

annals for the glory of Mr. Pitt's administration. The nation at that time scarcely felt the pressure of increased taxation occasioned by the war; for it was the constant boast of Pitt—a boast which is recorded upon his monument in Grafton—that under his administration the nation had prospered in company with war.

CHAPTER IV.

Lord Bute Prime Minister.—Policy of the Favourite.—John Wilkes.—Lord Bute resigns.—George Grenville's Ministry.—"North Briton," No. 45.—Arrest of Wilkes.—Negotiations for Mr. Pitt's return to power.—The king's desire to govern.—The Wilkite agitation.—Hogarth, Wilkes, and Churchill.—Wilkes ordered to be prosecuted.—Expelled the House of Commons.—Great Debates on General Warrants.—Officers dismissed for votes in Parliament.—Restrictions on the American Colonies.—Grenville's Resolutions on American Taxation.—The Stamp Act passed.—Resistance in America.—Motives for passing the Stamp Act.

THE influence of Pitt upon the action of the government was at an end, when the war which he had directed, and to which he continued to lend his spirit, came to an end. The policy in the conduct of the internal affairs of Great Britain, which now commenced its development, provoked an opposition, resulting in a conflict, in some respects the most lamentable, if not the most disgraceful, which had been witnessed in previous antagonism of the authority of government and the popular sentiment. The earl of Bute became ostensibly, as he had been for some time in reality, the prime minister, when the duke of Newcastle resigned his office of first lord of the Treasury. There might have been surprise that a Scottish peer, of no marked ability, known only as the favourite of the king's mother, and the chief officer of the household of the young sovereign when he was prince of Wales, should become the supreme director of affairs, and receive the highest honours, such as that of the Garter. But the temper of the nation would not have been blown into a flame, had not the constitutional guardians of public opinion shut up the safety valves which allow that mighty power of a free state harmlessly to exert its irresistible influence. The House of Commons quickly became unpopular; and that unpopularity left the throne open to the rude assaults of a headlong force, which threatened to destroy its claims to respect and obedience. In attempting to restore the influence of prerogative by weakening the power of the oligarchical dispensers of patronage, Bute endangered the success of a scheme in some respects desirable, by failing to cultivate the support of the people. Party contests had been utterly suspended during the triumphant administration of Pitt. When his power was at an end they were renewed with a virulence which it would be difficult perfectly to understand,

if we did not see in this change a natural result of a more deep-seated change in the social organization. From the Revolution of 1688 to the Rebellion of 1745, the contest was between the adherents to the Bill of Rights and to the Act of Settlement, and the gradually decreasing partisans of the Stuarts; and, coincident with the existence with these factions, a perpetual struggle between High Church and Low Church, between Orthodoxy and Dissent. The Crown during the whole period from the Revolution to the death of George II., had, with the exception of the short ministry of Harley and Bolingbroke, chiefly looked for its support to the great Whig party, and their successive phases of administration the popular element necessarily preponderated. There had been at many seasons a fierce struggle for supremacy; but at no period were the notions of prerogative advanced as the principle upon which the monarchy was to be upheld. It was not attempted to be disguised that the new minister of George III., who had supplanted, or was endeavouring to supplant, the old family influences, had resolved to place the power of the Crown upon a border basis—to bring back something of the old ascendancy of prerogative. He had shown his disposition to contend against the force of public opinion, by displacing the popular minister. The portion of history which we have now to trace has been justly described as "equally anomalous and disagreeable."*

Upon the resignation of the duke of Newcastle in June, 1762, —on the alleged plea of his difference with the Cabinet on the question of continuing a subsidy to the king of Prussia, but more probably from his perception that the parliamentary foundation of his power was to be cut from under his feet,—the earl of Bute left his office of Secretary of State to become the head of the Treasury. George Grenville then became Secretary of State; and sir Francis Dashwood Chancellor of the Exchequer. But whatever were the minor arrangements, the real power of the government was centred in Bute; and upon him fell that storm of popular indignation which Wilkes and Churchill embodied in the bitterest of personal attacks. In June, 1762, the first number appeared of "The North Briton." This paper, which afterwards acquired such a dangerous celebrity, was set up by John Wilkes, with the assistance of Charles Churchill. It was marked by no great display of talent; but it was daring in its personality. "The North Briton" did not observe the old decorum of giving names by initials. The king was not softened into the K—, nor was Bute pointed to as B—. The minister's name was not disguised as "The Jack-boot," nor as the

* Dr. Arnold—"Lectures on History," p. 263.

