

against his enemies, and giving ample proof of how great meanness the bulk of mankind is capable, putting on the air of a saint upon a lewd, drunken, pampered man; dispersing his blessings to all his worshippers and his kisses to some; taking their good money as fast as it could be brought in; drinking their best wines, eating of their best provisions without reserve, and without temperance. And, what completed the farce, complaining in the midst of this scene of luxury and triumph, as the old fat monk did over a hot venison pasty, in his barbarous Latin, 'Heu, quanta patimus pro ecclesiâ!' 'Oh what dreadful things do we undergo for the sake of the church!'

## CHAPTER XIII.

Conferences at Gertruydenberg.—Negotiations for peace broken off.—Despotism and Limited Monarchy.—The Whigs dismissed from office.—New Parliament.—Duchess of Marlborough dismissed from her offices.—Disasters in Spain.—Surrender of General Stanhope.—Hostility to Marlborough.—Party use of the Press.—Swift, the great party writer.—Property qualification for members of Parliament.—Harley stabbed by Guiscard.—Marlborough's last campaign.—Parliament.—Prospect of Peace.—The ministry defeated in the House of Lords.—Marlborough dismissed from all his offices.—New peers created.—Negotiations at Utrecht.—Note to Chapter XIII.—Table of Treaties.

The negotiations for peace which were broken off in 1709 were renewed in 1710. Conferences were opened at Gertruydenberg. Each of the Allied powers was endeavouring to gain some peculiar advantage; but all eventually concurred in pressing upon Louis the one humiliating condition which he had rejected in the previous year—namely, that he should assist in dethroning his grandson. Lord Chancellor Cowper seems to have stood alone amongst the British ministry in having no confidence of a peace, and to have offended his colleagues in doubting whether "France was reduced so low as to accept such conditions."\* Marlborough was the representative of England at these conferences; and he took the course which the selfish man ordinarily thinks the safest and most profitable. He was "white paper," he said, upon which the cabinet might write their instructions, but he would have the responsibility of giving advice. The negotiations were broken off; and the great general has the invariable resource of another season of battles and sieges: "I hope God will be pleased to bless this campaign," he writes to the duchess, "for I see nothing else that can give us peace, either at home or abroad."† He believed that another Oudenarde or another Malplaquet would have quieted the popular ferment about Sacheverel, and have disposed the queen to have confidence in her Whig advisers. "Yet," he says, "I have never, during this war, gone into the war with so heavy a heart as I do at this time. . . . The present humours in England give me a good deal of trouble." Louis le Grand was also troubled at this precise juncture; but his trouble had no relation to the bellows of the hydra-headed monster. Saint Simon tells us that the ex-

\* Diary, in Hardwicke Papers.

† Coxe, vol. v. p. 179

haustion of the realm, and the impossibility of obtaining peace, had caused the king severe anguish. He really doubted whether it was right to consummate all the schemes of taxation proposed by his ministers, by taking at once the tenth of every man's substance. He was at last relieved of his scruples, when he had unbosomed himself to the Père Tellier. The considerate ecclesiastic required a few days to reflect upon the reasonableness of the king's hesitation; but finally restored his majesty to his wonted tranquillity by informing him, that, having consulted the ablest doctors of the Sorbonne, they had decided that all the wealth of the nation was the king's, and that when the king took it from his subjects he only took what belonged to himself.

The ways of despotism have a fascinating simplicity for some minds, even in our own day. Here is the magnificent Louis, the Jupiter of Versailles, approaching mere mortals in having a slight quail of conscience, but is quickly the godhead again, when he knows that all of France is his. The edict for the tax was issued; the thought of peace was again postponed; the armies of France again took the field with new strength. The workings of the machine of a limited monarchy are far more complicated and unintelligible than the caprices of absolute power. Marshal Villars, at the end of May, came with a great army to the relief of Douay, which was invested by the Allies under Marlborough and Eugene. The general of the absolute king, and the general of the limited monarchy, are face to face. Villars is commanded to do a certain work,—and he has but one course to take—he has one master to serve. Marlborough has the terror of parliamentary critics, and of unscrupulous office-seekers, to make him groan under his responsibilities. On the 26th of May he writes to Godolphin, "I am this day threescore; but I thank God I find myself in so good health that I hope to end this campaign without being sensible of the inconveniences of old age."\* On the 12th he writes again to the Treasurer, "I can't say that I have the same sanguine prophetic spirit I did use to have; for in all the former actions I did never doubt of success, we having had constantly the great blessing of being of one mind. I cannot say it is so now; for I fear some are run so far into villainous faction, that it would give them more content to see us beaten."† Douay was surrendered to the Allies. But Marlborough now has no pleasure in success. "I must drudge" he writes to the duchess, "for four or five months longer, and venture my life for those who do not deserve it from me." The allusion is evidently to the queen. Mrs. Morley had entirely given up Mrs. Freeman.

