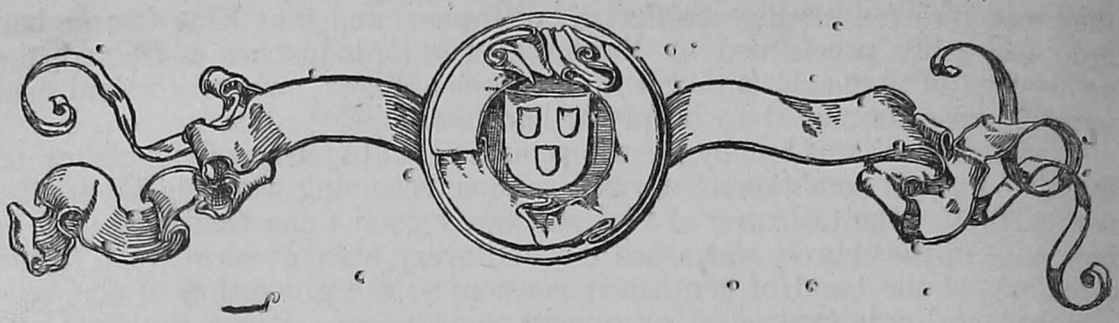


CHAPTER XIII

THE REIGN OF GEORGE I

[1714–1727 A.D.]

> "The era of the Georges may be compared to the era of the Antonines at Rome. It was a period combining happiness and glory — a period of kind rulers and a prosperous people. While improvement was advancing at home with gigantic strides — while great wars were waged abroad — the domestic repose and enjoyment of the nation were scarcely ever for a moment broken through. The current was strong and rapid, but the surface remained smooth and unruffled. Lives were seldom lost, either by popular breaches of the law or by its rigorous execution. The population augmented fast, but wealth augmented faster still; comforts became more largely diffused, and knowledge more generally cultivated. Unlike the era of the Antonines, this prosperity did not depend upon the character of a single man. Its foundations were laid on ancient and free institutions, which, good from the first, were still gradually improving, and which alone, amongst all others since the origin of civil society, had completely solved the great problem, how to combine the greatest security to property with the greatest freedom of action."—STANHOPE.[b]

THE Regency Bill, passed in 1705, had provided for the government on the demise of Anne, and the seven great officers of state, together with eighteen peers, named in an instrument signed by the elector of Hanover, took upon themselves the temporary administration. Of the eighteen peers named by George, the greater number were determined whigs; and Argyle, Cowper, Halifax, Townshend, and Devonshire were among them. Marlborough was not named, nor was his son-in-law, Sunderland: this was not extraordinary, but it excites some surprise to see the illustrious Somers excluded also. The great general, on landing at Dover, received an enthusiastic welcome, and his entry into London was like a triumph. Two hundred gentlemen on horseback met him on the road, and the procession was joined by a long train of horses and carriages. Marlborough went straight to the house of lords and took the oaths to King George; but then, mortified at his exclusion from the regency, he retired into the country. The lords-justices appointed Joseph Addison to be their secretary, and ordered that all despatches addressed to Bolingbroke should be delivered to Addison. In the Scottish capital King George was proclaimed without opposition; but for some days there prevailed great doubt and anxiety as to Ireland: and the lords of the regency, or lords-justices, thought at one moment of despatching thither General Stanhope as commander-in-chief, and Marlborough's son-in-law, Sunderland, as lord-lieutenant, without losing time in waiting for the king's instructions; but

[1714 A.D.]

they soon received intelligence that all was quiet, and that King George had been peaceably proclaimed at Dublin by the lords-justices of Ireland, the archbishop of Armagh, and Sir Constantine Phipps, whose toryism had formerly been suspected to be of the jacobite bias.

Not a moment was lost by the whigs in England in putting forth claims to the honours and emoluments of office, and in scheming what should be the new cabinet. The bishopric of Ely, and every good thing that happened to be vacant in the church, was asked for, and every place at court, such as the captaincy of the band of gentlemen pensioners, the groomship of the bedchamber, etc., was grasped at by several competitors. Baron Bothmar was made the medium of these applications to Hanover.

But we may turn from these pettinesses, which were the inevitable consequences of a demise and a new succession, to matters of greater weight, in which the interests of three nations were concerned, and in which they were but too often sacrificed to private ambition and the interests of worthless individuals. According to a very important provision in the act of regency, the houses of parliament met on the day of the queen's death, though it was a Sunday, and all such members as were in or near town hastened to their seats. The tories attempted to procure an adjournment till the following Wednesday; but Sir Richard Onslow represented that the state of the nation was too critical to allow of delay; and the houses met again on Monday. Three days were spent in administering and taking oaths to the new sovereign. In the same breath, and with the same drop of ink, they expressed their deep grief at the death of their late sovereign lady Queen Anne, of blessed memory, and their lively pleasure at the accession of King George, whose right to the crown was so undoubted, and whose virtues were so princely.

THE KING, THE PRETENDER, AND THE NEW PARLIAMENT

All those who wished well to the Protestant succession were impatient for the arrival of the new king, whose delay on the Continent excited universal surprise. Other princes had shown the extreme of eagerness for a far less glittering prize; but the phlegmatic George I seemed to look almost with indifference to the crown of three great and rising kingdoms; and it was not till six o'clock in the evening of the 18th of September, or nearly seven weeks after the death of Anne, that he landed at Greenwich with his eldest son, Prince George. His subjects of Hanover had witnessed his departure with regret and tears — his English subjects received him with joy and acclamations, although on a near view they saw little to admire in his personal appearance or in his bearing, which were plain and undignified.

His majesty presently proceeded to complete his ministerial arrangements: Lord Halifax was appointed first lord-commissioner of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer; Lord Cowper, again chancellor; Nottingham, president of the council; Marlborough, commander-in-chief and master-general of the ordnance; Wharton, (who was made a marquis), lord privy-seal; Orford, first lord of the admiralty; Shrewsbury, lord-chamberlain and groom of the stole; the duke of Devonshire, lord-steward of the household; the duke of Somerset, master of the horse; Sunderland, lord-lieutenant of Ireland; and Robert Walpole, whose ability in debate was worth a high price, paymaster of the forces. In Scotland, the jacobite earl of Mar was turned out, and the duke of Montrose put in his place; and the duke of Argyll was entrusted with the supreme command of the forces there. In Ireland, Sir

Constantine Phipps was deprived of the seals, and Mr. Broderick made chancellor. These ministerial arrangements were all completed before the 20th of October, on which day the coronation was performed at Westminster with the usual solemnities. The old abbey was thronged with nearly all the peers, whether whig, tory, or jacobite; the indolent *insouciant*-looking Oxford was there, and so was his keen-eyed, animated rival, Bolingbroke. The usual promotions in the peerage followed the ceremony.

GEORGE I
(1660–1727)

On the 29th of August the Pretender, who had gone from Bois-le-Duc to drink the mineral waters of Plombière, signed and sent forth a manifesto asserting his right to the throne of Great Britain, and explaining somewhat too clearly the causes of his inactivity up to "the death of the princess our sister, of whose good intention towards us we could not for some time past well doubt: and this was the reason we then sat still, expecting the good effects thereof, which were unfortunately prevented by her deplorable death." This was at once a capital blunder and a glaring proof of the little attention the exiled prince paid to the safety of his friends in England. The whigs instantly caught at the words as additional and incontrovertible evidence as to the intentions of the late ministry: the tories insisted that the manifesto was a false document basely forged by the whigs, to throw discredit upon them and dishonour the late queen; but they were driven from this position by the thick-headed and thick-hearted pretender, who openly acknowledged the authenticity of the manifesto.[c]

IMPEACHMENT OF BOLINGBROKE, OXFORD, AND ORMONDE

The parliament being dissolved, a new one met (March 17th, 1715). It proved decidedly whig, and it proceeded without delay to the impeachment of some of the late ministers for the Peace of Utrecht and other matters; and a committee of secrecy, with Walpole for its chairman, was appointed to examine the papers of Bolingbroke and others which had been seized. When it had made its report, Walpole arose and impeached Henry Lord Bolingbroke of high treason. Lord Coningsby then rose and said, "The worthy chairman of the committee has impeached the hand, but I impeach the head; he has impeached the clerk, I impeach the master"; and he impeached Robert Earl of Oxford and Mortimer of high treason. On the 21st of June Stanhope impeached the duke of Ormonde of high treason; the next day Lord Strafford was impeached of high crimes and misdemeanours by Mr. Aislabie. Sir Joseph Jekyl, a whig of unquestionable honesty, was against impeaching

[1715–1716 A.D.]

either Oxford or Ormonde, and he spoke warmly in favour of the latter; but the spirit of the commons was not to be controlled. Bolingbroke and Ormonde both fled to the Continent; Oxford more manfully stood his ground, and was committed to the Tower.

The subsequent fate of these noblemen was as follows: Bolingbroke repaired to the court of the Pretender, which was at Commerci in Lorraine, and became his secretary of state. He exerted all his abilities in the service of that contemptible prince; but, the facti ns of the petty court proving too strong for him, he was charged with treachery, and dismissed. He then bent all his efforts to procuring the reversal of his attainder in England, which he at length obtained in 1723, through the influence of the duchess of Kendal. The interest of the venal duchess was procured by a bribe of £11,000, and Walpole was threatened with a dismissal by the king if he refused to promote the measure. Walpole consented to the restoration of Bolingbroke's estates, but would not agree to his being permitted to resume his seat in the house of peers. Bolingbroke forthwith commenced a political warfare against Walpole and the whig party, which only ceased with his life in 1751. Ormonde, against whom nothing could be proved, unwisely followed the ex mple of Bolingbroke, and was like him attainted; he remained to the end of h s life in the cheerless court of the Pretender, almost its solitary ornament. Oxford, after lying two years in the Tower, took occasion of a new modification of the ministry to petition for his trial being brought on. All the customary solemn preparations were made for it; but a disagreement arising between the two houses, the commons refused to proceed with their impeachment, and the peers acquitted the earl, who, however, was excepted from an act of grace then passed, of which the only consequence to him was a prohibition to appear at court.

MAR'S RISING (1715–1716 A.D.)

Meantime the Pretender and his partisans were secretly preparing to make an effort for the overthrow of the new government. The earl of Mar, disgusted at the manner in which his declaration of loyalty had been received by the king on his landing, and alarmed at the vindictive spirit shown by the whigs, lent an ear to the agents of the pretender, retired to the Highlands, and in concert with some noblemen and chiefs of clans raised the standard of James III (September 6th). Two vessels arrived with arms, ammunition, and officers from France, and he was soon at the head of ten thousand men. The government proceeded to act with great vigour; the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended and several suspected noblemen and members of the house of commons were arrested. The death at this conjuncture of Louis XIV was a great prejudice to the cause of the Pretender; for the duke of Orleans, who became regent during the minority of the young king, found it his interest to attach himself to the house of Brunswick.

