tabloid headlines. Moreover, because the madman's newspaper had limited circulation, it didn't seem like it would cause much of a stir.

However, right after that, the French newspaper "Le Soleil" prominently reported the story in its humor section. Yet, in the report, there was an interesting statement: "But what's interesting is that the madman was not initially found by the lunatic asylum but was arrested first by the police on suspicion of 'leaking national secrets.' Of course, we have not yet discovered what 'secrets' were involved, as the publication of his newspaper was extremely limited. If any of our readers have indeed seen it, please write to us and enlighten us."

"Le Soleil's" report was just the beginning. Next, the "English Free Press Alliance" followed suit, and they reported the news in their regular news section. Their focus was on the people's freedom of speech.

"A madman writing some fantastical nonsense should have been met with a chuckle and left at that. But our police department went all out to arrest him, even using violence to force a confession... Today, they can throw him in jail for some lunatic writing gibberish. Tomorrow, they could tie up journalists who exposed scandals like 'The Lancet' incident and burn them at the stake using the newspapers that revealed the truth as fuel. 'Le Soleil' is a French newspaper; they can return to France. But we, out of concern and fear, are losing sleep over this nearly every night."

Simultaneously, members of the Textile Industry Association started to become active. They continuously visited various members of Parliament, inquiring about the situation, and, while leaving a bit of money behind, asked them to genuinely protect their interests.

Chapter 259: Division

In the days that followed, even the doorstep of the former Prime Minister, Mr. Pitt, theoretically retired at home, was almost flattened by a parade of various lobbyists. These lobbyists included representatives of industries that hoped to maintain peace, such as textiles, some banking sectors, and certain segments of the mechanical manufacturing industry. There were also those who were eager for war, such as some agricultural enterprises, some liquor businesses, and a plethora of advocates for the military-industrial complex.

The same held true for other politicians. Every Member of Parliament, whether in the House of Lords or the House of Commons, had their doorsteps filled with carriages.

Each lobbyist used "the interests of the nation and the people" as their pretext, demanding various actions from these legislators. They also subtly or not-so-subtly hinted that they would not forget the deep friendships they had, assuring that they would uphold these friendships.

Mr. Pitt noticed that in just a little over half a year, the entire political landscape of Britain had undergone a significant transformation.

In the preceding years, due to Mr. Pitt's efforts, the previously loose Tory party had become increasingly united and capable of acting as a cohesive whole in Parliament. His old rival, Mr. Fox, though sharp-tongued and capable of leaving even prominent Tories like Mr. Pitt momentarily speechless during debates, often resorting to statements like, "There are things we believe we understand, and we do indeed understand them; there are things we do understand, and we believe

we do understand them; there are things...you understand, right?" managed to outmaneuver the Whigs in parliamentary votes and even successfully provoked several internal rifts and divisions within the Whig party.

In the face of Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt could confidently say, "I have never won in parliamentary debates, but I have never lost in parliamentary votes."

Today, however, Mr. Pitt found that he, the man who had moved with the times, had seemingly become outdated. He realized that there had emerged deep fissures within the seemingly united Tory party.

Some MPs, whose families or friends had invested heavily in industries such as textiles and other trade with Europe, were steadfastly opposed to resuming war with France. They even believed that, as long as Ireland nominally remained within the United Kingdom, granting some "autonomy" to it was not unacceptable. Some went as far as to argue that the United Kingdom's policies toward Ireland over the years had been fundamentally flawed, highly unjust, and that they had treated the Irish, fellow civilized people, with the same heavy-handedness applied to barbarians.

On the other hand, another faction of MPs, whose interests lay in the military-industrial complex, were determined to urge a war with France. They were even convinced that those who opposed war were traitors to England and should be taken out for target practice for ten minutes.

Mr. Pitt knew that if there were an immediate vote on this matter, it was almost certain that the entire Tory party would fracture, handing a victory to the grinning Whigs.

In fact, the Whigs, especially Mr. Fox, were already visibly jubilant.

