

part in the Assassination Plot, although he knew of it; but he had made large preparations for assisting in a foreign invasion. Sir William Parkyns, as we have seen, was an active participator in the design to kill the king. Three other conspirators, Rookwood, Cranborne, and Lowick, were tried. They were all convicted, and all suffered the death of traitors.

The effect upon the temper of the nation of the discovery of this Jacobite Plot is forcibly expressed in the "Diary" of Evelyn: "Though many did formerly pity King James' condition, this design of assassination, and bringing over a French army, alienated many of his friends, and was likely to produce a more perfect establishment of king William."

The complete discomfiture of the plans of St. Germain is thus mentioned by the compiler of the Life of James: "This intended attempt being thus discovered, it raised such a ferment in the nation as put an end to the king's real design of landing, by making it impossible for his friends to assemble, they having enough to do to secure themselves from the strict and universal search which this discovery occasioned." No one who looks carefully at the evidence in this affair can doubt that "the king's real design of landing" came to an end when he knew that Sir George Barclay had not been able to carry out his commission "to make war upon the prince of Orange," by stopping that prince's coach as it was dragged through the miry and narrow lane at Turnham Green, and with his eight good men, armed with pistols and "strong pushing swords," putting to death the hated usurper who was unlawfully called king of England.

CHAPTER II.

William in the Netherlands.—His Financial Embarrassments.—Great Crisis of Commercial Difficulty.—Revival of Credit.—The New Currency established.—Attainder of Sir John Fenwick.—Negotiations for Peace.—The Peace of Ryswick.—Opening of St. Paul's Cathedral.—Parliament.—Reduction of the Army.—Dangers of an insufficient Force.—The East India Company.—Statute against Socinians.—Reformation of Manners.—Societies for Promoting Christian Knowledge and for the Propagation of the Gospel.—Licentiousness of the Stage.—Embassy to France.—French Embassy to England.—Czar of Muscovy in England.

AFTER these harassing events, had taken their course, William departed for the continent, to encounter dangers and difficulties far more oppressive than the risks of a battle—more insupportable to such a man than any dread of the assassin's knife. He left London in the very crisis of the monetary change, and was in Holland on the 7th of May. On the 22nd of May the king wrote to Shrewsbury from the Hague. He informed his Secretary of State that the French army had first taken the field; that the allied troops assemble as well as they can, but find it difficult to join, as the enemy had far advanced in great force. There was another reason, he said. The troops "in Flanders are so much in want of money, that they can scarcely move; and if the Treasury do not find prompt means to furnish supplies, I know not how I can possibly act."* On the 25th of May, Shrewsbury wrote to William in great alarm: "We discoursed this morning with several of the most eminent goldsmiths, and with some of the Bank, and had the smallest accounts from them of the state of credit in this town, and of the effect it would soon have upon all the traders in money; none of them being able to propose a remedy, except letting the Parliament sit in June, and enacting the clipped money to go again;—the very hope of which locks up all the gold and good money, and would be to undo all that has been done."† The Lords Justices, who had the charge of affairs in William's absence, were to a great extent helpless. They saw clearly what locked up all the gold and good money; but to retrace their steps would have been fatal. Their position was one of extreme difficulty. Public clamour was loud in its demand "that clipped money should be cur-

* "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 114. † *Ibid.*, p. 116.

rent again; that the standard should be advanced, and the price of guineas improved." Temporary aid which they expected had failed the government. An Act had been passed in the previous session for establishing a national Land Bank—a bank which was to lend money on mortgages, and to lend also to the State. Land and Trade were two rival interests. Trade, or the moneyed interest, would not subscribe any portion of the two millions and a half that were required to establish the Land Bank; and Land was looking for aid to the new scheme, in the shape of loans, and had no cash to spare in the shape of subscriptions. The scheme utterly broke down; and, at the same time, through the difficulties connected with the re-coinage, the Bank of England could not pay its notes in specie. There was one universal panic throughout the land. There was a bold issue of small exchequer-bills, of which there was considerable distrust. The Bank of England endorsed their notes with a promise to pay in the new money when it came forth, and meanwhile to pay interest at the rate of 15 per cent. Merchants and smaller traders exchanged their promissory notes. But in spite of every expedient the nation was quickly coming to the condition of semi-civilization—barter. Of all the sufferers in this crisis it is impossible to conceive a man placed in a more distressing condition than the sovereign who was to fight the battles of his country at the head of a great European confederation. "In the name of God, determine quickly to find some credit for the troops here, or we are ruined," he writes on June 4th. "We are here reduced to greater extremities than ever, for want of money; and if we do not soon receive some remittances the army will be disbanded," is his language on the 23rd of July. On the 30th, he says, "The letter from the Lords Justices has quite overcome me; and I know not where I am, since at present I see no resource which can prevent the army from mutiny or total desertion." The king then adds a most remarkable sentence: "If you cannot devise expedients to send contributions, or procure credit, all is lost, and I must go to the Indies." From such a man these words cannot be regarded as the mere impatience of disappointment. The army, whose mutiny or total desertion was imminent, stood between Louis of France and the subjugation of Holland. If Holland became a province of France, England would soon be in the same condition, with a Stuart viceroy under the conquering Bourbon. What then remained? To found a great maritime and commercial empire in the Dutch settlements—to call up the spirit of colonial freedom to balance the despotism of the old world. On the 31st the king sends Portland to England to arrange about assem-

