

to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, shall be incapable of all public employments, military and civil." On the 12th of March, the Test Act, entitled a "Bill to prevent the Growth of Popery," was read a third time. It required, in addition to the oaths, that a declaration renouncing the doctrine of transubstantiation should be made before admission to office. The proposed law affected the Puritans as much as the Papists, in the point of communion with the Church; but they made little opposition. They partook of the common dread that Romanism might come back in some bold or insidious form, and with it the arbitrary power which had so generally been its companion. An attempt to give them a special measure of relief was defeated by the prorogation of Parliament. The effect of the Test Act was decisive. The duke of York resigned his post of Lord High Admiral, and prince Rupert was appointed to the command of the fleet. Lord Clifford refused to take the test, and retired from his great office of Lord High Treasurer. The Commons voted the supplies with little reluctance, without going into the questions of the Dutch war or the shutting the Exchequer. There were six months of prorogation, during which the war was continued at sea with alternate success and defeat. At home the signs of an approaching storm were becoming manifest.

CHAPTER XI.

The Danby Ministry.—State of Parties.—Separate Peace with Holland.—Charles pensioned by Louis XIV.—Popular Discontents.—Coffee-houses closed by Proclamation.—Re-opened.—Meeting of Parliament after fifteen months' prorogation.—Four Peers committed to the Tower.—Marriage of the Prince of Orange to the Princess Mary.—Violent contentions between the king and the Parliament.—Intrigues with France of the Parliamentary Opposition.—The Popish Plot.

THE Parliament had been prorogued to the 20th of October. The instant the Commons met they voted an address to the king, desiring that the intended marriage of the Duke of York with the princess of Modena should not take place. The Parliament was immediately prorogued for a week. On the 27th the king opened the Session in person; and his Chancellor, Shaftesbury, addressed the members in the usual terms of eulogy and hope. The address against the marriage of the Duke of York was presented; and Charles returned for answer that the alliance "was completed, according to the forms used amongst princes, and by his royal consent and authority." A spirit of decided hostility against the government was now evident in the Commons. They refused a supply until "this kingdom be effectually secured from the dangers of Popery, and Popish counsels and councillors." They voted that a Standing Army was a grievance. They resolved upon a second Address on the subject of the duke's marriage. It was to have been presented on the 4th of November, but the king came suddenly to the House of Lords, and ordered that the Commons should be summoned. A singular scene took place. The Speaker and the Usher of the Black Rod met at the door of the House of Commons; and the Speaker having entered, the door was shut, and he was hurried to the chair. It was immediately moved that the alliance with France was a grievance; that the evil counsellors about the king were a grievance; that the duke of Lauderdale was a grievance. The Black Rod was knocking at the door with impatient loudness; the House resounded with cries of 'question'; the Speaker leapt out of the chair, and in a wild tumult the members followed him to the House of Lords. The king then pro-

rogued the Parliament to the 7th of January. During the interval Shaftesbury was dismissed from the custody of the Great Seal; Buckingham retired; the Cabal ministry was broken up. Sir Thomas Osborne, soon after created earl of Danby, became the chief minister, and retained power till 1678; Shaftesbury became the great leader of the party opposed to the Court. The history of England for the next seven years is the history of a continual struggle between the Crown and the Commons, during which time we trace, amidst some honesty of purpose, an equal degradation of the principles of loyalty and of independence. Monarchical government was never more profligate and anti-national, and representative government was never more factious and corrupt, than in the years from 1673 to 1681. The House of Commons elected after the Restoration first met on the 8th of May, 1661. It continued to sit till the 25th of January, 1679. Vacancies had been filled up from time to time by new elections; and in these what was called the Country Party gradually preponderated. But the general composition of the House was a curious admixture of by-gone and current opinions. There is "A Letter from a Parliament Man to his Friend," published in 1675, and attributed to Shaftesbury, which describes with admirable humour, and probably with equal truth, the composition of the House of Commons: *—"Sir, I see you are greatly scandalized at our slow and confused proceedings. I confess you have cause enough; but were you but within these walls for one half day, and saw the strange make and complexion that this house is of, you would wonder as much that ever you wondered at it; for we are such a pied Parliament, that none can say of what colour we are; for we consist of Old Cavaliers, Old Round-heads, Indigent Courtiers, and true Country-Gentlemen: the two latter are most numerous, and would in probability bring things to some issue were they not clogged with the humourous uncertainties of the former. For the Old Cavalier, grown aged, and almost past his vice, is damnable godly, and makes his doting piety more a plague to the world, than his youthful debauchery was: he forces his Loyalty to strike sail to his Religion, and could be content to pare the nails a little of the Civil Government, so you would but let him sharpen the Ecclesiastical talons: which behaviour of his so exasperates the Round-head, that he, on the other hand, cares not what increase the interest of the Crown receives, so he can but diminish that of the Mitre; so that the Round-head had rather en-

