

CHAPTER XI.

Public opinion on the American War.—Measures of conciliation proposed by lord North. France concludes a treaty of amity with America.—Chatham's last speech in Parliament.—His sudden illness in the House of Lords.—His death.—Propositions of lord North rejected by Congress.—French fleet under d'Estaing arrives in America.—Attack on Rhode Island impeded by fleet under lord Howe.—Admiral Keppel takes the command of the Channel Fleet.—Engagement off Ushant.—Court-martial on Keppel.—Burgoyne's defence of himself in Parliament.—Destruction of Wyoming.—Spain declares war against Great Britain.—Apprehensions of invasion.—The national spirit roused.—Enterprises of Paul Jones.—Military operations in America in 1779.

THE voice of Edmund Burke was rarely heard in parliament on the subject of America during the two Sessions of 1777. In his remarkable "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol," he says: "It is some time since I have been clearly convinced, that in the present state of things, all opposition to any measures proposed by ministers, where the name of America appears, is vain and frivolous. . . . Everything proposed against America is supposed, of course, to be in favour of Great Britain. Good and ill success are equally admitted as reasons for persevering in the present method. Several very prudent, and very well-intentioned, persons were of opinion, that during the prevalence of such dispositions, all struggle rather inflamed than lessened the distemper of the public counsels. Finding such resistance to be considered as factious by most within doors, and by very many without, I cannot conscientiously support what is against my opinion, nor prudently contend with what I know is irresistible." The tone of this letter sufficiently indicates the conviction of one who sagaciously watched the course of public opinion, that the contest with America had reached such a stage, that those who continued to advocate principles of conciliation, were not supported by the majority of the British nation. Burke saw the injury that the prevailing sentiment was producing upon the national character: "Liberty is in danger of being made unpopular to Englishmen. Contending for an imaginary power, we begin to acquire the spirit of domination, and to lose the relish of honest equality. The principles of our forefathers become suspected to us, because we see them animating the present opposition of our children." At the commencement of the war this state

of public opinion was wholly irrational and almost base. In 1776, the American Declaration of Independence turned aside many friends of pacific measures, to regard the conflict as one which it became the dignity of Great Britain to carry on to a successful assertion of national rights. But in 1778, when France was ostensibly preparing to support the cause of the revolted colonies, there could be little doubt that the advocates for recognizing the claim to independence, thus enforced by a power systematically hostile to British interests, would form a very inconsiderable portion of the people;—that continued opposition to the government upon this question would be "considered factious by most within doors, and by very many without."

At the beginning of 1778 Manchester and Liverpool came forward in a marked display of loyalty. Each community offered to raise a regiment of a thousand men at their own expense. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and parts of the Highlands, exhibited a similar spirit. Large subscriptions were provided in London for raising men for his majesty's service. These proceedings took place during the recess; and when the Houses met in January, strong objections were taken to what was held to be the unconstitutional measure of levying troops by private subscription without the consent of parliament. Lord North rejoiced in the manifestation of public spirit, which he regarded as a tribute to the conduct of the administration. But the prime minister, whilst thus exulting that "a very loyal part of his majesty's subjects had expressed their abhorrence of an unnatural rebellion," was about to depart very widely from the principle on which the contest had been hitherto conducted. On the 17th of February lord North brought in two Bills,—the first of which was entitled, "For removing all doubts and apprehensions concerning Taxation by the Parliament of Great Britain in any of the Colonies." This was a complete and utter renunciation of the right of Great Britain to impose any tax upon the American Colonies, except only such duties as it might be expedient to impose for the regulation of commerce, the net produce of which was always to be applied to the use of the Colony in which the duties were levied. The second Bill was to enable the king to appoint commissioners with ample powers to treat upon the means of quieting the disorders in America; and they were authorized to treat and agree with any body or bodies politic; or any person or persons whatsoever. The commissioners were thus empowered to treat with the Congress as if it were a legal body, and as if its acts and concessions would bind all America. The Congress, said lord North, had raised a difficulty with the former commission, on pre-