bling Parliament: "Rather than perish all must be risked." Shrewsbury wrote a desponding answer to Portland's communications; and then William in his reply expressed that noble sentiment which every Englishman ought to bear in mind in the day of public calamity and fear,— "May God relieve us from our present embarrassment, for I cannot suppose that it is His will to suffer a nation to perish which he has so often almost miraculously saved, though we have too well deserved it."* The heroic confidence of William had revived. "He was a man that knew how to meet adversity. His life had been one continued struggle with difficulties; but it had been the fixed rule of that life to encounter them with an unshaken fortitude, and a rigid adherence to what he considered to be right."† He would not "go to the Indies." The nation that God had "so often almost miraculously saved" would be saved again, even in the dire extremity of this time. It has been said with great truth, "the vessel of our commonwealth has never been so close to shipwreck as in this period."‡

On the 15th of August there was a great meeting of the General Court of the Bank of England to discuss an earnest appeal that had been made to them by the king's ministers, for an advance of two hundred thousand pounds. Very reluctantly had this application been made. Shrewsbury was in despair. He wrote to the king, "a loan from the city is much doubted, by the incapacity which has appeared in many to discharge the bills which have been drawn upon them from all parts. If the application to the Bank should not succeed, God knows what can be done." But he adds, "yet anything must be tried and ventured, rather than lie down and die."§ The application to the Bank did succeed. Immediate relief to the necessities of William, however small, was obtained. But he was not in a condition to carry on the campaign with any vigour. His difficulties were set forth with considerable exaggeration by the French. The Jacobites were everywhere rejoicing. But time was working that change, from temporary financial distress to growing ease and eventual relief, which is almost certain when the resources of industry are not exhausted, and the great body of the people are not alienated from a government. The embarrassments of the English had induced the duke of Savoy to make a separate peace with France. Everywhere there were signs of a defection from the alliance of which William was the heart and soul. He came home at the beginning of October. He met the

* "Shrewsbury Correspondence," pp. 119, 127, 129, 130, 132.

† Mr. Huskisson's Speech, June 11, 1822.

‡ Hallam, chap. xv.

§ "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 135.

Parliament on the 20th of that month. In him the indomitable resolution with which he had encountered so many adverse contingencies spoke out, when he said, "It is fit for me to acquaint you that some overtures have been made, in order to the entering upon a negotiation for a general Peace; but I am sure we shall agree in opinion, that the only way of treating with France is with our swords in our hands; and that we can have no reason to expect a safe and honourable peace, but by showing ourselves prepared to make a vigorous and effectual war." This was not the language of a bankrupt king; it was not addressed to a bankrupt nation. There were evident symptoms that the great difficulty of the currency was in some degree passing away. Had the government evinced the slightest disposition to recede from the measure of re-coinage; to reduce the standard; to raise the denomination of the coin, the evil would never have been cured. The very first measure of the Commons was to pass this resolution—"That they would not alter the standard of the gold and silver, in fineness, weight, or denomination; and that they will make good all parliamentary funds since his majesty's accession to the Crown, that have been made credits for loans from the subject." The effect of this true statesmanship for which the honour is mainly due to Montague, was instantaneous. The expectations of those who hoarded guineas in the belief that a guinea would pass for thirty shillings,—of those who hoarded crowns in the belief that what was worth five shillings would exchange for commodities at the value of seven shillings and sixpence,—were at an end. The true money flowed into circulation. Trade revived. The financial and commercial crisis was past. The nation was solvent. A hundred and twenty-six years afterwards, one of the ablest of English statesmen, in resisting a motion against the Resumption of Cash Payments on the ground of agricultural distress, rested his most powerful arguments on the great historical precedent of 1696, and concluded his convincing speech, by moving, in the very words of Montague's resolution, "That this House will not alter the standard of gold and silver, in fineness, weight, or denomination." England fought through the great currency change of 1822 as England had thrown off the far heavier weight, looking at the nation's comparative resources, of the change in 1696. The same spirit of the people was manifested at each crisis. A financier of the earlier period thus speaks of his contemporaries: "While our neighbouring nations expected we should sink under this burden, and some were even prepared to receive us as a prov-