* Printed in "Parliamentary History," vol. iv., Appendix IV.

slave the man than the conscience; the Cavalier, rather the conscience than the man; there being a sufficient stock of animosity as proper matter to work upon. Upon these, therefore, the Courtier usually plays: for if any Anti-Court motion be made, he gains the Round-heads either to oppose or assent, by telling them, If they will join him now, he will join with them for Liberty of Conscience. And when any affair is started on behalf of the country, he assures the Cavaliers, if they will then stand by him, he will then join with them in promoting a bill against the Fanatics. Thus play they on both hands, that no motion of a public nature is made but they win upon the one or other of them: and by this art gain a majority against the country gentlemen, which otherwise they would never have: wherefore it were happy that we had neither Round-head nor Cavalier in the House; for they are each of them so prejudicate against the other, that their sitting here signifies nothing but their fostering their old venom, and lying at catch to snap every advantage to bear down each other, though it be in the destruction of their country." The same letter does not spare the corruption of that very considerable body of members that it terms "Indigent;" a corruption which king Charles and king Louis each found availing with patriots as well as with placemen: "You now see all our shapes, save only the Indigents, concerning whom I need say but little, for their votes are publicly saleable for a guinea and a dinner every day in the week, unless the House be upon Money or a Minister of State; for that is their harvest; and then they make their earnings suit the work they are about, which inclines them most constantly as sure clients to the Court. For what with gaining the one, and saving the other, they now and then adventure a vote on the Country side; but the dread of Dissolution makes them straight tack about. The only thing we are obliged to them for is, that they do nothing gratis, but make every tax as well chargeable to the Court as burdensome to the country, and save no man's neck but they break his purse."

At the opening of the Session of Parliament in 1674, the king uttered these words with his own lips: "I know you have heard much of my alliance with France, and I believe it hath been very strangely misrepresented to you, as if there were certain secret articles of dangerous consequence; but I will make no difficulty of letting the treaties, and all the articles of them, without any the least reserve, to be seen by a small committee of both Houses, who may report to you the true scope of them." Charles I. did not

hesitate to employ indirect falsehood; but he never uttered such an audacious lie as his son now used, to stem the discontents which were gathering around him. Supplies were wanted to carry on the Dutch war; but the nation hated the war, and the Commons would not grant the supplies. To avert greater dangers a separate peace was made with Holland. The war went on between France and the United Provinces, who were now fully supported by Spain and the German powers. The noble resistance of the Prince of Orange to the ambition of Louis had saved his country; but had England taken a more honest course, future wars arising out of the same lust of dominion might have been effectually prevented. The Parliament was in some degree propitiated by the separate peace with Holland; but it was in a dangerous temper, and was quickly prorogued. It met again on the 13th of April, 1675. English troops under Monmouth had been left to assist the French, notwithstanding the English peace with Holland. The House of Commons demanded their recall. The violent scenes between furious partisans were suddenly mitigated, as if a god had descended to separate the combatants in a cloud. The god of money had effected this peacefulness. The English troops remained as auxiliaries of the French. After a protracted struggle to extend the oath required to be taken by officers of corporations to privy counsellors and members of parliament, which attempt was defeated by Shaftesbury, the Parliament was prorogued. There was another short Session. It was again prorogued for fifteen months on the 22nd of November.

