

CHAPTER XXIII.

Death of the Princess Charlotte.—Illness of the Regent.—Causes of his gloom and irritation.—Opening of Parliament.—Bill of Indemnity.—The Petition of Ogdon.—Mr. Canning.—Sir F. Burdett proposes a plan of Parliamentary Reform.—Parliament dissolved.—Death of Sir S. Romilly.—Death of Queen Charlotte.—Evacuation of France by the Allied troops.—Meeting of the New Parliament.—Duke of York the Custos of the King.—Act for Resumption of Cash Payments.—Sir James Macintosh's motion on the Criminal Laws.—Last efforts of Mr. Grattan for Catholic Emancipation.—Agitation for Reform.—The Manchester Massacre, so called.—The Six Acts.—Death of the Duke of Kent.—Death of George III.

FORTY-FOUR years ago, "without the slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment's immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh."* The death of the Presumptive Heiress of the British Crown, on the 6th of November, after the birth of a dead child, was the great event in the domestic history of 1817. Never was a whole nation plunged in such deep and universal grief. From the highest to the lowest, this death was felt as a calamity that demanded the intense sorrow of domestic misfortune. Around every fireside there were suppressed tears and bitter remembrances. The most solemn disclaimer was uttered, through this universal mourning, of the calamity against the people that they were desirous of a vital change in their laws and institutions. Whatever might be their complaints, they showed, on this occasion, that their attachment to a constitutional monarchy was undiminished by factious contests or real grievances; and that they looked with exulting hopes to the days when a patriot Queen should diffuse the sunlight of just government through every corner of a prosperous and happy land.

The Princess Charlotte seemed born to build up for generations the succession to the British Crown, by calling around her own person the warmest devotion of a zealous but a reflecting people. The nation exulted in the maturity of her person and her mind. She stood, as was hoped amongst her future subjects, a

* Robert Hall's Funeral Sermon.

beautiful, an accomplished, a noble-hearted woman. She had wisely asserted her own right to choose for herself in the most important action of her life. The nation hailed and revered her motives. The Prince of her choice brought neither extent of territory nor continental influence; but he brought an active, firm, inquiring mind, and an amiable temper. In the retirement of Claremont, they lived calmly and unobtrusively, in that enviable tranquillity which is so congenial to British feeling. The public sympathy with the husband of the Princess Charlotte upon his great bereavement is well characterized by Southey in a private letter: "The manner in which I have heard Prince Leopold spoken of on the occasion impressed me a good deal. He was called 'poor man' and 'poor fellow.' His affliction has brought him down to our level, and rank was forgotten in the sympathy of humanity."*

Since the death of the Princess Charlotte, the Prince Regent had been seriously indisposed, and for a short time his life was considered in danger. He was not a hard-hearted though he was a selfish man, and the sudden calamity appears to have had a greater influence upon his health and spirits than might have been expected by those who judged that there had been no great affection between the father and daughter. In the "Autobiography of Miss Knight, Lady Companion to the Princess Charlotte," there are many curious details of unpleasant passages in the intercourse of the Regent and the Princess, some of which had acquired an awkward publicity at the period of their occurrence. In the unhappy position of the father and the mother of the Princess there was a natural source of irritation; and the restrictions which were placed upon the intercourse of the daughter with the mother were in themselves galling to a young woman of strong affections and high spirit. In the enforcement of these restrictions the public sympathized with the two royal ladies; and manifested little respect for the support which the Prince Regent received when, in 1813, he placed before the Privy Council all the documents relative to the inquiry into the conduct of the Princess of Wales in 1806. He then obtained an opinion, that, with reference to the welfare of the Princess Charlotte and the most important interests of the State, the intercourse between the mother and the daughter should continue to be subject to regulation and restraint. The dissension became serious upon the refusal of the Princess Charlotte to marry the Prince of Orange. The impulsiveness of the Princess Charlotte's character was manifested when, in July, 1814, she fled from Warwick House, her own residence, to the house of the Princess

* "Memoirs of Sir William Knighton," by Lady Knighton, vol. i. p. 131.

of Wales, in the belief that she was about to be subjected to more coercion and to a stricter surveillance than she had yet endured. Miss Knight says, "It is possible that when Princess Charlotte was a child, her temper might have been violent and headstrong, and the world held that opinion when she was grown up. I never saw anything of this violence or obstinacy. Much agitation, nervous uneasiness, and sometimes nervous impatience,—all this I observed, and sometimes to such a degree as to injure her health. As a proof of this, it may be remarked, that she was so much afraid of her father, that when she had seen him, or expected him, she stuttered exceedingly, which she never did at times when there was nothing particular to agitate her."* Placed under happier circumstances by her union with a man of extraordinary good sense and prudence, the nation hoped that, although one cause of previous unhappiness still existed in full force, there would be no manifestation of those dissensions which, in former days, had rendered the position of the sovereign and of the heir-apparent one of mutual misery and of public scandal.

The national expression of feeling upon the death of the Princess Charlotte was termed by Lord Dudley "exaggerated lamentation;" and he thought that it "could not but be, from its obvious purport, offensive to the other branches of the Royal family."† It certainly might have been offensive to the Regent; for the strong national expression of hope in a future reign presented a forcible contrast to the small measure of enthusiasm towards him who was in the actual exercise of the sovereign power. But beyond this, there was a more direct cause of the Prince Regent's depression of spirits—the scandals that had reached him respecting the Princess of Wales. The only remedy for his gloom and irritation "was beset with so many difficulties that his Ministers shrunk from the responsibility of advising it, though he grew daily more urgent for them to attempt it at any risk."‡ On the 1st of January the Prince Regent wrote to the Lord Chancellor, "You cannot be surprised (much difficulty in point of delicacy being now set aside in my mind by the late melancholy event which has taken place in my family), if I turn my whole thoughts to the endeavouring to extricate myself from the cruellest, as well as the most unjust, predicament, that ever even the lowest individual, much more a Prince, ever was placed in, by unshackling myself from a woman who," &c. &c. § Mr. Fremantle, the gossiping correspondent of the mar-

* "Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight," vol. ii. pp. 88, 1861.