* Huskisson's "Speeches," vol. ii. p. 166.

ince, the strength of mind, constancy, and magnanimity of our people overcame it all."*

The two houses of Parliament were occupied, during this session, with the extraordinary proceedings under a Bill of Attainder against sir John Fenwick. The historical narratives of this event are, for the most part, as lengthy as the parliamentary debates. A very slight summary is all that we can attempt to give of an affair which has far more to do with the history of party than with the history of the nation; and of which the only thing of any real importance, after an interval of more than a century and a half, is the constitutional question of procedure by attainder.

In the deposition of Goodman, one of the witnesses for the Crown in the Assassination Plot, he implicated sir John Fenwick, as being, in conjunction with Friend, Parkyns, and others, in correspondence with James upon a projected invasion, and that Fenwick used to send over a list of the forces in England, and of their disposition. Porter, another of the conspirators, gave his testimony to a similar effect. Fenwick attempted to fly into France, under the assumed name of Thomas Ward; but in June he was apprehended at New Romney, in Kent. Fenwick was highly connected: he was a baronet of an ancient family. A letter which he had addressed to his wife, upon his apprehension, was intercepted. He exhorted her to make all friends: "I know nothing," he said, "can save my life, but my lord Carlisle's going over to him, [king William], backed by the rest of the family of the Howards, to beg it." In another passage, he says, "I cannot think what else to say, but the great care must be the jury. If two or three could be got that would starve the rest, that, or nothing can save me." Fenwick, being ordered for trial, offered to give evidence of great importance; and was visited in prison by the duke of Devonshire, at the king's desire. In a written paper he implicated Shrewsbury and Godolphin, Marlborough and Russell, as having been in communication with James at various times. The paper was transmitted to William, who probably knew as much of these general treacheries as Fenwick could tell him. He transmitted the paper to Shrewsbury, saying, "You may judge of my astonishment at his effrontery in accusing you. You will observe the sincerity of this honest man who only accuses those in my service, and not one of his own party." † William was desirous that Fenwick should be brought to trial before the public affairs demanded his own return to England. There was a diffi-

* "Wednesday Club," quoted in "Life of Paterson," p. 108.

† "Shrewsbury Correspondence," p. 145.

culty. Goodman had been tampered with, and could nowhere be discovered. Fenwick, in his letter to his wife, had said, "Money, I know, would do it; but alas, that is not to be had." The indefatigable aunt of the earl of Carlisle did accomplish the means of preventing the evidence of Goodman before a jury. Two witnesses were required by law in cases of treason; one only was forthcoming. It was resolved to proceed against Fenwick by Bill of Attainder, in which the deficient legal evidence could be supplied by the previous deposition of Goodman before the Privy Council, and by the evidence of two grand jurymen as to what he had sworn when the Bill of Indictment was found by them. This proceeding was altogether irregular, although the crime of Fenwick was conclusively established. The most prolonged and violent discussions therefore ensued, both in the Lords and Commons, as to the passing of this Bill. In the Commons the majority for the Bill was only thirty-three; in the Lords only seven. "The debates," says Burnet, "were the hottest, and held the longest, of any that I ever knew." Fenwick, previous to the Bill being moved in the Commons, had been brought to the bar, and persisted in refusing to make any further confession. Lord Hardwicke, in a note on Burnet, says, "The king, before the session, had sir J. Fenwick brought to the Cabinet Council, where he was present himself. But sir John would not explain his paper."* In another note he says: "My father was told by the duke of Newcastle, that his father, the first lord Pelham, then a lord of the Treasury, and a staunch Whig, voted against the Bill, because he thought it hard to put a man to death, who, on compulsion, that is, to save his life, had told disagreeable truths. And the management of party was such, that sir J. Fenwick was prevented from speaking out, lest he should exasperate the great men on both sides, who knew he could tell tales. The consequence was, that he was afraid to affirm his own tale, and lost his life." † He suffered death on the 28th of January. The proceeding by Attainder is a blot upon the reputation of the Whigs, as defenders of public liberty. The conversion of such a solemn act into a revengeful party proceeding, is disgraceful to many of the statesmen of that time. "It is now well known that Fenwick's discoveries went not a step beyond the truth." ‡

The king closed the Session of Parliament on the 16th of April, 1697, and on the 26th embarked for Holland. He had promoted Somers to be Lord Chancellor instead of Keeper of the Great Seal, and had created him a Peer. Russell was created earl of Oxford. Montague obtained the higher office of First Lord of the Treasury.

