POPULAR HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

Extreme grief of William.—Parliamentary Corruption.—War in the Netherlands.—Siege of Namur by the Allies.—Namur taken.—William's reception in England.—State of the Currency.—A new Parliament.—Measures for a new Coinage.—Trials for Treason regulated by Law.—The Assassination Plot.

THE death of the queen appears to have prostrated William. Shrewsbury could hardly approach him, till a month after, in consequence of "the retired manner his majesty has lived in since his last great misfortune." * His "former application to business" had not yet returned with the healing power of strenuous occupation. His political correspondence with the Grand Pensionary of Holland was suspended. The general before whom he retreated at Landen was no more: the strange life of Luxemburg—the crook-backed voluptuary who appeared to have no higher object than sensual ease, but who on the battle-field was all fire and decision—came to an end. Louis thought that William would rejoice. William heeded not this important event; and expressed his belief that he himself was no longer fit for military command. The French court sent Harlay, the president of the Parliament of Paris, to sound the Dutch as to the possibility of a peace. Pale and very thin was the envoy. Are you a sample, said the rough republicans, of the wretched condition of France? Let me send for my wife, replied the clever lawyer, and she will give you a notion of our thriving state.† Harlay, who had no accredited mission, did not put the Dutch in good humour by his joke. There was still to be a struggle before peace was established.

William gradually recovered his serenity. The Houses of Parliament went on as usual with their labours. The proposed renewal of the Licensing Act was rejected without a division in the Com-

* "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 218.

† St. Simon.

mons. The press had been more than commonly bold, even seditious. But the representatives of the English people did not choose to interfere with that noble principle which, half a century before, had been proclaimed to all the civilised world by the most eloquent of freedom's advocates: "Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" *

The proceedings of this Session disclosed, what was no secret to men of all parties, the frightful corruption by which statesmen in power and statesmen in opposition were moved to support or to resist some measure in which large pecuniary interests were involved; or to screen some public delinquent. Guy, a member of Parliament and secretary of the Treasury, was sent to the Tower for receiving a bribe, in connection with some inquiries into the conduct of a colonel of a regiment, who had appropriated the money for which he ought to have paid the quarters of his troops. Trevor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, was proved to have received a bribe of a thousand guineas from the Corporation of London, for assisting in passing "An Act for relief of the orphans and other creditors of the City of London" †—that Act under which, when a poor man buys a sack of coals in this winter of 1858, he has still to pay a tax to this long-tolerated phantom of a departed greatness. Trevor had to put the question from the Chair whether he himself was guilty of a high crime and misdemeanor; and had to say, "The Ayes have it." He was expelled the House. The East India Company had spent a hundred and seven thousand pounds in secret service money, as an examination of their books had proved to a parliamentary committee. Eighty-seven thousand pounds had thus been distributed in 1693 and 1694. Sir Thomas Cook, the chairman of the Company, had the management of these delicate matters. He was member for Colchester. In his place in Parliament he refused to answer inquiries. The Commons then passed a bill compelling him to answer, under enormous penalties. Upon the bill going to the Upper House, the duke of Leeds—the earl of Danby of Charles II., the marquis of Carmarthen of 1689—spoke strongly against the bill, and laying his hand on his breast, protested that he was perfectly disinterested in the matter. The inquiries went on, implicating others; and the Commons finally impeached Thomas, duke of Leeds, President of the Council, for that he did, "in breach of the great trust

* Milton. "Areopagitica."

† 5 & 6 Gul. and Mar., c. 10.

reposed in him, by himself, his agents, or servants, corruptly and illegally treat, contract, and agree, with the merchants trading to the East Indies, for five thousand five hundred guineas, to procure their charter of confirmation." * The duke had appeared at the bar of the House, and had to a certain extent acknowledged his delinquency, by admitting that he had helped a friend to get the money. That friend was one Bales, who admitted that he had received the money to bribe the duke, and had given it to a Swiss, who was the confidential manager of the duke's private business. The Swiss fled; the Parliament was prorogued; and the impeachment fell to the ground. The king's personal friend, Portland, was found to have been proof against these temptations, having refused a bribe of fifty thousand pounds.