"Thane," as the caricatures exhibited him. More paltry than the assaults upon the favourite's political character was the attempt to lower him in the estimation of the English as a Scot. Wilkes did this coarsely. Churchill with extraordinary skill, in his "Prophecy of Famine," which appeared in January 1763. We can read this production as we read Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel," utterly forgetting the partizan to admire the poet. Lord Temple, the friend of Wilkes, deprecated the system pursued in "The North Briton" of "attacking at once the whole nation of Scotland, by wholesale and retail, in so very invidious a manner."* He shrunk also from having "Lord B.'s name at full length." Much of the odium that fell upon this minister is to be ascribed rather to the belief that he was a favourite, than to his actions as a statesman. It was to the suspicious circumstances which made him the ruler of Leicester House that the people attributed the confidence placed in him by the young king. The common parallel of the libellers was Mortimer and queen Isabel. That a minion should have displaced such a minister as Pitt, was sufficient to make his name execrable without any very odious acts of power. His precipitation in concluding the peace without obtaining the full advantage of the war, would have been quickly forgotten. But his rash dismissal of three of the greatest amongst the peers from the Lord-Lieutenancies of their counties, for their presumption in offering objections to the conditions of the Peace, indicated a temper in which thinking men saw something like an attempt to go back to arbitrary power. The dislike of Bute became so intense, that in many places a jack-boot and a petticoat were publicly burnt, as types of the favourite and his patroness. When a Bill for laying a tax upon cider was passed amidst great opposition, the popular clamour reached its height; and at last the unhappy minister was afraid to appear in the streets without the escort of a gang of bruisers. Suddenly, on the 8th of April, 1763, lord Bute resigned all his official employments. It would seem, from a correspondence between him and George Grenville, that Bute had the sole power of forming a new ministry, previous to his resignation. Upon offering the great post of First Lord of the Treasury to George Grenville, he made use of the phrase "the king's friends," in recommending Grenville cordially to take the assistance of those who came under this designation. Grenville became the head of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; lord Egremont and lord Halifax the two Secretaries of State. Upon the retirement of Bute, Fox was raised to the peerage as lord Holland. Although he ceased to take any

* "Grenville Papers," vol. i. p. 457.

part in public affairs, he clung to the great sinecure of his office of Paymaster; and had the gratification of still receiving those vast irregular emoluments which Pitt despised. The voice of public execration might scarcely reach him amidst the fantastic buildings which he raised at Kingsgate, near Margate; where, though

"Old, and abandon'd by each venal friend,"*

he might hug himself in the satisfaction that he had done as much as any man in his time to play the great game of politics solely with reference to his own private advantage; and had won by his talents and perseverance the real prize of statesmanship, whilst his eloquent rival had only the barren fame.

On the 19th of April, eleven days after the resignation of lord Bute, the king closed the session of Parliament. His majesty dwelt upon the conditions of the definitive treaty of peace, as advantageous to his own subjects; and he then added, "My expectations have been fully answered, by the happy effects which the several allies of my crown have derived from this salutary measure. The powers at war with my good brother, the king of Prussia, have been induced to agree to such terms of accommodation as that great prince has approved; and the success which has attended my negotiation has necessarily, and immediately, diffused the blessing of peace through every part of Europe." On the 23rd of April came out No. 45 of "The North Briton," in which the comment of Wilkes upon this passage was considered by some, to use Walpole's expression, as giving "a flat lie to the king himself." Wilkes used these words: "The infamous fallacy of this whole sentence is apparent to all mankind; for it is known that the king of Prussia did not barely approve, but absolutely dictated as conqueror, every article of the terms of peace. No advantage of any kind has accrued to that magnanimous prince from our negotiation; but he was basely deserted by the Scottish Prime Minister of England." In this famous "North Briton" Wilkes cautiously abstained from giving the lie to the king himself. It was, he said, "the minister's speech,"—an imposition as great upon the sovereign, as upon the nation: the sanction of the king's name was given to the most unjustifiable public doctrines. The proceedings of the Government against Wilkes not only made the witty profligate the most famous man in England; but rendered him the centre of a constitutional resistance to the Prerogative of the Crown and the Privilege of Parliament which mixed up as it was with the cause of a man in many respects worthless, eventually placed the liberties of the peo-

* Gray—"Impromptu on Kingsgate."