\* Coxe, vol. v. p. 195.

† *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 197.

Their sweet eternal friendship has become the bitterest hate. They parted, with these last words from the haughty duchess to her sovereign: "I am confident you will suffer in this world or the next for so much inhumanity." Whilst Marlborough was before Douay this pleasant information reached him. The next blow was the news that his son-in-law, lord Sunderland, had been dismissed from his office of Secretary of State, the seals being given to lord Dartmouth. The most influential of the Whigs, still retaining office, wrote an earnest letter to Marlborough, in which they urged him not to let his private mortification interfere with his public duty: "We conjure you by the glory you have already obtained, by the many services you have done your queen and country, by the expectation you have justly raised in all Europe, and by all that is dear and tender to you at home, whose chief dependence is upon your success, that you would not leave this great work unfinished, but continue at the head of the army." Cowper, Godolphin, Somers, Newcastle, Devonshire, Orford, Halifax, and Boyle, who signed this letter, had probably no very strong apprehension that their own fall was so near at hand. The ascendancy of Mrs. Masham, and the manœuvres of Harley, were triumphant. Godolphin was first dismissed, and his office was put in commission. Harley was then made Chancellor of the Exchequer. The queen announced to the Council that it was her pleasure there should be a dissolution of Parliament. The Whigs were all thrust from power. There ensued four years of party contests, and of strange measures growing out of them, which must have been perplexing enough to all the honest, industrious, and quiet portion of the community; but which, to those who attempt to trace the secret springs of these political agitations, offer cause for thankfulness as well as wonder that we escaped without a convulsion into comparative safety and tranquillity. Swift says that queen Anne "did appear, upon all occasions, as desirous of preserving reputation with posterity as might justly become a great prince to be;" and that he proposed to accept the offer of historiographer "to write her majesty's reign," and especially desired to be furnished with materials for writing an account of "that great transaction," the change in the ministry. He thought that, in the next reign, incorrect views would be taken of the queen's proceedings: "For instance, what would be more easy to a malicious pen than to charge the queen with inconstancy, weakness, and ingratitude, in removing and disgracing the duke of Marlborough, who had so many years commanded her armies with victory and success; in displacing so many great officers of her court and kingdom, by whose

counsels she had, in all appearance, so prosperously governed; in extending the marks of her severity and displeasure toward the wife and daughters, as well as the relations and allies, of that person she had so long employed and so highly trusted; and all this by the private intrigues of a woman of her bedchamber, in concert with an artful man, who might be supposed to have acted that bold part only from a motive of revenge upon the loss of his employments, or of ambition to come again into power? \* What, indeed, could be easier than to assume all this from the patent facts! What, indeed, could be more difficult than to overturn these assumptions by the subsequent disclosures of a century and a half! The revelations of what is called secret history are not such as materially to change these views. We doubt whether our readers will care to follow the political schemers into all their holes and corners. "The private intrigues of the woman of the bed-chamber," have little interest for us now beyond the fact that we have arrived at that happier condition when public opinion has a direct influence upon courts and cabinets, and when the days of backstairs councils are at an end.

The campaign of Marlborough, in 1710, had no effect upon the state of affairs at home. There was no brilliant success to justify the war policy of the Whigs. The Parliament was dissolved on the 26th of September. "The practice and violence used in elections," says Burnet, "went far beyond anything I had ever known in England." He attributes the Tory preponderance to the efforts of the clergy: "Besides a course, for some months, of inflaming sermons, they went about from house to house, pressing their people to show, on this great occasion, their zeal for the Church, and now or never to save it." † Extraordinary efforts were made to prevent the election of the managers of the Sacheverel impeachment; but Jekyll, King, Lechmere, and Walpole, were returned. In 1734, Walpole, in his speech upon the Septennial Bill, looks back upon this time of agitation with painful recollections: "That there are ferments often raised among the people without any just cause is what I am surprised to hear controverted, since very late experience may convince us of the contrary. Do not we know what a ferment was raised in the nation toward the latter end of the late queen's reign? And it is well known what a fatal change in the affairs of this nation was introduced, or at least confirmed, by an election coming on while the nation was in this ferment." ‡ The new Parliament assembled on the 25th of November. There

\* "Change in Queen Anne's Ministry."

† "Own Time," vol. vi. p. 14.