The alternations of indulgence towards non-conformists and their persecution was one of the most striking symptoms of the utter want of principle in the conduct of public affairs. The sufferings of a large body of people were never taken into account when the Court and the Parliament were each striving to rule by factions. Defoe, who well knew the system which had been in operation from his boyhood, said, "the persecution of Dissenters has been all along the effect of state policy, more than error of zeal or a mistake of religion." Persecution "has very seldom been carried on any where from mere zeal, but with a complication of private ends, intrigues, and all kinds of abstracted villainy."* Under Danby's administration, in 1675, the king issued proclamations enforcing the laws against non conformists. How these measures worked may be seen in Baxter's simple relation: "I was so long wearied

* "Review," vol. ii. quoted in Wilson's "Life," vol. i. p. 60.

with keeping my doors shut against them that came to distrain on my goods for preaching, that I was fain to go from my house, and sell all my goods, and to hide my library first and afterwards to sell it." He shifted his abode. "When I had ceased preaching I was, being newly risen from extremity of pain, suddenly surprised in my house by a poor violent informer, and many constables and officers, who rushed in and apprehended me, and served on me one warrant to seize on my person for coming within five miles of a Corporation, and five more warrants to distrain for an hundred and ninety pounds, for five sermons."* Though the king was straitened in his means of extravagance by the jealousy of Parliament, the prodigality of the Court was as manifest as ever. On the 10th of September, 1675, Evelyn writes in his Diary: "I was casually showed the duchess of Portsmouth's splendid apartment at Whitehall, luxuriously furnished, and with ten times the richness and glory beyond the queen's; such massy pieces of plate, whole tables, and stands of incredible value." The lady looked down with contempt upon her sister-strumpets. She affected a decency that was not characteristic of some other ladies. When the wit of Nell Gwynn was praised, "yes," exclaimed La Querouaille, "but any one may know she has been an orange-wench by her swearing." The great duchess was the arbitress of the destiny of statesmen. She quarrelled with Buckingham, and he was driven into opposition. She corresponded with the French monarch, who settled an estate upon her for her valuable aid in the degradation of England. Time did not diminish her influence over the besotted king. Incredible as it may appear, there is a record of particular payments to her out of the Secret Service Money in the one year of 1681, of 136,668*l.* 10*s.* † The most hidden crimes cannot wholly be concealed, especially when subordinate agents are connected with them. The long prorogation of the Parliament in November, 1675, was a specific arrangement between Charles and Louis, for which the unworthy king of England received five hundred thousand crowns. The two sovereigns, with the connivance of Danby and Lauderdale, concluded a formal agreement not to enter upon any treaties but with mutual consent; and Charles accepted a pension, upon his pledge to prorogue or dissolve any Parliament that attempted to force such treaties upon him. The money was regularly paid by the French minister to Chiffinch, the notori-

* "Life of Baxter," Part iii. pp. 172, 191.

† "Monies received and paid for Secret Services;" Camden Society.