While Mar had his headquarters at Perth, and the duke of Argyll, who commanded the royal forces, lay at Stirling, the Pretender was proclaimed in the north of England by the earl of Derwentwater and Mr. Forster, who were joined by the Scottish lords Winton, Nithsdale, Carnwath, and Kenmure. At Kelso they were reinforced by a body of Highlanders sent by Mar, under the command of Brigadier Mackintosh. They thence proceeded to Penrith, where the *posse comitatus* of Cumberland fled at their approach, and advanced till they reached Preston in Lancashire; but here they were assailed by the royal troops under generals Willis and Carpenter, and obliged to surrender at discretion (November 13th).

The very day of the surrender at Preston a battle was fought between Argyll and Mar. As the latter was preparing to march southwards the duke advanced from Stirling and spread his camp from the village of Dunblane to the Sheriff-muir. His forces did not exceed four thousand men, while the army with which Mar attacked him amounted to nine thousand. The left wing of the royalists was in the short space of seven minutes routed and driven off the field by the clansmen; but the right wing, led by the duke in person, defeated and chased the left of the enemy. When the victorious troops on each side returned from the pursuit, they found themselves facing each other, each occupying the ground held by the other previously. They remained inactive till the evening, when the duke retired to Dunblane and the rebels to Ardoch. Next morning the duke returned and carried off the wounded and four pieces of cannon left by the enemy. The loss was five hundred slain on each side; each claimed the victory, but it was really on the side of the duke.

Mar returned to Perth, and soon after (December 22nd) the Pretender himself landed at Peterhead, and having been proclaimed, issued proclamations and received addresses as he passed through Aberdeen, Dundee, and Scone. He joined the army at Perth and his coronation was fixed for the 23rd of January (1716); but ere that day arrived, the intelligence of Argyll's being strongly reinforced had convinced his supporters of the hopelessness of resistance. The Pretender, therefore, with the lords Mar, Melford, and some others, got aboard a French vessel at Montrose, and standing for the coast of Norway to escape the English cruisers, arrived within five days safely at Gravelines. The rebel army was disbanded at Badenoch; the common people retired to their homes; most of the leaders escaped to France.[g]

When the Pretender arrived, *incognito*, in the neighbourhood of Paris, Bolingbroke waited upon him, attempted to revive his spirits, and to prescribe a political line of action. The prince professed the greatest affection, begged his lordship to follow him into Lorraine, and pressed him in his arms at parting, like a bosom friend. But, three days after this, when Bolingbroke thought his master was many a French league off, his lordship received a visit from the duke of Ormonde, who handed him two orders just written by the Pretender, and stating, *sans phrases*, that he was dismissed from his post as secretary of state, and must deliver to the duke of Ormonde all the papers in his office! The witty profligate says that this all might have been contained in a moderate-sized letter-case, but the rage which this treatment excited was scarcely to be contained in any space. Bolingbroke, with all his genius, had been duped and insulted by a blockhead and a bevy of women. Instead of taking post for Lorraine, as he had promised his secretary he would do, the Pretender had merely gone to an obscure house in the Bois de Boulogne, close to Paris, and had there confabulated and plotted with a set of kept-women and secretaries of foreign embassies, who used the place, and the majority of the persons assembled in it, for two kinds of intrigues.

Bolingbroke says that he had in his hands matter wherewith to damp the triumph of the duke of Ormonde, who was now secretary of state as well as lord-general to the prince without state or army, but that he scorned to make use of it. But Bolingbroke instantly renounced and denounced all connection with the jacobites; made overtures to Lord Stair, who was too conscious of his ability to despise him, and told Maria d'Este, the wretched mother of a wretched son, that he wished his arm might rot off if he ever again drew sword or pen for that cause. The duke of Berwick saw at once the enormous blunder that had been committed in thus dismissing the only Englishman the Pre-

[1716 A.D.]

tender ever had able to manage his affairs, and dismissing him in such an insulting manner as to make reconciliation impossible.

But, in the meantime, hundreds, thousands of Englishmen and Scots were paying a severe penalty for their rash doings. In Scotland, the number of prisoners was very small, and little work was done by the courts of law; but the clans were set loose upon one another, and the troops of George were put to live at free quarters in the houses and upon the estates of the jacobites. But, in England, Forster's imbecile conduct and dastardly surrender at Preston had filled the jails of the north with prisoners of a strange variety of conditions — nonjuring Protestants, high-church divines, popish priests and monks in disguise, fox-hunting jacobite squires, and Catholic officers and non-commissioned officers who had been turned out of the army on account of their religion; and mixed with these were Highland chiefs and dunniewassails, and jacobite Lowland lairds, who had marched with Forster from Kelso. Upon some of these unfortunate captives military law was executed, and they were tried in bands by a court-martial, and then shot in a heap; while above five hundred prisoners of inferior condition were left inhumanly to starve of hunger and cold in various castles and jails in the north.

Forster and the most conspicuous of the leaders were marched off for London, where they arrived on the 9th of December. When these unfortunate gentlemen had crossed Finchley common, and reached the brow of Highgate hill, they were made to halt, and to submit to numerous indignities: their arms were tied behind their backs like cut-throats and cut-purses; their horses were led by foot-soldiers, and their ears were stunned by all the drums of the escort beating a triumphal march, and by the shouts, scoffs, and jeers of the multitude. Upon their reaching the city, such as were lords or noblemen were sent to the Tower — the rest were divided among the four common jails. They were not long suffered to remain there in doubt and uncertainty: the nation, the parliament which re-assembled on the 9th of January were eager for an example, in the spirit of the time, and far too anxious for blood. Mr. Lechmere, after a long and vehement speech, impeached James, earl of Derwentwater, of high treason. Other members of the commons, with fewer words, but equal heat, impeached Lord Widdrington, the earls of Nithsdale, Winton, and Carnwath, Viscount Kenmure, and Lord Nairn. Not a single voice was raised in opposition, not an effort made in debate to avert the doom of these incompetent revolutionists, though certainly there was still many a jacobite in the house. On the 19th of January these noblemen were all brought before the house of lords, assembled as a court of justice in Westminster Hall, with Earl Cowper, the chancellor, presiding as lord high-steward. They knelt at the bar till the chancellor desired them to rise; and then they all, but one, confessed their guilt, and threw themselves upon the mercy of King George — a prince neither unmerciful nor cruel, but far indeed from possessing either a tender heart or a lively imagination. Sentence of death, as traitors, was forthwith pronounced upon Derwentwater, Widdrington, Nithsdale, Carnwath, Kenmure, and Lord Nairn; and preparations were ordered for the trial of Lord Winton, who had pleaded not guilty. Secretary Stanhope, who was a man of feeling, interposed and saved the life of Lord Nairn, who had been his schoolfellow: but the united interest and earnest supplications of the duchess of Cleveland and Bolton, of the young countess of Derwentwater pleading with tears for the husband she tenderly loved, and of many other ladies of rank, failed in moving the rough and sturdy king, who admitted them to an audience, but adhered to his purpose, which was the purpose of the majority of his ministers.

Bribes, which had succeeded before in like circumstances, were offered now without effect. Sixty thousand pounds was tendered for the single pardon of Lord Derwentwater, for whose present hard fate tears were shed and lamentations raised in every valley and on every hillside in Cumberland. Some of the best of the whigs in the commons, and among them poor Steele, would have saved life without money or bribe; but Robert Walpole, who in after life was certainly not a cruel minister, was on the present occasion perfectly obdurate: he expressed his horror and disgust at the leniency of these whigs, whom he called "unworthy members of this great body," since they could, "without blushing, open their mouths in favour of rebels and parricides." As, however, favourable circumstances had arisen for the earl of Carnwath and Lord Widdrington, and as some respect was due to the opinion and feeling of the house of lords, those two noblemen were respited. The three remaining victims were left for execution, and, to prevent any further interference, orders were sent to the Tower to have the block ready on the following morning. But during that night the conjugal affection and heroism of Lady Nithsdale robbed the block of a head. She dressed her lord in her own clothes, and he escaped by night, and in that disguise, out of the Tower. There thus remained only two victims — the English Lord Derwentwater and the Scottish Lord Kenmure; and they, at an early hour the next morning — the 24th of February — were brought to the scaffold on Tower Hill.

Lord Winton, who had pleaded not guilty, embarrassed his prosecutors, for, though he seemed at times crazy or half idiotic, he managed his business with considerable craft and skill, and on his trial struck one of the first of whigs and ministers with a sharp repartee. He was not put upon his trial till the 15th of March, having gained time by petitions and other devices. He was found guilty of high treason, and sent back to the Tower; but it appears that there was no real intention to proceed to execution, and, after lying some time in that state prison, he effected his escape.

In the beginning of April a commission for trying the rebels of inferior rank met in the court of common pleas. Forster, Brigadier Mackintosh, and twenty of their confederates were found guilty on indictments for high treason. Forster and Mackintosh were both fortunate enough to break their prison and escape, and seven others followed their example, and got safe to the Continent. But four were executed in London, and twenty-two in Lancashire, where above a thousand submitted to the king's mercy, and petitioned to be transported to the colonies in America. The amount of punishment and of blood seemed in those days unaccountably and imprudently small.[c]

Punishment was not, however, the only object of the ministers; they thought also of prevention. On the 1st of March, Lechmere moved for leave to bring in "a bill to strengthen the Protestant interest in Great Britain by enforcing the laws now in being against papists" — such, in those times, being the panacea for all evils! Lechmere was seconded by Lord Coningsby, and, no member venturing to oppose his motion, the bill was passed on the 17th of April; and we find that one of its clauses provided for the "effectual and exemplary punishment of such as being papists shall enlist themselves in his majesty's service."

THE SEPTENNIAL ACT (1716 A.D.)

But by far the most important and most celebrated measure of the government was their change in the duration of parliament. Under the act passed in 1694 its period had been fixed at three years. The cause of that

[1716 A.D.]

narrow limitation may probably be found in the enormous period of seventeen years, to which Charles II had prolonged his second parliament, and which, by a natural revulsion, drove the minds of men into the opposite extreme. The triennial system had now been tried for upwards of twenty years, and found productive of much inconvenience without any real benefit. There is no evidence whatever to prove that the house of commons had even in the smallest degree shown itself more watchful or public spirited during that epoch than either before or since; nay, on the contrary, it may be asserted that the grossest and most glaring cases of corruption that could be gleaned out of the entire parliamentary annals of Great Britain belong to those twenty years. The speaker (Sir John Trevor), on one occasion, accepted a bribe of 1000 guineas from the city of London, and, on its detection, was himself obliged to put to the vote that he had been guilty of a high crime and misdemeanour. The secretary of the treasury (Mr. Guy), on another occasion, was sent to the Tower for a similar offence. A shameful system of false endorsement of exchequer bills on the part of several members was detected in 1698; and even Burnet,[i] the apologist of those times, is reduced to admit the existence, and deplore the extent, of the corruption.

It is not to be supposed, however, that this was the cause which principally, if at all, influenced the ministers in proposing the restoration of septennial parliaments. Theirs was a case of pressing and immediate danger. A rebellion scarcely quelled — an invasion still threatened — parties in the highest degree exasperated — a government becoming unpopular even from its unavoidable measures of defence: such were the circumstances under which, according to the act of 1694, the parliament would have been dissolved at the risk of tumults and bloodshed — a most formidable opposition — and, perhaps, a jacobite majority. What friend of the Protestant succession could have wished to incur this terrible responsibility? Even those who may approve of triennial parliaments in general, would hardly, I think, defend them at such a juncture. According to this view of the subject, there was at first some idea of providing only for the especial emergency; but it was judged more safe and constitutional to propose a uniform and permanent recurrence to the former system. It was, therefore, on permanent grounds that the question was argued in 1716; and we need scarcely add that it is on such only that it should be considered now.