‡ Coxe's "Walpole," vol. i. p. 425.

was as great a change in the language which the queen addressed to the "Lords and Gentlemen," as in the composition of the House of Commons. The usual topic of congratulation for the conduct of the war in Flanders was no more to be adverted to, although the campaign had been successful in holding France in check, in spite of the vast efforts that had been made to recover her lost ground. The queen announced her determination "to support and encourage the Church of England as by law established;" but the Dissenters had to hear the revival of the term which was so offensive to them—the term which implied that all they held of spiritual freedom was conceded as a favour, and not as a right: "I am resolved to maintain the Indulgence by law allowed to scrupulous consciences." Her majesty had adopted the language of Sacheverel in substituting "Indulgence" for "Toleration." Marlborough returned to London in December. The queen took care to inform him that it was no accidental omission that no vote had been proposed in either House for his services in the campaign. Whilst expressing her desire that the duke should continue to serve her, she also said, "I must request you would not suffer any vote of thanks to you to be moved in Parliament this year, because my ministers will certainly oppose it." Harley, and especially St. John, had made up their minds to humiliate him whom they called "the great man." He had to endure indignities from those he had been accustomed to command. St. John writes a private letter to his friend Drummond, in which he exults at the duke's abasement. The queen, he says, and her advisers, wished that Marlborough should command the army, and that he should have everything which as a general he could expect; but "he has been told that he must draw a line between all that is passed, and all that is to come, and that he must begin entirely upon a new foot; that if he looked back to make complaints, he would have more retorted upon him than it was possible to answer. . . . What is the effect of all this plain dealing? He submits, he yields, he promises to comply." \* Swift says of Marlborough, "We are not to take the height of his ambition from his soliciting to be general for life. I am persuaded his chief motive was the pay and perquisites by continuing the war; and he had *then* no intentions of settling the crown in his family." Marlborough was at the summit of royal favour, and of popular applause, when he asked to be general for life, and was very properly refused. Could Swift be serious in thus covertly imputing to the duke that he was aiming at the crown at any time, and especially at the time of his declining popularity?

\* Astle Papers, in Coxe's Walpole, vol. i. p. 36.

And yet St. John insinuates the same thing, in another letter to Drummond, who was in Holland: "I dare say he is convinced by this time that he cannot lead either his mistress or any one else as he used to do. We shall send him over a subject. Take care you do not put royalty into his head." This notion continued to be a real, or an affected, belief of St. John, when, in 1713, upon the performance of Addison's Cato, "he called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator;\* or, as the story is told by Spence, "for so well representing the character of a person who rather chose to die than see a general for life." †

There is something still more bitter for the great conqueror to endure than the loss of political influence. "He was told," says St. John, "that his true interest consisted of getting rid of his wife, who was grown to be irreconcilable with the queen, as soon as he could, and with the best grace which he could." In the royal closet, on the 17th of January, there is a scene which tells us of something more pitiable even than the last scenes of all," when

"From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow."

He presented to the queen a humble letter from the duchess, expressing her apprehension that her lord could not live six months, if some end was not put to his sufferings on her account. "I really am very sorry that I ever did anything that was uneasy to your majesty." The duke then implored her majesty not to renounce the duchess; not to discharge her from the great office she held. "I cannot change my resolution," said the queen. Again he entreated. "Let the *key* be sent me within three days." The victor of Blenheim is now on his knees, imploring for a respite of *ten* days. Monmouth praying for his life to James was not more earnest and more abased. "Send me the key in *two* days," cried the inexorable queen. The duchess had more spirit than her lord, and the key was sent the next day. "When the duke told her the queen expected the gold key, she took it from her side, and threw it into the middle of the room, and bid him take it up, and carry it to whom he pleased." ‡ Her office of lady of the wardrobe was bestowed upon the duchess of Somerset; that of keeper of the privy purse upon Mrs. Masham. The haughty Sarah was turned out of her apartments in the palace. We almost blush to record the mode in which the duchess is revenged upon the queen. "She ordered the locks, placed on the doors at her expense, to be taken off, and the marble chimney-pieces to be removed." § The counter-

\* Johnson's "Lives," Cunningham's edit. vol. ii. p. 137.  
‡ Dartmouth's note on Burnet, vol. vi. p. 30.

† "Anecdotes," p. 35.  
§ Coxe, vol. v. p. 417.

revenge of the royal mistress winds up this story of the degradation of greatness: "The queen is so angry, that she says she will build no house for the duke of Marlborough, when the duchess has pulled hers to pieces, taken away the very slabs out of the chimneys, thrown away the keys, and said they might buy more for ten shillings."\* The "house for the duke of Marlborough" was to be the reward of his services to the nation.

