

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

weakness had come a proportionate weakness of the democratic element of the constitution. The time had arrived when the minority in parliament, whether Peers or Commoners, saw that, to renew their strength as a governing power, they must identify themselves more distinctly with the people. The abuses consequent upon the excessive number of sinecure offices, and of large pensions unsanctioned by parliamentary authority, called for Economical Reform. The scandalous proportion of members of the House of Commons returned for rotten boroughs demanded Reform in Parliament. A vast amount of public opinion was brought to bear upon these two points, in the form of Associations for the redress of grievances. During the Christmas recess a spirit burst forth in many of the most influential counties of England, to which there had probably been no parallel since the days of Hampden. Had the gross ignorance of large masses of the populace not taken the form of brutal riot, in a direction opposed to the progress of tolerant opinions, this spirit might have produced some great change in our representative system,—a change dangerous, because premature; unsubstantial, because an extended suffrage required a solid foundation of popular intelligence. Burke, in vindicating the scheme of Economical Reform which he advocated at that time, as a moderate concession to a just public demand, says of “the portentous crisis from 1780 to 1782,” that “it was one of the most critical periods in our annals. . . . Such was the distemper of the public mind, that there was no madman, in his maddest ideas, and maddest projects, who might not count upon numbers to support his principles and execute his designs.”\*

On the 8th of February, sir George Savile, the respected member for Yorkshire, presented to the House of Commons the Petition of a great meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of his county, which was signed by eight thousand persons. “It was first moved,” said sir George, “in a meeting of six hundred gentlemen and upwards. In the hall where this petition was conceived there was more property than within the walls of this House.” He said that there was a committee appointed to correspond on the subject of the petition with the committees of other counties. The Yorkshire petition set forth, as the consequences of a most expensive and unfortunate war, a large addition to the national debt, heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of the kingdom. It then came to the chief grievance: “Alarmed at the diminished resources and growing burdens of this country, and convinced that rigid frugality is now

\* “Letter to a Noble Lord.”

indispensably necessary in every department of the State, your petitioners observe with grief, that notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished condition of the nation, much public money has been improvidently squandered, and that many individuals enjoy sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service, to a large and still increasing amount; whence the Crown has acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, may soon prove fatal to the liberties of this country.”

The great meeting in Yorkshire gave an example to the rest of England. Twenty-three counties adopted similar petitions, and appointed their corresponding committees. Motions for Economical Reform had been brought forward in the House of Lords before the recess; and Burke had given notice of the measure which he intended to propose. On the 11th of February he accomplished this intention, in the delivery of a speech which is amongst the master-pieces of English composition,—unsurpassed in lucidness of detail, force of reasoning, historical research, and gleams of wit and poetry, by any example of parliamentary rhetoric. The perusal of this speech will show how many gross abuses have been corrected during the eighty years that have elapsed; and, what is better, how much wiser and honester a spirit has arisen to govern the public expenditure in every department,—making it shame to fill an office without its duties, or to receive a pension without desert. Many of the details of reform treated of in this speech are now, happily, things of a past time. The royal household, whose manifold offices were derived from the feudal principle and the system of purveyance, is now conducted upon the same plan as that of a nobleman’s establishment. The turnspit in the royal kitchen is no longer a member of parliament. The number of covers on the royal table is no longer determined by a Board of Green Cloth. Offices, whose very names sound strange to us, were then kept up for parliamentary influence alone. They are gone. Some great officers are attached to the royal person, as of old; though they are not perhaps retained upon the principle laid down by Burke, that, because “kings are fond of low company,” it is of importance to provide such an establishment as will bring about the royal person a great number of the first nobility. General principles too often fall short in their practical application. Burke proposed to abolish the offices of master of the buck-hounds and harriers, as they answered no purpose of utility or of splendour. “It is not proper that great noblemen should be keepers of dogs, though they were the king’s dogs.” Many other courtly ap-

pointments are vanished. The master of the buck-hounds remains, and if the office is filled by a courteous gentleman and a bold rider, its utility is not too curiously investigated. Though some of the details of Burke's bill present evils no longer unreformed, his general principles of reform will always remain as a guide to honest administrators. Out of seven fundamental rules which he lays down, three, especially, will apply to all time; and, it may be feared, will never cease to require a vigilant application.

