succeeded by the Marquis of Rockingham. During his short administration, the Stamp Act was repealed, although the Commons still insisted on their right to tax America. The joy which this repeal created in the colonies was unbounded; and the speech of Pitt, who proposed the repeal, and defended it with unprecedented eloquence, was every where read with enthusiasm, and served to strengthen the conviction, among the leading men in the colonies, that their cause was right. Lord Rockingham did not long remain at the head of the government, and was succeeded by the Duke of Grafton; although Mr. Pitt, recently created Earl of Chatham, was virtually the prime minister. Lord Rockingham retired from office with a high character for pure and disinterested patriotism, and without securing place, pension, or reversion, to himself or to any of his adherents.

The elevation of Lord Chatham to the peerage destroyed his popularity and weakened his power. No man ever made a greater mistake than he did in consenting to an apparent elevation. He had long been known and designated as the *Great Commoner*. The people were proud of him and, as a commoner, he could have ruled the nation, in spite of all opposition. No other man could have averted the national calamities. But, as a peer, he no longer belonged to the people, and the people lost confidence in him, and abandoned him. What he gained in dignity he lost in power and popularity. The people now compared him with Lord Bath, and he became the object of universal calumny.

And Chatham felt the change which had taken place in the nation. He had ever loved and courted popularity, and that was the source of his power. He now lost his spirits, and interested himself but little in public affairs. He relapsed into a state of indolence and apathy. He remained only the shadow of a mighty name; and, sequestered in the groves of his family residence, ceased to be mentioned by the public. He became melancholy, nervous, and unfit for business. Nor could he be induced to attend a cabinet council, even on the most pressing occasions. He pretended to be ill, and would not hold conference with his colleagues. Nor did he have the influence with the king which he had a right to expect. Being no longer beloved by the people, he was no longer feared by the king. He was like

Samson when deprived of his locks — without strength; for his strength lay in the confidence and affections of the nation. He opposed his colleagues in their resolution to impose new taxes on America, but his counsels were disregarded.

These taxes were in the shape of duties on glass, paper, lead, and painters' colors, from which no considerable revenue could be gained, and much discontent would inevitably result. When the news of this new taxation reached the colonies, it destroyed all the cheerfulness which the repeal of the Stamp Act had caused. Sullenness and gloom returned. Trust in parliament was diminished. New combinations of opposition were organized, and the newspapers teemed with invective.

In the midst of these disturbances, Lord Chatham resigned the Privy Seal, the office he had selected, and retired from the administration, (1768.)

In 1770, the Duke of Grafton also resigned his office as first lord of the treasury, chiefly in consequence of the increasing difficulties with America; and Lord North, who had been two years chancellor of the exchequer, took his place. He was an amiable and accomplished nobleman, and had many personal friends, and few personal enemies; but he was unfit to manage the helm of state in the approaching storm.

It was his misfortune to be minister in the most unsettled and revolutionary times, and to misunderstand not merely the spirit of the age, but the character and circumstances of the American colonies. George III., with singular obstinacy and blindness, sustained the minister against all opposition; and under his administration the American war was carried on, which ended so disastrously to the mother country.

As this great and eventful war will be the subject of the next chapter, the remaining events of interest, connected with the domestic history of England, will be first presented.

The most important of these were the discontents of the Irish.

As early as 1762, associations of the peasantry were formed with a view to political reforms and changes, and these popular demonstrations of the discontented have ever since marked the history of the Irish nation — ever poor, ever oppressed, ever on the eve of rebellion.

Functions of the Parliament.