The king was no doubt rejoiced to get away from this tainted atmosphere to the bracing air of a campaign. He was first reconciled to the princess Anne, and then departed for the continent; having, when he prorogued the Parliament on the 3rd of May, said, "I will take care to place the administration of affairs, during my absence, in such persons on whose care and fidelity I can entirely depend." The duke of Leeds was not one of those persons. Burnet, writing in the reign of queen Anne, says of the princess, "now that he [William] was to go beyond sea, she was not set at the head of the councils, nor was there any care taken to oblige those about her." † The bishop no doubt alludes to Marlborough and his duchess; and adds, "this looks either like jealousy and distrust, or a coldness towards her." Lord Dartmouth, in a note upon this passage, says, "The princess was not only next to him in succession, but there was a party which might have made a claim for her against him. She was a very good woman, and not likely of herself to give in to it. But she was not of the strongest understanding, and always influenced by others, who might have found their account in it." Marlborough took the more prudent course. Shrewsbury writes to Russell that the princess Anne has lost no opportunity of showing her zeal to the king and the government; and that "our friend" [Marlborough] seemed resolved to encourage this union. "I do not see," adds Shrewsbury, "that he is likely at present to get much by it, not having yet kissed the king's hand, but his reversion is very fair and great." ‡

The energy and perseverance of William were at length to be crowned with success. It was a real advantage to him that Luxemburg was gone. It was a greater advantage that Louis had ap-

* "Parliamentary History," vol. v. col. 937.

† "Own Time," vol. iv. p. 261.

‡ "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 220.

pointed as his successor an accomplished courtier but a feeble general, Villeroy; and that this sycophant of the great king entrusted an important command to the duke de Maine, the most favoured of the illegitimate children of Louis. But the numbers, and the high discipline, of the French armies would have probably interfered with any signal advantage on the gart of the allies, if William had not exercised in this campaign many of the highest qualities of a great commander. The opening of the campaign, says St. Simon, was a beautiful game of chess; the prince of Orange, the elector of Bavaria, and the earl of Athlone moving in detached bodies; and Villeroy, Boufflers, Harcourt, and Montal regulating their own movements by those of their enemy which they saw, or by those which they expected. William, "who had well taken all his measures to cover his main design," suddenly turned his course towards Namur. The elector of Bavaria, and the Brandenburg army, arrived at the same point. That strongest fort of Europe was invested by this united force at the beginning of July. Vauban had materially strengthened the fortifications since it had been taken by the French. The court of Louis thought William's attempt a rash one, and that it would signally fail. "I was of another opinion," writes St. Simon; "I persuaded myself that a man of the sagacity of the prince of Orange would not commence so important a siege without well seeing how he was to come out of it." William's movement had been so admirably planned and rapidly accomplished, that Boufflers had scarcely time to reinforce the garrison of Namur, and to take the command of the fifteen thousand men who were now within the walls. Villeroy expected to destroy that part of the allied army under Vaudemont which remained in Flanders, and then to relieve Namur. Vaudemont, by consummate prudence—aided by the incompetence and cowardice of the duke de Maine—effected a retreat to Ghent. Villeroy took two small fortresses, Dixmuyde and Deynse, sending their garrisons into France in violation of a convention for exchange of prisoners. He bombarded Brussels, effecting a tremendous destruction of private property, "in reprisal," says St. Simon, "of the attacks on our coasts." He then marched with eighty thousand men to attack the besieging army at Namur; but Vaudemont had joined his force to that already on the banks of the Meuse and Sambre. Meanwhile the siege had proceeded with a vigour almost unparalleled. The letters of William himself furnish the best materials for tracing the progress of the siege, without perplexing ourselves or our readers with "the differences and distinctions between the scarp and counterscarp, the glacis and

covered way, the half-moon and ravelin," with which "my uncle Toby did ofttimes puzzle his visitors and sometimes himself too."* In a letter to Shrewsbury, on the 17th of June, the king imparts his design of besieging Namur, "a very great undertaking—God grant that it may succeed." † On the 1st of July, he says, "This night we propose to open the trenches at the gate of St. Nicholas." On the 9th, the English, Scotch, and Dutch battalions carried the lines "which the enemy had constructed to cover their works." On the 18th William writes, "Affairs here go on tolerably well, though not as expeditiously as I could wish. Yesterday, we made our lodgment in the counterscarp, and I now flatter myself that we shall soon be masters of the town. I cannot sufficiently applaud the firmness and valour of the troops. It is very grievous to lose so many brave men, but it cannot be avoided in a siege like this." ‡ It was on this occasion that William exclaimed to the elector of Bavaria, who stood by his side, "See my brave English! See my brave English!" On the 28th of July the king writes to his Secretary of State: "Although you will doubtless have heard of the surrender of Namur before you receive this letter, yet I would not omit informing you myself, that we obtained possession of this place this afternoon. The day after to-morrow we shall open the trenches before the citadel, and I hope that God will also bless this enterprise; and that we shall soon be masters of it." § On the 15th of August Portland writes to Shrewsbury: "The king having slept little last night, and been on horseback the whole day, has ordered me to tell you, sir, that it is impossible for him to write this evening. Affairs here are at a great crisis. The siege of the citadel advances rapidly; the breach begins to be practicable, and I think a little time will render us masters of it, unless the enemy succour it by gaining a battle, since they approach us with a very numerous army." The two armies, that of William and of Villeroy, stood for three days in presence of each other, whilst the siege was proceeding under an incessant bombardment. On the 16th of August, the French army retired. The elector of Bavaria had the immediate charge of the siege, whilst the king was watching Villeroy; and when it was known that the French had moved off, the storm of the citadel of Namur commenced. Portland had summoned Boufflers to surrender upon the retirement of Villeroy, but the French commander still held out. The assault was undertaken by the Bavarians, the Dutch, the Brandenburgers, and the English. The Brandenburgers had amongst their leaders, the