"That all jurisdiction; which furnish more matter of expense, more temptation to oppression, or more means and instruments of corrupt influence, than advantage to justice or political administration, ought to be abolished.

"That all offices which bring more charge than proportional advantage to the State; that all offices which may be engrafted on others, uniting and simplifying their duties, ought, in the first case, to be taken away; and in the second, to be consolidated.

"That it is right to reduce every establishment, and every part of an establishment (as nearly as possible), to certainty, the life of all order and good management."

Burke, in his truly statesmanlike speech upon Economical Reform, argued that a temperate reform is permanent, because it has a principle of growth. "Whenever we improve, it is right to leave room for a further improvement." It is the recognition of this principle which has enabled us gradually to effect many improvements which Burke did not think ripe for advocating in his own day. He proposed to reform the crying abuses of the offices of Paymaster of the Forces and Treasurer of the Navy, each of which officers had a separate treasury, and derived large profits from the use of money which they retained in their hands. The first William Pitt, as we have seen, disdained such an irregular addition to the profits of place. His rival, Fox, and his successors, were not so scrupulous. Burke proposed to reduce the enormous profits of the Auditors of the Exchequer. In our own times such profits of patent places were made odious by the disinterested renunciation of lord Camden. Public opinion in our country is ultimately potential in effecting what corrupt influences resist. The philosophical reformer did not suggest depriving the Crown of its constitutional right of granting pensions. He proposed to limit the amount to a sum which would now be considered extravagant. He abstained from attempting even the reduction of exorbitant emoluments to efficient offices. He did not think the great efficient offices of the State overpaid. They were paid at a much higher rate than in our own time; and the question may now sometimes present itself to

dispassionate minds, whether they are not underpaid. The reasons which Burke then gave for not putting the service of the public to auction, and knocking it down to those who will execute it cheapest, is of wider application now, when larger expenses are attached to the holders of office with comparatively small salaries, than in days when statesmen in power might accumulate fortunes out of the profits of place. It is an honourable characteristic of public service in England that ambition and the lucre of gain have ceased to go together in rendering power attractive. An honourable and fair payment for service is grudged by none but the wildest self-styled reformers. Burke did not go too far when he said that, "if men were willing to serve in such situations without salary, they ought not to be permitted to do it. Ordinary service must be secured by the motives to ordinary integrity."

Burke's proposals were so temperate, and so incapable of being refuted by argument, that lord North offered no opposition to the reception of the first Bill which was founded upon them. Other members were ready to go further than Burke. Sir George Savile, on the 15th of February, moved for an account of all places for life or lives, whether held by patent or otherwise; and also for an account of all subsisting pensions, granted by the Crown, during pleasure or otherwise. The motion was opposed by lord Nugent, upon the ground that many reduced gentry enjoyed his majesty's private bounty, and would not like their names to be made public—"many lady Bridgets, lady Marys, and lady Jennys." Lord North proposed an amendment, limiting the account to pensions payable at the Exchequer. The whole amount payable under the name of pensions, he said, did not exceed £50,000. To publish a list would "prepare a feast for party-writers, and furnish materials for magazines and newspapers." Happy is the government that does not shrink from the eye of magazines and newspapers! Lord North carried his amendment only by a majority of two in a full House. The Session was a series of parliamentary conflicts, some conducted with personal acrimony which involved the ridiculous arbitrement of duelling. A Bill was carried in the House of Commons against contractors sitting in Parliament, which was rejected in the House of Lords. Burke's own Bill encountered every obstruction in its progress through Committee; and the Session was concluded without any practical result of the great statesman's incontrovertible exposition of abuses which agitated the minds of a whole people.