ple upon a firmer foundation of legal right than had previously been acknowledged. On the 30th of April a "General Warrant" was issued against the authors, printers, and publishers of a seditious and treasonable paper entitled "The North Briton," No. 45, &c. By a "General Warrant" is understood an authority to apprehend any person supposed to be implicated in a particular charge. Balfe, the printer, and Kearsley, the publisher, were taken at once. The king's messengers entered the house of Wilkes at midnight on the 29th, but he protested against their intrusion at such an hour; and they quitted him, to return in the morning. He was carried before the two Secretaries of State, and was by them committed to the Tower; his papers being seized and examined. At first he was closely confined, and was debarred all intercourse with his friends, or the use of pen and paper. When these severe restrictions were laid aside, he was visited by earl Temple and the duke of Grafton. On the 3rd of May, he was brought to the Court of Common Pleas, upon a writ of habeas corpus granted by sir Charles Pratt, the Lord Chief Justice. Serjeant Glynn argued the case, and Wilkes spoke himself with that boldness approaching to effrontery, which was one of his characteristics. The court postponed its decision till the 6th. The crown lawyers had contrived not to have the question then raised of the legality of a General Warrant; but the Chief Justice, speaking in the name of himself and his fellow judges, determined that his privilege as a member of parliament protected Wilkes from arrest. That privilege, Pratt said, held good in all cases except treason, felony, and an actual breach of the peace. A libel was not a breach of the peace, but only tended to such breach. "Let Mr. Wilkes be discharged from his imprisonment." The next day earl Temple was dismissed from the Lord-Lieutenancy of Buckinghamshire, and his name was struck off the list of Privy Councillors. Wilkes was deprived of his commission as a colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia. For seven years did the battle go on—a battle in which every supposed victory of the Government was a real defeat. Of this extraordinary contest, in its various aspects, we shall have to take up the narrative from time to time as we proceed. At every step it will be impossible not to see the weakness and folly of the Ministry and the Parliament; and, however we may despise the reckless audacity of the demagogue over whom public opinion threw its shield, we cannot but rejoice that the eternal principles of justice were asserted from the judgment seat, and that the majesty of the law was not sullied by any such subserviency to power as had disgraced earlier periods of our history.

The interval between the proceedings against Wilkes and the meeting of Parliament in November, was marked by an attempt to call back Mr. Pitt to the direction of affairs. George Grenville had been tried by Bute, and had not given satisfaction. A dry, formal man, with very precise notions of the mode of conducting public business, he could not brook the interference of the ex-minister who had given him his office. Bute was close at the royal ear to give advice to the young sovereign, in the capacity of "the king's friend." Lord Egremont, one of the Secretaries of State, died suddenly of apoplexy. Bute, who, when he got rid of Pitt, had said that the king would never suffer those ministers of the late reign, who had attempted to fetter him, to come again into his service, now advised his majesty to give his confidence to the man whom he used contemptuously to term "the people's darling." On the 27th of August, the well-known sedan-chair of Pitt (built in a singular fashion to accommodate his gouty foot) was moving through the Park to Buckingham House, the king having commanded his attendance. The king was gracious; the great commoner authoritative and firm. Pitt maintained that it would be for his majesty's interest to restore to his confidence those steady friends of the House of Hanover who had been driven from his counsels. The king, according to Pitt's report to lord Hardwicke, appeared to be convinced by his arguments, and desired to see him again on the following Monday, the first interview being on Saturday. In the meantime Bute and Grenville had been with his majesty; and when Pitt had another audience, the king continued to discuss his proposals, as if he had not intimated to Grenville that he was to continue his minister; but finally said, "I see this won't do." Lord Shelburne congratulated Pitt "personally and very sincerely on a negotiation being at an end, which carried through the whole of it such shocking marks of insincerity." The only result of this negotiation was, that it became manifest that Bute still influenced public affairs. Grenville had been affronted by the course which had been taken in endeavouring to supersede him; and he only consented to remain in office upon the condition that there should be no "secret influence." The duke of Bedford became President of the Council, and lord Sandwich Secretary of State.

It is impossible to look upon this extraordinary proceeding on the part of George III. without in some degree regarding it as a manifestation of his peculiar character. He had been brought up with certain notions, and in many respects very proper notions, of his own power and prerogative. As far as he was acquainted with the history of his country, and we have no right to assume that he

was ignorant of it, he had seen no sovereign since the time of William III. who took a direct and active part in the administration of public affairs. So far from indulging the indolence which lord Waldegrave thought was constitutional, he exhibited an amazing anxiety to suggest, to control, to dictate, in every operation of government. He was impatient under the triumphant administration of Pitt, because the personal supremacy of the minister overshadowed the authority of the king. It is possible that he was wearied with the tutelage of Bute, when he thought it possible to call back the greatest man in his kingdom to be the instrument of his will. Pitt's firm bearing, in that memorable audience of the 27th of August, satisfied him that he could not put his government into the hands of a responsible minister who proposed to act as the representative of a great party. When Grenville saw the king on the Sunday evening after his first interview with Pitt, he found him "in the greatest agitation"—the terms, his majesty said, which Pitt had demanded were "too hard." The prevailing desire of George III. to have a ministry moulded to his own views was a constant struggle against the shackles imposed upon a king by the very conditions of a limited monarchy. He had force of character enough to be determined that he should be consulted, and if possible obeyed, in the smaller as well as in the greater affairs of state; but he had not sufficient strength of understanding to know how much to leave to the responsibility of his servants—how far he could safely direct, and at what point he could best defer to the opinions of those to whom he purported to have given his confidence. Through this tendency to govern of himself he weakened his own real power and influence. Lord Brougham has truly said, "It is not to be denied that George III. sought to rule too much; it is not maintained that he had a right to be perpetually sacrificing all other considerations to the preservation or extension of his prerogative. But that he only discharged the duties of his station by thinking for himself, acting according to his conscientious opinion, and using his influence for giving those opinions effect, cannot be denied."* But it was a lamentable circumstance of this constitution and not unreasonable rule of conduct, that the king personally did many harsh acts to mark his resentment of those who differed from him; that though to some of his ministers he was a confiding and even affectionate master, to others he was wayward and distrustful; that during the first nine years of his reign there were six successive administrations, and that, to use the words of Burke, "the question at last was not, who could do the public bus-