The first circumstance, however, after the accession of George III., which claims particular notice, was the passing of the Octennial Bill, in 1788. The Irish parliament, unlike the English, continued in existence during the life of the sovereign. In 1761, an attempt had been made by the patriotic party to limit its duration, and to place it upon the same footing as the parliament of England; but this did not succeed. Lord Townshend, at this period, was lord lieutenant, and it was the great object of his government to break the power of the Irish aristocracy, and to take out of their hands the distribution of pensions and places, which hitherto had, from motives of policy, been allowed them. He succeeded in his object, though by unjustifiable means, and the British government became the source of all honor and emolument. During his administration, some disturbances broke out in Ulster, in consequence of the system which then prevailed of letting land on fines. As a great majority of the peasantry and small farmers were unable to pay these fines, and were consequently deprived of their farms, they became desperate, and committed violent outrages on those who had taken their lands. Government was obliged to resort to military force, and many distressed people were driven to America for subsistence. To Ireland there appeared no chance of breaking the thraldom which England in other respects also exercised, when the American war broke out. This immediately changed the language and current of the British government in reference to Ireland; proposals were made favorable to Irish commerce; and some penal statutes against Catholics were annulled. Still the patriots of Ireland aimed at much greater privileges than had as yet been granted, and the means to secure these were apparent. England had drawn from Ireland nearly all the regular forces, in order to send them to America, and the sea-coast of Ireland was exposed to invasion. In consequence of the defenceless state of the country, the inhabitants of the town of Belfast, in 1779, entered into armed associations to defend themselves in case of necessity. This gave rise to a system of volunteers, which soon was extended over the island. The Irish now began to feel their strength; and even Lord North admitted, in the House of Commons, the necessity of granting to them still greater privileges, and carried a bill through parliament which

removed some grievous commercial restrictions. But the Irish looked to greater objects, and especially since Lord North, in order to carry his bill, represented it as a boon resumable at pleasure, rather than as a right to which the Irish were properly entitled. This bill, therefore, instead of quieting the patriots, led to a desire for an independent parliament of their own. A union was formed of volunteers to secure this end, not composed of the ignorant peasantry, but of all classes, at the head of which was the Duke of Leinster himself. In 1781, this association of volunteers had a force of fifty thousand disciplined men; and it moreover formed committees of correspondence, which naturally alarmed the British government.

Resignation of Lord North.

Irish Discontents.

These and other disturbances, added to the disasters in America, induced the House of Commons to pass censure on Lord North and his colleague, as incapable of managing the helm of state. The king, therefore, was compelled to dismiss his ministers, whose administration had proved the most disastrous in British annals. Lord North, however, had uncommon difficulties to contend with, and might have governed the nation with honor in ordinary times. He resigned in 1782, four years after the death of Chatham, and the Marquis of Rockingham, a second time, was placed at the head of the government. Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke also obtained places, and the Whigs were once more triumphant.

The attention of the new ministry was imperatively demanded by the discontents in Ireland, and important concessions were made. Mr. Grattan moved an address to the king, which was unanimously carried in both Houses, in which it was declared that "the crown of Ireland was inseparably annexed to the crown of Great Britain; but that the kingdom of Ireland was a distinct kingdom, with a parliament of her own, the sole legislature thereof; that in this right they conceived the very essence of their liberty to exist; that in behalf of all the people of Ireland, they claimed this as their birthright, and could not relinquish it but with their lives; that they had a high veneration for the British character; and that, in sharing the freedom of England, it was their determination to share also her fate, and to stand and fall with the British nation." The new lord lieutenant, the Duke of Portland, assured the Irish parliament that the British legislature had

resolved to remove the cause of discontent, and a law was actually passed which placed the Irish parliament on the same footing as that of England. Acts were also passed for the right of habeas corpus, and for the independence of the judges.

The volunteers, having accomplished the objects which they originally contemplated, did not, however, disband, but now directed their efforts to a reform in parliament. But the House of Commons rejected the proposition offered by Mr. Flood, and the convention, appointed by the volunteers, indefinitely adjourned without persevering, as it should have done. The volunteer system soon after declined.

The cause of parliamentary reform, though no longer supported by the volunteers in their associate character, was not deserted by the people, or by their advocates in parliament. Among these advocates was William Pitt himself. But in 1783, he became prime minister, and changed his opinions.

But before the administration of Pitt can be presented, an event in the domestic history of England must be alluded to, which took place during the administration of Lord North. This was the Protestant Association, headed by Lord George Gordon, and the riots to which it led.