At the beginning of the new year, 1711, the queen sent a Message to Parliament, stating that "her majesty having received notice that there has been an action in Spain, very much to the disadvantage of king Charles's affairs, which having fallen particularly on the British forces, the queen immediately gave directions for sending and procuring troops to repair this loss." Never was a victory more opportune to a government than was this defeat to the ministry of Harley and Bolingbroke. The defeated commander of the British forces was General Stanhope, who having signalised himself by his eloquence in the impeachment of Sacheverel, had returned to his command in Catalonia, with large reinforcements, and an ample supply of money. He induced Charles once more to put himself at the head of an army, and to meet his rival Philip in the field. Charles and his general, Staremberg, appear to have been very unwilling to fight; and it required all Stanhope's determination to induce them to hazard an attack. The battle of Almenara, on the 27th of July, was a victory for the Allied forces; and it was followed up by other successes. On the 20th of August another battle was fought under the walls of Saragossa. The Allies were here signally victorious, and the often repeated wish of Stanhope was realised, that there might come "a day to retrieve Almanza." † Charles made good use of the victory, by announcing to the Saragossans the restoration of the peculiar rights of the people of Aragon,—a measure which had upheld his cause in Catalonia, under every disaster. Philip, after his defeat, had returned to Madrid, to which capital he was ever welcome, whether a conqueror or a fugitive. But he again quitted his faithful city, for Stanhope had induced Charles to march again into Castille. The vanguard of the Allies entered Madrid on the 21st of September; and when Charles made his public entry shortly after, he found the streets empty and the houses shut up. He immediately left in deep indignation, exclaiming, "This city is a desert." Stanhope wrote home, "The country is our enemy; and we are masters in Castille of no more ground than

\* Coxe, vol. v. p. 419. Letter detailing a conversation with Harley.

† Mahon, "War of Succession," p. 312.

we encamp on." The Allies lingered at Madrid till the beginning of November, waiting for re-inforcements from Portugal, which never came. Meanwhile the duke of Vendôme had arrived to take the command of the army of king Philip. The Castilians were enthusiastic in furnishing the means of organizing a powerful force; and he soon marched to the Tagus to prevent the possible junction of the Portuguese with the other portions of the Allied army. Charles now determined to return himself to Catalonia, with an escort of two thousand horse. The Allies, thus weakened in an important arm—their commanders differing in opinion—at last began to retreat to Aragon, at the beginning of December. The country was so destitute of supplies, chiefly through the hostility of the people, that the army was divided into three separate bodies, English, Germans, Spaniards and Portuguese, each taking different lines of march. On the day when the Allies were thus compelled to abandon that concentration which was their safety, Philip and Vendôme entered Madrid in triumph. But the energetic Frenchman lost no time in festivities and ceremonials. He, with the king, joined the Spanish army, which had been returning along the Tagus by forced marches; and crossing the bridge at Guadalaxara with his infantry, and swimming the river with his cavalry, came up with the British portion of the Allies. Stanhope was posted at Brihuega, a small town on the river Taguna. The English general had been watching the movements of some partizan cavalry on the hills; and was confiding in his belief that the Spanish infantry was not within some days' march of him. As he afterwards learnt, the army decamped from Talavera on the 1st of December; and they reached Brihuega on the 8th, a distance of "forty-five long leagues," and such was the disposition of the population that the Allies had not the slightest intimation of the approach of the thousands of cavalry and infantry that Stanhope had now to fight single-handed. He did his best. He threw up barricades and entrenchments in the town, and made the old Moorish wall which surrounded it a formidable defence. Through the next day the British fought with desperation against forces of four times their number. At seven in the evening their ammunition was nearly exhausted; and Stanhope then asked and obtained honourable terms of capitulation. Speaking in the highest terms of his brave men, he wrote to the Secretary of State, "Whatever other things I may have failed in through ignorance, I am truly conscious to myself that, in the condition we were reduced to, I could not do a better service to the queen, than endeavour to preserve them by the only way that was left." \* General Stanhope,

\* Mahon, p. 337.

his officers, and his men, remained prisoners in Spain till a little time before the peace of Utrecht. The next day, the 10th of December, a great battle was fought at Villa Viciosa by Vendôme with the other portions of the Allied army under Staremberg. The fortunes of the combatants were long doubtful; the losses of each were very great. But Staremberg had no resource but a retreat, which he commenced towards Aragon, the next day, before sunrise. He was harassed and followed by partizan cavalry; sustained severe losses; was unable to defend Saragossa, where Philip established his court; and finally reached Barcelona, with forces dwindled to half their number before the battle of the 10th. The cause of king Charles in Spain was henceforth hopeless.