* "Statesmen of the time of George III.," vol. i. p. 14.

ness best, but who would undertake to do it at all."* In Burke's parliamentary language, it was "the arbitrary fiat of an all-directing favourite" that prevented men of talents and integrity accepting employments where they could not exercise their judgment or their honesty. But it is now well known that the influence of lord Bute had wholly come to an end after a few years; and we cannot therefore shut our eyes to the fact that the king, however right in his determination not to be a cypher in the State, had not the discretion to prevent that desire becoming a source of national disunion.

The seven years of Wilkite agitation could not have been a pleasant epoch in the life of any friend of rational liberty, and well-balanced authority. The principles of constitutional freedom were mixed up with the quarrel of a profligate demagogue, and the outrages of an unthinking multitude. Sober men naturally turned from the support of such a cause. On the other hand, the course of the government was so paltry, so passionate, so vindictive, so obstinate, that the most strenuous loyalty could scarcely give an honest assistance to measures which transformed a nation's willing obedience into a dull submission to the powers that be. During this period of hateful controversy, there was a perpetual excitement of libels and mobs; the decisions of the law coming in conflict with the desires of the Crown; the will of the people opposed to the votes of the Parliament. The bystanders looked with surprise and alarm upon this extraordinary game, in which statesmen seemed to be puppets moved by some machinery, rather than by their own natural impulses. Time has partially lifted up the curtain, and we see the hands that pulled the strings.

John Wilkes, although filling an influential position—a Buckinghamshire magistrate; a bon vivant in what was called the best society—was a needy man, and a little able of himself to carry on the great legal contest in which he became engaged. His chief friend was earl Temple, who had left office with Pitt, and bore no good will to the influence which had thrust him and his more eminent brother-in-law from high employment. His connexion with Wilkes was not entirely political; for Wilkes was a colonel in lord Temple's militia regiment. But his open support of the writer of the "North Briton" indicated pretty clearly that Temple was in some degree identified with Wilkes; and this led to the immediate revenge of the court, in his dismissal from the Lord-Lieutenancy of Buckinghamshire. From that time the correspondence of Wilkes and the lord of Stowe on the subject of the libellous paper, and

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xvi. col. 879.

the prosecutions connected with it, are very frequent. The patriotic effusions of Wilkes are generally accompanied with requests for the loan of money. "I have this cause at heart, and I feel the spirit of Hampden in it, but I have not his fortune . . . £500 I must contrive to get, and, after your lordship's goodness, I even blush to mention it." * Wilkes adds, "I believe the causes will in time pay themselves." At this time one of the journeymen printers who had been arrested under the General Warrant had obtained a verdict against the Secretary of State, with three hundred pounds damages, for false imprisonment. Chief Justice Pratt had summoned up decidedly for the journeyman printer. Other "causes" of the same character were depending; and Temple gives Wilkes advice as to the course of legal proceedings in "the business of the devils, your friends." † The "North Briton" was now printed at a private press in Wilkes's own house in Great George Street; where other productions were printed, one of which became the object of a movement on the part of the Government, as unwise as the proceedings under the General Warrant.

Whilst an inevitable parliamentary battle in the next Session was in preparation, the town was amused by lampoons and caricatures on both sides of this stirring question. Hogarth had been attacked by Wilkes in an early number of the "North Briton," for Hogarth had published a caricature called "The Times," of which Pitt was the subject. The pictorial satirist took his revenge of the "North Briton" by issuing a portrait, scarcely a caricature, which he had sketched when Wilkes was brought before Chief Justice Pratt. Churchill came to the aid of his friend, and published his bitter "Epistle to William Hogarth." The painter was not to be put down, even by Churchill's compliment to his genius sweetening the assaults upon "the Man." He published his print of "The Bruiser, C. Churchill, once the reverend"—the poet's face moulded into that of a bear, with a pot of porter in one hand, and club in the other. Pitiful were these effusions of personal spite. More pitiful even was the revenge against Wilkes that was being concocted in the highest places. On the 5th of November, the earl of Sandwich writes to Mr. Grenville, to inform him of conferences between his lordship, the Lord Chancellor, and bishop Warburton, on the subject of his proposal to bring before the House of Lords a complaint against Wilkes as the author of a blasphemous and impious work; and he tells Grenville, "I mean to carry the affair into execution; so that I think we have now nothing to do but to settle the mode of bringing it on." ‡ Amongst

* "Grenville Papers," vol. ii. p. 75—Wilkes to Temple, July 9, 1763.