The 6th of April is described as a day which "was to distin-

quish the present Session from every other since the Revolution." \* It was a day that might have brought back to some persons, whether of those who dreaded or those who hoped for change, recollections of the Long Parliament. Another, and perhaps a fiercer, conflict between prerogative and the people might have appeared at hand. Charles Fox harangued the petitioners of Westminster in the Hall; and resolutions were carried for annual parliaments, and an addition of a hundred knights of the shire to the representation. Tumults were expected; and bodies of guards were in readiness in the neighbourhood of the Houses. Tumult there was none. The Order of the Day was for taking into consideration the petitions of the people of England—petitions which were so numerous signed as to occupy "such an immense quantity of parchment, as seemed rather calculated to bury than to cover the Speaker's table." † In a Committee of the whole House Mr. Dunning rose. The general prayer of the petitions was for a reform in the public expenditure; and for limiting and restraining the increasing influence of the Crown. He passed a splendid eulogium upon Mr. Burke's Bill, which, when first proposed, received the approbation of every individual in that House. A different feeling was soon indicated—a temper and disposition which originated out of the House, and not within those walls. Ministers have now said that the influence of the Crown is not too much; that it is not competent for the House to inquire into the expenditure of the Civil List. He would bring both these points fairly to issue. He first moved, "That it is the opinion of this Committee that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." The resistance offered to the motion was feeble and indirect. One of its immediate consequences was to disturb lord North from his usual placidity. He accused the Opposition of pursuing measures likely to overturn the Constitution. There was immense confusion, amidst the cry of "take down the words." The motion was carried by 233 against 215. Another motion, that it is competent to the House to examine into and correct abuses in the expenditure of the Civil List, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, was agreed to without a division. A third motion, that it was the duty of the House to provide a remedy for the abuses complained of in the petitions, was also agreed to. Contrary to the ordinary usage, the resolutions were reported before the House adjourned. Only nine county members voted with the government. "The exultation and triumph on one side of the House was only equalled by the

\* "Annual Register," 1780, p. 164.

† *Ibid.*

evident depression and dismay which prevailed on the side of administration. . . . The system of the Court was shaken to its foundations." \* The king the next day expressed his belief to lord North that the Resolutions could not be regarded as personal to the minister, and adds, "I wish I did not feel at whom they were personally levelled." On the 18th of April, Dunning made another motion, that it is incompatible with the independence of parliament that persons holding certain offices about the Court should sit in Parliament. This was carried only by a majority of 215 to 213. The king exults that "things begin to wear a better aspect. Lord North shall see that there is at least one person willing to preserve unspoiled the most beautiful Constitution that ever was framed." The minority rapidly gained strength, and soon became a large majority. Abstract propositions had been carried. The practical measures which were to render them of effect were rejected. On the 18th of May, the most important clauses in Burke's Bill were lost in Committee. The king has triumphed. "You cannot doubt," he writes to lord North, "that I received with pleasure the account of Mr. Burke's Bill having been defeated." His majesty was looking to a new Parliament to continue the abuses that were odious to the nation, or, as it appeared to the royal mind, "to keep the present Constitution of the country in its pristine lustre."

According to the theory of a narrow-minded king, the pristine lustre of the Constitution would have been shorn of its beams, if fifty useless places had not been held by members of parliament, to do the bidding of the Court without the slightest reference to the interests of the nation. According to the theory of a large section of a somewhat intolerant public, the Protestant succession would have lost the best part of its value, if English Roman Catholics were allowed to hold property in land; if their spiritual instructors were not subject to the penalties of treason or felony; if a Protestant son could no longer eject his Papist father from his estate. These severities of the Statutes of the tenth and eleventh of William III. had ceased to be applied; but they existed as a temptation to informers to extort money from the timid, and as a stigma upon the loyal and peaceful. In 1778, upon the motion of Savile, seconded by Dunning, these obsolete penalties were repealed, with the approbation of men of all parties. The Acts of William III., dating before the Union with Scotland, did not affect the position of Roman Catholics there; and it was subsequently contemplated to repeal a Statute of the Scottish Parliament, which was as odious to right-thinking persons as the enactments of the

\* "Annual Register," p. 171.

