



Pitt the Elder: Man of War

Edward Pearce

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This remarkable book opens at the dawn of the British Empire—with the great sea battle at Quiberon Bay where French ships, intended for the 1759 invasion of Britain, are chased, caught, and defeated by a fleet commanded by Admiral Sir Edward Hawke. In this momentous victory Britain effectively settled the outcome of the Seven Years War and established itself as the world's dominant imperial power. At the heart of the conflict with France was William Pitt, the first Earl of Chatham and Britain's future Prime Minister. Weaving together military history and political biography, Edward Pearce provides a portrait of the man "with an eye like a diamond"—a man who had close ties with the slave trade and who preached war and British supremacy on a world stage. Alongside detailed descriptions of battles in Europe and North America we follow Pitt's career as a politician—one that was closely intertwined with General James Wolfe at Quebec; American independence; and, the slow mind of George III and the quick one of the rake and outsider John Wilkes. Posterity has invested Pitt with a mystique—presented him as heroic, a titan, a brilliant statesman, and military strategist. Edward Pearce scrutinizes the reputation and investigates the extent to which Britain's victories and imperial advances can be credited to Pitt alone or to a coalition of commanders, naval administrators, and foreign allies such as Frederick the Great of Prussia. He also shows us Pitt the man—vain, ruthless, tortured with physical illness, and succumbing to mental collapse. *Pitt the Elder* is a masterful portrait of arguably the most powerful minister ever to guide Britain's foreign policy and of an age which marked a new epoch in history, when the balance of power in Europe and the world was set for almost two centuries.

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