† *Ibid.*, p. 78.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

the profligate nobles of that age, few had obtained a more unenviable reputation than lord Sandwich. A boon companion of Wilkes himself, we have evidence that at the very time at which he was dining with him at a convivial weekly club, Sandwich was employing spies to watch and report all Wilkes's daily movements. * This might be proper official caution; but no official necessity could excuse the baseness of bribing a printer to purloin the proof-sheets of a poem of which Wilkes had printed twelve copies at his press, for private distribution. On the 15th of November, the Parliament was opened. In the House of Lords, before the speech from the throne was taken into consideration, lord Sandwich made a complaint of a printed paper entitled "An Essay on Woman," with notes to which the name of Dr. Warburton was affixed; and of another printed paper entitled "The Veni Creator paraphrased." The "holy Secretary," as Walpole calls him, read many of the atrocious passages, to the great disgust of all decent peers; and the amazement of some who saw the earl of Sandwich employed in the vindication of religion and morality. † The compositor employed by Wilkes in his own house, receiving there 25s. a week, and bed and board, was examined; and he produced some proof-sheets, with corrections in the handwriting of Wilkes, to establish the authorship. The House then resolved to address his majesty to desire that he would give immediate orders for the prosecution of the author or authors of this scandalous and impious libel. The whole force of the State, of Kings, Lords, and Commons was arrayed against one demagogue. In the Lower House, after a series of debates, it was resolved that the "North Briton," No. 45, was a false, scandalous, and seditious libel, and that it should be burnt by the common hangman. A riot took place when this resolution was carried into effect. Meanwhile, in consequence of Mr. Martin, on the first night of the Session, having termed the writer of the "North Briton" a cowardly, malignant, and infamous scoundrel, Wilkes had challenged him; and in a duel the next day was dangerously wounded. The measures contemplated against him were therefore delayed. His position appearing very perilous he sought safety in France before his wound was healed. On the 20th of January he was expelled the House of Commons.

The question of the legality of a General Warrant had been formally decided in an action tried before Chief Justice Pratt, on the 10th of December, 1763. At the time of the arrest of Wilkes,

* See their Report to the Secretaries of State; October 31 to November 13, in "Grenville Papers," vol. ii. p. 155.

† See Chesterfield's Letters.

lord Halifax and lord Egremont were the two Secretaries of State. Egremont died; and the proceedings which Wilkins had instituted against him were necessarily abated. Halifax, by a series of legal evasions, prevented the action against himself being tried. But the action for false imprisonment against Mr. Wood, the Under Secretary of State, resulted in a verdict against him by a special jury, with damages of a thousand pounds. The opinion of the Chief Justice was now given in the most unequivocal words. "There is no authority in our law-books that mentions this kind of warrants; but in express terms condemns this. Upon the maturest consideration I am bold to say, this warrant is illegal." This judgment was subsequently affirmed by lord Mansfield upon the arguments on a Bill of Exceptions.* But the legality of General Warrants formed the subject of a series of debates in the House of Commons, conducted with all the energy that is naturally elicited by great constitutional questions. The House, on the 13th of February, examined witnesses and debated this question for eleven hours; and the next day for seventeen hours. The debate was renewed three days after, and then the ministerial majority was only fourteen. Walpole gives a ludicrous account of the appearance of the House on this occasion: "You would have almost laughed to see the spectres produced on both sides. . . . Votes were brought down in flannels and blankets till the floor of the House looked like the pool of Bethesda." † There was no record of the debate on this occasion except Walpole's letter, until the publication of his "Memoirs of George III.," where a summary is given of the arguments of many speakers. The ministry went upon precedents for their defence, and alluded to the issue of such warrants during the administration of Mr. Pitt. The great orator boldly said that he knew them to be illegal when he issued them. He preferred the general safety in a time of danger to any personal consideration. He did an extraordinary act at any risk, even of his head, to procure the arrest of a suspicious foreigner, who was concealed at different times in different houses. "What was there in a libel so heinous and terrible as to require this formidable instrument?" Their honest convictions made some of the ordinary supporters of the government vote with the minority on this question of General Warrants. It is pitiable to trace the persevering desire of the king to carry out what he deemed a proper pun-

* The received legal doctrine is thus laid down by Blackstone: "A warrant to apprehend all persons, guilty of a crime therein specified, is no legal warrant; for the point upon which its authority rests is a fact to be decided on a subsequent trial, namely, whether the person apprehended thereupon be really guilty or not."—Kerr's edit., vol. iv. p. 342.