days when Popery was the great terror of England. The proceedings of the parliament in 1778 stirred up the fanaticism of Edinburgh and Glasgow at the beginning of 1779. Riots took place in Edinburgh. Houses of reputed Roman Catholics were assailed and damaged. A house where Catholics assembled for worship was set on fire. Those who by speech or writing advocated freedom of opinion, were threatened with vengeance; the brutal zealots selecting as one of the objects of their hostility their distinguished countryman, the historian Robertson. A Protestant Association and Committee was set up in Scotland; and a silly nobleman, lord George Gordon, was chosen as its President. This fanatic had sat in Parliament for several years, raving and gesticulating when any debate excited his monomania. Contemptible as he was in intellect, he acquired some consideration from the position he had obtained as the leader of a body of people, large in numbers and dangerous in their enthusiasm. The Protestant Associations of Scotland had multiplied in England. On the first day of the Session in November, 1779, lord George Gordon declared that the indulgences given to Papists had alarmed the whole country. He did not speak his own sentiments only. Government should find a hundred and twenty thousand men at his back, who would avow and support them, and whose warmth of spirit was still greater than his own.

The contempt in which the public character of lord George Gordon was regarded appears to have shut the eyes of the government to the danger of his proceedings. In the House of Commons he was viewed as a silly bore. He was complimented as being "a staunch Whig, an enemy to the American war, and a friend to the liberties of the people;" but the same laudatory member said, "he could not bear to see the noble lord render himself a laughing-stock and a make-game to the whole house. He had got a twist in his head."\* He was endured, probably, from his high connexion, being the brother of the duke of Gordon; and for this, we must presume, the king had patience to hear him indoctrinate his majesty with a pamphlet, the reading of which went on till night put an end to the audience. The twist in lord George's head did not the less fit him to be a demagogue. He calculated that a display of physical force would serve his cause better than argument in Parliament. On the 29th of May he called a public meeting at Coachmaker's Hall; where he harangued a great audience about the dangers of Popery; and proposed a Resolution that the whole body of the Protestant Association should meet in St. George's

\* Mr. Turner—April 11—"Parliamentary Debates," vol. xxi. col. 387.

Fields on the following Friday, to accompany him to the House of Commons to deliver their Petition. If less than twenty thousand persons should attend him, he would not present it. He proposed that they should assemble in four divisions—the Protestants of London the first, of Westminster the second, of Southwark the third, and the Scots resident in the metropolis the fourth; and that every real Protestant should come with a blue cockade on his hat. On Friday, the 2nd of June, a vast assemblage was gathered together in St. George's Fields—fifty or sixty thousand persons according to most accounts. Their leader marshalled them in three columns,—one to march over London Bridge, another over Blackfriars Bridge, and a third over Westminster Bridge, headed by himself. At half-past two this formidable body was assembled in Palace Yard, and intercepted all the avenues of Parliament. The quiet which had distinguished their march now took a more congenial attitude of insult to every obnoxious Peer or Commoner. They filled the lobbies; and twice attempted to force the doors of each House. The fanatic rose in his place, and presented the petition, praying for a repeal of the Act passed in favour of Roman Catholics. He moved that the petition be referred to a Committee of the whole House. This necessarily produced a debate. For several hours the members were unable to go out, the lobby being filled with a furious mob. Lord George went several times to the top of the gallery stairs; harangued the people, telling them that their petition was likely to meet with ill success; and pointed out to their vengeance such members as had spoken against its consideration. Expostulation was in vain. At last, colonel Gordon, a near relative, went up to him, and said, "My lord George, do you intend to bring your rascally adherents into the House of Commons? If you do, the first man of them that enters—I will plunge my sword not into him, but into your body." A party of horseguards at length arrived, with a magistrate at their head; and eventually the lobby was cleared, and the rabble went home. The House then divided, six for the petition, and a hundred and ninety-two against it. During this scene, the terror in the House of Lords was kept up by the constant arrival of Peers announcing the insults to which some of their body were exposed in the streets, and exhibiting the outrages which had been inflicted upon themselves. Dishevelled hair, clothes covered with mud, proclaimed that the hootings in Palace-Yard were not those of a good-tempered English mob. The disgusting excesses of that day had an influence, and not altogether an unnatural influence, upon the political condition of the British people for many years. Most inopport-