* Oxford edit. vol. iv. p. 323.

† *Ibid.*, p. 324.

‡ Hallam, chap. xv.

The campaign in the Netherlands was distinguished only by one considerable event—William rescued Brussels from a second bombardment. He outmarched the French generals by a rapid night movement over the plain of Waterloo, and through the forest of Soignies, and encamping near Brussels, entrenched himself and saved the city.

In his speech at the close of the Session of Parliament, the king had alluded, though not in very decided terms, to the possibility that an honourable peace might be agreed to. The difficulty of concluding a general pacification was less on the part of France than on the part of some of the allies. Spain was haughty and intractable, though she had rendered little assistance in the war. The emperor of Germany wanted the war prolonged, with a view to his own interest in the succession to the crown of Spain. Plenipotentiaries were appointed by the several powers to discuss the terms of a treaty with the ministers of France. They disputed long as to the place of meeting. At last it was agreed that their conferences should be held at Newburg House, a palace belonging to William in the village of Ryswick, between the Hague and Delft. The earl of Pembroke, and others on the part of England; Harlay as the representative of France; the accredited agents of Spain, of the Emperor, of Sweden and of other minor powers—these met twice a week with solemn bows and ceremonial speeches. At the end of June they had concluded nothing, with their infinitude of protocols. The French and English armies were facing each other in the neighbourhood of Brussels. This state neither of peace nor war was not suited to the decisive temper of William. In each of the armies there was a man who could interpret in a straightforward manner the wishes of their respective sovereigns. Portland was thoroughly in the confidence of William. He sent a message to Boufflers, who had been his prisoner for a few days after the capture of Namur, when they formed that sort of intimacy that often springs up between generous enemies. Portland desired half an hour's private conversation with Boufflers, at some place between the two armies. Boufflers asked the consent of his sovereign, and received it, with the condition that he should repair "to this rendezvous with all the dignity becoming a marshal of France, who commands one of my armies."* He was to speak as little as possible, and to draw from Portland all he could—a very general rule in that mysterious science called diplomacy. They met on the 8th of July at the village of Brucom, a short distance from Halle; standing apart from their attendants in an orchard. They had

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 5.

four subsequent discussions in open places, where walls could tell no secrets. Portland was authorized to say at the first interview, that William, on the part of England and of the States General, was satisfied with the terms of territorial arrangement that Louis had proposed, provided satisfaction should be given upon points which concerned himself personally. At the sixth and last interview they met in a small house, and the points of the negotiation were put into writing. William demanded that Louis should sanction no attempt to disturb the existing order of things in England, by James and his friends; and that the Stuart exiles should remove from France. There is the show of magnanimity in the answer of Louis, that his honour was wounded—"wounded by the proposal that has been made to me to name expressly in the treaty, and to engage to remove from my kingdom, a king who had found no asylum except with me, and no alleviation of his misfortunes except in the manner in which I have received him." As to the objection that whilst James was in France, the secret practices of his party would be encouraged, even against the wishes of Louis, the great king answers in the tone that only absolute power can assume: "All Europe is sufficiently aware of the obedience and submission of my people; and when I shall please to hinder my subjects from assisting the king of England—as I engage to do, by promising not to assist, directly or indirectly, the enemies of the prince of Orange, without any exception—there is no reason to apprehend that he will find any assistance in my kingdom."* Portland waived the point that James should be mentioned by name, provided that Louis agreed not to favour rebellions and intrigues in England, when William would give the like assurance with regard to any factions or rebellions in France. The high-blown pride of Louis was signally manifested at this presumption of William. He writes to Boufflers: "You shall answer to this proposal that this equality of condition cannot take place; and that the submission of my subjects, and the tranquillity of my kingdom, give me no reason to fear either faction or rebellion."† William, however, succeeded in carrying the reciprocal condition. He refused the demand of Louis that a general amnesty should be granted to all the adherents of James. He would pardon offences of men who would live quietly, but he would not consent to such a stipulation on the part of a foreign power. The treaty of Ryswick was concluded between France, England, the States General, and Spain, on the 22nd of September. An extended term was given to the Emperor of Germany to accede to the treaty.

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 21.

† *Ibid.*, p. 86.

