

In 1724, through the ordinary course of ministerial rivalries and jealousies, the accomplished lord Carteret was removed from the office of Secretary of State, which he held in conjunction with lord Townshend, and the same course was pursued towards him, as towards Townshend himself in 1716. Carteret was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—a post considered of far less anxious responsibility than that of Secretary of State. During his lord lieutenancy Ireland became no bed of roses. Amongst the many real wrongs which Ireland has borne, and the not less numerous imaginary grievances of which she has complained, in her connection with England, there is probably no example of a national ferment so wholly disproportionate to the extent of the injury, as that of Wood's patent for a coinage of copper farthings and halfpence. No one can doubt that when a nation is in almost utter want of money of the lowest denomination, the extortions practised upon the humblest classes must be considerable. Ireland was so completely without a currency to conduct the smaller operations of trade, that labourers were paid by cards bearing the seals and signatures of their employers. In all such cases of a questionable or a depreciated currency, it is the poor man who has to bear the largest amount of trouble or loss. In 1722, a patent was granted to William Wood, a proprietor and renter of iron and copper mines in England, to enable him to coin farthings and halfpence for Ireland to the value of £108,000. There is no doubt that the patentee was to make a profit, for the duchess of Kendal had been bribed to promote the grant of the patent. But Walpole and his subordinates took every reasonable measure of precaution that the coinage should not become an opportunity for fraud or excessive gain. Sir Isaac Newton, as Master of the Mint, approved the terms of the contract; and when the coins were in circulation, and it was seen that discontent was assiduously stirred up, an assay was made by the officers of the Mint, and it was declared that in weight and fineness of metal the pieces were satisfactory. The difference of exchange between England and Ireland had been thought a satisfactory reason for a slight diminution in weight of the copper currency for Ireland.

The Irish parliament, moved in some degree by the apparent neglect of this exercise of the royal prerogative, without consulting the Irish Privy Council, voted an address to the king, that the terms of the patent would occasion a loss to the nation of 150 per cent. Walpole was astonished, as he well might be, at this impudent declaration of a legislative body. He examined the matter carefully; and perceived that the assertion was founded upon a

computation that the rough Irish copper was worth twelvepence a pound, and that a pound of halfpence and farthings coined out of fine copper were to pass for thirty pence. He found that the Mint of London paid eighteenpence per lb. for prepared copper; that the charge of coinage was fourpence per lb.; and that the duties and allowances upon copper imported into Ireland amounted to 20 per cent. A Committee of the English Privy Council went into a searching examination of the whole affair; and fully justified the patentee from any charge of having abused the fair terms of his patent. It was, however, conceded that the amount of farthings and halfpence issued should not exceed £40,000 in value; and that this money should not be a legal tender for a larger sum than fivepence halfpenny in one payment.

Under these circumstances, in 1724, a Letter was published by M. B. Drapier, addressed "to the tradesmen, shopkeepers, and country people in general, of the kingdom of Ireland, concerning the Brass Halfpence coined by one William Wood, hardwareman," which Letter thus solemnly opens: "What I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest concern to yourselves and your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life, entirely depend upon it." The writer, as every one guessed, was the famous Dean of St. Patrick's; and certainly no pen was so able as that wielded by Jonathan Swift, to raise a popular clamour by the most skilful treatment of his subject; and, what was perhaps as much to the purpose, by the most unscrupulous assertions. "In England," the Drapier said, "halfpence and farthings pass for little more than they are worth; if you were to beat them to pieces and sell them to the brazier, you would not lose much more than a penny in a shilling. But Mr. Wood made his halfpence of such base metal and so much smaller than the English ones, that the brazier would hardly give you above a penny of good money for a shilling of his; so that the sum of £108,000 in good gold and silver must be given for trash that will not be worth eight or nine thousand pounds real value." The Irish parliament falsely asserted, that the depreciation amounted to 150 per cent. The more mendacious demagogue asserted that the depreciation amounted to 1100 per cent. "For example, if a hatter sells a dozen of hats for 5s a-piece, which amounts to £3, and receives the payment in Wood's coin, he really receives only the value of 5s." Throughout the whole of the Drapier's Letters, Swift's argument rests upon the most solid basis of political economy; but his premises are utterly false. He knew well what England and Ireland had suffered by