ous pander to the vices of his master; and the degraded king regularly signed a receipt for the wages of his iniquity. Such things could not go on without exciting some suspicion. How could the extravagance of the Court be maintained? Where did the money come from? The annual revenue was large, but all knew that it was insufficient to meet the riots and follies of Whitehall. Serious thinkers began to murmur. Gossiping loungers about the coffee-houses began to sneer and whisper. Coffee-houses were in those days what clubs are in our day—the great marts for the interchange of town talk, political, or literary, or fashionable, or scandalous, or simply stupid. A Coffee-house, says a tract of 1673, “is an exchange where haberdashers of political small-wares meet, and mutually abuse each other, and the public, with bottomless stories.”* Roger North takes a more serious view of Coffee-house gossip, in 1675: “There was such licentiousness of seditious and really treasonable discourse, in coffee-houses, of which there were accounts daily brought to the king, that it was considered if coffee-houses ought not to be put down.”† Clarendon, in 1666, had proposed either to put down coffee-houses, or to employ spies to frequent them and report the conversation. If in 1675 the king had daily reports of “treasonable discourse,” we may presume that the spy-system had been tried, although it was not quite efficient. On the 29th of December, a proclamation appeared, recalling all the licences issued for the sale of coffee, and ordering all coffee-houses to be shut up, “because in such houses, and by the meeting of disaffected persons in them, divers false, malicious, and scandalous reports were devised and spread abroad, to the defamation of his majesty’s government, and the disturbance of the quiet and peace of the realm.” The licences were withdrawn, through a legal quibble upon the same Statute under which they had been issued. By the Act granting the king certain excise duties in perpetuity, ‡ a duty of fourpence was imposed, “for every gallon of coffee made and sold, to be paid by the maker.” The licence to sell was under a subsequent Act, by which the Justices in Sessions, or the Chief Magistrate of a Corporation, were to grant Licences for the selling of Coffee, Chocolate, Sherbet, or Tea, no Licence being to be granted unless the retailer had first given security for the payment of the dues to the king. § There was no complaint that the securities had not been given, or that the

* “Harleian Miscellany,” vol. viii. p. 7.

† “Lives of the Norths,” vol. i. p. 316.

‡ 12 C. II. c. 12.

§ 15 Car. II. c. 11.

dues were unpaid. The pretence under which the licences were recalled was, that as the Statute made no mention of a time for which the licences were granted, they might be recalled at any time by a higher authority than that of the magistrates who issued them. There never was a more flagrant violation of law under a show of some submission to law. The Coffee-houses were closed. “The great Coffee-house in Covent Garden”—Will’s Coffee-house—where Mr. Pepys saw in 1664, “Dryden the poet, and all the wits of the town, and Harris the player, and Mr. Hoole of our college,” was suddenly shut up at the merry Christmas time. Mr. Dryden had no longer there “his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire.”* His opera of “The State of Innocence and Fall of Man” was his last previous dramatic production; and he could no longer tell to the groups around him, how when he went to the old blind schoolmaster in Bunhill-fields, and asked “leave to put his Paradise Lost into a drama, in rhyme, Mr. Milton received him very civilly, and told him he would give him leave to tag his verses.”† Milton about a year before, had been carried to his last resting-place in Cripplegate-church; and amongst the “treasonable discourse” of the frequenters of the coffee-houses some might have uttered the thought that Milton was not far wrong when, in his last political treatise, he raised his warning voice against the way his countrymen were marching, “to those calamities which attend always and unavoidably on luxury, all national judgments under foreign and domestic slavery.”‡ Probably no political measure was more indicative of a disposition in the government to attack the liberties of the people in their social habits than this shutting-up of the coffee-houses. The popular indignation soon compelled the government to retract its proclamation. “The faction was much incensed,” writes North. “They said that Mr. Attorney [sir William Jones] should answer it in Parliament.” Mr. Attorney was frightened; and possibly some higher authorities were not at their ease. Permission was given to re-open the houses for a certain time; under a severe admonition to the keepers, that they should stop the reading of all scandalous books and papers, and hinder every scandalous report against the government. Despotism would be more dangerous though not more odious than it is, amongst nations with pretensions to civ-

* “Johnson’s Lives of the Poets;” Cunningham’s edit. vol. i. p. 338.

Aubrey, “Lives,” vol. iii. p. 444. † “Way to establish a free Commonwealth.”

ilisation, if it had something less of the weakness and folly which always accompanies its measures for the repression of opinion.