On the 26th of November (N.S.) William made his entry into London. Never was public joy more manifest. The evil times had passed away; there was now hope that the nation would go forward in a career of prosperity under a stable government. On that night of universal gratulation, whilst fireworks were displayed, and pitch barrels were blazing, in every open place of London, William wrote from Kensington to his friend Heinsius, "I arrived here this evening, after having passed through the city amidst the lively acclamations of the people. I do not recollect having ever seen so great an assemblage of well-dressed people. It is impossible to conceive what joy the peace causes here." Well might England rejoice. Her constitutional king was acknowledged by the proud monarch who had so long treated him only as the prince of Orange. He had vindicated the choice of the nation, by nine years of incessant struggle against difficulties which would have crushed any common man. He had established the freedom and independence of the country which had chosen him as its head. When the negotiations were going forward, James issued what he termed a solemn protestation against "all whatsoever that may be treated of, regulated, or stipulated, with the usurper of our kingdoms," and "against all the proceedings of his pretended Parliament, and whatever tends to the subversion of the fundamental laws of our kingdom, particularly to those relating to the succession to our Crowns." He urged upon all princes and potentates to consider how dangerous the precedent of peace with an usurper would prove to themselves; "and since ours is the common cause of all Sovereigns, we call for their assistance in the recovery of our kingdoms."* The unhappy man had not yet learnt that there is something higher than "the cause of all Sovereigns"—the cause of their People.

The 2nd of December, 1697, was a memorable day in England. It was the day of General Thanksgiving for the Peace. It was especially memorable in London; for on that day the new Cathedral of Saint Paul's, which, for twenty-two years, had been gradually rising out of the ashes of the old Cathedral, was opened for divine worship. The king was to have attended this opening; but he heard Burnet preach at Whitehall, for he was told that if he went to Saint Paul's the streets would be so filled with spectators that all the parish churches would be forsaken. No crowd was assembled within the walls of the noble temple on that day of national thanksgiving; for the choir alone was constructed with a view to the performance of the ordinary ritual of Protestant worship.

* "Life of James II.," vol. ii. p. 572.

There, Compton, bishop of London, preached; there, the lord-mayor and aldermen represented the commonalty of London. Great public occasions have been since, when the vast spaces beyond that choir have been filled with multitudes. There is one annual solemnity when the voices of thousands of children unite here in hymns of adoration. But not till a hundred and sixty-one years had gone by, since the magnificent fabric of Wren had been opened for divine service, was the experiment made of assembling a vast congregation beyond the comparatively narrow limits of the choir, to join in the chaunts of our noble liturgy,—to listen to the preacher who was now to speak to such an assemblage as were once spoken to by the preachers of the Reformation at Paul's Cross. To the mind of the great architect the notion could never have presented itself, that three thousand people would have been seated in attendance on the evening service of each Sunday night of a cold and wet winter—the greater number in the area where the choir, the nave, and the transepts join. Wren could not have imagined that, above those piers which carry the majestic concave to which no one ever looked up without a sense of its grandeur, the vast circle of the dome would be illuminated with many hundreds of jets of flame—brilliant as stars, shedding down a light as of noon-day—produced by an invention unknown to his age of scientific discovery. On those Sunday nights of December, 1858, whilst the simplest chaunts of the cathedral service, and the commonest hymns of a rural congregation, were sung by a choral band of unusual number and skill, the voices of the vast assembly swelled louder than the organ-peal, as if they felt that, for the first time, the colossal fane which rises sublimely over the smoke and mists of London had been applied to its proper uses; that the decent solemnities of the Anglican Church had now acquired a grandeur which, could the pure-minded philosopher who sleeps in the crypt below the dome have foreseen this change, he would have thought that a far nobler destination for the great monument of his genius had been reached than all the pomp of Saint Peter's on its highest festivals.

The Parliament was opened by William on the 3rd of December. The most important passage in the royal speech was this: "The circumstances of affairs abroad are such, that I think myself obliged to tell you my opinion, that, for the present, England cannot be safe without a land-force; and I hope we shall not give those who mean us ill the opportunity of effecting that, under the notion of a peace, which they could not bring to pass by a war." He spoke the language of the sovereign of a free nation when he