Following this development, several die-hard Tory MPs, who had never visited Mr. Fox before, expressed goodwill through various channels, indicating that if Parliament were to vote on the peace issue, they hoped that Mr. Fox's Whigs would stand on the side of maintaining peace. Of course, in return, they would also support some of the Whig party's proposals, especially those related to Ireland and even religious policy.

Before, Mr. Fox had only seen Whigs defecting in droves, often discovering on the eve of the vote that they still had a numerical advantage, only to find that on the following noon, their numbers were less than half. When had he ever seen the Tories also producing defectors?

"I had thought that only our Whigs, primarily a party of commoners, would produce defectors. I never imagined that the noble members of your Tory party would also be two-faced!" Mr. Fox mused.

However, despite his disdain for these profit-driven aristocrats, Mr. Fox recognized the importance of gathering more allies, a lesson he had learned from his years in politics, particularly those years being outsmarted by Mr. Pitt.

So, though filled with scorn for these turncoats, Mr. Fox was very affable and welcoming to these envoys, conveying his willingness to cooperate.

And so, Mr. Pitt first noticed that the "English News Union" had begun to divide. The first defectors were from the "English News Union," in direct competition with "London Businessman," who published the "English Economic Observer."

On April 1st, the "English Economic Observer" published an unexpected article titled "Fair Treatment of the Irish is the Key to Ireland's Long-Term Stability."

In this article, the "English Economic Observer" began by recounting how Britain had lost its North American colonies, pointing out that it was the excessive taxation and exploitation of the North American colonies by Britain that had led to their independence.

The article then presented a compelling case, comparing the treatment of the Irish with North America. It concluded, "Our government's exploitation of the Irish may even exceed that of the North American colonies."

Building on this, the article posed a series of questions: "Does the United Kingdom government truly consider Ireland a part of the United Kingdom, or do they regard it merely as a colony? Does the United Kingdom government genuinely treat the Irish as citizens of this nation, or do they see them as no different from African natives?"

This salvo caught the "English News Union" completely off guard. It wasn't until three days later that "The Times" organized a rebuttal to the "English Economic Observer's" article. Soon after, the "English Free News Union" also joined the fray, and a war of words erupted among several newspapers.

"The Times" accused the "English Economic Observer" of betraying their homeland, and, in return, the "English Economic Observer" scathingly labeled "The Times" as "minions of tyranny" and the "mouthpiece of warmongers."

Meanwhile, "The Free England," a publication of the "English Free News Union," declared, "Though we may not see eye to eye with the 'English Economic Observer' on many issues, we still regard it as a media outlet with principles, attitude, and conscience. As for 'The Times' outrageous accusation of 'betraying the homeland,' it reminds us of Samuel Johnson's famous quote: 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.'"

Faced with this situation, both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Addington realized that it was not the right time to immediately impose a blockade on Ireland. First and foremost, the timing was not entirely ripe; the Irish had made significant strides in their agricultural production, and they likely had enough potatoes to sustain them for a while. Starting a blockade now would give them and the French more time to adapt. Furthermore, the navy's experiments with underwater mines had just been completed, and it would take a considerable amount of time to increase production to the level required to effectively block the Irish coast. Secondly, such an action would very likely lead to division, not only within the United Kingdom but more importantly, within the Tory party.

On the other hand, after all this commotion, the so-called "secrets" of the British navy had been revealed to the whole of Europe.

Upon receiving this news, Napoleon immediately summoned Joseph and inquired about a countermeasure.

"Sea mines, eh? The British have actually come up with something like that. Well, you ask me how to defuse them? It's technically possible, but it's a real hassle, like clearing landmines – very dangerous and much more troublesome," Napoleon remarked.

"You're aware of this? Even today, we haven't finished clearing them around Verdun," Napoleon cursed, "How did you bury so many in the first place?"

"Well, that's the result of us being able to slowly clear them under peaceful conditions," Joseph said. "Dealing with sea mines is even more complicated, and in that region, we won't have naval superiority that allows us to peacefully and gradually clear them. So, forget about clearing mines."

"So, what do we do?" Napoleon asked.