* "Tristram Shandy," vol. i. c. xxvi. † "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 90.
‡ *Ibid.*, p. 94. § *Ibid.*, p. 98.

prince of Anhalt-Dessau, a young man of nineteen, who afterwards had the honour of introducing important changes in military science. "He invented the iron ramrod; he invented the equal step; in fact, he is the inventor of modern military tactics." * The Dutch and Brandenburgers accomplished their duty with little difficulty. The Bavarians suffered severe loss. The English, under Cutts, were at first driven back; but their intrepid commander, though wounded, led them on again, and they carried a battery which had swept away many in its deadly fire. Two thousand men were sacrificed in this terrible assault. Boufflers demanded a truce to bury the dead. He also intimated a desire to capitulate, but asked for a delay of ten days, when he would yield if not relieved. This request was refused; another storm was threatened; but on the twentieth he agreed to surrender with the honours of war.† On the twenty-sixth of August, the French garrison, now reduced to five thousand men, marched out. But the brave marshal was detained a prisoner. William resolved to keep him till the garrisons of Dixmuyde and Deynse should be restored. Louis sent full powers to Boufflers to comply; and he was released after ten days' detention. On the day after the surrender William wrote to Shrewsbury, to announce the capture of the citadel of Namur: "With all its circumstances it is assuredly a great event, and we cannot sufficiently offer up our thanks to God for this success, from which we shall doubtless derive considerable advantages." ‡ On the same day Portland wrote to Shrewsbury: "The English have greatly signalised themselves in this siege, by their share in the vigorous actions which have occurred, in which they have been *too much* animated by the presence of the king himself. But, thank God, he is very well. The fatigue he has suffered is incredible, as well as the care and trouble he has undergone, and is able to support." § When we contemplate this feeble-bodied man with the most heroic spirit, one day in the trenches; another day on horseback from morning till night, expecting a battle with Villeroy; we can understand the confidence which he had won, in spite of repeated miscarriages and disappointments. The English, who were never wanting in their estimate of personal bravery, would follow such a leader through every hazard of war. The coolness of this model of self-command was amongst his most valuable qualities. One day, when William was in the trenches, the deputy-

* Carlyle, "History of Friedrich II.," vol. i. p. 395.

† The reader who compares modern historians will find, in the accounts of this siege, discrepancies as to dates. They proceed from the difference between the old and new styles. We follow in this instance the original narratives which give the old style.

‡ "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 103.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

governor of the Bank of England placed himself at his side. "Mr. Godfrey," said the king, "why do you expose yourself?" The Londoner replied, "Not being more exposed than your majesty, should I be excusable if I showed more concern?" William, who had an especial objection to men going beyond their commission, replied, "I am in my duty, and therefore have a more reasonable claim to preservation." A cannon-ball in a few minutes finished the career of the over-zealous amateur. But whilst we admire the resolution and perseverance of William, and the undaunted courage of all the troops of the allies, we must not forget that much of the success was due to the science of the engineer, Coehorn, the great rival of Vauban. When Namur was taken by the French in 1692, the forts which Coehorn had constructed for its defence could not resist the besiegers. He was now to devise the most scientific means of attack upon works which he had constructed, and which Vauban had perfected. He had the gratification of seeing this place of strength pass out of the hands of the power that had held it for three years.