said, "That which I most delight in, and am best pleased to own, is, that I have all the proofs of my people's affection that a prince can desire; and I take this occasion to give them the most solemn assurance that, as I never had, so I never will nor can have, any interest separate from theirs." The House of Commons behaved with becoming gratitude to William, in fixing the royal revenue at a liberal amount for his life. They were somewhat precipitate, greatly to his annoyance, in their determination to reduce the army to ten thousand horse and foot. Before the opening of Parliament the question of maintaining an army during peace had been warmly canvassed. The king wrote to Heinsius: "The members who have come from the provinces seem to be strongly prejudiced against this measure, and infinite pains are taken to discredit it in the eyes of the public by speeches and by pamphlets."* In January, the Commons limited the vote for the maintenance of troops for the current year to three hundred and fifty thousand pounds. William again wrote to Heinsius to say how greatly he was embarrassed: "You cannot form an idea of the indifference with which all foreign affairs are now considered. People here only busy themselves about a fanciful liberty, while they are forced to acknowledge that they were never so free, and have nothing to apprehend from me."† In alluding to the clamour for what he calls "a fanciful liberty," William has reference to that popular jealousy of a standing army, which burst out the instant that the army abroad had done its work. The notion then set forth in very able tracts that "a standing army is inconsistent with a free government, and absolutely destructive to the constitution of the English monarchy," has long since passed away. But "the indifference with which foreign affairs are considered" has, again and again, been a cause of deep anxiety, not only to lavish ministers but to disinterested patriots. The arguments that were urged in 1697 against leaving the kingdom in a defenceless state may be applied, with little change, to our own times. "If," says the author of a letter once attributed to Somers, "we were in the same condition that we and our neighbours were an age ago, I should reject the proposition of a standing army with horror. But the case is altered. The whole world, more particularly our neighbours, have now got into the mistaken notion of keeping up a mighty force; and the powerfulest of all these happens to be our next neighbour, who will very probably keep great armies. We may appear too inviting, if we are in such an open and unguarded condition that the success of an attempt may seem to be not only probable, but

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 139.

† *Ibid.*, p. 148.

certain. England is an open country, full of plenty, everywhere able to subsist an army; our towns and cities are all open; our rivers are all fordable; no passes nor strong places can stop an enemy that should land upon us." The writer then contrasts the secrecy and despatch with which an absolute government can carry forward its designs, whilst the measures of a free government must be contrived and executed without the same promptitude and the same concealment. This is good sense at any period; nor is the writer less sound when he points out the essential difference "between troops that have been long trained, who have learned the art and are accustomed to the discipline of war, and the best bodies of raw and undisciplined troops." * These arguments were of little avail. William, with his accustomed imperturbability, wrote to Heinsius,—“I shall get on as well as I can. It is fortunate, however, that they have resolved to give half-pay to all the officers who shall be disbanded. I estimate their number at fifteen hundred, or nearly so; so that, if we could afford it, we should have the means of forming again a considerable army.” †

The most important proceeding of this Session of Parliament was the Bill for settling the long-disputed question of continuing the monopoly of the old East India Company or for establishing a new Company. Fierce were the disputes between these rival traders; and these disputes took that form of party advocacy which is most violent when pecuniary interests are involved. The government, then composed almost exclusively of Whigs, favoured the pretensions of the adventurers who desired to be formed into a new Company, for they had promised to set on foot subscriptions for raising two millions sterling, to be lent for the public service upon interest at eight per cent. The old East India Company had offered to advance seven hundred thousand pounds, at four per cent. The necessities of the time made the offer of the highest sum most acceptable. The Whigs carried the New Company against the Tories, who supported the Old Company. The favoured adventurers were to be called “the English Company.” The body which had been chartered by queen Elizabeth, and called “the London Company,” was to cease trading in three years. But the Old Company had obtained territorial possessions of small extent, and had now made an important acquisition by the purchase of Calcutta, where they had built a stronghold, known as Fort William. The New Company had provided in this Bill for

* “A Letter balancing the necessity of keeping a land-force, with the dangers that may follow on it.”

† Grimblot, vol. i. p. 150.

the charge of sending ambassadors from the Crown to the potentates of the East. They proposed that the king should now send an ambassador extraordinary to the Great Mogul, in whose dominions the original traders had their chief factories and settlements, to desire his favour for the New Company. Sir William Norris, member for Liverpool, accordingly set forth with ample allowance for his dignity. But Aurungzebe, was not propitiated by the professions of the representative of the merchants who came to rival those to whom he had already granted his sublime protection. The ambassador was unable to contend against the prescriptive privileges which had been bestowed upon Englishmen a century before, and which had been confirmed by the successors of Jehangir. The great “Alemgir,” or “Conqueror of the World,” ordered the ambassador to depart from Agra. The discomfited envoy had no choice but to obey, and he died on his way home. In four more years the rival Companies were united.* From that period we may date the gradual extension of the power of the one East India Company, which was ultimately to win for England an empire in Hindustan far more extensive than that of the Mogul conquerors in the height of their grandeur.