tunely, whilst the strongest evidence of popular ignorance was before the eyes of Parliament, the duke of Richmond, according to notice, rose to introduce a Bill, for declaring and restoring the natural, inalienable, and equal right of all the Commons of Great Britain (infants, persons of insane mind, and criminals incapacitated by law, only excepted) to vote in the election of their representatives in Parliament; for regulating the mode and manner of such elections: and for restoring annual Parliaments. The duke said that he found himself exceedingly unhappy that he should have to trouble their lordships with a motion in the situation in which they were at present. He made a speech, necessarily under great embarrassment; for the practical answer to his proposition was the tumult in Palace Yard. The men who were to exercise the natural, inalienable, and equal right of voting in the election of their representatives, were interrupting the freedom of debate, demanding the re-enactment of barbarous laws, at the bidding of a madman. The Houses adjourned without further violence, on that night, in the neighbourhood of Parliament. But the spirit of bigotry took another direction. The ministers of Sardinia and Bavaria had their chapels sanctioned by law and the custom of nations. These were set on fire, and their fittings plundered and destroyed. Thirteen of the rioters were apprehended, upon the arrival of the military, and were taken to Newgate.

Saturday, the 3rd, was a day of comparative tranquillity. But busy agents of mischief were at work; and on Sunday afternoon, Catholic chapels in Moorfields were beset, and their altars and pulpits were torn down and burnt. On the Monday, the supineness of the magistrates, and the want of any efficient system of police, encouraged the No-Popery fanatics—joined by the idlers, the drunkards, and the thieves that congregate in a great city—to renewed attacks upon religious edifices and private houses. The indifference of men high in office to these continued outrages was incomprehensible. Dr. Johnson writes to Mrs. Thrale: "On Monday, Mr. Strahan, who had been insulted, spoke to lord Mansfield, who had, I think, been insulted too, of the licentiousness of the populace; and his lordship treated it as a very slight irregularity."\* On that Monday the house of sir George Savile was gutted. The king writes to lord North that he had given directions to the two Secretaries of State to take measures for preventing riot on the morrow. His majesty does not appear to have contemplated any immediate danger; for he says, "This tumult must be got the better of, or it will encourage designing men to use it as a precedent

\* Boswell's "Life," ed. 1848, p. 648.

for assembling the people on other occasions." On Tuesday, the two Houses again met. Detachments of guards prevented any great outbreak in the neighbourhood of Parliament; though one of the ministers, lord Stormont, was injured by the mob. Burke got into their hands; but his courageous remonstrances produced the effect by which a high spirit generally secures its ascendancy over an English multitude, ignorant but not blood-thirsty. The House of Commons agreed in a Resolution that they would take the petitions into consideration as soon as the tumults should subside. There was no appearance that they would subside quickly. The more lawless and desperate now came forth in greater numbers; and began to regard London as a city to be sacked. About six o'clock on that summer evening a fierce multitude appeared in front of Newgate, and demanded of Mr. Akerman, the keeper of the prison, the release of the rioters who had been committed for the destruction of the chapels of the foreign ambassadors. Their demand was firmly refused; and then Mr. Akerman's private house was set on fire. The present building of Newgate was then only partially completed. The greatest number of the prisoners were confined in the wretched cells of the old prison, which had existed in the time of Charles II. It was, therefore, easily assailed by a furious mob, who thundered at the entrances with sledge hammers and pickaxes; and then dragged out the furniture of the keeper's house, to pile the tables and chairs against the prison doors and set them on fire. A way was thus soon forced. The whole building was quickly in a blaze. The felons without rushed through the flames to release the felons within; and that night there were three hundred criminals loose in the streets. The prison of Clerkenwell was also broken open, and the prisoners released. The character of the riots was now altered. The objects of attack were the administrators of the law. The houses of three metropolitan magistrates were sacked. Midnight came; when a yell of havoc was raised before the house of the Chief Justice in Bloomsbury Square; and, leaving scarcely time for lord and lady Mansfield to escape, the frantic miscreants broke in, threw furniture, pictures, books, manuscripts, into the street, where they made a fire which they fed with these valuables, many of them too precious for any money estimate of their value. There perished the law library of the greatest lawyer of his age; enriched with his own notes; and with that library was destroyed the correspondence of half a century. The mansion itself became a ruin in this fiery havoc. A detachment of guards was at hand; but the officer did not dare to act without the orders of a magistrate, and the magistrates, it was given in evidence, had all run away.