tence of the non-admission of their title to independent States. "As the Americans might claim their independence in the outset, he would not insist on their renouncing it till the treaty should receive its final ratification by the king and parliament of Great Britain." The minister, in recapitulating the circumstances of this unhappy contest, from the period of the Stamp Act, maintained that, from the beginning, he had been uniformly disposed to peace. In the historical part of the Annual Register, written no doubt by Burke, the temper of the House is thus recorded: "A dull melancholy silence for some time succeeded to this speech. It had been heard with profound attention, but without a single mark of approbation to any part, from any description of men, or any particular man, in the House. Astonishment, dejection, and fear, over-clouded the whole assembly. Although the minister had declared, that the sentiments he expressed that day had been those which he always entertained, it is certain that few or none had understood him in that manner; and he had been represented to the nation at large, as the person in it most tenacious of those parliamentary rights which he now proposed to resign, and the most remote from the submissions which he now proposed to make. It was generally therefore concluded, that something more extraordinary and alarming had happened than yet appeared, which was of force to produce such an apparent change in measures, principles, and arguments."

The "something more extraordinary and alarming than yet appeared," was soon to be manifested. On the 17th of March, a royal message was presented to both Houses, stating that his majesty had been informed, by order of the French king, "that a treaty of amity and commerce had been signed between the court of France and certain persons employed by his majesty's revolted subjects in North America;" and that in consequence of this offensive communication the king had sent orders to his ambassador to withdraw from the French court. The communication was made to the British secretary-of-state, by the French ambassador in London, on the 13th of March. On the 14th, lord North earnestly pressed the king to accept his resignation, and to send for lord Chatham. The letters of the king sufficiently manifest the strong aversion which his majesty had taken to the statesman who, in this crisis of his country's fate, was looked up to as the only Englishman who was likely to conciliate America whilst he alarmed France. The king, on the 15th of March, declared that he did not object to lord North applying to lord Chatham to support his administration; but adding, that no advantage to my country, nor personal

danger to myself, can make me address myself to lord Chatham or to any other branch of opposition. Honestly, I would rather lose the crown I now wear than bear the ignominy of possessing it under their shackles." In another letter of the same day he says, "I don't expect that lord Chatham and his crew will come to your assistance." Lord North continuing to press for a more complete change of ministers than the king contemplated, the correspondence continued for several days in the same determined exhibition of the sovereign's implacability. Chatham he terms "that perfidious man." He would not have him, "as Dictator, planning a new administration." Lord North at length consented to go on as the head of a ministry till the Session of Parliament was closed. A few official changes were made, the most important of which was the appointment of the Attorney-General, Thurlow, to be Lord Chancellor. The national feeling, with regard to Chatham, was expressed in a letter to lady Chatham, by Thomas Coutts, the eminent banker. He said that lord Chatham's health "becomes every day more interesting, in the present desponding state of the people. Every rank looks up to him, with the only gleam of hope that remains." In a few weeks a higher power than courts or senates decided that Chatham should be at rest—indifferent to the hatred of a king, or the veneration of a people.

The duke of Richmond had given notice in the House of Lords of a motion which he intended to make on the 7th of April, "for an address to the king upon the state of the nation." On the 5th the duke sent to lord Chatham the draft of his proposed Address; which Chatham returned the next day, expressing his concern "to find himself under so wide a difference with the duke of Richmond as between the sovereignty and allegiance of America." * Chatham was slowly recovering from a fit of the gout; but he determined to go to town from Hayes, and take his place in Parliament. Lord Camden, in a letter to the duke of Grafton, describing the closing scene of the great earl's public life, says, "he was not in a condition to go abroad; and he was earnestly requested not to make the attempt." Camden saw him in the Prince's Chamber before he went into the House; and remarked "the feeble state of his body, and the distempered agitation of his mind." An eye-witness has recorded his appearance. "Lord Chatham came into the House of Lords, leaning upon two friends, lapped up in flannel, pale, and emaciated. Within his large wig, little more was to be seen than his aquiline nose and his penetrating eye. He looked like a dying man,