In his speech on the opening of Parliament the king said, “I esteem it one of the greatest advantages of the peace that I shall now have leisure to rectify such corruptions or abuses as may have crept into any part of the administration during the war; and effectually to discourage profaneness and immorality.” Two months after, the Commons went up with an Address to the king, praying that he would issue his proclamation commanding all magistrates to put in execution the laws against such profaneness and immorality; and they added a request that he would take measures “for suppressing all pernicious books and pamphlets, which contain in them impious doctrines against the Holy Trinity, and other fundamental articles of our faith.” As the king intimated in his answer, that it was necessary to make some more effectual provision for suppressing the pernicious books and pamphlets to which the Address alluded, an Act was passed, by which it was provided that if any person who had been educated in the Christian religion, or had made profession of the same, should by writing, printing, or teaching, deny the Holy Trinity, or deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures to be of divine authority, he should, for the first offence be disqualified for any office; for the second, be rendered incapable of bringing any action, of purchasing lands, or of being guardian, executor, or legatee. He was moreover to

* See ante, vol. iii. p. 280.

be subject to three years' imprisonment.* That portion of the Statute which related to persons denying the doctrine of the Trinity was repealed by the Act of 53 George III. The law of 1698, with this exception, still remains unrepealed or unmodified. But it is perfectly clear that any attempt to enforce it would be wholly opposed to the spirit of this age,—not that we are less earnest in religious feeling than the generation that passed this Statute, but that we have learnt that opinions are not to be put down by indictments, as long as they are not disgustingly obtruded upon society as an insult to its decencies. In the attack made by the Act of William upon "blasphemous and impious opinions" regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the difficulty, if not the impossibility, was involved of so accurately measuring the difference between orthodoxy and heterodoxy as to enable plain men to decide upon points upon which divines themselves were disputing. Thomas Firmin, a London citizen, was one of the leading advocates of the popular schemes of that day, "for setting the poor to work,"—that is, by providing the labour out of a common public stock which could not be provided by commercial enterprise, and thus increasing production without reference to the demand of the consumers, or making more poor by underselling the producers who were previously in the market. Firmin was, however, a man of real benevolence, and though his schemes on any large scale would be impracticable, his exertions rescued many poor children from idleness and starvation. "He was in great esteem," says Burnet, "for promoting many charitable designs; for looking after the poor of the city and setting them to work; for raising great sums for schools and hospitals, and indeed for charities of all sorts, public and private." This practical Christian was the friend of Tillotson; "he was called a Socinian, but was really an Arian." He was as diligent in propagating his theological tenets as in his less questionable labours. According to Burnet, those who were at work to undermine the government "raised a great outcry against Socinianism, and gave it out that it was likely to overrun all; for archbishop Tillotson and some of the bishops had lived in great friendship with Mr. Firmin, whose charitable temper they thought it became them to encourage." The clergy themselves came to dispute amongst themselves, and thus to be divided by their adversaries into "real and nominal Trinitarians." The spirit of controversy that was again called forth "made the bishops move the king to set out injunctions, requiring them to see to the repressing of error and heresy, with all possible zeal, more particularly in the

* 9 Gul. III. c. 35 (c. 32 in the common printed editions.)

fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and to watch against and hinder the use of new terms or new explanations in these matters. This put a stop to these debates, as Mr. Firmin's death put a stop to the printing and spreading of Socinian books."* How far the Statute which immediately followed Mr. Firmin's death was conducive to the repression of infidelity, may be sufficiently estimated by its progress in the next two reigns, when the test of wit and wisdom, of refinement and taste, was to be a free-thinker after the fashion of Shaftesbury or Bolingbroke.

The Socinian books might have vanished; but the profaneness and immorality, which could not so readily be touched by Act of Parliament, had to be combated by an organization very peculiar to this country. The principle of Association was to come to the aid of the government. Societies for the Reformation of Manners had for some time been in activity. They originated with the Puritans. They were encouraged by Dissenters after the Revolution; and they gradually embraced men of various modes of worship. Their business was to lay informations before the magistrates, of swearers, drunkards, sabbath-breakers, and other offenders, and to appropriate that portion of the fines which were earned by common informers, to purposes of charity. The objection which ever was, and ever will be, against the most honest exertions of such Societies is—that they are not impartial in their visitations. Defoe indignantly attacked the unequal distribution of punishment "in the commonwealth of vice," and boldly said, "till the nobility, gentry, justices of the peace, and clergy, will be pleased either to reform their own manners, or find out some method and power impartially to punish themselves when guilty, we humbly crave leave to object against setting any poor man in the stocks, or sending him to the house of correction for immoralities, as the most unjust and unequal way of proceeding in the world." †

Whatever were the immoralities of the upper classes,—whatever was the laxity of some of the clergy,—there was a spirit growing up which is the best proof of an extending sense of Christian obligation. When the influential members of a community have come to recognize the duty of association, for objects of benevolence of a wider range than their own parish, town, county, or kingdom, there is a principle stirring within them which, if not exaggerated into false enthusiasm, will make them more regardful even of the wants at their own doors. Such an Association was

* Burnet, "Own Time," vol. iv. p. 382.