At the opening of the Session of Parliament on the 15th of February, 1677, the Lord Chancellor, Finch, made an elaborate speech which, says Mr. Southey, "contains passages which are as worthy of attention now as they were when they were delivered."* Such a passage as the following would be more worthy of attention, had it not been repeated, with very slight variation, by every parliamentary orator from that day to this, with whom the dead calm of national apathy is the perfection of national happiness—the highest glory of a sovereign to "be rowed in state over the ocean of public tranquillity by the public slavery."† The words of Lord Chancellor Nottingham are these: "It is a great and a dangerous mistake in those who think that peace at home is well enough preserved, so long as the sword is not drawn; whereas, in truth, nothing deserves the name of peace but unity; such an unity as flows from an unshaken trust and confidence between the king and his people, from a due reverence and obedience to his law and his government; from a religious and an awful care not to disturb the ancient landmarks."‡ These are the common-places which have been entered in many a book besides Mr. Southey's. "Trust and confidence between the king and his people" had been manifested by a prorogation of Parliament for fifteen months. A fierce debate took place on this question. The duke of Buckingham maintained that the prorogation for so long a time amounted to a dissolution, being contrary to the statutes of Edward III., which required the annual calling of Parliament. Lords Shaftesbury, Salisbury, and Wharton supported this opinion; and by way of silencing them were ordered to be sent to the Tower, unless they begged pardon of the king and the House. They refused, and were imprisoned. Such commitments by either House terminate with the Session; but the government contrived to keep these dangerous rivals out of the way for more than a year, by adjournments instead of prorogations. In the Commons, the Country party were in a minority upon this question. The bribery of the Lord Treasurer had been more effectual than the eloquence of the Lord Chancellor. The instalment of the king's pension from France, paid in February, was applied to get votes for a large grant. But the greater part of the supply was

* "Southey's Common-place Book," vol. i. p. 106.

† Marvell. "Rehearsal Transposed," vol. ii. p. 295.

‡ "Parl. History," vol. iv. co. 803.

devoted to the support of the navy; and with this sum the Commons would not trust the Treasurer, but appointed their own receivers to superintend its disbursement. The French were now carrying all resistance before them in the Spanish Netherlands. The prince of Orange was defeated at Cassel. Valenciennes and Cambray were surrendered. The Commons voted an address praying the king to oppose the French monarch, and save the Netherlands from his grasp. Charles required an immediate grant as a preliminary to a declaration of war. The House refused it. Then was resorted to that disgusting system of foreign bribery by Spain to obtain the grant, by France to prevent it, which has brought such great disgrace upon many of the public men of this period, and which in some degree qualifies the same baseness in the king. The grant being refused, Charles adjourned the Parliament; obtained an increase of his pension, from Louis; and gave his promise accordingly that he would keep off the meeting of the troublesome representatives who urged him into war, and yet were afraid to give him the means of carrying it on.

When sir William Temple, in 1668, having concluded the Triple Alliance, returned to the Hague as Ambassador, he described the prince of Orange as "a young man of more parts than ordinary, and of the better sort; that is, not lying in that kind of wit which is neither of use to one's self nor to any body else, but in good plain sense." Temple adds, never any body raved so much after England, as well the language, as all else that belonged to it.* William was then in his nineteenth year. When Temple went back to the Hague in 1674 the young man had applied his plain sense and his higher qualities—if most high qualities be not included in plain sense—to take the position of the deliverer of his country. He had measured his strength with the great Condé; and in the battle of Seneffe, disastrous as it was, had earned from the French veteran the praise that he had acted in everything like an old captain, except in venturing his person too much like a young soldier. Temple in his second embassy had hinted at the possibility of an union with the daughter of the duke of York. The proposal was renewed more formally, but the prince of Orange did not then respond. He suspected the disposition of the English government to favour the designs of Louis XIV. He was himself resolved to struggle, "as he had seen a poor old man struggling alone in a little boat upon a canal, against the eddy of a sluice.

* Letter quoted in Courtenay's "Life of Temple," vol. i. p. 286.