* "Chatham Correspondence," vol. iv. p. 518

yet never was seen a figure of more dignity." * The two friends were his son, William Pitt, and lord Mahon, his son-in-law. The duke of Richmond had made his motion for an Address. Viscount Weymouth had opposed the motion. The earl of Chatham, continues the narrative of the eye-witness, "rose from his seat with slowness and difficulty, leaning on his crutches, and supported under each arm by his two friends. He took one hand from his crutch, and raised it, casting his eyes towards heaven, and said, 'I thank God that I have been enabled to come here this day, to perform my duty, and to speak on a subject which has so deeply impressed my mind. I am old, and infirm—have one foot, more than one foot, in the grave—I am risen from my bed, to stand up in the cause of my country, perhaps never again to speak in this House.'" He rejoiced that he was still able to lift up his voice against the dismemberment of this ancient and most noble monarchy. "My Lords, his majesty succeeded to an empire as great in extent as its reputation was unsullied. Shall we tarnish the lustre of this nation by an ignominious surrender of its rights and fairest possessions? Shall this great kingdom, which has survived whole and entire the Danish depredations, the Scottish inroads, and the Norman conquest—that has stood the threatened invasion of the Spanish armada—now fall prostrate before the House of Bourbon? Surely, my lords, this nation is no longer what it was. Shall a people that, fifteen years ago, was the terror of the world, now stoop so low as to tell its ancient inveterate enemy, Take all we have, only give us peace?" Lord Camden describes the words of Chatham as "shreds of unconnected eloquence, and flashes of the same fire which he, Prometheus-like, had stolen from heaven; and were then returning to the place from whence they were taken." That withering sarcasm which occasionally found its place in his impassioned harangues, was not absent in this last effort. Speaking of the probability of invasion, he said, "Of a Spanish invasion, of a French invasion, of a Dutch invasion, many noble lords may have read in history; and some lords may perhaps remember a Scotch invasion." He looked at lord Mansfield. The duke of Richmond replied; and then Chatham made an effort again to address the House. "He fell back upon his seat," writes Camden, "and was to all appearance in the agonies of death. This threw the whole House into confusion. Every person was upon his legs in a moment, hurrying from one place to another, some sending for assistance, others producing salts, and others reviving spirits; many crowding about the earl to observe his countenance; all affected; most part really concerned; and even

* "Seward's Anecdotes," vol. i. p. 383. Fifth edit.

those who might have felt a secret pleasure at the accident yet put on the appearance of distress, except only the earl of M., who sat still, almost as much unmoved as the senseless body itself." There was one who, though "born and bred a Briton," felt no regret that one of the noblest vindicators of Britain's honour had, in all human probability, concluded his eventful career. The king the next day wrote to lord North, "May not the political exit of lord Chatham incline you to continue at the head of affairs?" The political exit was quickly followed by the close of the "last scene of all." Chatham died at Hayes on the 11th of May. On the day after his decease, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to honour his memory by a public funeral and a public monument. The king was "rather surprised," he said in a note to lord North, at such a testimony; but trusted it would be merely an expression of gratitude for Chatham's having roused the nation at the beginning of the late war, and his conduct as Secretary of State. "This compliment, if paid to his general conduct," added his majesty, "is rather an offensive measure to me personally." The funeral in Westminster Abbey was attended by few of the party in power. The monument, by Banks, "erected by the King and Parliament as a testimony to the virtues and abilities of William Pitt, earl of Chatham," records that during his administration, "Divine Providence exalted Great Britain to an height of prosperity and glory unknown to any former age." The cenotaph erected by the Corporation of London has an inscription of higher import. The monument to William Pitt is placed in the Guildhall of the City of London, "that her citizens may never meet for the transaction of their affairs without being reminded, that the means by which Providence raises a nation to greatness are the virtues infused into great men; and that to withhold from those virtues, either of the living or the dead, the tribute of esteem and veneration, is to deny to themselves the means of happiness and honour."