The return of William to England was hailed by the popular enthusiasm which naturally attends success. The good man struggling with misfortune may be the noblest sight in the world, but it calls forth no huzzas or bell-ringings. The king reached Kensington through the illuminated streets on the night of the 10th of October, and immediately went to business. A Proclamation was issued for a new Parliament. In a week William set forth upon a most unusual mission, to propitiate the people by showing himself amongst them. He visited Newmarket; was entertained by the earl of Sunderland at Althorpe, and by the duke of Newcastle at Welbeck. He hunted in Sherwood forest, amidst oaks which tradition associates with the memory of the courteous outlaw, who once reigned there by the title of his long-bow and his broad arrows. He looked upon those towers of Warwick, where the great king-maker gave law, at a time when the throne rested upon feudalism, and representative government was a dream. William was making his holiday tour, to incline those who had to choose representatives to send men well affected to the principles of liberty which had placed him upon the throne. At Oxford he had personally to feel that too often the seats of learning are the last to be illumined by the progressive spirit of a generation—the last to perceive that they are halting whilst the great body of a nation are moving onward. The record of Evelyn is quite sufficient to note this fact: "The king went a progress into the north, to show himself to the people against the elections, and was everywhere com-

plimented, except at Oxford, where it was not as he expected; so that he hardly stopped an hour there, and having seen the Theatre, did not receive the banquet proposed." The elections generally were favourable to the government. The Whig party acquired a considerable accession of strength. The taxes were heavy; the currency of the kingdom was in a frightful state of depreciation; the price of grain was unusually high—and yet the nation manifested no alarming discontent. The Jacobites plotted; but they were as far from success as ever.

Looking at the depreciated state of the coinage in 1696, it is difficult to say how far the high price of grain was the natural result of a succession of bad seasons. The years from 1692 to 1699 are known as "the seven barren years." In Scotland there was a dearth approaching to famine. Legislation might have had something to do with the high prices. A bounty upon importation was established in 1689, which might not have sufficiently stimulated production to meet the ordinary wants of the people under the extraordinary drain of the war. The average price of wheat from the Restoration to 1691 was about forty-eight shillings a quarter. From 1692 to 1699 the average price was about sixty-two shillings. A very factious member of Parliament, sir John Knight, made a speech in 1694, in which he complains that corn is sent out of the country "for the use of our Dutch allies, to enable them to live cheap, by making the same dear at home." He would have shown a better knowledge of the matter if he had said that the Dutch bought the corn cheaper than the natural rate, through the bounty, and then sold it in England again at a profit. The necessity, however, for feeding the armies abroad must have had a material influence on the market. But even the needful consumption and inevitable waste of four campaigns was not wholly without some compensating good: "In Norfolk and Suffolk, and in Lincolnshire, there was a wonderful improvement in husbandry and tillage; for the war was of great advantage to the farmers, who exported corn into Holland." *

The defective state of the coinage was now to be effectually redressed. The evil had become insupportable. The established prescription of the gallows was found to be no remedy for the disease. In July, 1694, we read, "many executed at London for clipping money, now done to that intolerable extent, that there was hardly any money that was worth above half the nominal value." † A writer of the period, who speaks with full knowledge of his subject, says that "the almost fatal symptoms of the general cor-

* Cunningham. "History," vol. i. p. 153. † Evelyn.

ruption of the silver money, like covered flames or distracted torrents, universally broke out upon the nation, as it were at once. Guineas on a sudden rose to thirty shillings per piece; all currency of other money was stopped; hardly any had wherewith to pay; public securities sank to about a moiety of their original value, and buyers hard to be found even at these prices; no man knew what he was worth; the course of trade and correspondency almost universally stopped; the poorer sort of people plunged into inexpressible distress, and, as it were, left perishing, whilst even the richer had hardly wherewith to go to market for obtaining the common conveniences of life." This writer adds that "the intolerable corruption of the coin was alone sufficient to have provoked any nation on earth to extremities. . . . . Nevertheless, the remainder of gratitude in the people to their deliverer, king William, was even still such, that they bore these inexpressible afflictions with an inimitable temper and patience." * It is difficult to understand these seemingly exaggerated phrases of "fatal symptoms," "inexpressible distress," "intolerable corruption of the coin," without some explanation. Those of us who lived in the latter years of George III. can recollect the time when there was not a sixpence, shilling, or half-crown, in circulation, that was not worn perfectly smooth. These coins, which had originally come from the Royal Mint, were not counterfeits. They passed as counters. But their real value was not tested by their circulation in common with any new coinage. In 1695, of the various coinages of Elizabeth, of James I., and of Charles I., it was computed that five millions were in circulation, in common with about half-a-million of the new coinages of Charles II., James II., and William III. The old money, which had no milled edge, had been gradually clipped, so that at last the current silver coin had been diminished in weight nearly one-half. Of this clipped money four millions were considered to be in circulation; whilst one million six hundred thousand pounds of unclipped coin were hoarded, or only appeared occasionally in remote places.† As fast as new silver coins were issued from the Mint they disappeared. They were worth twice as much as the old clipped coin. Whilst a single unclipped shilling was circulating in the same town with the shilling that was not intrinsically worth more than sixpence, traders would perpetually demand the honest shilling from their customers, and not being able to get it would put a higher price upon their com-