This old man's business, and mine, are too like one another.* But the desire for an English alliance overcame this repugnance to the union. Probably he looked far into the future. William came to England in 1677. On the 19th of October the marriage between him and Mary, the eldest daughter of the duke of York, was agreed upon. On the 4th of November it was solemnised—"to the great joy of the nation," says Reresby; "for his highness being a protestant prince, this match in a great measure expelled the fears that the majority had conceived concerning popery." † Dr. Edward Lake, who was chaplain and tutor to the princesses Mary and Anne, in his diary of the 16th of November, writes: "The wind being easterly, their highnesses were still detained at St. James's. This day the court began to whisper the prince's sullenness or clownishness, that he took no notice of his princess at the play and ball, nor came to see her at St. James's the day preceding this designed for their departure." ‡ With the usual earnestness of his character, William was labouring to induce the king his uncle to take a bold and honourable part in the negotiations for peace with France; and it is very likely that he neglected to pay to his bride those attentions which policy, if not love, would have demanded. In after life Mary showed the depth of her affection for her husband, so cold in his demeanour, so high-minded in real deeds. The sweetness of her nature was eminently fitted for his support and consolation in the great trials, and the arduous duties, of his life. The chaplain records that Mary wept incessantly all the morning of their departure. "The queen observing her highness to weep as she took leave of her majesty, would have comforted her with the consideration of her own condition when she came into England, and had never till then seen the king; to whom her highness presently replied, 'But, madam, you came into England; but I am going out of England.'" §

The marriage of the prince Orange with the princess Mary gave offence to the king of France. He regarded it as a breach of faith on the part of his pensioner, the king of England, and he stopped the payment of the sum for which Charles had agreed to prevent any meeting of Parliament till April, 1678. Before that time Louis expected to have been in a condition to dictate terms to the Allies. When the pensioner saw his pay stopped, he called the Parliament together, on the 28th of January. To attempt to unravel the knot

* Conversation with Temple, "Life of Temple," vol. i. p. 488. † "Memoirs," p. 199.
‡ "Camden Miscellany," vol. i. § *Ibid.*

of the complicated intrigues of this period would be as wearisome to our readers as unsatisfactory to ourselves. The king announced to the Parliament that he had made such alliances with Holland as were for the preservation of Flanders, and had withdrawn the auxiliary English troops from the French service. The king further asked for money to carry on the war against France, so as to support a fleet of ninety sail, and an army of forty thousand men. The fast-and-loose game which was played throughout this Session has left a stain upon parliamentary government. It was impossible for the Dutch and their allies, and equally impossible for the English people, to understand the movements of the Court party and the Country party as exhibited in the votes of Parliament. Well might the prince of Orange say, "Was ever anything so hot and so cold as this Court of yours? Will the king never learn a word that I shall never forget since my last passage to England, when, in a great storm, the captain was all night crying out to the men at the helm, 'Steady! Steady! Steady!'" The independent members of the House of Commons knew that a prompt assistance to the Allies was absolutely necessary to control the ambitious designs of France. They urged the war, but they hesitated to vote the supplies, or clogged the vote by vexatious conditions. "Great debates," says Reresby, "had arisen upon this affair, and the reason of the violent opposition it met with was the desire in some to oppose the Crown, though in the very thing they themselves wished for, the nation being ever desirous of a war with France; and a jealousy in others that the king indeed intended to raise an army, but never designed to go on with the war; and, to say the truth, some of the king's own party were not very sure of the contrary." * There was a violent debate on the 14th of March, very imperfectly reported. Reresby says of this debate, "Several speeches were made in the House, full fraught of jealousies and fears, and particularly with regard to the army at this time levying; as if it rather intended to erect absolute monarchy at home, than infest the enemy abroad." † The Commons on the 29th of April received a message from the king, desiring that the House would immediately enter into a consideration of a supply for him, for his majesty must either disband the men, or pay them. The king and the representatives of the people now came to violent issues. A supply was refused unless a war was declared against France; if not the army must be disbanded. The army had been raised, and was encamped on Hounslow

* "Memoirs," p. 200. † *Ibid.*, p. 303.