"Napoleon, who do you think is more afraid of sea mines, us or the British?" Joseph asked.

"Of course, the British... How about it, Joseph, can we make something like this?" Napoleon inquired.

"As long as we have the funding and about a month's time, I can create one," Joseph replied. "Of course, if it's just for intimidating the British, I can make a model that would terrify them by tomorrow."

Chapter 260, The Paris Expo and a Grand Misunderstanding

"What do you mean by a 'model'?" Napoleon inquired.

"I've seen a report on that lovely 'madman,'" Joseph replied, "and there's enough information in there. Well, it floats underwater at a certain depth, and once it's hit, it explodes... Hehe, seeing this description, I pretty much know how it works. It's straightforward, aside from the creativity; there's no real difficulty. The creativity is directly reflected in its appearance. Anyone knowledgeable can tell how it works just by looking at its shape. Do you have paper and a pen here? I can draw it for you right now."

Napoleon pulled out a piece of paper and handed over a sketching charcoal pencil. Joseph took the pen and paper, and with a few strokes, he created a rough sketch.

"Your drawing is truly hideous!" Napoleon furrowed his brows. "When it comes to drawing, Lucien is much better than you. Besides, this thing is quite ugly."

"Napoleon, you see, beneath this device is an anchor chain. Adjusting the length of the chain allows it to remain submerged at the desired depth in the water. The sphere itself is a buoy, filled with explosives. These tentacle-like protrusions are the triggering mechanisms. Well, these triggers are quite simple."

"Simple?" Napoleon exclaimed. "I recall not too long ago, you guys delayed the development of triggering mechanisms for artillery shells due to their complexity and poor reliability. Now, you're saying the triggers are simple?"

"That's because we recently postponed the development of triggering mechanisms for artillery shells, and they are a completely different matter, aren't they? These triggering mechanisms, if placed inside a shell, would explode inside the barrel just due to the acceleration during firing. Can they be the same thing? For triggers like these, with low requirements, I can sketch one out in less than a minute. Look, these tentacles have an outer layer made of lead, which is relatively soft and deforms upon intense impact. Inside the tentacle is a glass jar filled with sulfuric acid. Below the jar is a battery lacking an electrolyte, with its positive and negative poles connected to an electric detonator. As soon as the tentacle is struck, the lead outer shell deforms, the glass jar inside breaks, sulfuric acid flows out, the battery generates current, the current drives the electric detonator, and then it triggers the explosion—this is incredibly simple."

Napoleon wasn't surprised that Joseph came up with a solution that seemed to have no issues in such a short time. He knew that the Military-Industrial Complex's research institute had conducted some feasibility studies on triggering mechanisms. Although these studies hadn't continued, it was clear that many problematic design schemes had been rejected during that process. What Joseph quickly drew was probably one of those designs that had been rejected earlier, perhaps with a slight facelift.

"Very well, have them create the model as soon as possible, and then we'll figure out a way to let the British spies take a look..." Napoleon said.

"Why make it so complicated?" Joseph suggested. "The Department of Foreign Trade is organizing the first Paris International Exposition of Imported and Exported Goods, right? Just bring it there and display and sell it alongside other weapons."

"That's a good idea," Napoleon agreed. "Hopefully, this will make the British rethink their position a bit."

"Napoleon," Joseph looked at him in amazement, "I thought you were eagerly anticipating a war?"

"War is merely a means to achieve glory, not the end," Napoleon explained. "As long as peace can bring us glory, I don't necessarily have to be particularly fond of war."

Of course, Napoleon's current love for peace was a result of the bountiful harvest of the previous year, which had gained him broader support among the peasants. If this year continued in peace, with the improvement of the irrigation system, another bountiful harvest was highly anticipated. A bountiful harvest allowed farmers to live better lives, and it provided cheaper bread for urban workers, further boosting his popularity. In France, there were more and more people shouting "Long live Napoleon!" As long as this trend continued, why wouldn't Napoleon love peace?