The news of the disasters in Spain was received by the triumphant party in Parliament in the way that the baseness of faction, whether Tory or Whig, has too often applied itself, not to the redress of a national calamity, but to derive advantages of party out of the calamity. The Lords, now having a majority of the partizans of the ministry, told the queen, in answer to her Message, "as this misfortune may have been occasioned by some previous mismanagement, we take the liberty to assure your majesty we will use our utmost endeavours to discover it, so as to prevent the like for the future." They entered into an examination of the whole history of the war, going not only back to the battle of Almanza, but to the time of the early exploits of Peterborough. Lord Galway and lord Tyrwley were placed at the bar to give an account of affairs long since passed. Marlborough said, "It was somewhat strange that generals who had acted to the best of their understandings, and had lost their limbs in the service, should be examined like offenders, about insignificant things." The Lords carried a vote that "the late ministers were justly to be blamed for contributing to all our disasters in Spain;" and the thanks of the House were given to the earl of Peterborough, for his great and eminent services. The party object of the just commendation of Peterborough was sufficiently marked by the terms in which the Lord Chancellor, Harcourt, delivered the thanks of the House: "Such is your lordship's known generosity and truly noble temper, that I assure myself the present I am now offering to your lordship, is the more acceptable, as it comes pure and unmixed, and is unattended with any other reward, which your lordship might justly think might be an alloy to it." Swift's famous "Examiner" of the previous 23rd of November was to be echoed from the woolsack, to give a new sting to the sarcasms of the coffee-houses. There was a general by whom "pure and unmixed" praise, with-

out "any other reward," would have been counted as dust in the balance. The bitter satirist of the "Examiner" says, "the common clamour of tongues and pens for some months past has run against the baseness, the inconstancy, and ingratitude of the whole kingdom to the duke of Marlborough;" and he then states an account, "to convince the world that we are not quite so ungrateful either as the Greeks or the Romans; and in order to adjust the matter with all fairness, I shall confine myself to the latter, who were much more generous of the two." Here is the account: and we may easily believe the effect it would produce amongst grumbling Englishmen:—

## A BILL OF ROMAN GRATITUDE.

	£ s. d.
<i>Imprimis.</i>	
For frankincense, and earthen pots to burn it . . . . .	4 10 4
A bull for sacrifice . . . . .	8 0 0
An embroidered garment . . . . .	50 0 0
A crown of laurel . . . . .	0 0 2
A statute . . . . .	100 0 0
A trophy . . . . .	80 0 0
A thousand copper medals, value half-pence a-piece . . . . .	2 1 8
A triumphal arch . . . . .	500 0 0
A triumphal car, valued as a modern coach . . . . .	100 0 0
Casual charges at the triumph. . . . .	150 0 0
	£994 11 10

## A BILL OF BRITISH INGRATITUDE.

	£
<i>Imprimis—</i>	
Woodstock . . . . .	40,000
Blenheim . . . . .	200,000
Post-office grant . . . . .	100,000
Mildenheim . . . . .	30,000
Pictures, jewels, &c. . . . .	60,000
Pall-mall grant, &c. . . . .	17,000
Employments . . . . .	100,000
	£540,000

The ministers of state, who, from the time when the influence of opinion was thought of importance to the one object of gaining or holding power, have directly associated themselves with public writers, have generally made mistakes in the choice of their literary allies. The authors of real knowledge and ability have been too proud to become the tools of a government, when the association has been considered to be that of the superior with the inferior. The hacks only would take the great man's pay; and, doing his work as hirelings, would earn for themselves and their employers a fitting measure of general contempt. Not so was the connection of Harley and St. John with the great apostate, the Reverend

Jonathan Swift—of all party writers that ever really influenced public opinion, the most unscrupulous, the most unjust, the most uncharitable; but incomparably the most able. He is not the mere rhetorician who desires to manifest his own cleverness. Apparently he is the simplest of advocates; speaking nothing but his own earnest convictions, and employing no weapon but the severest logic. He has no tricks of fence to exhibit the skill that can disarm an adversary when he pleases. He does disarm him at once; beats him down; strikes the poisoned dagger into his heart, without the slightest compunction. Against such a combatant, the genial frankness of Steele, the amiable decorum of Addison, had no chance. The Tories secured the vicar of Laracor, when he came up to London, at the beginning of September, 1710, deputed by the Irish primate and clergy to obtain a remission of the first fruits of livings, as in the case of the English Church. He cherished bitter resentment against the Whigs for not having given him any valuable preferment. "The Whigs were ravished to see me, and would lay hold of me as a twig while they are drowning, and the great men making me their clumsy apologies."\* He has not yet quite separated himself from his old friends. He dines in company with Addison and Steele. He writes a paper for the "Tatler." He is entertained by Halifax, but refuses to drink a toast proposed by him, "the resurrection of the Whigs," unless he would add "their reformation." On the 7th of October he dines with Harley, drinking good wine for two hours, and for two hours they were alone; and the great minister charged the great satirist to come to him often, for his levee was not a place for friends to come to. Still he keeps up his old intimacy with Steele and Addison, for a week or two; but at length he finds party had so possessed Mr. Addison, "that he talked as if he suspected me." Swift professed a desire to use his new Tory intimacies to retain Steele in one of his employments, he having been turned out of his place of Gazetteer for writing a "Tatler" against Mr. Harley some months ago. Mr. Harley does not approve of satire when it is directed against himself. We turn to the "Tatler," No. 191, which lost Steele his place when the Tories came in, and we find it a very mild satire indeed, describing "a cunning man" under the name of Polypragmon, who "fears the imputation of want of understanding much more than the abuse of it;" having "the monstrous affectation of being thought artful." The description of Polypragmon is evidently copied from the life, and most persons probably knew the portraiture: "It is certain Polypragmon