In considering, therefore, the general question, we may, in the first place, cast aside the foolish idea that the parliament overstepped its legitimate authority in prolonging its existence; an idea which was indeed urged by party spirit at the time, and which may still sometimes pass current in harangues to heated multitudes, but which has been treated with utter contempt by the best constitutional writers.[1] If we look to the practical effects of the change, the most obvious and most important is the increased power of the popular branch of the legislature. Speaker Onslow, a very high authority on this subject, was frequently heard to say that the Septennial Bill formed the era of the emancipation of the British house of commons from its former dependence on the crown and the house of lords.

The ministers determined that their proposed bill should originate in the house of lords. It was there that they felt least sure of a majority; and they wished, that, in case of failure, their friends in the commons should not at

[1] Mr. Hallam[h] observes: "Nothing can be more extravagant than what is sometimes confidently pretended by the ignorant, that the legislature exceeded its rights by this enactment, or, if that cannot legally be advanced, that it at least violated the trust of the people and broke in upon the ancient constitution."

least incur needless unpopularity, nor lose ground at the ensuing elections. Accordingly, on the 10th of April, a bill for the repeal of the Triennial Act was brought in by the duke of Devonshire. It was of course keenly opposed by the whole weight of the opposition, yet their numbers were less formidable than had been apprehended; and their chief division on the bill going into committee, gave them only sixty-one votes against ninety-six.

The Septennial Bill, having passed the lords, was sent down to the commons, and read a second time on the 24th of April. Walpole being then severely indisposed, he was unable to take any part in support of the measure; but it had his full concurrence.

In committee on the bill, Lechmere proposed a clause to disable such persons from becoming members of either house of parliament as have pensions during pleasure. But Stanhope urged that such a clause would only clog the bill and endanger its miscarriage, a part of it being an infringement on the privileges of the peers; and he announced his intention of himself bringing in a separate bill with reference to pensioners in the house of commons. Accordingly, he over-ruled Lechmere's proposition (probably intended as a stratagem for defeating the Septennial Bill altogether); and the same evening he moved for leave to bring in a bill to disable any person from being chosen a member of, or sitting or voting in, the house of commons, who has any pension during pleasure, or for any number of years, from the crown. This bill was accordingly prepared, and ordered to be brought in by Stanhope, Craggs, and Boscawen, and it passed on the 8th of June. As for the Septennial Bill, it was read a third time on the 26th of April, the minority mustering no more than 121.

THE KING AND THE PRINCE OF WALES

During the time that the ministers were carrying the Septennial Act and their other measures through parliament, they had another struggle, almost as important and far more difficult to maintain, at court. The king's impatience to revisit his German dominions could no longer be stemmed. It was in vain that his confidential advisers pointed out to him the unpopularity that must attend, and the dangers that might follow, his departure at such a crisis; their resistance only chafing instead of curbing his majesty, and at length the ministers let go the reins. Two great obstacles, however, still remained to delay his journey — first, the restraining clause in the Act of Settlement; and, secondly, his jealousy of the prince of Wales, whom, in his absence, it would be indispensable to invest with some share at least of power and sovereign authority.

As to the first of these difficulties, it might have been met in two modes; by proposing to parliament either an occasional exception, or a total repeal of the restraining clause. The former would certainly have been the more safe and constitutional course, but the latter was thought the most respectful, and accordingly preferred. Accustomed as George was to foreign habits, and attached to his Hanoverian subjects, his ardent desire to visit them should be considered a misfortune indeed to Great Britain, yet by no means a blemish in his character. But it certainly behoved the legislature to hold fast the invaluable safeguard which they already possessed against his foreign partialities. It might, therefore, be supposed by a superficial observer, that the repeal of the restraining clause, when proposed by Sir John Cope in the house of commons, would have been encountered with a strenuous opposition. On the contrary, it passed without a single dissentient voice; the whigs and the

[1716 A.D.]

friends of government supporting the wishes of the king, and the tories delighted at the prospect that his majesty's departure would expose his person to unpopularity and his affairs to confusion.

The jealousy which George I entertained of his son was no new feeling. It had existed even at Hanover, and been since inflamed by an insidious motion of the tories in the house of commons, that, out of the civil list, £100,000 should be allotted as a separate revenue for the prince of Wales. The motion was over-ruled by the ministerial party, and its rejection offended the prince as much as its proposal had the king.

Such being his majesty's feelings, he was unwilling to entrust the prince with the government in his absence, unless by joining other persons in the commission, and limiting his power by the most rigorous restrictions. Through the channel of Bernsdorf, his principal favourite, he communicated his idea to the members of the cabinet, and desired them to deliberate upon it. The answer of Lord Townshend to Bernsdorf is still preserved. He first eagerly seized the opportunity of recapitulating in the strongest manner the objections to the king's departure, and then proceeded to say, that the ministers having carefully perused the precedents, found no instance of persons being joined in commission with the prince of Wales, and few, if any, of restrictions upon such commissions; and that they were of opinion "that the constant tenour of ancient practice could not conveniently be receded from." Under such circumstances, the king found it impossible to persevere in his design. Instead, however, of giving the prince the title of regent, he named him Guardian of the Realm and Lieutenant — an office unknown in England since the days of the Black Prince. He also insisted that the duke of Argyll, whom he suspected of abetting and exciting his son in ambitious views, and who, as groom of the stole to the prince, had constant and easy access to his person, should be dismissed from that and all his other employments. Having thus settled, or rather unsettled matters, George began his journey on the 9th of July, and was attended by Stanhope.

It cannot be denied that at this period the popularity of George I was by no means such as might have been expected from his judicious choice of ministers, or from his personal justice and benevolence of disposition. These qualities, indeed, were not denied by the multitude, but they justly complained of the extreme rapacity and venality of his foreign attendants. Coming from a poor electorate, a flight of hungry Hanoverians, like so many famished vultures, fell with keen eyes and bended talons on the fruitful soil of England. Bothmar and Bernsdorf, looking to the example of King William's foreign favourites, expected peerages and grants of lands, and were deeply offended at the limitations of the Act of Settlement. Robethon, the king's private secretary, whilst equally fond of money, was still more mischievous and meddling; he was of French extraction, and of broken fortunes: a prying, impertinent, venomous creature, forever crawling in some slimy intrigue. All these, and many others, even down to Mahomet and Mustapha, two Turks in his majesty's service, were more than suspected of taking money for recommendations to the king, and making a shameful traffic of his favour.

But by far the greatest share of the public odium fell upon the king's foreign mistresses. The chief of these, Herrengard Melesina von Schudenburg, was created by his majesty duchess of Munster in the Irish peerage, and afterwards duchess of Kendal in the English. She had no great share of beauty; but with George I a bulky figure was sufficient attraction. To intellect she could make still less pretension. Lord Chesterfield, who had married her niece, tells us that she was little better than an idiot; and this

testimony is confirmed by the curious fact that one morning, after the death of her royal lover, she fancied that he flew into her window in the form of a raven, and accordingly gave the bird a most respectful reception. She affected great devotion, and sometimes attended several Lutheran chapels in the course of the same day — perhaps with the view of countenancing a report which prevailed, though probably without foundation, that the king had married her with the left hand, according to the German custom. Her rapacity was very great and very successful. After the resignation of the duke of Somerset, no master of the horse was appointed for several years, the profits of the place being paid to the duchess; and there is no doubt that her secret emoluments for patronage and recommendations far surpassed any outward account of her receipts. Sir Robert Walpole more than once declared of her (but this was after the death of George I), that she would have sold the king's honour for a shilling advance to the best bidder.

The second mistress, Sophia Baroness Kilmanseck, created countess of Darlington, was younger and more handsome than her rival; but, like her, unwieldy in person and rapacious in character. She had no degree either of talent or information, it being apparently the aim of George, in all his amours, to shun with the greatest care the overpowering dissertations of a learned lady.[b]

ENGLAND AND THE CONTINENTAL POWERS

In the spring of 1716, defensive alliances had been concluded by the British government with the states general and with the emperor, to operate in case of aggression on either by France or other powers. The issue, however, of the rebellion of 1715 had entirely indisposed the government of the regent of France to any rupture with England. The duke of Orleans was moreover anxious to procure the support of England to his succession to the crown of France, in the event of the death of Louis XV, a sickly boy. The claim to that crown had been renounced by the Bourbon king of Spain; but Philip V might interpret that renunciation according to the power which he might possess of setting his agreement at nought. Whilst George I was at Hanover this summer, negotiations were going forward between Stanhope, his secretary of state, and the abbé Dubois, the profligate but most able servant of the regent. The English government desired the expulsion of the Pretender from France and its dependencies; and was anxious to stipulate that a new harbour should be abandoned which Louis XIV had begun to construct at Mardyke, to serve the same warlike purposes as Dunkirk, which had been demolished according to the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht. The agent of the regent was ready to yield these points, to secure the friendship of the government of King George. Thus the policy of England and France tended towards peace and a more intimate alliance. On the other hand, the continental objects of George I threatened to involve his island subjects in a war, in which they would certainly not have engaged had their king not also been elector of Hanover. When Charles XII of Sweden, in 1714, after those five years of seclusion at Bender which followed the disastrous day of Pultowa, burst upon Europe again, he found a large part of his territories divided among many rapacious neighbours, with whom he would have to fight if Sweden were to regain any semblance of her old power. Frederick IV of Denmark, in 1712, had conquered Schleswig and Holstein, Bremen and Verden. To strengthen himself against Charles, "the Swedish-iron hero" — as Mr. Carlyle calls him — Frederick bartered away Bremen and Verden to

[1717 A.D.]

the elector of Hanover, in 1715, for £150,000, on condition that George should join a coalition against Sweden. George's son-in-law, Frederick William of Prussia, had gone to war that same year, with his giant grenadiers, to compel Charles to resign his pretensions to Stettin, which Prussia had obtained in pawn for a payment of £60,000. The northern war blazed furiously. The elector of Hanover sent a British fleet into the Baltic to coerce Sweden; and with six thousand Hanoverians joined the Prussians, Danes, and Russians, against "the lion-king." At Stralsund Charles made his last effort. He was overpowered; and getting away to Sweden, meditated schemes of vast import, but thoroughly impracticable. Charles endeavoured to gratify his revenge against England in stirring up another jacobite insurrection. Northern Europe was now still more agitated; for the czar Peter had marched with his Muscovites into Mecklenburg, and was threatening Denmark. George was for violent measures against Russia, which his minister Stanhope very wisely discountenanced. This smoke did not burst into flame. In the conduct of the negotiation with France there was a difference of opinion between Stanhope at Hanover, and Townshend at home; and this, with other less dignified causes, produced a partial breaking up of King George's first whig ministry.