* "Wednesday Club," 1717, quoted in Bannister's "Life of Paterson," p. 105.

† "Essay for the Amendment of the Silver Coins, 1695," quoted in Tindal, vol. iii., p. 305.

modities to bear a proportion with the clipped shilling. The labourer who was paid his weekly wages in the depreciated coin could only obtain a small loaf instead of a large one. The dealer who had to make remittances in guineas, or in bills which represented guineas, was obliged to give at least thirty shillings to obtain the guinea. The money-changers and bankers were making large fortunes out of the perplexities of all those who had to sell or to buy. Evelyn grumbles that "Duncombe, not long since a mean goldsmith, had made a purchase of the late duke of Buckingham's estate at near 90,000*l.*, and reputed to have near as much in cash:"

> "And Helmsley, once proud Buckingham's delight,
> Slides to a scrivener or a city knight." *

The new Parliament was opened on the 22nd of November. The most important part of the king's speech was that in which he said, "I must take notice of a great difficulty we lie under at this time, by reason of the ill state of the coin, the redress of which may perhaps prove a further charge to the nation. How were these words to be interpreted? Was the nation to bear the great loss of converting four millions of money intrinsically worth only two millions, into money of the true standard? Was the public to sustain a loss of two millions? The subject had been widely agitated. It had been proposed to issue money of less than the intrinsic value to replace the old—to make a ninepenny shilling that would pass for twelvepence. Though the great merchant, Dudley North, who was also a great political economist, opposed the plan that was ultimately carried, he saw that a coin could not be treated as if it were only a counter: "What is true may be remembered, which is, that money went to foreign markets, and would not, as at home, pass by a stamp or denomination, but must be weighty" †—must pass at its real weight. He had proclaimed the sound doctrine, "that debasing the coin is defrauding one another." Locke demolished the theory of the little shilling in a masterly tract. His opinion was, that after a certain time the old money should only pass by weight, and that upon this principle it should be exchanged for silver coinage of which a shilling should be worth twelvepence. By this plan the State would have effected the restoration of the currency without a national cost,—but at the price of what individual misery! When the House of Commons came to debate this important question, the resolutions proposed by Montague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were finally agreed to. A new coinage of intrinsic value was to be issued; the loss of the clipped

* Pope. "Imitations of Horace," Sat. ii. † "Life of Dudley North," p. 172.

money was to be borne by the public, for which a special fund was to be provided by a house-tax and a window-tax. This was something like a revival of the hearth-money, but cottages were exempt. Up to the 4th of May the clipped money would be received in payment of taxes. The old money had then mostly disappeared; but the mechanical resources of that time were not sufficient to produce the new money in sufficient quantity to carry on the exchanges of the people. The difficulty was in some measure relieved by the issue of Exchequer-bills. The difficulty was conquered when Newton was appointed Master of the Mint, and by vast exertions, connected with the establishment of provincial mints, gradually sent forth a supply of circulating medium equal to the demand. The distress and confusion had been enormous; but those who had thought the great change was ill-managed, at last said, "better and worse in the means is not to be reflected upon, when a great good is obtained in the end." *

On the day on which the Royal Assent was given to the Recoinage Bill, the Bill "for regulating trials in cases of Treason and Misprision of Treason" also became law. This salutary measure had been repeatedly lost by the opposition of the Commons to a clause introduced by the Peers, with reference to trials of members of their own order.† The Commons no longer opposed the wishes of the Upper House. One of the most important of the clauses of this Statute, by which some of the injustice of the old modes of trial was obviated was, that prisoners should be admitted to make their defence by counsel learned in the law. History has properly recorded the effect produced by Anthony Ashley Cooper, lord Ashley, the author of the "Characteristics," in his maiden speech in the Commons. When he rose to speak, he hesitated, looked bewildered, was still silent amidst the encouraging cheers of the House, and at last said, "If I, sir, who rise only to give my opinion on the Bill now depending, am so confounded that I am unable to express the least of what I proposed to say, what must the condition of that man be, who, without any assistance, is pleading for his life, and under apprehensions of being deprived of it?" We need not ask whether this stroke of genius was premeditated. Very soon after the meeting of Parliament, an unpleasant question arose which affected the popularity of the king. The Commons, though the factious hostility to William had greatly abated, came to a Resolution to mark their dislike of some token of lavish favour which he had shown to his Dutch friends. He had ordered a grant to the earl of Portland of a mag-

