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William Pitt the Younger

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William Pitt the Younger William Hague
William Pitt the Younger is an illuminating biography of one of the great iconic figures in British history: the man who in 1784 at the age of twenty-four became (and so remains) the youngest Prime Minister in the history of England. In this lively and authoritative study, William Hague–himself the youngest political party leader in recent history–explains the dramatic events and exceptional abilities that allowed extreme youth to be combined with great power.
The brilliant son of a father who was also Prime Minister, Pitt was derided as a “schoolboy” when he took office. Yet within months he had outwitted his opponents, and he went on to dominate the political scene for twenty-two years (nineteen of them as Prime Minister). No British politician since has exercised such supremacy for so long.

Pitt’s personality has always been hard to unravel. Though he was generally thought to be cold and aloof, his friends described him as the wittiest man they ever knew. By seeing him through the eyes of a politician, William Hague–a prominent member of Britain’s Conservative Party–succeeds in explaining Pitt’s actions and motives through a series of great national crises, including the madness of King George III, the impact of the French Revolution, and the trauma of the Napoleonic wars. He describes how a man dedicated to peace became Britain’s longest-serving war leader, how Pitt the liberal reformer became Pitt the author of repression, and how–though undisputed master of the nation’s finances–he died with vast personal debts.

With its rich cast of characters, including Charles James Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Edmund Burke, and George III himself, and set against a backdrop of industrial revolution and global conflict, this is a richly detailed and rounded portrait of an extraordinary political life.

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