MINISTERIAL DISSENSIONS

The popularity which the prince of Wales acquired during the king's absence was looked upon with fear and suspicion at Hanover. He was affable; appeared fond of English customs; spoke our language tolerably well; and went amongst the people in a free and unreserved manner. Party writers began to contrast the son with the father. The prince was not discreet in a position where discretion was so essential. He manifested an eagerness to open the parliament in person during the king's absence; whilst the king desired that the prorogation might be extended, to enable him to remain longer at Hanover. Townshend, in his communications with Stanhope, had pressed that the king should speedily decide as to his return; intimated the prince's wish to open parliament; and suggested that in certain emergencies a larger discretionary power should be given to the "guardian of the realm." The king was enraged; and avowed his determination to dismiss his chief minister from his office of secretary of state. To soften this dismissal Townshend was offered the office of lord-lieutenant of Ireland. The secretary at first stoutly refused. His colleagues were indignant. Stanhope, from Hanover, tried to persuade them to acquiesce in the king's determination. The whigs, he wrote to Mr. Methuen, one of the commissioners of the treasury, "may possibly unking their master, or (which I do before God think very possible) make him abdicate England; but they will certainly not force him to make my lord Townshend secretary." The fallen minister was at last induced to accept the lord-lieutenancy of Ireland; and Methuen was appointed secretary of state as the colleague of Stanhope. The apparent renewal of the friendly relations of the sovereign and his ministers was not of long duration.

The king opened the session of parliament on the 20th of February, 1717. He announced that a Treaty of Alliance had been concluded between Great Britain, France, and the states-general. There were to be no longer apprehensions about Dunkirk and Mardyke; the pretender was to be removed beyond the Alps. This treaty, concluded on the 4th of January, 1717, is known as the Triple Alliance. The king further notified that he had directed

papers to be laid before parliament, "which contain a certain account of a projected invasion." These papers were "copies of letters which passed between Count Gyllenburg, the barons Görtz, Spaar, and others, relating to the designs of raising a rebellion in his majesty's dominions, to be supported by a force from Sweden." The discovery of this scheme had delayed the opening of the session. In October, some letters between Baron Görtz, the bold and intriguing minister of Charles XII, and Count Gyllenburg, the Swedish envoy in London, had been intercepted and deciphered by the English government. On the 29th of January, Stanhope, as secretary of state, laid the information thus obtained before the council; and it was determined to resort to the extraordinary measure of arresting the Swedish envoy, and of seizing his papers. Gyllenburg, of course, stoutly resisted; and pleaded the protection to which the representatives of foreign governments are entitled by the law of nations. That law, however, does not sanction an ambassador in being the active instrument of plots against the government to which he is accredited. General Wade carried off the contents of the Swede's escritoire, and put a guard over his prisoner. The contents of the papers fully justified the act of the government. Görtz had organised a scheme for an insurrection in England, and a simultaneous invasion of Scotland by the king of Sweden. Spain had entered into the confederacy. Its prime minister, Alberoni, had remitted a million of French livres to Spaar, the Swedish envoy in Paris, to set the forces of Charles XII in motion. The Pretender had offered £60,000 for the same object. The whole affair exploded upon the arrest of Gyllenburg. The king of Sweden did not disown the act of his ministers, neither did he own them; but he ordered the British resident at his court to be put under arrest. Apprehensions of danger from Sweden were still professed by the English ministry; and on the 3rd of April, Stanhope delivered to the commons a royal message, asking for an additional supply, "not only to secure his majesty's kingdoms against the present dangers with which they are threatened from Sweden, but likewise to prevent as far as possible the like apprehensions for the future." The motion for a supply was only carried by a majority of four votes. It was opposed by many of the whigs, and coldly supported by others. Walpole, to whom the house looked up on all financial questions, spoke indeed in favour of the motion, but with a reserve that was more significant than censure. It was clear that the most important of the whig leaders were jealous of the influence of Sunderland, who was now held to be the king's chief adviser. The result of this debate was that the same evening Townshend was dismissed from his office of lord-lieutenant of Ireland; and that, the next morning, Robert Walpole resigned — firm in his resistance to the entreaties of the king to keep the seals of chancellor of the exchequer. Other resignations followed, including that of Methuen. Stanhope now became the head of the government; Sunderland and Addison were appointed secretaries of state; and James Craggs secretary for war.

THE QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE

The period during which Stanhope had the chief administration of affairs, from 1717 to his death in 1721, was a period of extraordinary excitement in the complicated policy of various European states, and of momentous embarrassment in the financial operations of the English people and the English government. The chief instigator of the disputes which in 1717 threatened to involve Europe again in a general war was Cardinal Alberoni, the prime

[1717 A.D.]

minister of Spain. He had great projects in view, which he thought would raise Spain in the scale of nations. He prepared an armament at Barcelona, whose destination was wholly unknown. In August, 1717, a Spanish fleet anchored in the bay of Cagliari; and eight or nine thousand troops made a descent on the island of Sardinia, of which they took possession after a stout resistance from Spaniards of the Austrian party. The expedition was not merely intended to seize this barren territory. Spain had an eye to Sicily, which had been ceded at the peace to Victor Amadeus. England interposed, in the endeavour to preserve the peace of Europe. Negotiations went forward, without much effect; Stanhope having sent his cousin, afterwards earl of Harrington, as ambassador to Spain. The regent of France also sent his ambassador. But the bold and crafty Alberoni wanted only to gain time, and he made the most extensive preparations for war upon a great scale. Spain, directed by the energy of this adventurer, threw off her accustomed lethargy. In a year or two he had set in motion every instrument of intrigue against France and England. The Turks had been totally defeated by Prince Eugene at the great battle of Peterwaradin. Alberoni urged the sultan to persevere in the war with the emperor. He had encouraged Baron Görtz in his schemes for the invasion of England by Sweden. He had entered into correspondence with the Pretender, and proposed a Spanish expedition to land in Britain, to be commanded by James, or by the duke of Ormonde. He fomented insurrections and conspiracies in France. In 1718 it became evident that the British government must prepare for warlike operations, and give up its attempts at mediation. Alberoni, whose vanity made him presumptuous, but whose acuteness gave him signal advantages over ordinary politicians, must have offered many a rude shock to the complacency of diplomatic routine.

EASTGATE HOUSE, ROCHESTER

(Original of the "Nun's House" in *Edwin Drood* by Dickens)

The English negotiators had to attempt the difficult task of reconciling the conflicting interests of the emperor and the Bourbon king of Spain. The Treaty of Utrecht had failed in placing the peace of Europe on a durable foundation. There must be other territorial arrangements, which it was the object of the Quadruple Alliance of England, Holland, France, and the emperor to effect. Exchanges of dominion were to be made between the rivals; something gained and something yielded on either side; doubtful successions guaranteed; compensations; all interests consulted but that trifling one, the welfare of those handed about from potentate to potentate. Alberoni resolved for war, exclaiming, "The Lord's hand is not shortened."

ARREST OF THE PRINCE OF WALES

With this threatened interruption to the peace of Europe, the administration of Stanhope, who was now raised to the peerage, had to meet the parliament which was summoned for the 21st of November. Just at this time a scene took place within the walls of St. James' palace, which threatened as much embarrassment to the tranquil progress of government as any complication of foreign affairs. The king and the prince of Wales openly quarrelled. The rupture was deemed of sufficient importance to warrant the secretary of state in writing an explanation of the circumstances to the foreign ministers.

Then was exhibited the unbecoming spectacle of the heir-apparent in opposition to the government of his father; of the court of Leicester House in rivalry to the court of St. James. The discarded members of the whig cabinet could at Leicester House lament, in common with tories and jacobites, over their exclusion from power. Walpole and Shippen could make common cause as assailants of the existing government, however irreconcileable themselves upon the principles upon which the government could be conducted. The king, on the other hand, was surrounded by some indiscreet and unscrupulous adherents. After his majesty's death, Queen Caroline found amongst his private papers a proposal from the earl of Berkeley, first lord of the admiralty in 1718 — which proposal was in the handwriting of Charles Stanhope — to seize the prince of Wales, and carry him off to America. George I had too much sense to adopt the kidnapping project; but he formed a crude plan to obtain an act of parliament that the prince should be compelled to relinquish his German possessions upon coming to the throne of Great Britain. The friends of constitutional monarchy were alarmed at these proceedings; and it was fortunate that the power which the great abilities of Walpole eventually secured under George I, enabled him to use, for the purpose of outward reconciliation, the influence which he had obtained over the prince of Wales during his term of opposition politics.

WAR WITH SPAIN

Into fightings arising out of the squabbles of the empire and of Spain — or rather out of the squabbles of [in Carlyle's *d* phrase] "Kaiser Karl VI and of Elizabeth Farnese, termagant queen of Spain" — was England precipitated. When the number of troops to be maintained came to be discussed in parliament, "downright Shippen" said that some expressions of the king's speech "seem rather calculated for the meridian of Germany than of Great Britain." He added, "It is the only infelicity of his majesty's reign that he is unacquainted with our language and constitution; and it is therefore the more incumbent on his British ministers to inform him, that our government does not stand on the same foundation with his German dominions, which, by reason of their situation, and the nature of their constitution, are obliged to keep up armies in time of peace." For these expressions Mr. Shippen was sent to the Tower, and there remained till the prorogation of parliament in March. There were interesting debates in both houses on the evident tendency to engage in war indicated by the number of troops to be employed; but the parliament was prorogued with the royal expression of a hope that such treaties might be concluded, "as will settle peace and tranquillity amongst our neighbours." The hope was illusive; and indeed was contrary to a message from the crown, just at the close of the session, pointing out the

[1718 A.D.]

necessity of an increase of the navy. No specific object was named; but Walpole observed that the message and the address, which was voted had the air of a declaration of war against Spain.

On the 4th of June, Admiral Byng sailed for the Mediterranean, having twenty ships of the line under his command; for intelligence had been received that an armament of twenty-nine ships of war, with transports for thirty-five thousand soldiers, had sailed from Barcelona with sealed orders. The English prime minister, Lord Stanhope, in the desire to avert war, had proceeded to Madrid; and he was even prepared to give up Gibraltar, which it appears he thought "of no consequence." Alberoni, amidst pacific professions, had manifested no disposition to abate his pretensions. Whilst Stanhope was talking of peace, the Spanish fleet had sailed into the bay of Solento, and having landed a large force upon Sicilian ground under the marquis di Lede, the troops in a few days had become masters of Palermo. The chief military operation was the siege of Messina. On the 31st of July the citadel was invested. On the 1st of August, Sir George Byng's fleet was anchored in the bay of Naples, where he took on board two thousand German troops to reinforce the Piedmontese garrison of Messina. The Spanish fleet would have been in comparative safety if they had remained at anchor in the road of Messina, in line of battle, with the batteries behind them that Di Lede had constructed. The admirals chose to put to sea, and Byng hurried after the Spaniards, through the straits of Faro. On the 11th of August the English squadron was carried by a breeze into the heart of the Spanish fleet, off Cape Passero. Six of their men of war had been separated from their main body, and a division, commanded by Captain Walton, was despatched by the English admiral to intercept them. The battle, it is held, was commenced by the Spaniards. Byng was superior in force; and the Spanish admirals acted without a settled plan. But they fought bravely, till the main fleet was all taken or destroyed. The report of Captain Walton to his admiral, is the very model of a business-like despatch: "Sir, we have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships which were upon the coast: the number as per margin." The Spanish fleet was thus swept away; but Byng, in a letter to Di Lede, affected to consider this catastrophe as not necessarily involving a war between the two nations. Messina fell before the Spanish troops, at the end of September; and Byng again anchored in the bay of Naples. Alberoni did not quietly endure the pacific mode in which his fleet had been annihilated. He seized all British vessels and goods in Spanish ports.