The news of the French alliance being concluded reached Washington's camp at Valley Forge on the 4th of May. The biographer of Steuben records that "suddenly the public distress seemed to be forgotten amidst universal joy." Many supposed that immediate peace would be the natural consequence of this change of circumstances. Steuben wrote to Henry Laurens, then President of Congress, to offer his congratulations "in seeing the independence of America established on so solid a basis." The cautious President replies, "It is my opinion that we are not to roll down a green bank and toy away the ensuing summer. There is blood, much blood, in our prospect. Britain will not be hummed

by a stroke of policy. She will be very angry, and if she is to fall, her fall will be glorious, We, who know her, ought to be prepared."*

The pacific measures of the British government produced not the slightest change in the policy of the leaders of the American revolution. Washington held that the propositions and the speech of lord North must have proceeded from despair of the nation's succeeding against the United States. When the Commissioners under lord North's bill arrived at Philadelphia, they found the army about to evacuate the town; having received positive orders to that effect from home. Howe had resigned his command, which had been transferred to sir Henry Clinton. The abandonment of Philadelphia; the certainty of the French alliance; the contempt which was felt at the vacillating policy of the ministry, emboldened the Congress to treat the royal Commissioners with little ceremony. That body refused to hold a conference with them, unless they should withdraw the naval and military power of Great Britain, or acknowledge the Independence of America in direct terms. No reply was given to the explanatory offers of the Commissioners—offers which, if made in the early days of the contest, would have commanded not only willing obedience but fervent gratitude. The Commissioners determined to return to England; but they first took the somewhat dangerous step of addressing a Manifesto to the American people, remonstrating against the decision of the Congress, and holding out the threat that if peace and union were refused, the war would in future be conducted upon different principles. "The policy, as well as the benevolence, of Great Britain, have thus far checked the extremes of war, when they tended to distress a people still considered as our fellow subjects, and to desolate a country shortly to become again a source of mutual advantage; but when that country professes the unnatural design, not only of estranging herself from us, but of mortgaging herself and her resources to our enemies, the whole contest is changed." Upon this plea, it was affirmed that the laws of self-preservation called upon Great Britain, if her colonies were to become an accession to France, "to render that accession of as little avail as possible to her enemy." When this Manifesto was brought before Parliament at the end of the year, there were different opinions as to the meaning to be attached to such a threat; but most men, not wholly subservient to the ministry, agreed with Burke, that "if the war was to be changed,—if the lenity, the humanity, the toleration, which had been hitherto observed, was to be foregone,—and we

* "Life of Steuben," p. 138.

had foreborne nothing that the rights of war could authorize,—then the plan now to be prosecuted was different from lenity and toleration, and was different from the laws of war; for war was constantly to be limited by necessity, and its calamities and ravages to be bound in by that plea alone. . . . The extremes of war, and the desolation of a country, were sweet sounding mutes and liquids, but their meaning was terrible; they meant the killing of man, woman, and child, burning their houses and ravaging their lands, annihilating humanity from the face of the earth, or rendering it so wretched, that death would be preferable."*

The war of Great Britain against France and America at once became a fierce struggle by land and sea. When sir Henry Clinton had marched through Jersey with Washington following him, and a partial battle had been fought on the 28th of June, the British army was at last established at New York, with a large garrison at Rhode Island. A French fleet from Toulon, under the count d'Estaing, had appeared off New York on the 5th of July. It consisted of twelve sail of the line and six frigates, with a large number of troops on board. It was determined to attack the British on Rhode Island, by a combined army of four thousand French and ten thousand Americans. The garrison of five thousand retired within their lines at Newport. The Americans had crossed the narrow strait called the Seaconnet Channel; and d'Estaing was about to land his troops on the west side of the island, when the fleet under lord Howe appeared in sight, and the French admiral put to sea to offer battle, leaving his allies to pursue the siege of Newport alone. The fleets were prevented engaging by a violent storm, by which they were both dismantled. Each went into port to refit; the British to New York, the French to Boston. The abandonment of the Americans by d'Estaing compelled them to relinquish their enterprise upon Rhode Island; and bitter was their indignation against their allies. The French admiral finally sailed to pursue his own plans of attacking the British West Indian Islands, or defending those of France. The island of St. Lucia was taken by the British, and Dominica by the French.