\* Journal to Stella, Sept. 9.

does all the ill he possibly can, but pretends to much more than he performs. He is contented in his own thoughts, and hugs himself in his closet, that though he is locked up there and doing nothing, the world does not know but that he is doing mischief. To favour this suspicion, he gives half-looks and shrugs in his general behaviour, to give you to understand that you don't know what he means. He is also wonderfully adverbial in his expressions, and breaks off with a perhaps and a nod of the head upon matters of the most indifferent nature." A wise man would have laughed at the satire and not have taken a miserable revenge. Swift was not one who would be content to wound in this delicate way. Nor would he be won over by small bribes. The Treasurer and the Secretary have found out his weak side: "It is hard to see these great men use me like one who was their betters, and the puppies with you in Ireland hardly regarding me."\* Harley, a man of second-rate capacity; St. John, a man of high talent, but one who possessed his faculties chiefly as the instruments of his ambition; made Swift their tool by deference to his intellectual greatness. The pride of intellect is a higher thing than the pride of birth, far higher than the pride of wealth; but it is a pride that, ill-regulated, degenerates into tyranny and uncharitableness. It did not prevent Swift from going all lengths in doing what was really dirty work, that any of the pamphleteers at whom he sneers as Grub-street would have done for a lower price than he set on his services. A bishopric in prospect was a grander thing than an immediate fee of secret-service money. To be so paid was degrading. Another sort of price was a just reward of merit. Harley, in spite of his blandishments and his dinners, mortally offended Swift by offering him fifty pounds; and then Swift said, "If we let these great ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them."† Swift had sold himself in spite of his pride. In a few weeks after his first coquetting with "these great ministers," the "Examiner," the literary organ of St. John and Harley, is handed over to his conduct; and one of the first uses of his new weapon is the savage attack upon Marlborough. Of real principle in his junction with the Tory ministers there was as little as there was any real love for religion in their exuberant zeal for the Church.

The Session of 1711 was remarkable for the passing of a Statute which, having continued as law for a hundred and fifty-seven years, was swept away by a brief Act of repeal in 1858. The Tory ministry desired to propitiate what was called the Country Party,

\* "Journal," November 11.

† *Ibid.*, February 7, 1711.

by bringing in a Bill by which every knight of the shire was to have the property qualification of a real estate of six hundred a year and every member for a borough a similar qualification of half the value. The wealth and influence of that large portion of the community employed in liberal professions and in commerce were rapidly increasing. The land-owners and agriculturists had not yet discovered that capital applied to improvements in cultivation might yield as large a profit as capital applied to the extension of trade. The landed interest would not bestir itself for its own advantage; and it opened its half-shut eyes to gaze with envy and dislike upon the mercantile interest that was up and doing. Burnet says of the Qualification Bill, "Our gentry was become so ignorant and so corrupt, that many apprehended the ill effects of this; and that the interest of trade, which indeed supports that of the land, would neither be understood nor regarded. But the new minister resolved to be popular with those who promoted it, so it passed." Like all other expedients for setting the interests of one class above those of another class, this measure for making the land paramount was defeated in practice by fabricated qualifications at which all parties connived; and it was finally repealed as utterly useless for good or evil, beyond the encouragement of a debasing system of chicanery.