the depreciation of the coin. This bold opponent of the government which had delivered his country from despotism, says, "I intend to truck with my neighbours, the butchers and bakers and the rest, goods for goods; and the little gold and silver I have I will keep by me, like my heart's blood, till better times, or until I am just ready to starve; and then I will buy Mr. Wood's money, as my father did the brass money in king James' time, who could buy £10 of it for a guinea." Against such logic as this what could simple truth avail? The Irish went mad about Wood's halfpence. The mischievous Dean not only stirred the nation up with Drapier's Letters, but with songs that were sung in every street. Wood was to be scalded in his own melted copper. He was to be hanged:

"The halfpence are coming, the nation's undoing;  
There's an end of your ploughing, and baking, and brewing;  
In short, you must all go to rack and ruin."

When Carteret came over, he found the Irish people in a state of frenzy. He tried what are called strong measures. He offered a reward of £300 for discovering the author of the Drapier's Letters. He prosecuted their printer. The grand jury threw out the bill; and another grand jury made a presentment, setting forth, that "several quantities of base metal coined, commonly called Wood's Halfpence, have been brought into the port of Dublin, and lodged in several houses in this city, with an intention to make them pass clandestinely;" and that "having entirely his majesty's interest and the welfare of our country, and being thoroughly sensible of the great discouragements which trade hath suffered by the apprehensions of the said coin, whereof we have already felt the dismal effects; and that the currency thereof will inevitably tend to the great diminution of his majesty's revenue, and the ruin of us and our posterity, do present all such persons as have attempted or shall endeavour by fraud or otherwise, to impose the said halfpence upon us, contrary to his majesty's most gracious intention, as enemies to his majesty's government, and to the safety, peace, and welfare of all his majesty's subjects of this kingdom." It was in vain that the government attempted to stand up against this storm. The grand jury said, "we do, with all great gratitude, acknowledge the services of all such patriots as have been eminently zealous for the interest of his majesty and this country, in detecting the fraudulent imposition of the said Wood, and preventing the passing of his base coin." Swift wrote this eulogy upon his own patriotism. He had beaten the government of king George. The patent was withdrawn. It was believed by the few who knew how

baseless were the exaggerated complaints of Wood's Halfpence, that the Drapier had asserted the independence of Ireland. The multitude believed whatever he had predicted of national ruin. This victory was in some respects the triumph of genius; but it must not be forgotten, that if the genius manifested in the Drapier's Letters could lead one admirer of Swift to regard them as the most perfect examples of oratory since the days of Demosthenes,\* a calmer view of the limits to which genius ought to be confined by honesty, would lead us to say, that out of the four names which the great partisan chose to bear,

"Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver,"

that of Drapier ought to be as odious to those who justly estimate the duty of a public writer, as that filth in which Swift delighted to wallow,—more his own filth than the filth of his age.

Walpole restored Ireland to quietness by cancelling Wood's Patent. He had the rare wisdom of yielding even to popular prejudice, when perseverance was clearly more perilous than concession. With Walpole such a course may be regarded as prudence. With a less skilful and powerful administrator it would have been weakness. In 1725 Scotland was also firing-up upon a domestic question. The House of Commons, in opposition to the opinion of Walpole, had determined that the Malt Duty, which had been constantly evaded in Scotland, should be merged in a duty of threepence on every barrel of ale. The duty was to come into operation on the 23rd of June. On that day there was considerable restlessness amongst the population of Glasgow. Daniel Campbell, the member of Parliament for Glasgow—one of the class which had been raised to opulence by the commercial freedom which the Union opened—was considered by the populace to have supported the government in devising the ale duty. Campbell's house was attacked at midnight, and destroyed. Military force was called in; and the next day, the soldiers being beset by the mob in their guard-house, the people were fired upon, and several were killed and wounded. General Wade, whose troops had been employed in the most useful service of constructing the great military roads of the Highlands, marched into Glasgow, and effectually quelled the riot. At Edinburgh, the resistance to the tax took another form. The brewers refused to brew. The Scotch lawyers talked of prosecution and imprisonment. The wiser Secretary for Scotland indeed threatened; but he saw that such a combination would break down of itself. The brewers had a meeting, and re-