† Letter to Lord Hertford.

ishment for their offence. On the first day of the Session, when the question of parliamentary privilege was discussed, General Conway, the Colonel of a Regiment, voted in the minority. The king immediately wrote to Grenville, "General Conway's conduct is amazing. I am hurt for lord Hertford [brother of Conway, and ambassador at Paris]. I shall propose to Mr. Grenville the dismissing instantly, for in this question I am personally concerned." * On the 25th his majesty urged the dismissal of Conway and others; and that it should be given out "that the next would have the same fate if they do not amend their conduct." † Grenville's Diary shows that he repeatedly advised the king to defer this resolution with regard to Conway; although he supported the king in his determination to take this course of exhibiting his power. On the 18th of February, after the great debate upon General Warrants, the king wrote to Grenville, "firmness and resolution must now be shown, and no one's friend saved who has dared to fly off; this alone can restore order, and save this country from anarchy, by dismissing. . . . I am not to be neglected unpunished." ‡ In April, Conway was dismissed from his regiment and from his office. The same mode of resentment was adopted in the case of lord Shelburne, colonel Barré, and general A'court, as well as towards persons holding civil offices. The disposition of George III. to look at public measures as personal questions was one cause of many serious calamities of his reign. He told Grenville on the 14th of December that he took no notice of lord Shelburne at the levée; "but spoke to two people on each side of him; which, he thought, was the treatment he deserved, for having broke his word and honour with him, having pledged both upon not going into opposition, and then taking the first opportunity to oppose a measure which personally regarded the king." § The dismissal of Conway for a conscientious vote in Parliament,—a man who had distinguished himself in Germany; was remarkable for his fairness, and his aversion to faction; and was a general supporter of the government—is truly described as a step whose boldness was almost unprecedented. Sir Robert Walpole had dismissed three military men from their employments, the famous "cornet of horse" among the number; but they had incurred the penalty "by a personal, violent, and constant opposition." || The dismissal of Conway and others, for their parliamentary conduct, excited considerable alarm as to the arbitrary tendencies of the Court; and it did

* "Grenville Papers," vol. ii. p. 162.

† *Ibid.*, p. 166.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 238—Diary of Grenville.

|| Walpole—"George III.," vol. i. p. 402.

much to establish that unpopularity which a king, who had many qualities to recommend him to the affection of his people, was by his own manifestations of self-will bringing down upon his head. The question of the proceedings against Wilkes became merged in higher questions. The demagogue was prosecuted for libels; was found guilty; and was outlawed on the 1st of November for non-appearance to receive sentence. But he was now considered a persecuted man. When the Common Council voted thanks to Chief Justice Pratt for his judgment on the question of General Warrants, and requested him to sit for his picture to be placed in Guildhall, they expressed the prevailing opinion even of temperate politicians. The ministry had the sense of the nation against them. The king was not shielded by ministerial responsibility, for he had unwisely exhibited that individual sensitiveness—those resentments and animosities—which are scarcely compatible with the functions of a constitutional sovereign.

We shall see, in a few years, John Wilkes, and all the chorus of his political drama, passing away, "like an insubstantial pageant faded." Another scene was to be opened, which, devoid of interest as it might at first appear, was to be developed in a series of long continued action which involved not only the interests of England, but eventually the destinies of the Anglo-Saxon family, and incidentally of all the human race. The triumphant administration of Mr. Pitt had given a firmness and compactness to the British empire in North America, which appeared to promise a long continuance of prosperity to the mother-country and her colonies. These colonies were founded upon principles of freedom and toleration, by a race nurtured in those principles, and, in some cases, seeking for a happier field for their establishment than they could find under a temporary suspension of the old English right to be well governed. The colonial Assemblies, or Parliaments, of the thirteen provinces of North America, elected by the people, trained men of industry and ability to the consideration of questions of public policy and local administration. Thus, whatever might be the authority and influence of the Governor of each State appointed by the Crown, there was always an energy and freedom in their discussions which called out those qualities of good sense, and even of eloquence, which are fostered, more or less, by all representative institutions. From these Assemblies complaints often arose against the commercial policy of the mother-country; and especially after the peace of 1763, when the attempt to carry out our Navigation Laws by a rigid prohibition of the contraband trade of the American with the Spanish colonies produced the most seri-

ous dissatisfaction. The trade between Great Britain and her colonies had been always based upon principles wholly opposite to those of commercial freedom. The Englishman was forbidden to smoke any other than Virginian-grown tobacco, and the Virginian could wear no other coat than one of English-made cloth. It was an age of regulation and balance in small matters as well as in great—in commerce as in war. No particular injury was contemplated towards the colonists in the trade regulations; although the monopoly of the English merchants was regarded as the supreme advantage of colonial possessions. From very insignificant beginnings, the North American provinces had become great and prosperous, and contained a population somewhat exceeding two millions. The State regarded these colonists as a happy family of good children, to be kept in order by that paternal authority which knew best what was for their advantage. It was not a very harsh authority, although its exercise was unwise in its persistence. If it vexed them with restrictions, it soothed them with privileges. But the privileges were thought inadequate to the restrictions. At last the parent took up the fancy of compelling the children to pay something in acknowledgment of the heavy cost of past protection, and as a contribution towards the expense of that protection in future. A Stamp Act to raise sixty thousand pounds produced a war that cost a hundred millions.