In the House of Commons, on the 5th of May, Thomas Townshend noticed the sailing of the French fleet from Toulon, whilst our fleet was merely exhibited as a pageant at Portsmouth—a "puppet-show," as Walpole terms it. Lord North said the utmost exertions had been made. Though no fleet had sailed, the ministers were not to be accused of incapacity; for the French at all

* "Parliamentary Debates," vol. xix. col. 1400.

times, by their mode of supply of seamen from their registers, could man a fleet sooner than England. Admiral Keppel, an experienced officer, and highly popular with the navy, had been appointed to the command of the Channel fleet. The appointment was creditable to the ministry, for Keppel was, as a member of Parliament, strongly opposed to their policy. When he first accepted the command he found only six ships of the line fit for service; but before the middle of June the number was increased to twenty. He sailed from St. Helen's on the 17th of June. Two French frigates, reconnoitring, were attacked by his squadron; one of which was captured and the other driven on shore on the coast of France. Amongst the papers of the *Lecorne* thus captured, he discovered that anchorage was ordered at Brest for an immense fleet, with which he thought his own unable to contend. He sailed back to Portsmouth. The public feeling is expressed in a letter of Gibbon:—"Keppel's return has occasioned infinite and inexpressible consternation, which gradually changed into discontent against him." The Admiralty made great exertions; and Keppel, on the 9th of July, again put to sea with a reinforcement of ten ships. The French fleet, consisting of thirty-two sail of the line, and a considerable number of frigates, had come out from Brest, under the command of count d'Orvilliers. After four days' manœuvring, an engagement took place off Ushant, which had no decisive result. Night was coming on with a heavy squall. Keppel signalled to the second in command, sir Hugh Palliser, to come up to renew the fight; but that admiral was unable to obey the order, from the damage which his ship had sustained. The French admiral got back to Brest, and Keppel sailed to Plymouth. The conduct of the two admirals became the subject of warm debates when the Parliament met in November. Attacks and recriminations were conducted with all the heat of party; Keppel being upon terms of friendship with the leading members of the Opposition; Palliser a supporter of the ministry, and a lord of the Admiralty. Each admiral blamed the other; and, finally, upon charges made by Palliser against Keppel for misconduct and incapacity, a court-martial was ordered. The trial lasted thirty-two days, and ended in a unanimous verdict of the Court, that Keppel had acted with bravery and judgment, and that the charges were ill-founded and malicious. This court-martial has been rendered illustrious by a passage of Burke, in which he describes "with what zeal and anxious affection I attended him through that his agony of glory. . . . If to the eternal disgrace of this nation, and to the total annihilation of every trace of honour and virtue in it, things

had taken a different turn from what they did, I should have attended him to the quarter-deck with no less good will, and more pride, than I partook of the general flow of national joy that attended the justice that was done to his virtue."* The popular enthusiasm in favour of Keppel was indeed remarkable. It may be attributed, in part, to a conviction that the government was unequal to the conduct of the war. The people could not be supposed to feel with Burke that Keppel was "one of the greatest and best men of his age;" but they illuminated and rioted for his acquittal; and his portrait became a favourite sign in town and country. Palliser demanded a court-martial upon himself, and received an acquittal of a very qualified character. The extravagant admiration of Keppel, and the proportionate depreciation of Palliser, may suggest the opinion that admirals and generals may receive a more impartial judgment from their contemporaries by withholding their support from extreme parties in politics.

General Burgoyne returned to England in the spring of 1778, Congress having consented to give him passports, upon the condition that he would go back to America, and abide the fate of the rest of the army, should their embarkation continue to be prevented. He was treated coldly by our government, and refused admission to the royal presence. A court of inquiry into his conduct was refused, upon the ground that he was a prisoner on parole to the Congress. As a member of Parliament, he had an opportunity of vindicating the Convention of Saratoga. The blame that had been attached to him for the employment of Indians in his campaign appears to have wounded him very deeply. He stated that he always believed the Indian alliances to be, at best, a necessary evil. He had declined their offers and solicitations to be employed separately. He had presided at one of the greatest councils with the Indians that had been held at Montreal. It was their custom to offer the pipe of war to the representative of the power they meant to serve. It was pressed upon him by the chiefs present; and it was at his option, by a single whiff of tobacco, to have given flame and commotion to a dozen nations. He had acted in this matter under the instructions of sir Guy Carleton in 1776; and when he came to England in that year he found the system of restraining the impetuous passions of these people unpopular with those official persons who had adopted the reasoning, in their zeal against the colonists, that partial severity was general mercy. He returned to Canada, determined to be the soldier, not the executioner, of the State. The eloquent invective of Chatham, we thus see, had