Harley laboured hard to please "the country gentlemen of his party;"\* but, as the case has ever been, an English minister has more difficulty with his violent supporters than with those who are thoroughly adverse to him. "In the House of Commons there appeared a new combination of Tories of the highest form, who thought the Court was yet in some management with the Whigs and did not come up to their height, which they imputed to Mr. Harley; so they began to form themselves in opposition to him."† Lord Nottingham, at a conference with the ministers, which is recorded by Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state, urged them to prosecute the Whigs, so as "to make it impracticable for them ever to rise again." They said "the queen would never be brought into such measures;" and from that day Nottingham "was most indefatigable in persecuting the queen and all her servants, with all the art that he was master of."‡ Swift saw the storm coming: "the ministry is upon a very narrow bottom, and stands like an isthmus between the Whigs on one side and violent Tories on the other. They are able seamen, but the tempest is too great, the ship too rotten, and the crew all against them." This keen looker-on upon the game in which he had sometimes to folow for the upper boys, wrote, on the 14th of March, the above dolorous comment upon

\* Onslow, Note on Burnet, p. 36. † Burnet, vol. vi. p. 37. ‡ Note on Burnet, *ibid.*

the low spirits which Harley displayed. Four days after, an event occurred which changed the face of affairs as regarded Harley. "An odd accident, that had been almost fatal, proved happy to him."\* On the 8th of March he was stabbed at a sitting of the Privy Council. The assassin, whom Swift calls "a desperate French Popish villain," conferred such a benefit upon Harley, that the partizans of his rival St. John insisted that the blow was meant for the Secretary and not for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The minister who had to bear the pain had a fair right to whatever compensations were to follow. But it seems somewhat unreasonable that the random stroke of a suspected traitor should have made Mr. Harley earl of Oxford and lord high treasurer; and to use the words of a historian of these times, should have "blasted the hopes of his ministerial rivals; fixed his presidency in the cabinet; and have given firmness to an administration which had been tottering from inherent jealousies and dissensions." † The accident which produced such results may be briefly related. The marquis de Guiscard, who had been an abbé séculier in France, and who is represented as having committed enormous crimes which compelled him to fly his country, came to England; and appears to have had a command in an expedition, in 1707, connected with the discontents of the Huguenots in the Cevennes. In a book which he then published he calls himself "lieutenant-general of the forces gone upon the present descent." Burnet says, "he had a pension assigned him for some years, but it did not answer his expense; so when he was out of hope of getting it increased, he wrote to one at the court of France, to offer his services there." ‡ His services consisted in his acting as a French spy. Dartmouth relates that Guiscard had been with the queen on the evening of the 7th, "and nobody in the outer room but Mrs. Fielding, or within call but Mrs. Kirk, who was commonly asleep." He says, "if Guiscard had any design upon the queen, his heart failed him." Very mysterious it seems that such a person should have had access to the queen, although he was one of St. John's boon companions. Her majesty told Dartmouth that "he was very pressing for an augmentation of his pension; and complained that he was ill paid." § He was arrested in St. James's Park on the morning of the 8th; for a letter which he had written having been opened at the Post-office, his communications with the French court were discovered. He was taken to the office where the Council were sitting; and having given up his sword, he contrived to secrete a penknife which was upon

\* Burnet, *ibid.*

‡ "Own Time," vol. vi. p. 38.

† Somerville, p. 129.

§ Note, *ibid.* p. 39.

the table of an outer room. Dartmouth, who was present, says, "He behaved himself with great confidence before the Council; and denied everything, till he had shown one of his own letters, which he endeavoured to snatch out of lord Harcourt's hand." He asked to speak in private with St. John, who very wisely refused. "When," says Dartmouth, "Mr. St. John refused to speak with him, he bent down, as if he would have whispered with Mr. Harley, and gave him two or three violent blows upon the breast before anybody could stop him." Harley bleeding rose up; and St. John and the other counsellors drew their swords, and inflicted many wounds upon the assassin. Swift, in his Journal of the 17th, writes, "Guiscard died this morning at two; and the coroner's inquest have found that he was killed by bruises received from a messenger, so to clear the cabinet-counsellors, from whom he received his wounds." What a sight was there now to be seen in London, where, of old, "not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver" to gaze upon any strange beast. "When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."\* How much more exciting to see a dead French Papist, who was killed by noble English Protestants! "We have let Guiscard be buried at last, after showing him pickled in a trough this fortnight for two pence a-piece; and the fellow that showed would point to his body, and 'See, gentlemen, this is the wound that was given him by his grace the duke of Ormond; and this is the wound, &c.,' and then the show was over, and another set of rabble came in." † Both Houses went up with an Address to the queen, to express how deeply they were affected "to find such an instance of inveterate malice against one employed in your majesty's council, and so near your royal person; and we have reason to believe that his fidelity to your majesty, and zeal for your service, have drawn upon him the hatred of all the abettors of popery and faction." Harley slowly recovered. When he attended in his place on the 11th of March, the Speaker congratulated him upon his escape and restoration to health. His attempted assassination was an undeniable evidence of his extraordinary merits. This was party-logic, very agreeable to Harley, but not equally gratifying to one who had a lurking contempt for his fortunate brother in office. "Mr. St. John affected to say in several companies that Guiscard intended the blow against him." Swift adds, "I am apt to think Mr. St. John was either mistaken or misinformed. However the matter was thus represented in the weekly paper called 'The Examiner,' which Mr. St. John perused before it was printed, but made no

\* "Tempest," act ii. sc. 2.