The war smouldered on during two years; for an object which, as Carlyle truly said, "could not be excelled in insignificance." King George, in opening parliament on the 11th of November, announced that he had concluded terms and conditions of peace and alliance between the greatest princes of Europe, but that Spain "having rejected all our amicable proposals, it became necessary for our naval forces to check their progress." Walpole headed in the commons the opposition to an address of thanks, contending, that by their giving sanction to the late measures, they "would screen ministers, who, having begun a war against Spain, would now make it the parliament's war." The motion for an address of thanks was carried by a majority of sixty-one.

BILL FOR RELIEF OF DISSENTERS

A domestic measure of real interest to the nation, and honourable to the ministry to have proposed, was carried during this session, with some curtailments of its original design. It was a bill for the relief of Protestant dis-

senters, entitled "a bill for strengthening the Protestant interest in these kingdoms." Stanhope took a liberal view of the religious differences which had so long agitated the nation, and he desired to repeal, not only the Act against Occasional Conformity, the Schism Act, and the Test Act, but to mitigate the penal laws against Roman Catholics. It was contended, and perhaps prudently, by some of his colleagues, that by aiming at too much nothing would be accomplished. The debates were warm in both houses; and finally, by a majority of only forty-one, the measure was passed, without the repeal of the Test Act, and without any attempt to put the Roman Catholics upon a juster footing of equality, however limited, with their fellow-subjects.

SETTLEMENT OF THE SPANISH DIFFICULTIES

The hostility of Alberoni towards the government which had proved the most formidable enemy to his designs for the extension of the power of the Spanish monarchy, now assumed the somewhat dangerous form of an alliance with the Pretender, and a direct assistance to him in another attempt at the invasion of Great Britain. There was no longer to be hope for the house of Stuart in the rash designs of Charles of Sweden. He had fallen by a stray bullet — probably by the hand of an assassin — in the trenches of Frederickshall. He no more will terrify the world with his volcanic outbreaks. Alberoni was to accomplish, by weaving his web of intrigue around the persevering adherents of James, what his brother intriguer Görtz had failed to accomplish. Upon the sister of Charles XII succeeding to the crown of Sweden, there had been a political revolution, and the restless minister of the late king had perished on a scaffold. Alberoni had failed in the issue of a conspiracy which he had stirred up against the regent Orleans. It was effectually crushed; and, whatever were the private views of the regent, his lenity in this affair was a proof that he possessed one of the best attributes of power, "the quality of mercy." The plot of the duke and duchess of Maine being clearly traced to the schemes of the Spanish minister, war was declared by France against Spain. There was one great card more to play. The Pretender was invited to Madrid. He safely reached that capital from Italy, and was received with signal honours. The duke of Ormonde, and the earl Marischal and his brother, had also passed from France into Spain. An expedition had been prepared by Alberoni, which it was originally intended that James should lead.

But it was at length arranged that Ormonde should land in England; that Lord Marischal should sail with some forces to Scotland; and that Keith, his brother, should go through France to gather together the jacobites who had taken refuge there. The armament which sailed from Cadiz, consisting of five men-of-war, with twenty transports, carrying five thousand men, was scattered by a great storm in the Bay of Biscay. The crews threw overboard the stands of arms, the munitions of war, and the horses, to lighten their vessels; and the greater part of the armada returned to Spanish ports, in a dismantled condition. The earl Marischal, with two frigates, carrying about three hundred troops, proceeded to Scotland; and his brother, with Tullibardine, Seaforth, and a few other noble refugees, joined him in a small vessel. The whole proceeding was known to the British government, through information furnished by the regent of France. The adventurers, with the Spanish soldiers, landed on the banks of Loch Alsh, in the month of May, 1719. The vessels returned to Spain; and the Scottish leaders were left to

[1719 A.D.]

face their desperate enterprise. They established themselves in an old castle in the inner reach of the loch; but their attempts to fortify it afforded them no safety. Three English vessels of war entered these solitary waters, and battered the rude tower to the ground. Scattered parties of Highlanders joined the Spaniards; and the whole body, about fifteen hundred — some accounts say two thousand — encamped at Glenshiel. In this valley, surrounded by mountains, whose pathways were known only to the natives, they remained inactive, expecting to be joined by large bodies of insurgents. No general rising took place in the Highlands. No great chiefs again ventured to appear in arms against a strong government. In June, General Wightman, with sixteen hundred troops, marched from Inverness. He hesitated to attack desperate men in their formidable pass; but a sharp struggle took place with detached bodies on the mountain sides, which lasted three hours. The next day the Spaniards surrendered as prisoners of war; but the Highlanders had disappeared. Wightman had twenty-one men killed, and a hundred and twenty-one wounded. He brought into Edinburgh two hundred and seventy-four Spanish prisoners. The Scottish leaders took shelter in the Western Isles; and finally escaped to Spain.

Whatever opposition might be raised to the origin and objects of the war in which England was engaged against France, no one could complain that the naval power of the country was inefficiently employed. No British admiral could have manifested more energy and promptitude than Admiral Byng displayed, in exploits that required the utmost courage and decision of character. He rendered the most efficient aid to the forces of the emperor in the contest with the Spaniards for the possession of Sicily. By his sagacious counsels he gave a successful direction to the languid efforts of the imperial commanders, who were jealous of each other, and divided in their plans. Their troops were destitute of provisions, and he supplied them by sea with stores, to prevent them starving in the interior of the island. They were insufficiently supplied with ammunition, and he furnished them with the means of attack and defence. With such aid the Austrians, after a serious defeat at Franca Villa, in June, 1719, were enabled to besiege the Spaniards in Messina, of whose citadel they obtained possession in October. There were military operations of less importance before the Spaniards finally evacuated Sicily and Sardinia.

Meanwhile, the French had sent an army against Spain, under the command of the duke of Berwick, the natural son of James II — the general who had won the victory of Almanza for the Bourbon king of Spain. Berwick was now to lead an army against the same king; and he was to be assisted by English sailors belonging to the government of the sovereign who was regarded as an usurper by the head of his own family. The French made themselves masters of Fuenterabia and St. Sebastian; and Lord Cobham, with an English squadron, captured Vigo. These disasters might have convinced Alberoni that the conflict with these great powers, in which Spain had engaged, was an undertaking in which his own abilities could not supply the want of material resources. But he probably was not prepared to be deserted by the court which he had so ably served in the endeavour to increase its power and importance. Before the reverses in Sicily, Alberoni had made overtures for peace. Stanhope proposed to Dubois, to demand from King Philip the dismissal of his minister. His ambition, said Stanhope, had been the sole cause of the war; and "it is not to be imagined that he will ever lose sight of his vast designs, or lay aside the intention of again bringing them forward, whenever the recovery of his strength, and the remissness of the allied powers, may

flatter him with the hopes of better success." King Philip submitted to this dictation.

In December, 1719, Alberoni, by a royal decree, was dismissed from all his employments, and was commanded to leave the Spanish territory within twenty-one days. Incapable grandees rejoiced that the son of an Italian gardener no longer ruffled their solemn pride; some loftier spirits testified their respect to fallen greatness. The cardinal went back to Italy, a poor man. After vain attempts to resist or evade the demands of the allies that Spain should accede to the Quadruple Alliance, that accession was proclaimed in January, 1720; Philip declaring that he gave peace to Europe at the sacrifice of his rights. He renewed his renunciation of the French crown. Europe was again at peace. Even the czar of Muscovy had been warned by the presence of an English fleet in the Baltic, that he would not be permitted utterly to destroy Sweden. By England's protection of the female successor of Charles XII, the elector of Hanover secured Bremen and Verden. The policy of foreign affairs did not exclusively contemplate the safety of King George's island subjects, but there was no advocacy of merely German policy of which the nation had a right to complain. The reputation of Great Britain was not damaged by the mode in which the war had been carried on. Her naval strength had been successfully exerted. A peace of twelve years, with a very trivial interruption, was the result of the Quadruple Alliance.

THE PEERAGE BILL (1719 A.D.)

The two parliamentary sessions of 1719 were remarkable for ministerial attempts to carry a measure which would have produced a vital change in the composition of the house of lords. It was proposed to limit the royal power of creating peers; and the king was persuaded to send a message to the lords, that his majesty has so much at heart the settling the peerage of the whole kingdom upon such a foundation as may secure the freedom and constitution of parliament in all future ages, that he is willing his prerogative stand not in the way of so great and necessary a work.

In February, resolutions were proposed in the upper house that the English peers should not be increased beyond six of their present number; with the exception of princes of the blood; and that instead of there being sixteen elective peers for Scotland, the king should name twenty-five as hereditary peers. In the house of lords, the resolutions were carried by a large majority. The proposition produced an excessive ferment. The whig members and the whig writers took different sides. Addison supported the bill; Steele opposed it. The measure was abandoned on account of the strong feeling which it produced on its first introduction; but it was again brought forward in the session which commenced on the 23rd of November. It passed the lords, with very slight opposition. In the commons the bill was rejected by a very large majority, 269 to 167. On this occasion Walpole, generally the plainest and most business-like of speakers, opposed the bill with a rhetorical force which, according to the testimony of Speaker Onslow, "bore down everything before him." The exordium of his speech is remarkable: "Among the Romans, the wisest people upon earth, the Temple of Fame was placed behind the Temple of Virtue, to denote that there was no coming to the Temple of Fame, but through that of Virtue. But if this bill is passed into a law, one of the most powerful incentives to virtue would be taken away, since there would be no arriving at honour but through the winding-sheet of an old

[1719–1720 A.D.]

decrepit lord, or the grave of an extinct noble family; a policy very different from that glorious and enlightened nation, who made it their pride to hold out to the world illustrious examples of merited elevation:

Patere honoris scirent ut cuncti viam."

The opponents of the Peerage Bill did not fail to use the obvious argument, that although the prerogative of the crown might be abused by the creation of peers, as in the late reign, to secure a majority for the court, there was a greater danger in so limiting the peerage as to make the existing body what Walpole called "a compact impenetrable phalanx."

THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE

The great event of the sixth year of the reign of George I was the exciting affair of the South Sea scheme — an event upon which, after the lapse of nearly two hundred years, we may still look with greater interest than upon the treaties and the wars of which Carlyle[d] has said, with some truth, that they are to us as the "mere bubblings up of the general putrid fermentation of the then political world." Few people of that time clearly understood what this famous South Sea project meant; and it is somewhat difficult to make it intelligible now.