"What mighty contests rise from trivial things."

On the 10th of March, 1764, Mr. Grenville moved in the Commons a series of Resolutions, for imposing small duties on certain articles of American commerce; to "be paid into the receipt of his majesty's exchequer and there reserved, to be from time to time disposed of by Parliament, towards defraying the necessary expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the British colonies and plantations in America." Following this resolution for the appropriation of the produce of duties upon the foreign trade of the American colonies, came the 14th of the series, in these words: "That towards further defraying the said expenses, it may be proper to charge certain Stamp Duties in the said colonies and plantations."* The notion of imposing Stamp Duties on the colonists was considered to have originated with Mr. Jenkinson, the Secretary of the Treasury. But there was found amongst Mr. Grenville's papers a letter to him from one Henry M'Culloh, dated July 5, 1763, in which he says, that a Stamp Duty on vellum and paper in America would amount to upwards of sixty thousand

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xv. col. 1427.

pounds sterling per annum.* Mr. Jenkinson writes to the Minister in July, 1764, to urge him forward with the Stamp Act, which had been postponed in the previous Session to obtain "further information on that subject." On the 10th of January, 1765, the Parliament met. The question of General Warrants was again debated in full houses, and again the Ministry had a small majority. The question of taxing America by Stamp Duties produced only a feeble debate and only one division. On the 6th of February, Grenville introduced fifty-five Resolutions, which were to be engrafted into the Stamp Act. Walpole says, "This famous Bill, little understood here at that time, was less attended to. . . . The colonies, in truth, were highly alarmed, and had sent over representations so strong against being taxed here, that it was not thought decent or safe to present their memorial to Parliament." † The colonists could not see in Grenville's proposition for a paltry tax, any other than the beginning of an attempt to tax them largely without their own consent. They denied the right of the House of Commons to tax them unless they had representatives in that House. Grenville had rashly termed his Resolution for a Stamp Act as "an experiment towards further aid." Where was the system, thus begun, to end? The Stamp Act was passed, without a debate or division in the House of Lords; and it received the Royal Assent on the 22nd of March. Benjamin Franklin, as agent for the province of Pennsylvania, had come to London to oppose the passing of the Act. When it was passed, he wrote to a correspondent in America, "We might as well have hindered the sun's setting. That we could not do. But since it is down, my friend, and it may be long before it rises again, let us make as good a night of it as we can. We may still light candles. Frugality and industry will go a great way towards indemnifying us." The prudent submission of Franklin to an evil which he thought inevitable was not the prevailing feeling of the colonists. The Act was to come into operation on the 1st of November. When the enactment first became known, there was a deep expression of grief, but scarcely any manifestation of resentment. But in the State Assemblies, a determination not to submit without remonstrance was quickly manifested. Virginia, the most attached to the monarchy of all the provinces—the most opposed to democratic principles—was the first to demand a repeal of the Statute by which the colonists were taxed without their own consent. The Resolutions of the Assembly of Virginia went forth as an example to the other provinces, many of which passed similar Resolutions. But in Vir-

* "Grenville Papers," vol. ii. p. 374.

† "George III.," vol. ii. p. 68.

ginia there was an orator of no common order. Patrick Henry, who was born in 1736, had received no regular education—had been a farmer and then a shopkeeper,—when he adopted the law as a profession. He obtained a brief in a great public cause; and then manifested qualities which left every competitor far behind. As a member of the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg, he is held by Mr. Jefferson to have given "the earliest impulse to the ball of revolution." Jefferson, then twenty-two years of age, first heard Patrick Henry in the Assembly in May, 1765, when he brought forward certain resolutions against the Stamp Act; and, fifty years afterwards, Jefferson declared that he never heard such eloquence from any other man.* One specimen of Henry's oratory on the Stamp Act, in this Assembly, has been preserved: "Cæsar," he exclaimed, "had his Brutus; Charles the First had his Cromwell; and George the Third"—"Treason," cried the Speaker; "Treason," cried many of the members—"may profit by their example," was the conclusion of the sentence. "If this be treason," said Henry, "make the most of it." The House of Burgesses in Virginia was dissolved by the governor of the province; but the torch which had been lighted was carried from state to state; and delegates were appointed by several of the Assemblies for a General Congress to meet at New York.