In 1780, parliament had passed an act relieving Roman Catholics from some of the heavy penalties inflicted on them in the preceding century. It relieved bishops, priests, and schoolmasters from prosecution and imprisonment, gave security to the rights of inheritance, and permission to purchase lands on fee simple. This act of toleration was generally opposed in England; but the fanatical spirit of Presbyterianism in Scotland was excited in view of this reasonable indulgence, to a large body of men, of the rights of conscience and civil liberty. On the bare rumor of the intended indulgence, great tumults took place in Edinburgh and Glasgow; the Roman Catholic chapel was destroyed, and the houses of the principal Catholics were attacked and plundered. Nor did the magistracy check or punish these disorders with any spirit, but secretly favored the rioters. Encouraged by the indifference of the magistrates, the fanatics formed themselves into a society called the *Protestant Association*, to oppose any remission of the present unjust laws; and of this association Lord George Gordon was

chosen president. He was the son of the Duke of Gordon, belonging to one of the most ancient of the Scottish nobility, but a man in the highest degree wild and fanatical. He was also a member of parliament, and opposed the views of the most enlightened statesmen of his time, and with an extravagance which led to the belief that he was insane. He calumniated the king, defied the parliament, and boasted of the number of his adherents. He pretended that he had, in Scotland, one hundred and sixty thousand men at his command, who would cut off the king's head, if he did not keep his coronation oath. The enthusiasm of the Scotch soon spread to the English; and, throughout the country, associations were affiliated with the parent societies in London and Edinburgh, of both of which Lord Gordon was president. At Coachmakers' Hall he assembled his adherents; and, in an incendiary harangue, inflamed the minds of an immense audience in regard to the Church of Rome, with the usual invectives respecting its idolatry and corruption. He urged them to violent courses, as the only way to stop the torrent of Catholicism which was desolating the land. Soon after, this association assembled at St. George's Fields, to the astonishing number of fifty thousand people, marshalled in separate bands, with blue cockades; and this immense rabble proceeded through the city of London to the House of Parliament, preceded by a man carrying a petition signed by twelve hundred thousand names. The rabble took possession of the lobby of the house, making the old palace ring with their passionate cries of "No popery! no popery!" This mob was harangued by Lord Gordon himself, in the lobby of the house, while the matter was discussed among the members. The military were drawn out, and the mob was dispersed for a time, but soon assembled again, and became still more alarming. Houses were plundered, churches were entered, and the city set on fire in thirty-six different places. The people were obliged to chalk on their houses "No popery," and pay contributions to prevent their being sacked. The prisons were emptied of both felons and debtors. Lord Mansfield's splendid residence was destroyed, together with his pictures, furniture, and invaluable law library. Martial law was finally proclaimed — the last resort in cases of rebellion, and never resorted to but in extreme cases; and the military did what magistrates could not

Protestant Association.

do — restored order and law. Had not the city been decreed to be in a state of rebellion, the rioters would have taken the bank, which they had already attacked. Five hundred persons were killed in the riot, and Lord George Gordon was committed to the Tower. He, however, escaped conviction, through the extraordinary talents of his counsel, Mr. Erskine and Mr. Kenyon; but one hundred others were capitally convicted. This disgraceful riot opened the eyes of the people to the horrors of popular insurrection, and perhaps prevented a revolution in England, when other questions, of more practical importance, agitated the nation.

But no reform of importance took place until the administration of William Pitt. Mr. Burke attempted to secure some economical retrenchments, which were strongly opposed. But what was a retrenchment of two hundred thousand pounds a year, when compared with the vast expenditures of the British armies in America and in India? But though the reforms which Burke projected were not radical or important, they contributed to raise his popularity with the people, who were more annoyed by the useless offices connected with the king's household, than by the expenditure of millions in war. At first, his scheme received considerable attention, and the members listened to his propositions so long as they were abstract and general. But when he proceeded to specific reforms, they no longer regarded his voice, and he was obliged to abandon his task as hopeless. William Pitt made his first speech in the debate which Burke had excited, and argued in favor of retrenchment with the eloquence of his father, but with more method and clearness. The bill was lost, but Burke finally succeeded in carrying his measures; and the offices of the master of the harriers, the master of the staghounds, the clerk of the green cloth, and some other unimportant sinecures, were abolished.

Parliamentary Reform.

The first attempt at that great representative reform which afterwards convulsed the nation, was made by William Pitt. He brought forward two resolutions, to prevent bribery at elections and secure a more equitable representation. But he did not succeed; and Pitt himself, when his cause was advocated by men of a different spirit, — men inflamed by revolutionary principles, — changed his course, and opposed parliamentary reform with more ardor than he had at first advocated it. But parliamentary reform

did not become an object of absorbing interest until the times of Henry Brougham and Lord John Russell.

No other great events were sufficiently prominent to be here alluded to, until the ministry of William Pitt. The American Revolution first demands attention.

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