\* Isaac Hawkins Browne.

solved to put the question "Brew or not?" One man said he would not be bound by a majority, and voted "brew." The assembly broke up; and all the brew-houses of Edinburgh were at work that night. Walpole wrote to lord Townshend in September, "I think we have once more got Ireland and Scotland quiet, if we take care to keep them so."

In 1725 England presented the miserable spectacle which she had witnessed in the reign of James I.,—a Lord Chancellor impeached for malversation in his great office. Thomas Parker was a very different man from Francis Bacon; and the offences of which the earl of Macclesfield was accused were of another character than those which were the ruin of the viscount St. Alban's. The Chancellor of king James was disgraced upon the charge of having received bribes from suitors. The Chancellor of king George was impeached, found guilty, excluded for ever from office, and fined thirty thousand pounds, upon the charges of selling Masterships in the Court of Chancery, and of conniving at the frauds of the Masters in trafficking with the trust-money of the suitors, and the estates of widows and orphans. Lord Campbell, in controverting a disposition in some writers of recent times to consider that lord Macclesfield was unjustly condemned, holds that "his conviction was lawful and his punishment was mild."\*

The foreign policy of George I., under the able administration of Walpole, had become decidedly pacific. The nation was manifestly prospering under the relief which peace had brought. The fear of the Pretender, and of Spanish or Swedish invasions, had passed away. The House of Brunswick, after ten years of struggle, was firmly fixed on its constitutional throne. Yet there were still threatenings of war. The Congress of Cambrai, to which the difficulties that had not been finally settled by the peace of 1720 had been referred, had been wearily discussing certain royal claims and disputes—"baling out water with sieves"—for four or five years. The regent Orleans had died during these tedious pro-collings, in 1723. Louis XV., declared of age, had taken the government of France into his own hands, with the duke de Bourbon as his minister. The alliance of France with England continued uninterrupted. But the emperor Charles, and the king of Spain, Philip, were coming to a closer understanding about territorial arrangements than England, France, and Russia thought safe. Philip of Spain was a mere shadow in the management of these affairs. His queen was the restless agitator; and Elizabeth had found a most active successor to Alberoni in the duke de Ripperda

\* Lives of the Chancellors," vol. iv. p. 555.

—a Dutch adventurer, who found it as easy to change from Protestantism to Catholicism, as he afterwards did to change from Catholicism to Mahometanism. Ripperda was sent upon a secret mission to Vienna, to accomplish, by a direct treaty between the two great rival powers, what the congress of Cambrai had been vainly hammering at for a time not to be borne by royal patience. The courts of France and Spain had, moreover, got into a very pretty quarrel in 1725. When Philip acceded to the Quadruple Alliance, his reluctance had been smoothed over by a plan for marrying the infanta of Spain to the youthful king of France; and also of marrying his son, Don Luis, to a daughter of the regent Orleans. The children were betrothed, after the then usual fashion of sovereigns. When Louis XV., though only fifteen years old, was held of age to govern, the Infanta was only eight years old. The duke de Bourbon, and probably the young king also, had no disposition to complete a marriage which so long postponed the prospect of succession. The Infanta was returned to Spain with little ceremony; and another queen of France was looked out for. The court of Madrid was of course in a fever of indignation. The national pride was wounded, as well as the royal honour. All Frenchmen were ordered to leave Spain. The congress of Cambrai was at an end. Ripperda was to make any bargain with the emperor. As king George hesitated about taking part in the quarrel, the alliance of the courts of Madrid and Vienna was to be one of hostility to the courts of Versailles and St. James's. The Treaty of Vienna, in 1725, was ominous to the peace of Europe.