The cry of "treason" in the Assembly of Virginia, although followed by the strong remonstrance of the burgesses, was a manifestation of the desire which then almost universally prevailed amongst the colonists to regard themselves as bound in allegiance to the British crown. The alienation was a gradual result of a mistaken view of the policy that ought to prevail, between a colony that had grown to a real capacity for independence and the parent State. It was a result, also, of that system of parliamentary corruption and of court influence which at that time entered so largely into the government of England. Walpole says that the Stamp Act "removed the burthen of a tax to distant shoulders;" that Grenville contemplated his measure "in the light of easing and improving an over-burthened country." † Burke, in his memorable speech on American taxation, on the 19th of April, 1774, exhibited this fact more distinctly. He points out that upon the close of the war, "the necessity was established of keeping up no less than twenty new regiments, with twenty colonels capable of seats in this House. . . . Country gentlemen, the great patrons of economy, and the great resisters of a standing armed force, would not

* Tucker—"Life of Jefferson," vol. i. p. 40.

† "George III.," vol. ii. p. 68 and p. 70.

have entered with much alacrity into the vote for so large and expensive an army, if they had been very sure that they were to continue to pay for it. But hopes of another kind were held out to them." He then traces in this speech the policy of Mr. Grenville, and the peculiarities of his character, which led him to think "better of the wisdom and power of legislation than in truth it deserves;" to believe "regulation to be commerce, and taxes to be revenue." The Navigation Act was Grenville's idol. The commerce of America "had filled all its proper channels to the brim." He "turned his eye somewhat less than was just towards the incredible increase of the fair trade; and looked with something of too exquisite a jealousy towards the contraband." The result was, that "the bonds of the Act of Navigation were straitened so much, that America was on the point of having no trade, either contraband or legitimate." The Americans, Burke says, "thought themselves proceeded against as delinquents, or at best as people under suspicion of delinquency." They were irritated enough before the Stamp Act came. They adopted such counter measures as appeared efficient to a people that had not yet begun to feel their own strength, and understand their own resources. They agreed amongst themselves to wear no English manufactured cloth; and to encourage the breed of sheep that they might manufacture cloth from their own wool. They protested against the English monopoly; and they devised, feebly enough, such measures as they thought might overcome it. At last what Burke calls "the scheme of a regular plantation parliamentary revenue" was established—"a revenue not substituted in the place of, but superadded to, a monopoly; which monopoly was enforced at the same time with additional strictness, and the execution put into military hands." It was one of the misfortunes of Mr. Grenville's scheme that his Stamp Act was popular. "Great was the applause of this measure here. In England we cried out for new taxes on America, whilst they cried out that they were nearly crushed with those which the war, and their own grants, had brought upon them." Such was the commencement of a struggle which ended in the independence of the American colonies, and thenceforward in the establishment of an empire which has shown how quickly, in one vast region, might be realised the probable future contemplated by Adam Smith;—when "the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another."*

* "Wealth of Nations," book iv. chap. vii.

CHAPTER V.

Illness of the king.—The Regency Bill.—Overtures to Pitt.—He declines office.—Grenville and Bedford.—The Rockingham Administration.—Disturbances in America.—Parliament.—Debates on the Stamp Act.—Pitt contends for its Repeal.—Examination of Dr. Franklin.—Declaratory Bill as to rights over the Colonies.—Repeal of the Stamp Act.—Weakness of the Rockingham Administration.—They quit office.—Pitt created earl of Chatham.—His loss of popularity.—His plans for great measures.—Embargo on Corn.—Chatham's illness.—Disorganisation of his ministry.—Parliament dissolved.

DURING the progress of the Bill for the taxation of the American Colonies, the king was attacked by a serious indisposition. On the nature of that illness the greatest secrecy was maintained. "The king's illness," says Walpole, "had occasioned a general alarm; but, though he escaped the danger, his health was so precarious, and he had such frequent disorders in his breast on taking the least cold, that all sober men wished to see a Regency settled by Parliament in case of his death."* The real nature of the king's malady was not suspected by the politicians of that day, or by the general public. "His majesty had a serious illness—its peculiar character was then unknown, but we have the best authority for believing that it was of the nature of those which thrice after afflicted his majesty, and finally incapacitated him for the duties of government." This is the statement of a gentleman whose means of information, and whose diligence in penetrating into the secret passages of the past, were of more permanent value than his adroitness in the use of the facts he ascertained for the advancement of his own party views.† The family of George III. at that time consisted of George, prince of Wales, born on the 12th of August, 1762; and of Frederick, duke of York, born on the 16th of August, 1763. The differences of opinion between the king and his ministers upon the Regency Bill are of minor importance in a view of public affairs at this distance of time, and require no elaborate detail. The king wished that the power of nominating a Regent should be vested in himself. The Ministry thought it desirable that a Regency during the minority of the successor to the throne should be distinctly named. On the 24th of April, his majesty, in

* "George III." vol. ii. p. 95.

† Mr. Croker, in "Quarterly Review," vol. lxvi. p. 240.