* "Letter to the Duke of Bedford."

in view the ministerial directors of the war rather than the commander who succumbed to unavoidable difficulties.

Connected with the subject of the barbarities of the Indians, there is an event of the year 1778, which has been rescued from the possible oblivion of History by the more enduring associations of Poetry.* Wyoming, on the Susquehanna, consisting of eight townships, was a new settlement. The soil was fertile; the climate genial; the inhabitants unusually prosperous. Happy they were not, for a minority amongst them was bitterly opposed to those who resisted the British government. The people were removed from the scene of hostilities; yet the greater number took a deep interest in the contest for independence, and had sent a large proportion of their adult male population to the army of the Congress. The infant settlement was comparatively defenceless; although four forts had been constructed to resist the inroads of the savages. The right to the soil was a disputed point between the States of Connecticut and Pennsylvania; and in the absence of central control those who were loyalists, or Tories, were exposed to rigorous treatment. The mutual hatred between the two parties of Americans was too often marked by persecution; and political differences became the justification for rapine and revenge. Many of the Tories of Wyoming had abandoned the settlement. Some strangers had come amongst the inhabitants of the townships under suspicious circumstances, and had been arrested and sent to Connecticut. At the beginning of July, a body of armed men, amounting to sixteen hundred, appeared on the Susquehanna. One fourth of these were Indians. The whole force was commanded by a partisan known as colonel Butler; and according to the accounts of the time, by one Brandt, half Indian by blood, ferocious and cruel beyond example—"the Monster Brandt."† One of the smaller forts was first taken by storm, and all the men were massacred. The commander of another fort was induced to march out with four hundred men to hold a parley; and after a murderous struggle only seventy escaped. In a third fort the men were slaughtered, or burnt alive. In a fourth the same indiscriminate havoc was pursued, with similar cruelty. Then commenced such a wholesale destruction of houses, corn-ricks, standing corn, as the terrible devastations of what some have called regular warfare could scarcely parallel. The sufferings of those who fled from

* Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming."

† "Gertrude of Wyoming." Mr. Campbell, in a note to the latter editions of his poem, says he was misled by popular accounts, and that Brandt was not present at Wyoming.

the scenes of devastation, to endure all the miseries of inhospitable woods, were almost as great as those of the victims of the Indian tomahawk. Other such scenes of havoc took place in back settlements.

The Annual Register of 1779, opens with a sentence that can scarcely be held as founded merely upon vain apprehensions: "The year of which we treat presented the most awful appearances of public affairs, which this country had perhaps beheld for many ages. . . . Mankind seemed to wait, with an aspect which at best bespoke indifference, for the event of that ruin which was expected to burst upon us." The writer proceeds to say, that "the expected evil and danger were less dreadful in the encounter than in the distant appearance." In that year Spain joined France in the alliance against Great Britain. On the 16th of June the king sent a message to parliament announcing that the Spanish minister had delivered a state-paper which amounted to a declaration of war. Invasion was expected; and a proclamation was issued, charging all civil and military authorities to remove horses, cattle, and provisions from the coast in case of a descent. An extraordinary measure was carried through parliament, by a suspension of the Standing Orders, to do away with all exemptions from impressment into the royal navy. Ships of the line were rotting in the harbour for want of sailors, it was affirmed—"Will you trust the existence of this country to the fate of a battle on shore?" An encampment of large bodies of militia was formed on Cox Heath. The spirit of the country was again roused, as when Spain threatened England in days of yore. Her fleet, combined with that of France, rode in the Channel, with as mighty a display as when Drake went out from Plymouth to encounter the galleons. The united fleet consisted of sixty-six sail of the line, with a large number of frigates, and smaller vessels. Sir Charles Hardy left Portsmouth with thirty-eight ships; and although the combined armament was insulting the coast, he could not venture on an action with a force so superior. But in avoiding an engagement he did good service in leading the enemy to pursue him; and thus diverting their object of landing an invading army. The stormy season was approaching whilst time was thus gained. The ships of both the hostile nations were in bad condition. A malignant disease had broken out amongst their crowded sailors and troops. The Spanish admiral declared to the French admiral, that he must return to his own ports. The French admiral chose the same prudent course. When the king opened the parliament in November, he exulted that the designs and attempts at invasion had, by the