In the infant days of the national debt the great terror of statesmen was its increase and duration. At the accession of Queen Anne, the debt amounted to sixteen millions; at her death it had reached fifty-two millions. In 1711 there was a floating debt of about ten millions. Harley, then lord-treasurer, proposed to create a fund for that sum; and to secure the payment of interest, by making certain duties of customs permanent. Capitalists who held debentures were to become shareholders in a company incorporated for the purpose of carrying on a monopoly of trade to the Spanish coasts of South America; making the new fund a part of their capital stock. Thus was established the South Sea Company. When the Peace of Utrecht was completed, Spain refused to permit any approach to the free trade which would have made such a commercial company of value. One ship only was allowed to be sent annually. A few factories were established, and the one ship sailed in 1717. Alberoni broke the treaty, and seized the British goods. But the company had other means for the employment of capital; and many opulent persons were amongst its shareholders and directors.

At the opening of the session of parliament in November, 1719, the king said to the commons, "I must desire you to turn your thoughts to all proper means for lessening the debts of the nation." In January, 1720, a proposal was read to the house of commons from the South Sea Company, in which it was set forth that if certain public debts and annuities were made part of the capital stock of the company, it would greatly contribute to that most desirable end adverted to in his majesty's speech. Before that speech was delivered Sir John Blunt, a South Sea director, had been in communication with the ministers, who gave a favourable ear to his projects. There was an annual charge upon the revenue of eight hundred thousand pounds, for irredeemable annuities granted in the reigns of William and Anne. To buy up these annuities was the advantageous point in the proposal of the company. The house of commons agreed in the necessity of reducing the public debts. "Till this was done," said Mr. Brodrick, who moved that other companies should be allowed to compete, "we could not, properly speaking, call ourselves a nation." The Bank of England accordingly sent in a rival proposal;

and the two companies went on outbidding each other, till the South Sea Company's large offer to provide seven millions and a half to buy up the annuities was accepted. The annuitants were not compelled to exchange their government security for the company's stock; and the chief doubt seemed to be whether the greater number would consent to this transfer. Although the terms offered by the company to the annuitants were not encouraging, there was a rush to accept them. To hold stock in a company whose exclusive trading privileges might realise that "potentiality of wealth" which is never "beyond the dreams of avarice," was a far grander thing than to receive seven, eight, or even nine per cent. upon annuities. Within six days of the announcement of the company's terms, two-thirds of the annuitants had exchanged their certain income for the boundless imaginary riches of South America.

Upon this foundation was built the most enormous fabric of national delusion that was ever raised amongst an industrious, thrifty, and prudent people. It had been long manifest that there was a great amount of superfluous capital, especially of the hordings of the middle classes, which wanted opportunities for employment. To obtain interest for small sums was scarcely practicable for the mass of those who were enabled to keep their expenditure below their incomes. Before the beginning of the century, companies, more or less safe, had been formed to meet this desire for investments. In spite of the long wars of the reigns of William and Anne, and the jacobite plots and rebellions which threatened the Protestant succession, the country was going steadily forward in a course of prosperity. Wherever there is superfluous wealth, beyond the ordinary demands of industry for capital, there will be always projectors ready to suggest modes for its co-operative uses. In the summer of that year, the South Sea year, "the dog-star rages" over Exchange Alley with a fury that has never been equalled; because no capitalist, even to the possessor of a single shilling, was then too humble not to believe that the road to riches was open before him. Subscribers to projects recommended by "one or more persons of known credit," were only required to advance ten shillings per cent. A shilling, and even sixpence per cent. was enough to secure the receipt for a share in the more doubtful undertakings. Shares of every sort were at a premium, unless in cases where the office that was opened at noon on one day was found closed on the next, and the shillings and sixpences had vanished with the subscription books.

But the great impulse to the frantic stock-jobbing of that summer was the sudden and enormous rise in the value of South Sea stock. In July, Secretary Craggs wrote to Earl Stanhope, who was abroad with the king, "it is impossible to tell you what a rage prevails here for South Sea subscriptions at any price. The crowd of those that possess the redeemable annuities is so great, that the bank, who are obliged to take them in, has been forced to set tables with clerks in the streets." The hundred-pound shares of the South Sea Company went up to a thousand pounds in August. The shares of the Bank of England and of the East India Company were transferred at an enormous advance. Smaller companies of every character — water companies, fishery companies, companies for various manufactures, companies for settlements and foreign trade — infinite varieties, down to companies for fattening hogs and importing jackasses from Spain — rushed into the market amidst the universal cry for shares and more shares. The directors of the South Sea Company opened a second, a third, and a fourth subscription. They boldly proclaimed that after Christmas their annual dividend should not fall short of fifty per cent. upon their £100 shares. The rivalry of the

THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE

(From the painting by E. M. Ward, R.A., in the Tate Gallery)

[1720 A.D.]

legion of projects of that season was odious to these great lords of the money market. The government itself began to think that some fearful end would come to the popular delusion; and a royal proclamation was issued against "mischievous and dangerous undertakings, especially the presuming to act as a corporate body, or raising stocks or shares without legal authority." It was calculated that the value of the stock of all the companies, with corporate authority or no authority, amounted at the current prices to five hundred millions sterling; being five times as much as the circulating medium of Europe, and twice as much as the fee simple of all the land of the kingdom. The attempt of the South Sea Company to lessen the number of their competitors was the prelude to their own fall. At their instance, writs of *scire facias* were issued, on the 18th of August, against four companies; and the subscribers to these, and to all other projects not legalised, were ordered to be prosecuted by the officers of the crown. A panic ensued. In a day or two, the stocks of all the companies not incorporated rapidly fell; and with the downward rush went down every description of stock. Before August, knowing and cautious holders of South Sea stock began to sell out.

Walpole, who had originally opposed the scheme, did not carry his opposition to the extreme of neglecting his opportunity of largely adding to his fortune, by investing at the proper time, and selling out at the proper time. The earl of Pembroke applied to Walpole for his advice as to the great question of selling when the shares were at their culminating point. The adroit financier coolly answered: "I will only tell you what I have done myself. I have just sold out at £1,000 per cent., and I am fully satisfied." By the middle of September holders of South Sea stock were crowding the Exchange, not as eager buyers, but as more eager sellers. The stock was at 850 on the 18th of August; in a month it had fallen to 410. Mr. Brodrick, on the 13th of September, writes that the most considerable men of the company, "with their fast friends, the tories, jacobites, and papists," had drawn out; "securing themselves by the losses of the deluded thoughtless numbers, whose understandings were overruled by avarice, and hopes of making mountains of mole-hills. Thousands of families will be reduced to beggary. The consternation is inexpressible; the rage beyond expression; and the case is so desperate, that I do not see any plan or scheme for averting the blow." On the 29th of September, South Sea stock had fallen to 175. This greatest of bubbles had burst.

Many persons of rank and station were not so prudent as Walpole and the earl of Pembroke had been. The duke of Portland, Lord Lonsdale, and Lord Irwin were provided with colonial governments to enable them to live. Merchants, lawyers, clergy, physicians passed from their dream of fabulous wealth and from their wonted comforts into poverty; some "died of broken hearts; others withdrew to remote parts of the world, and never returned." It has been observed by Craik that "the calamitous effects of the madness were rather individual and immediate, than permanent or general. There was little, if any, absolute destruction of capital. The whole mischief consisted in a most quick and violent shifting of property from one hand to another." But the derangement of the ordinary course of industry was to be added to this shifting of property. Serious as was this temporary evil; furious as it made the sufferers in their reproaches against every one but themselves; eager as it rendered the legislature for confiscation of the property of the South Sea directors, the national credit was not permanently impaired by the infatuation which produced so much private misery. In this respect, the issue of the South Sea scheme was essentially different from the Mississippi scheme of

John Law in France, which also exploded in that fatal year for projectors; producing there what was equivalent to a national bankruptcy. When the South Sea crash came, there was an alarm for its public consequences. But Walpole, who had again joined the government, though in a subordinate office, applied his great financial abilities to avert the difficulties which this convulsion might occasion to the state; and instead of joining the first cry for vengeance upon the South Sea directors, he calmly said in parliament that if London were on fire wise men would endeavour to extinguish the flames before they sought for the incendiaries. When the king opened the session on the 8th of December, the royal speech recommended measures "to restore the national credit." Walpole was regarded by all parties as the man to effect this.

WALPOLE TO THE RESCUE (1721–1722 A.D.)

To endeavour to equalise, to the most inconsiderable extent, the losses and gains of individuals by the extravagant rise and sudden depression of South Sea stock, would have been a task far beyond the province of any minister of state. The financial abilities of Walpole were necessarily directed to the very difficult labour of disentangling the government from the embarrassments of the South Sea Company. The English ministry had never attempted to sustain the value of the company's shares by arbitrary edicts; or to interfere with their fall by regulations that were based upon other principles than the great natural laws by which the money market, like every other market, must be governed. The French ministry, when the scheme of Law for relieving its exhausted finances by a paper currency, based on the imaginary riches of Louisiana, was in the course of breaking down, gave its orders that individuals should not retain in their possession any sum beyond a small amount of gold and silver, and should be compelled to carry on their transactions in Law's substitute for money. The shares were not to fall according to the rate at which their owners were willing to sell them, but to sink in nominal value, by a monthly reduction, till they had reached half their original price, at which rate they were to be fixed.

All this, of course, was the merest convulsion of despotism. The regent had shifted a large amount of the debts of the state to the deluded people, and no attempt was made to retrieve the national credit. Walpole had to pursue a policy which was the only possible one under a limited monarchy; and which indeed was not beset with the difficulties that the government of the regent would have had to encounter in any struggle to be honest. The French finances were hopelessly embarrassed by a long course of extravagance, before Law thought he could perform the part of the magician in the Arabian story, making a scrap of paper pass as a piece of silver. The English finances were healthy, though the national debt amounted to fifty or sixty millions. The French government adopted the schemes of Law, to furnish the means of new extravagances. The English government went into the scheme of the South Sea Company, with the view of redeeming a portion of the national debt, and thus of lessening the amount of taxation. Voltaire records that he had seen Law come to court with dukes, marshals, and bishops following humbly in his train. The English court was not free from shame in the South Sea project. Half a million of fictitious stock had been created by the directors, previous to the passing of the bill. The duchess of Kendal, as well as other favourites of the king, had large douceurs out of the profits which the directors made by the transfer of these shares; and it is lamentable to add that

[1721-1723 A.D.]

Craggs, the secretary of state, his father the postmaster-general, and Aislabie, the chancellor of the exchequer, were amongst the recipients of this bribery. It was the business of parliament to trace the extent of the corruption; and to punish in some degree those directors for vengeance upon whom the nation was frightfully clamouring.

Although in the petitions to parliament "for justice on the authors of the present calamities," we may see how individuals come to consider the losses produced by their own insensate desire for sudden riches as national misfortunes, we may yet observe how general is the calamity when a people think to grow rich by gambling instead of by work. Want of money is the universal cry. No branch of industry had been exempted, according to these petitions, from suffering. There may be exaggeration in these complaints. But it is nevertheless easy to understand how difficult it would be, in a condition of society where commercial credit was not upheld by large banking operations, to escape very serious evils, when the many streams and rills in which capital ordinarily flowed were diverted into one vast flood, and thus for a while the channels were left dry from which industry derived its regular nourishment.