Speaking of the Department of Foreign Trade's Paris International Exposition of Imported and Exported Goods, preparations had been underway for several months. The venue was located just outside Paris in the direction of Versailles. In history, this area had been the property of nobles and was confiscated by the revolutionary government.

In the original timeline, to become emperor, Napoleon attempted to compromise with these old nobles and allowed them to return to France, returning a portion of their property. However, in this alternate timeline, Napoleon's path didn't require compromising with these individuals, and the land remained public property.

Napoleon sold the land at low prices to retired soldiers to gain control over the rural areas. In this region, more land was preserved for future facilities of the "Roman Empire." The location of the Paris International Exposition was chosen as the site for a civic square that Napoleon had prepared for the future.

A few months ago, this area was just wasteland. However, two new technologies had rapidly transformed the environment.

The first technology was cement.

The cement technology was not originally developed by the French. In 1756, British engineer J. Smithson discovered that to obtain hydraulic lime, limestone with clay had to be used for burning. The ideal mixture for mortar used in underwater construction was hydraulic lime and volcanic ash.

Based on this, in 1796, the British created the so-called "Roman cement" from marl. However, due to the high demands on marl, it wasn't widely used.

It wasn't until 1824 that the British, Joseph Aspdin, produced what's known as Portland cement (silicate cement) by burning limestone and clay. Cement technology finally gained widespread use.

However, since there was Joseph, destined to make future students hate him, the technology, with its limited complexity but significant impact, had to make its debut in France.

Napoleon also had a deep appreciation for cement because it could not only be used to construct sturdy fortresses but also to build wonders at a very low cost.

All those "great rulers" or "notorious tyrants" with a bit of a "spectacle" or "great achievement" syndrome, regardless of race, age, or culture, from Egypt's Khufu to Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar II, from China's Emperor Qin to Sui Dynasty's extravagant profligate, from the Khmer Empire's Suryavarman II to India's Shah Jahan, were enthusiasts of such grand spectacles. Of course, they all, to varying degrees, confirmed the later saying: "Your Majesty, grand spectacles can ruin a nation!"

Although Napoleon also had a great love for grand spectacles, he, being well-versed in history, was well aware of the rule that "grand spectacles can ruin a nation." So he had been striving to restrain his desire to create a spectacle.

During the wars with Britain, Prussia, and Austria, Napoleon captured many cannons. He had long wanted to emulate the Rhode Islanders and create a grand spectacle from captured enemy weapons. (In history, this was the Arc de Triomphe.) However, his brother heartlessly shattered that dream. The captured enemy weapons were indeed melted down, but they were turned into wires or something else.

But the appearance of cement once again made Napoleon see the possibility of creating wonders at a very low cost. Just think about it, the grand spectacles of ancient Rome were constructed by stacking enormous stones, each requiring cutting, carving, and hauling. One couldn't even imagine the amount of manpower and resources that went into it. But with cement, things became much easier.

The second technology, of course, was steel. With the development of steelmaking, there came steel rebars. Combined with cement, you got reinforced concrete. The business of the first steel mill was doing so well that the second steel mill of the Lorraine Iron and Steel Company quickly started production. With sufficient funds, there would be a third steel mill, a fourth, and so on.

Since Joseph and Napoleon mentioned the advantages of reinforced concrete construction, Napoleon's dream of creating wonders temporarily died but then resurrected. However, Joseph consistently emphasized that steel could make money and should be used where it could make money, which temporarily held back Napoleon's desire to create a spectacle.

But later, the plan for the Paris International Exposition of Imported and Exported Goods by the Department of Foreign Trade finally gave Napoleon a legitimate opportunity to create a spectacle.

Napoleon took the lead and gathered a group of artists and architects to design a large market with a Roman flavor. If it weren't for reinforced concrete, Napoleon estimated that this project would probably take decades to complete. With these materials, calculations showed that the first phase of the project could be completed in a few months, given a steady supply of materials. Most

importantly, the idea of creating this grand market received unanimous approval from Joseph and Lucien.

Now, the first phase of the grand market project was almost complete, with only some finishing touches remaining. The first Paris International Exposition of Imported and Exported Goods would officially open here in just one month.