blessing of Providence, been frustrated. Lord North in the debate on the Address, spoke with a British spirit that found a response in the national feelings. The combined powers of France and Spain "had fitted out a powerful armament; they appeared upon our coasts, it is true; they talked big, threatened a great deal, did nothing, and retired. It should be remembered that the enemy professed themselves to be acting on the offensive; we were as professedly acting on the defensive. They came with a declared intention to invade, we to resist such an attempt; they were therefore foiled, for they had not dared even to make the attempt. Their immense armaments paraded to no purpose; and their millions were spent in vain. Had they landed, and indeed he almost wished they had, their reception, he was confident, would have been such as would have added to their disgrace; and would have convinced them, that a British militia had spirit enough to defend their country, and repel invaders."

In May, 1779, Benjamin Franklin was accredited by the Congress as the sole representative of the United States at the court of France—their Minister Plenipotentiary. In a letter from Passy he describes his gracious reception by Louis XVI. at Versailles; and his constant weekly attendance at the royal levée. To a friend in America he says, "Perhaps few strangers in France have had the good fortune to be so universally popular."* The society and conversation of the French ladies he describes as extremely agreeable. But the energetic old man was occupied in more serious affairs than the enjoyment of a brilliant society, in which his brown cloth coat was a remarkable contrast to the velvet and embroidery of all around him. His abilities were constantly directed to the difficult task of raising money upon American credit and of employing it to organize attacks upon the coasts of Britain. Franklin's correspondence shows that he was the active agent in the employ and direction of John Paul Jones, who, with a little squadron in the American service, did considerable damage to British commerce, and produced no small amount of alarm, in 1779. The first notion was to fit out an expedition, in which the sea forces should be commanded by Jones, and the land forces by La Fayette. Franklin's instructions to his American captain refer to this expedition "as an introduction only to greater trusts and more extensive commands." The French government hesitated about this joint adventure; and finally Paul Jones sailed with three ships and a brigantine, and did surprising feats which justified his selection as a bold captain and a skilful seaman. What he was

* "Correspondence," vol. viii. p. 401.

encouraged to do may be collected from Franklin's letters. "It was intended to send him with some transports and troops to make descents in England. Had not the scheme been altered by a general one of a grand invasion, I know he would have endeavoured to put some considerable towns to a high ransom, or have burnt them. He sailed without the troops, but he nevertheless would have attempted Leith, and went into the Firth of Edinburgh with that intention, but a sudden hard gale of wind forced him out again." Franklin adds, that the burning of Fairfield and other towns by the British in America had demolished all his moderation. We may consider that Leith and perhaps Edinburgh were providentially saved by the "sudden hard gale of wind" from the fate which this unscrupulous rover had prepared for them. Sir Walter Scott, when a boy, was in Edinburgh when Jones came into the Firth; and "the capital of Scotland was menaced by three trifling sloops or brigs, scarce fit to have sacked a fishing-village." An old Highland chief, Stuart of Invernahyle, was the only man who thought of a feasible plan of resistance. "A steady and powerful west wind settled the matter." But Paul Jones had better work before him than sack and plunder. "Going north about," writes Franklin, "he fell in with a number of ships from the Baltic, convoyed by a fifty-gun ship and a twenty-four-gun frigate, both of which he took." These vessels were the *Serapis* and the *Scarborough*. The engagement was a desperate one; and the largest vessel of the American squadron, the *Bonhomme Richard*, sank two days after the action. "The three trifling sloops, or brigs," described by Scott, were in truth large vessels, formidably armed and well-manned. His two prizes were carried by Jones into a neutral port in Holland. The English captains, Pearson and Piercy, fought their vessels with the most desperate courage. The colours of the *Serapis* were not struck till two-thirds of her men were killed or wounded. Paul Jones, a native of Scotland, had been bred to the sea; had settled in Virginia; and had received a commission from Congress on the breaking out of the war.