† "The Poor Man's Plea against all the Proclamations, or Acts of Parliament, for Reformation."

that of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge;" such was the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts;" both established about this period. These Societies were chiefly created and brought into a condition of practical utility by the efforts of one man. A Society had been formed in 1649 under an Act of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, "for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England." It subsisted till after the Restoration; but in that period—one of the decline of genuine Christianity—it fell into disuse. Thomas Bray, a native of Shropshire, born in 1656, was educated at Hart Hall, Oxford. Whilst he held the benefice of Sheldon he published a very useful work, "Catechetical Lectures." The Governor and Assembly of the Colony of Maryland, having established a legal maintenance for ministers of the church, Dr. Bray was appointed a Commissary, or general Superintendent. One of his first labours, after selecting proper persons to be sent, was to provide Libraries for their use. Another of his valuable designs was to establish lending Libraries in England and Wales for the use of the clergy. He was truly the founder of those Parochial Libraries, established by Act of Parliament in 1708, which, if they had been carried forward with corresponding energy, would have tended to dissipate some of that ignorance amongst the people generally which it has been a main object in our own time to remove. To this admirable man was mainly owing the establishment of the two great and venerable Societies which still maintain their utility in connexion with the Church of England.

With a clergy even more zealous and united than the churchmen of the end of the seventeenth century—a clergy learned, logical, argumentative, but rarely touching the hearts of their hearers—the counteracting influences to such a Society as that for promoting Christian Knowledge were very great. Not the least of these opposing influences was the licentiousness of the Stage. In 1697, Sunderland, as Lord Chamberlain, had issued an order to prevent the profaneness and immorality of the acted drama. In 1699, the Master of the Revels represented that the actors did not leave out such profane and indecent expressions as he had ordered to be omitted. The king therefore issued his command that nothing hereafter should be acted contrary to religion and good manners. How this command was obeyed let Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh inform us. The Master of the Revels might refuse "to license any plays containing irreligious or immoral expressions," as he was commanded; but the Master of the Revels probably made no attempt to remonstrate against performances in

which the phraseology might be tolerably decent, but of which the whole structure of the action was to represent chastity as the thin disguise of scheming women, and the pursuit of adultery as the proper business of refined gentlemen; to make the sober citizen the butt of the profligates who invaded his domestic hearth; to exhibit the triumphs of intellect in the schemes of venal lacqueys to aid the intrigues of their masters, and of odious waiting-maids to surround their mistresses with opportunities of temptation. Was this a true picture of Society? We believe not. None of these writers, with all their wit and vivacity, ever looked beyond the periwigs and point laces, the stomachers and towering caps, that they saw in the side-boxes. The great middle class was wholly unknown to them—that class which, although it had cast aside some of those severities of puritanism which confounded innocent gaiety with vice, was not inclined to adopt the principle inculcated by the dramatists that stupidity and decency were inseparable. There was an earnest public in England that disliked the Stage because it was corrupting. Defoe was of this number, and he wrote against the drama with little of his usual discrimination. Jeremy Collier took a bolder course, and smote down the individual writers who made plays "the greatest debauchers of the nation," as Burnet says. He had even Dryden at his feet, when the great poet acknowledges, "In many things he has taxed me justly. . . . It becomes not me to draw my pen in defence of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one." Dryden maintains, however, that Fletcher's "Custom of the Country" is more offensive than any of the plays then acted. "Are the times," he asks, "so much more reformed now, than they were five and twenty years ago?"* Unquestionably they were more reformed. But the morality of the age of the Restoration still tainted the Stage of the Revolution. Charles the Second brought to England the manners of the Court of France in the days of its worst profligacy. Since then, the Court of France had grown devout and decent. Burnet says, "It is a shame to our nation and religion to see the stage so reformed in France, and so polluted still in England."† The Court of William and Mary, in its seclusion at Kensington, had little influence upon the world of fashion; and thus there was no perceptible effect upon manners in the decorous example of the highest in the land. Burnet was pretty right in his antithesis—"The stage is the great corrupter of the town, and the bad people of the town have been the chief corrupters of the stage."‡

* Preface to the "Fables." † "Own Time," vol. vi. p. 263. ‡ *Ibid.*