The commons, through the entire session, were occupied with investigations and discussions connected with the financial convulsion. Walpole brought forward his plan for sustaining the national credit, and had induced the house to agree that the public contracts with the South Sea Company should be undisturbed. His first proposal, to engraft a portion of the stock of that company into the Bank of England, and another portion into the East India Company, was carried after much debate; but this plan was ultimately merged into another measure. The private estates of the directors were to be regarded as a fund to provide some remedy for the public embarrassment. A bill was passed, to compel them to deliver on oath an estimate of the value of their property, and to prevent them going out of the kingdom. A secret committee of inquiry was appointed. After they had examined Mr. Robert Knight, the cashier of the company, he fled to Brabant. A reward of £2,000 was offered for his apprehension; but it was believed that there were influences at work powerful enough effectually to screen him. Knight was arrested at Antwerp; but the states of Brabant refused to give him up. "Screen" became a bye-word. Caricatures — which it is said were become common at this period for political objects — had for their point the duchess of Kendal and the flight of the cashier. "The Brabant Screen" exhibited the king's mistress sending Knight upon his travels, giving him his dispatches from behind a screen.

The prudent cashier took care to obliterate, as far as possible, the evidence that great ladies and ministers of state had been corrupted by the South Sea directors. The committee of the commons reported that "in some of the books produced before them, false and fictitious entries were made; in others entries with blanks; in others entries with erasures and alterations; and in others leaves were torn out." They found, further, that some books had been destroyed, and others taken away or secreted. Out of the mouths of the directors the committee extracted evidence to show that there had been extensive appropriation of stock to "certain ladies," at the instance of Mr. Secretary Craggs; and the proof was clear that persons high in office had received and held stock during the time that the company's bill was depending in parliament, "without any valuable consideration paid, or sufficient security given for the acceptance of, or payment for, such stock." Nevertheless, Charles Stanhope, one of the accused, was cleared by a majority of three. The earl of Sunderland was exonerated by a larger majority; but he

could not stand up against the popular odium, and resigned his post of first commissioner of the treasury. Aislabie, the chancellor of the exchequer, was expelled the house, and was sent to the Tower. James Craggs died of small-pox, during the heat of this inquiry. His father, the postmaster-general, destroyed himself by poison.

Their charges against the directors were founded upon their practice of "selling their own stock at high prices, at the same time that they gave orders for buying stock upon account of the company"; and upon their various contrivances "to give his majesty's subjects false notions of the value" of the South Sea stock. Their punishment, under the bill that was passed, was severe. Their estates, amounting to two millions sterling, were confiscated for the relief of the sufferers by their schemes. A small allowance was made to each; but they were disabled from ever holding any place, or for sitting in parliament. Such visitations for their offences were thought far too lenient by the greater number of their contemporaries. They may now be considered excessive.

DEATH OF STANHOPE AND MARLBOROUGH

During a debate in the lords upon the conduct of the South Sea directors, the duke of Wharton, as profligate as he was able, made a furious attack upon Stanhope, comparing him to Sejanus. The anger to which the earl was moved produced a rush of blood to his head. A temporary relief by cupping was obtained; but the next day the skilful and honest secretary of state suddenly expired. No suspicion of improper connection with the South Sea scheme had affected his honour. Lord Townshend again became secretary of state. With Walpole, chancellor of the exchequer, salutary measures were pursued to restore confidence. The South Sea Company were relieved from certain engagements to make advances to the government; and the credit of their bonds was sustained at its just value.

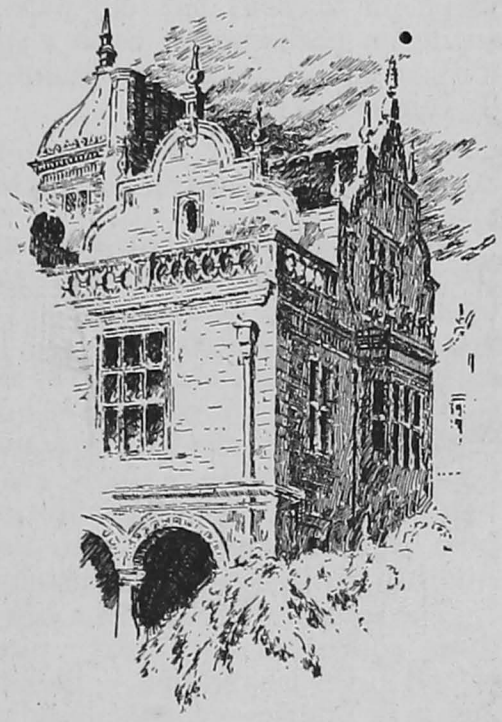
The session of 1722 was a busy session. Questions more important than those connected with party interests were discussed. An act had been passed in the last session — under the apprehension of the plague, which was raging in France — for the building of pest-houses, to which infected persons and even the healthy of an infected family, were to be removed; and lines were to be drawn round any infected town or city. Earl Cowper, the ex-chancellor, a man of liberal and enlightened views, moved for the repeal of these powers, as unknown to our constitution, and inconsistent with the lenity of free government. But his motion was rejected. "The people called Quakers" had presented a petition, complaining that, under their present form of affirmation, they were unable to answer in courts of equity, take probates of wills, prove debts on commissions of bankruptcy, take up their freedoms, and be admitted to poll at elections for their freeholds. Upon a debate in the lords, Atterbury, the bishop of Rochester, spoke against indulgences "to be allowed to a set of people who were hardly Christians." The London clergy petitioned against a bill for their relief, contending that, however the Quakers might be injured in their private affairs, "an oath was instituted by God himself as the surest bond of fidelity amongst men," and that any relaxation of that principle would only tend to multiply a sect "who renounce the divine institution of Christ, particularly that by which the faithful are initiated into his religion." The bill for the relief of the Quakers was passed, in spite of the hard terms in which they had been assailed. The session was prorogued to the 15th of March; and it was previously dissolved,

[1722 A.D.]

under the provisions of the Septennial Act. During the prorogation, the earl of Sunderland died; and his father-in-law, the great duke of Marlborough, terminated his chequered career of political time-serving and of military glory.

STUART ASPIRATIONS

In 1720, the wife of James Edward carried forward the aspirations of the house of Stuart into another generation, by giving birth to a son. Atterbury, the most uncompromising of partisans, considered this "the most acceptable news which can reach the ears of a good Englishman." Charles Edward Louis Casimir, whose royal descent was put beyond suspicion by the presence of seven cardinals in the chamber of the princess, was destined even in his cradle to give the signal for conspiracies and possible insurrections. The duke of Ormonde was again to lead foreign forces to the invasion of Britain. The jacobites in England, amongst whom there were five earls, and the undaunted bishop of Rochester, were to get possession of the Tower, seize all the deposits of public treasure, and to proclaim James III. A judicious, and in many respects impartial, historian, ascribes what he calls "the second growth of jacobitism" to the publication in the reign of Anne of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. Atterbury was one of its editors. The "gray discrowned head" of Charles; the exile and the restoration of his son — these were the stirring recollections that made the remnant of the old cavaliers, now bearing the somewhat less glorious name of tories, turn to the first Charles' grandson "pining in a distant land, under circumstances not far unlike to those of Charles Stuart in France."



A JACOBEAN MANSION IN BIRMINGHAM

The departure of the king, in the summer of 1722, upon his usual visit to his German dominions, was to be the signal for an invasion of England by the Pretender and his faithful Ormonde. Disbanded troops of various countries were being collected together for this enterprise. The managers of the plot had the supreme folly to apply to the regent of France for the aid of five thousand men; and the regent, having more respect for treaties than Louis XIV, informed the British minister at Paris of the application. The vigilant Walpole was soon acquainted with the plan of action and the names of the actors. The king was advised not to go to Hanover; a camp was formed in Hyde Park; and some of the conspirators — two nonjuring clergymen, two Irish priests, a young barrister, and two lords — were apprehended. After a delay of three months, the bishop of Rochester was arrested, and, after examination before the council, was sent to the Tower.

For nearly thirty years had Francis Atterbury been known as the keenest of controversialists, as well as the most impressive of preachers. From the beginning of the century he had been considered as the leader of the high church party, the great asserter of the independence of convocation. Grad-

ually he had become identified with the most extreme principles of passive obedience; was the prompter of Sacheverell in his defence in 1710; was recognised as having earned a bishopric when Harley came into power; and had, upon the death of Queen Anne, taken a very decided part in his hostility to the Hanoverian succession. His arrest in August, 1722, produced the most violent ferment amongst his church party. The Episcopal order, it was proclaimed, was outraged. Atterbury was prayed for in the London churches. Atterbury was represented, in a print intended to move the popular sympathy, as standing behind his prison bars, gazing upon a portrait of Laud. The plot, it was maintained, was a base fiction. The new parliament met in October; and the king, in his speech on the 11th, announced the discovery of a dangerous conspiracy, and the arrest of some of the conspirators. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended for a whole year; and the consent of the house of peers was desired to sanction the detention in the Tower of the bishop of Rochester, lords North and Grey, and the earl of Orrery. A foolish declaration, signed "James Rex," had been issued on the 22nd of September, in which James III, king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, proposed that George should quietly deliver to him the throne of those kingdoms; when he, King James, would bestow upon George the title of king in his native dominions, and invite all other states to confirm it. Moreover, the British crown should be confirmed to the penitent usurper, if ever he should attain it in the due course of legitimate succession. This wonderful production was ordered by parliament to be burnt by the common hangman, as "a false, insolent, and traitorous libel." On the 1st of March, 1723, a committee of the commons made a report of their examinations into the evidence of the conspiracy. It is a document of great length. It involved other eminent persons besides those who had been arrested. Christopher Layer, the barrister, had been previously tried and condemned in the King's Bench. He was the only person who suffered capital punishment. Bills of pains and penalties were passed against the two Irish priests. The most important person amongst the accused, the bishop of Rochester, was also proceeded against by bill, enacting his punishment and deprivation. This bill passed the commons without a division. Atterbury declined making a defence before the lower house; but on the 6th of May he stood at the bar of the house of lords; and after the evidence against him had been gone through he defended himself with great ingenuity and eloquence.

The debate amongst the peers on the question of the passing of the bill was remarkable for the constitutional opposition of Lord Cowper, the ex-chancellor.

The connection of Atterbury with the exiled family, before his banishment, has been abundantly proved by other evidence than that within the reach of his accuser and judges. The bill against him was passed by a majority of forty peers; most of the bishops voting against him. He embarked for France in June, 1723; and died at Paris in 1732.