* "Life of Dudley North," p. 172. † See vol. iv. p. 558.

nificent estate in Denbighshire, being a part of the hereditary domain of the Crown. A sensible Address was carried unanimously, in which William was told, that the manors now intended to be granted had been usually annexed to the principality of Wales, and settled on the princes of Wales for their support; and that such grant was in diminution of the honour and interest of the Crown. The king answered the Commons who went up with the Address, "Gentlemen, I have a kindness for my lord Portland, which he has deserved of me by loving and faithful services, but I should not have given him the lands, if I had imagined the House of Commons could have been concerned. I will therefore recall the grant, and find some other way of showing my favour to him." It was well that a constitutional king should learn a lesson which had never been taught to the Stuarts, when they alienated the domains of the Crown for the endowment of their minions and of their illegitimate children.

On the 24th of February the king went to the House of Peers, and told the assembled Lords and Commons, that he was come that day upon an extraordinary occasion: "I have received several concurring informations of a design to assassinate me; and that our enemies at the same time are very forward in their preparation for a sudden invasion of this kingdom." He had given orders, he said, regarding the fleet; he had sent for troops home; some of the conspirators were already in custody, and measures were taken for the apprehension of the rest. The Houses immediately determined upon a joint Address to the king; carried a Bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; and passed another Bill that the Parliament should not be dissolved by the death of William. It was then resolved in the Commons that the members should enter into an Association, testifying and declaring "that his present majesty king William is rightful and lawful king of these realms," and pledging themselves in the following words: "We do mutually promise to engage to stand by and assist each other to the utmost of our power, in the support and defence of his majesty's most sacred person and government, against the late king James and all his adherents. And in case his majesty come to any violent or untimely death, which God forbid, we do hereby further freely and unanimously oblige ourselves to unite, associate, and stand by each other, in revenging the same upon his enemies and their adherents, and in supporting and defending the succession of the Crown, according to an Act made in the first year of the reign of king William and queen Mary, entitled 'An Act declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession of the

Crown.'" A similar Association was formed by the Peers. But the words "rightful and lawful king of these realms" were changed to these—"That king William hath the right by law to the Crown of these realms; and that neither king James nor the pretended prince of Wales, nor any other person, hath any right whatsoever to the same." Some members of each House hesitated to sign; but they formed a small minority; and the nation generally entered with unwonted cordiality into a similar engagement. The project of the invasion of the kingdom and the concurrent assassination of the king, which thus roused the nation to rally round the throne, was a plot of no ordinary magnitude. There are ample materials for a connected narrative of this event, the most important in some respects of the reign of William; and those documents which recent years have brought to light render some aid in the solution of an interesting historical problem—Whether the atrocious scheme of assassinating his rival was suggested, or adopted, or encouraged directly or indirectly, by James himself.

The original auto-biographical Memoirs of James that touch upon this interesting period have been preserved.* He tells us that having been informed at the beginning of 1696 that the affairs of the prince of Orange did not wear so favourable an aspect as formerly—that the country party gave him trouble and vexation—his own friends, called Jacobites, thought it "a good occasion to blow the coals." These friends proposed that he should land in England with ten or twelve thousand men, when they were sure "the greatest part of the nation would rise and restore him." James communicated this "to His Most Christian Majesty," who promised the troops, but thought it would be best that these ardent Jacobites "should rise first." The narrative thus continues: "Upon this, the duke of Berwick was sent over to head them in case they could be persuaded to rise first; and about the same time several officers, and other persons who had served, desired leave to go over into England and Scotland upon their private concerns." These "gentlemen of the guard" and others, who went over to England upon their private concerns, "had directions to join themselves with any that should rise and declare for the king, being most of them men of experience." The duke of Berwick was the illegitimate son of James.

On the 27th of December, sir George Barclay, a Scot who had served under Dundee, received a Commission from James, which, he says, in his narrative published in the Life of James, "was exactly as follows: 'James R. Our will and pleasure is and we do

* "Life of James," vol. ii., p. 538.