Looking back upon these affairs, they excite very small interest in our day; they pass over as the summer cloud "without our special wonder." It was fortunate that England and France had no desire for war. Cardinal Fleury had succeeded the duke de Bourbon as prime minister of Louis XV., and he and Walpole were not going to rush into hostilities. But they would take measures of precaution. The Treaty of Hanover bound England, France, and Prussia—the date, September 3, 1725—in an engagement to hold by each other, if either were attacked. The tables were turned since the War of the Succession. The old foes were fast friends, and the old friends bitter foes; and all these changes took place, as in private friendship, for "some trick not worth an egg." War seemed imminent, however pacifically disposed were Fleury and George. When the English Parliament met on the 20th of January, 1726, the king announced the conclusion of his defensive treaties with the Most Christian king and the

king of Prussia, to which several of the powers had been invited to accede. There was some opposition to the Address approving the Treaty; but the government majority was very large. Some change might have been expected in the policy of Spain, by the fall of Ripperda, who was dismissed from his employments, and, apprehensive of royal or popular resentments, had taken refuge in the house of the English minister. He was accused of having exaggerated the desire of Austria for so intimate an alliance with Spain as would have warranted an offensive league between them. Ripperda was dragged from Mr. Stanhope's apartments and sent to prison. The rights of ambassadors were considered to have been violated, and the remonstrances of the English government embittered the disputes between the two countries. They were more embittered by the revelations that Ripperda made to Stanhope, in revenge for his disgrace, and in gratitude for the asylum that had been afforded him. He disclosed the secret articles of the Treaty of Vienna; and declared that its chief object was the extirpation of the Protestant religion.

Warlike movements were very soon organized in England. The czar Peter was dead. The czarina Catherine I., had prepared a fleet for co-operation with Austria and Spain. Admiral Wager sailed to the Baltic with an English fleet; and the politics of Russia became more pacific. A squadron under admiral Hosier blockaded Porto Bello,—an unfortunate enterprise, for the brave admiral and a large number of his fleet's crews perished of yellow fever in the Spanish Main. If this activity was not war, it was very like war. In the Parliament which met in January, 1727, the king announced that he had received information upon which he could wholly depend, that one of the secret articles of the Treaty of Vienna was an agreement to place the Pretender upon the throne of Britain. The Parliament instantly voted a large increase of the army and navy. The emperor was advised by Palm, his minister at London, to disavow such a secret agreement. The indiscreet resident addressed a memorial to the king, a translation of which was printed and published; in which the secret articles were disavowed, and the royal word was spoken of with disrespect. The two Houses were indignant at "the insolence" of the imperial minister in dispersing his memorial through the kingdom; declaring "their utmost abhorrence of this audacious manner of appealing to the people against his majesty." Palm was commanded immediately to leave England. Spain was assembling an army for the siege of Gibraltar, under the command of the conde de Las Torres; who boasted that in six weeks he would drive the heretics into the sea.

On the 11th of February the siege was commenced. English men-of-war in the harbour secured a constant supply of provisions for the garrison from the coast of Africa. Lord Portmore—one of the men whose energy age appears unable to cripple—hastened from England, in his eightieth year, to defend the fortress of which he was the governor. For four months the Spaniards ineffectually fired upon the rock, and then they raised the siege.