AFFAIRS OF IRELAND; WOOD'S BRASS HALF-PENNIES

In 1724, through the ordinary course of ministerial rivalries and jealousies, the accomplished Lord Carteret was removed from the office of secretary of state, which he held in conjunction with Lord Townshend, and the same course was pursued towards him, as towards Townshend himself in 1716. Carteret was appointed lord-lieutenant of Ireland — a post considered of far less anxious responsibility than that of secretary of state. During his lord-

[1724 A.D.]

lieutenancy Ireland became no bed of roses. Amongst the many real wrongs which Ireland has borne, and the not less numerous imaginary grievances of which she has complained, in her connection with England, there is probably no example of a national ferment so wholly disproportionate to the extent of the injury, as that of Wood's patent for a coinage of copper farthings and halfpence. No one can doubt that when a nation is in almost utter want of money of the lowest denomination, the extortions practised upon the humblest classes must be considerable. Ireland was so completely without a currency to conduct the smaller operations of trade, that labourers were paid by cards bearing the seals and signatures of their employers. In all such cases of a questionable or a depreciated currency, it is the poor man who has to bear the largest amount of trouble or loss. In 1722, a patent was granted to William Wood, a proprietor and renter of iron and copper mines in England, to enable him to coin farthings and halfpence for Ireland to the value of £108,000. There is no doubt that the patentee was to make a profit, for the duchess of Kendal had been bribed to promote the grant of the patent. But Walpole and his subordinates took every reasonable measure of precaution that the coinage should not become an opportunity for fraud or excessive gain. Sir Isaac Newton, as master of the mint, approved the terms of the contract; and when the coins were in circulation, and it was seen that discontent was assiduously stirred up, an assay was made by the officers of the mint, and it was declared that in weight and fineness of metal the pieces were satisfactory. The difference of exchange between England and Ireland had been thought a satisfactory reason for a slight diminution in weight of the copper currency for Ireland.

The Irish parliament, moved in some degree by the apparent neglect of this exercise of the royal prerogative, without consulting the Irish privy council, voted an address to the king, that the terms of the patent would occasion a loss to the nation of 150 per cent. Walpole was astonished, as he well might be, at this impudent declaration of a legislative body. He examined the matter carefully; and perceived that the assertion was founded upon a computation that the rough Irish copper was worth twelvepence a pound, and that a pound of halfpence and farthings coined out of fine copper were to pass for thirty pence. He found that the mint of London paid eighteenpence per pound for prepared copper; that the charge of coinage was fourpence per pound; and that the duties and allowances upon copper imported into Ireland amounted to 20 per cent. A committee of the English privy council went into a searching examination of the whole affair; and fully justified the patentee from any charge of having abused the fair terms of his patent. It was, however, conceded that the amount of farthings and halfpence issued should not exceed £40,000 in value; and that this money should not be a legal tender for a larger sum than fivepence halfpenny in one payment.

Under these circumstances, in 1724, a letter was published by M. B. Drapier, addressed "to the tradesmen, shopkeepers, and country people in general, of the kingdom of Ireland, concerning the brass halfpence coined by one William Wood, hardware man," which letter thus solemnly opens: "What I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest concern to yourselves and your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life, entirely depend upon it." The writer, as every one guessed, was the famous dean of St. Patrick's; and certainly no pen was so able as that wielded by Jonathan Swift, to raise a popular clamour by the most skilful treatment of his subject; and,

what was perhaps as much to the purpose, by the most unscrupulous assertions.

Throughout the whole of the Drapier Letters, Swift's argument rests upon the most solid basis of political economy; but his premises are utterly false. He knew well what England and Ireland had suffered by the depreciation of the coin. This bold opponent of the government which had delivered his country from despotism, says, "I intend to truck with my neighbours, the butchers and bakers and the rest, goods for goods; and the little gold and silver I have I will keep by me, like my heart's blood, till better times, or until I am just ready to starve; and then I will buy Mr. Wood's money, as my father did the brass money in King James' time, who could buy £10 of it for a guinea." Against such logic as this what could simple truth avail? The Irish went mad about Wood's halfpence.

JONATHAN SWIFT
(1667–1745)

When Carteret came over, he found the Irish people in a state of frenzy. He tried what are called strong measures. He offered a reward of £300 for discovering the author of the Drapier letters. He prosecuted their printer. The grand jury threw out the bill; and another grand jury made a presentment, setting forth, that "several quantities of base metal coined, commonly called Wood's Halfpence, have been brought into the port of Dublin, and lodged in several houses in this city, with an intention to make them pass clandestinely"; and that "having entirely his majesty's interest and the welfare of our country, and being thoroughly sensible of the great discouragements which trade hath suffered by the apprehensions of the said coin, whereof we have already felt the dismal effects; and that the currency thereof will inevitably tend to the great diminution of his majesty's revenue, and the ruin of us and our posterity, do present all such persons as have attempted or shall endeavour by fraud or otherwise, to impose the said halfpence upon us, contrary to his majesty's most gracious intention, as enemies to his majesty's government, and to the safety, peace, and welfare of all his majesty's subjects of this kingdom." It was in vain that the government attempted to stand up against this storm. The grand jury said, "we do, with all great gratitude, acknowledge the services of all such patriots as have been eminently zealous for the interest of his majesty and this country, in detecting the fraudulent imposition of the said Wood, and preventing the passing of his base coin." Swift wrote this eulogy upon his own patriotism. He had beaten the government of King George. The patent was withdrawn.

IMPEACHMENT OF THE LORD CHANCELLOR (1725 A.D.)

In 1725, England presented the miserable spectacle which she had witnessed in the reign of James I — a lord chancellor impeached for malversation in his great office. Thomas Parker was a very different man from Francis Bacon; and the offences of which the earl of Macclesfield was accused were of another character than those which were the ruin of the viscount St Albans. The chancellor of King James was disgraced upon the charge of having received bribes from suitors. The chancellor of King George was impeached, found guilty, excluded forever from office, and fined thirty thousand pounds, upon the charges of selling masterships in the court of chancery, and of conniving at the frauds of the masters in trafficking with the trust-money of the suitors, and the estates of widows and orphans. Lord Campbell, in controverting a disposition in some writers of recent times to consider that Lord Macclesfield was unjustly condemned, holds that "his conviction was lawful and his punishment was mild."

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The foreign policy of George I, under the able administration of Walpole, had become decidedly pacific. The nation was manifestly prospering under the relief which peace had brought. The fear of the Pretender, and of Spanish or Swedish invasions, had passed away. The house of Brunswick, after ten years of struggle, was firmly fixed on its constitutional throne. Yet there were still threatenings of war. The congress of Cambrai, to which the difficulties that had not been finally settled by the peace of 1720 had been referred, had been wearily discussing certain royal claims and disputes — "bailing out water with sieves" — for four or five years. The regent Orleans had died during these tedious protocollings, in 1723. Louis XV, declared of age, had taken the government of France into his own hands, with the duke de Bourbon as his minister. The alliance of France with England continued uninterrupted. But the emperor Charles, and the king of Spain, Philip, were coming to a closer understanding about territorial arrangements than England, France, and Russia thought safe.

The Treaty of Hanover bound England, France, and Prussia — the date, September 3rd, 1725 — in an engagement to hold by each other, if either were attacked. The tables were turned since the War of the Succession. The old foes were fast friends, and the old friends bitter foes; and all these changes took place, as in private friendship, for "some trick not worth an egg." War seemed imminent, however pacifically disposed were Fleury and George. When the English parliament met on the 20th of January, 1726, the king announced the conclusion of his defensive treaties with the most Christian king and the king of Prussia, to which several of the powers had been invited to accede.

Warlike movements were very soon organised in England. The czar Peter was dead. The czarina Catherine I had prepared a fleet for co-operation with Austria and Spain. Admiral Wager sailed to the Baltic with an English fleet; and the politics of Russia became more pacific. A squadron under Admiral Hosier blockaded Porto Bello — an unfortunate enterprise, for the brave admiral and a large number of his fleet's crews perished of yellow fever in the Spanish main. If this activity was not war, it was very like war. In the parliament which met in January, 1727, the king announced that he had received information upon which he could wholly depend, that

one of the secret articles of the Treaty of Vienna was an agreement to place the Pretender upon the throne of Britain. The parliament instantly voted a large increase of the army and navy. The emperor was advised by Palm, his minister at London, to disavow such a secret agreement. The indiscreet resident addressed a memorial to the king, a translation of which was printed and published; in which the secret articles were disavowed, and the royal word was spoken of with disrespect. The two houses were indignant at "the insolence" of the imperial minister in dispersing his memorial through the kingdom; declaring "their utmost abhorrence of this audacious manner of appealing to the people against his majesty." Palm was commanded immediately to leave England.

Spain was assembling an army for the siege of Gibraltar, under the command of the count de las Torres; who boasted that in six weeks he would drive the heretics into the sea. On the 11th of February the siege was commenced. English men-of-war in the harbour secured a constant supply of provisions for the garrison from the coast of Africa. Lord Portmore — one of the men whose energy age appeared unable to cripple — hastened from England, in his eightieth year, to defend the fortress of which he was governor. For four months the Spaniards ineffectually fired upon the rock, and then they raised the siege.

THE DEATH OF GEORGE I (1727 A.D.)

On the 15th of May, 1727, King George closed the session of parliament preparatory to his departure for Hanover. He adverted to the attack upon Gibraltar. He had suspended, he said, his resentments under such provocation; and instead of having immediate recourse to arms, and demanding that assistance of his allies which they had engaged, and were ready, to give, he had concurred with France and the states general in making overtures of accommodation. Sweden had acceded to the Treaty of Hanover; and a convention had been signed by Denmark. The overtures of accommodation, thus mentioned, had been successful. The Austrian ambassador signed, on the 31st of May, preliminaries of peace with England, France, and Holland. Spain remained alone; neither prepared for war, nor acceding to the conditions of peace.

At this juncture the power of Walpole seemed to be somewhat endangered. Bolingbroke — who had been allowed by the intervention of Walpole to return to England; who was about to embark at Calais at the close of his exile, when Atterbury landed there a banished man; who had been restored to his estates by act of parliament in 1725 — was intriguing to reach once more the possession of power under George which he had obtained under Anne. He had secured, by bribes and protestations, the favour of the duchess of Kendal, the mistress, or according to some, the left-handed wife of the Hanoverian king. The duchess presented to her royal admirer a memorial from Bolingbroke, in which he denounced Walpole as the author of every public evil. The king put this paper into the hands of Walpole, with his usual straightforward mode of action. The ambitious statesman therein requested an interview with his sovereign. George was indisposed to grant this meeting. Walpole earnestly pressed it, with his never-failing sagacity; for, as he himself said, "if this was not done, the clamour would be, that I kept his majesty to myself, and would allow none to come near him to tell the truth." George told his minister that Bolingbroke's complaints and representations were "bagatelles."

The king set out for Hanover on the 3rd of June, accompanied by the duchess of Kendal and Lord Townshend. The unhappy wife of George had

[1727 A.D.]

died on the 13th of November, 1726, after many schemes of escape. The king landed on the 7th at Vaart, in Holland. On the 8th he proceeded on his journey, leaving the duchess of Kendal on the Dutch frontier. On the 9th, he slept at Delden; and was again in his coach at four o'clock in the morning of the 10th, accompanied by two official persons of the court of Hanover. In the forenoon of that day he was struck by apoplexy. He refused to stop at Ippenburen, as his attendants wished. His hands fell; his eyes were heavy; but his will was strong. "Osnabruck! Osnabruck!" he exclaimed. His one surviving brother, the prince bishop, had his palace at Osnabruck. The king's voice grew fainter. He murmured in his death-sleep, "*C'est fait de moi*" (All is over with me). All was over. When the bishop was roused by the gallop of horses in his court-yard at midnight, George, king of Great Britain, and elector of Hanover, was dead. He was buried in Hanover.[1]