The military operations in the Northern States of America, during 1779, were not of much importance with reference to the superiority of either army. There were successes on either side which are scarcely necessary to be detailed in our brief general history. Washington was doing every thing that a prudent commander could accomplish in the face of great difficulties. He was more apprehensive of the consequences of corrupt and evil management than of any struggle in the field. He writes in March to

general Warren, "Our conflict is not likely to cease so soon as every good man could wish. The measure of iniquity is not yet filled; and, unless we can return a little more to first principles, and act a little more upon patriotic ground, I do not know when it will, or what may be the issue of the contest." He complains of speculation, peculation, engrossing, which afford too glaring instances of its being the interest and desire of some to continue the war. He laments the depreciation of the currency. This depreciation had now gone beyond any example of European history in which the promises to pay of a government were treated as little better than waste-paper." "A waggon-load of money," wrote Washington, "will now scarcely purchase a waggon-load of provisions." He held that this depreciation, with the manifest proofs of speculation, stock-jobbing, and party-dissensions, kept the arms of Britain in America, and led the British government and their friends to believe that the Americans would be their own conquerors.

The inactivity of the British army in the Northern States was compensated by successes in the South. Towards the end of 1778, sir Henry Clinton despatched an expedition by sea to Georgia. Savannah was taken; and the province was reduced to submission. Georgia and South Carolina were occupied through the winter by British troops; the fertility of these countries affording a plentiful supply of stores. This occupation materially facilitated the success of the Southern campaign of 1780.

CHAPTER XIII.

Associations for redress of grievances.—Meetings in Yorkshire and other Counties.—

Burke's proposals for Economical Reform.—Dunning's motion on the influence of the Crown.—Decreasing strength of the Opposition.—Protestant Associations in Scotland.—They extend to England.—Lord George Gordon.—Procession to Parliament.—Roman Catholic chapels burnt.—Newgate set on fire.—Lord Mansfield's House sacked.—The library burnt.—Continued riots.—A council called.—Wedderburn's opinion on the employment of military.—The riots stopped by military force.—Naval affairs.—The war in America.—Charleston taken by the British.—Lord Cornwallis.—His severities.—French armament under Rochambeau.—Treachery of Benedict Arnold.—Major André seized.—Verdict of a Council of Officers.—His execution.

THE internal affairs of the country in the year 1780 are, in many respects, as interesting and instructive as those of any year in our annals. England was, unquestionably, distinctly threatened with some great political convulsion. The obstinate persistence in the war with America had brought upon the country its natural consequences,—excessive taxation, and interruption to the usual course of profitable industry. Twenty years only had elapsed since the nation looked back upon a period of unexampled prosperity, and of signal triumph: of victory abroad and of tranquillity at home. The nation had then confidence in the directors of its affairs; regarded the parliament as the true representative of public opinion; and viewed the sovereign power, according to the principles of the Revolution, as the especial guardian of the freedom and happiness of the people. A young prince had come to the crown, with every apparent disposition to rule righteously and constitutionally; and yet, from the first year of his accession, a system of favouritism had surrounded the throne with a host of placemen, who were chosen to assert an invidious distinction between the interests of the king and the measures of the responsible servants of the State. During these twenty years a great change had come over the popular convictions. The parliament had become opposed to the people; and the executive power had grown out of harmony with the theory of the constitution, through the tendency to govern by the corruption of the parliament. The preponderating influence of a great aristocratic party had indeed been weakened, and in many essentials destroyed; but with that