On the 15th of May, 1727, king George closed the Session of Parliament preparatory to his departure for Hanover. He adverted to the attack upon Gibraltar. He had suspended, he said, his resentments under such provocation; and instead of having immediate recourse to arms, and demanding that assistance of his allies which they had engaged, and were ready to give, he had concurred with France and the States-General in making overtures of accommodation. Sweden had acceded to the Treaty of Hanover; and a Convention had been signed by Denmark. The overtures of accommodation, thus mentioned, had been successful. The Austrian ambassador signed, on the 31st of May, preliminaries of peace with England, France and Holland. Spain remained alone; neither prepared for war, nor acceding to the conditions of peace. At this juncture the power of Walpole seemed to be somewhat endangered. Bolingbroke, who had been allowed by the intervention of Walpole to return to England; who was about to embark at Calais at the close of his exile, when Atterbury landed there a banished man; who had been restored to his estates by Act of Parliament in 1725,—was intriguing to reach once more the possession of power under George which he had obtained under Anne. He had secured, by bribes and protestations, the favour of the duchess of Kendal, the mistress, or according to some, the left-handed wife of the Hanoverian king. The duchess presented to her royal admirer a memorial from Bolingbroke, in which he denounced Walpole as the author of every public evil. The king put this paper into the hands of Walpole, with his usual straightforward mode of action. The ambitious statesman therein requested an interview with his sovereign. George was indisposed to grant this meeting. Walpole earnestly pressed it, with his never-failing sagacity; for, as he himself said, "if this was not done, the clamour would be, that I kept his majesty to myself, and would allow none to come near him to tell the truth." George told his minister that Bolingbroke's complaints and representations were "bagatelles." The king set out for Hanover on the 3rd of June, accompanied by the duchess of Kendal and lord Townshend. The unhappy wife of George had died on the 13th of November, 1726; after many

schemes of escape. The king landed on the 7th at Vaert, in Holland. On the 8th he proceeded on his journey, leaving the duchess of Kendal on the Dutch frontier. On the 9th, he slept at Delden; and was again in his coach at four o'clock in the morning of the 10th, accompanied by two official persons of the court of Hanover. In the forenoon of that day he was struck by apoplexy. He refused to stop at Ippenburen, as his attendants wished. His hands fell; his eyes were heavy; but his will was strong. "Osnabruck! Osnabruck!" he exclaimed. His one surviving brother, the prince bishop, had his palace at Osnabruck. The king's voice grew fainter. He murmured in his death-sleep, "C'est faite de moi" (All is over with me). All was over. When the bishop was roused by the gallop of horses in his court-yard at midnight, George, king of Great Britain, and elector of Hanover, was dead. He was buried at Hanover.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Accession of George II.—Walpole confirmed in power.—Frederick, the heir-apparent.—Course of foreign policy.—The Stuarts.—Arrival in England of prince Frederick.—Townshend leaves office.—What is History?—The Dissenters.—Inquiry into the state of the Gaols.—Law proceedings in English.—Party Quarrels and Libels.—Parliamentary Opposition.—The Salt-tax.—The Excise Scheme.—Wars in Europe.—Neutrality of Great Britain.—Motion for the Repeal of the Septennial Act.—Wyndham's character of Walpole.—Walpole's character of Bolingbroke.—Bolingbroke quits England.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE is seated at dinner in his villa at Chelsea on the 14th of June, 1727. An express arrives from lord Townshend, who has accompanied George I. to the Continent as Secretary of State. The king is dead. The First Commissioner of the treasury is instantly in the saddle on his road to Richmond, where the prince of Wales is staying. The prince of Wales has dined and is asleep in his bed-chamber, the princess sitting by his side. Sir Robert Walpole must see the prince immediately. At that moment the great minister probably regarded his tenure of power as more uncertain than when the duchess of Kendal was intriguing with Bolingbroke against him. The prince looked upon his father's chief adviser with suspicion and resentment. "I am come to acquaint your Majesty with the death of your father," was Walpole's hasty communication. He then asked certain questions about the king's pleasure as to the Council being summoned, and as to other necessary formalities. "Go to Chiswick, and take your directions from sir Spencer Compton," was the uncourteous reply.\* Sir Spencer Compton was Treasurer to the prince of Wales. He was Speaker of the House of Commons and Paymaster to the Army—"a plodding heavy fellow, with great application, but no talents," says lord Hervey. Walpole told Compton it was clear that the king meant him for his minister. Walpole professed that he had no desire of power for himself—a small office in the household would be sufficient to show that he was not disgraced. The minister expectant, who was "always more concerned for the man-

\* "The Memoirs of John, Lord Hervey, from the Accession of George II. to the Death of queen Caroline," edited by Mr. Croker, and first published in 1848, have drawn aside the veil from many a courtly scene, although the mutilation of the MS. has left some enigmas yet unsolved.