† Journal to Stella, March 25.



alteration in the passage. This management was looked upon at least as a piece of youthful indiscretion in Mr. St. John; and perhaps was represented in a worse view to Mr. Harley.\* Strange, that two great statesmen should have their "first misunderstanding" about the honour which was proposed to be conferred upon one of them by a stab from a French spy! Singular, that the man of the greatest intellect in that period of political dishonesty, should grudge the White Staff and a Peerage, to him who had the lucky misfortune to have a penknife blade broken upon the rib beneath his embroidered waistcoat; and should envy the fulsome addresses of Parliament about papists and factions, of the utter falsehood of which he was perfectly conscious. Was it thus? Swift says, "I remember very well that, upon visiting Mr. Harley as soon as he was in a condition to be seen, I found several of his nearest relatives talk very freely of some proceedings of Mr. St. John." Was he intriguing to be first minister—at which Swift hints—during the time when Harley's recovery was somewhat doubtful? St. John's great power and influence in the House of Commons as its best orator, might have commanded this, without seeking to assume what Swift terms "the merit" of Guiscard's attempt. "This accident," says Burnet, "was of great use to Harley; for the party formed against him was ashamed to push a man who was thus assassinated by one that was studying to recommend himself to the court of France." It averted suspicion from the secret correspondence that Harley himself was carrying on with that court, if not directly with the court of St. Germans. St. John would be equally desirous to have the same cover for his own designs, and to smother the fact mentioned by Dartmouth, that the correspondence of Guiscard, which was read at the Council, contained "intelligence which few of the cabinet had any knowledge of before they read his letters; and he was never asked who he had it from, the answer being evident." St. John was doubtless the discloser of secrets thus pointed at. A clandestine negotiation for peace was at that time going forward with the French minister, Torcy, under the immediate direction of St. John, through the Abbé Gautier, whilst the queen was made to pledge herself to the Dutch government that no step towards a pacification should be taken but in concert with them. How far St. John was at that time concerned in the schemes which the Jacobite party had for setting aside the Act of Settlement, and for bringing back the Pretender, in connection with these advances for peace, is a matter of inference from his subsequent conduct. "It is remarked by sir James Mackintosh in one of his note-books

\* "Change in Queen Anne's Ministry."

(we know not on what authority) that the first introduction of Bolingbroke into the secret negotiation was during the illness of Harley after he had been stabbed by Guiscard."\* It was for the interest of both these unscrupulous ministers, that their undoubted duplicity to the Allies, and their possible treason to the Constitution, should be covered by the pretence that each was meant to be assassinated by a French agent, for their zeal and fidelity to their sovereign and their country. They became rivals even for the honour of this miserable delusion.

The attempt of Guiscard upon the life of Harley led to the passing of the Statute, by which it was enacted that if any person or persons "shall unlawfully attempt to kill, or shall unlawfully assault, or strike or wound, any person, being one of the most honourable Privy Council of her majesty, her heirs or successors, when in the execution of his office of a Privy Counsellor in Council, or on any Committee of Council, that then the person or persons so offending, being thereof convicted in due form of law, shall be and are hereby declared to be felons, and shall suffer death as in cases of felony, without benefit of clergy."†

On the 4th of March Marlborough left England, to resume his command of the Allied forces in the Netherlands, but without a remnant of the political power which had once been entrusted to him. Yet the weakness of the ministry had induced Harley and Bolingbroke to relax somewhat in their hostility to the great general; and Swift evidently had his cue, when he wrote thus on the 15th of February: "Nobody that I know of did ever dispute the duke of Marlborough's courage, conduct, or success; they have been always unquestionable, and will continue to be so, in spite of the malice of his enemies, or which is yet more, the weakness of his advocates. The nation only wishes to see him taken out of ill hands, and put in better."‡ Three weeks after the attempt upon Harley's life, St. John wrote a letter to Marlborough, full of professions of respect: "Your grace may be assured of my sincere endeavours to serve you; and I hope never again to see the time when I shall be obliged to embark in a separate interest from you."§ Marlborough was too experienced in the value of such professions not to be on his guard. He wrote to beg the duchess not to name any of the ministers in her letters to him, all of which he had certain assurance that they opened. "The concern you have for me must in kindness oblige you never to say anything of them which may give offence; since whilst I am in the service I am in their power, especially by the villainous way of printing, which stabs me to

\* "Edinburgh Review," vol. lxii. p. 19. † 9 Annæ, c. 21. ‡ "Examiner."

§ Coxe, vol. vi. p. 7.