† "Letters," p. 195.

‡ Duke of Buckingham—"Court of England during the Regency," vol. ii. p. 202.

§ "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. ii. p. 305.

quess of Buckingham, assigns as a reason for the Regent not opening the Parliament in person, on the 27th of January, "that allusion must be made in the Speech to the death of the Princess Charlotte, which he cannot bear."* Lord Dudley considered that, in the Speech composed for the Prince Regent, he could distinguish somewhat of that feeling which "the exaggerated lamentation" for the Princess was calculated to excite: "The mention of her is rather dry—sulky rather than sad."

The general tone of the Royal Speech was hopeful and confiding. Improvement in every branch of domestic industry, and the state of public credit, were proofs that the difficulties under which the country had been labouring were to be ascribed to temporary causes. So important a change could not fail to withdraw from the disaffected the principal means of fomenting a spirit of discontent. The peace and tranquillity of the country had been restored. The confidence thus expressed by the Government was supported by the announcement of their intention of bringing in a bill for the immediate repeal of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act. The chief business of the Opposition was therefore to contend against the mode in which the Ministers had exercised their extraordinary powers, and to argue that no necessity had ever arisen for granting those powers. The discussion on these topics was initiated in both Houses by the Ministers themselves. Papers relative to the recent state of the country were presented on the 2d of February. Committees were appointed to report upon them, and the Reports of the Lords and Commons were presented towards the end of the month. The Reports went to completely justify the necessity for extraordinary measures, and to prove the discretion and moderation of the Government in the execution of the powers vested in it by the two Acts of the last Session. It was somewhat contrary to the general tenor of these Reports, that they expressed a decided opinion that the great body of the people had remained unseduced by the designs of the disaffected, even in the most disturbed districts, and at the periods of the greatest distress. The Reports produced little debate, but the discussions were repeated and vehement upon "A Bill for Indemnifying Persons who, since the 26th of January, 1817, have acted in apprehending, imprisoning, or detaining in custody, persons suspected of high treason, or treasonable practices, and in the suppression of tumultuous and unlawful assemblies. On the motion for going into Committee on this Bill, Mr. Canning uttered five words, which long had the effect or inducing a belief that he regarded the sufferings of the humble

* "Court of England during the Regency," vol. ii. p. 202.

with cold-blooded indifference, and made a jest of their misfortunes. One of three petitioners, who complained of severities which they endured whilst under confinement, was described by Canning as "the revered and ruptured Ogden." In Hansard's Parliamentary Debates the words are given as "the ever to be revered and unhappy Ogden."* There appears to be little doubt, that the words which his enemies ascribed to Canning were the words which he used. But in the same sentence in which he employed the unfortunate alliteration, he exposed the shameful mendacity of the petition which had been got up for Ogden, which affirmed that hernia had been caused by the weight of his irons, when he had suffered from the affliction during eight years, and was cured whilst in confinement, having written to his relatives and friends to express the delight he felt in being made a new man again. Amongst the most virulent of the attacks upon Mr. Canning for his somewhat imprudent expression, was an anonymous pamphlet, "which he considered as suggestive of his assassination," and of which he "was always fully persuaded that Mr. Hobhouse was the author."† A fashion now happily past with regard to all classes, was at that time, for men filling the highest offices in the State, to settle attacks upon their personal honour by the arbitrement of a duel. To provoke a duel, Canning wrote to the anonymous author of the pamphlet, "you are a liar and a slanderer, and want courage only to be an assassin." The writer of the pamphlet acknowledged the letter, but declined to remove the mask.

The question of Parliamentary Reform, which had slept for ten years, as far as Parliament was concerned, was revived in the House of Commons by sir Francis Burdett. In 1809 he had proposed that every county should be divided into electoral districts, each returning one member; and that the franchise should be vested in the taxed male population. Fifteen members then supported this motion. In 1818 sir Francis Burdett, in accordance with the views of the Hampden Club, of which he was the chairman, brought forward resolutions for universal male suffrage, equal electoral districts, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments. Sir Francis restricted his proposal to male suffrage, although many of the Reform Associations were composed of women as well as of men. In the session of 1818 the seconder of the resolutions, lord Cochrane, was their only supporter on the division, in addition to the mover. The advocates of Reform out of doors were damaging a cause which had once had the support of Pitt

* Hansard, vol. xxxvii. col 1026.

† Stapleton—"George Canning and his Times," p.

and Fox, of Grey and Erskine. Moderate men had begun to wish that the cause was in better hands than the violent advocates of the same principle that Burdett had announced. Sydney Smith, in 1819, wrote to Francis Jeffrey, "I am doubtful whether it is not *your* duty and *my* duty to become moderate Reformers, to keep off worse."*

In this session messages from the Regent were delivered to both Houses, announcing that treaties of marriage were in negotiation between the duke of Clarence and the Princess Adelaide Louisa Theresa Caroline Amelia of Saxe Meiningen; also between the duke of Cambridge and the Princess Augusta Wilhelmina Louisa of Hesse; also announcing that the Prince Regent had given his consent to a marriage between the duke of Kent and her Serene Highness Mary Louisa Victoria, daughter of the duke of Saxe Cobourg Saalfeld, widow of Enrich Charles Prince of Leiningen, and sister of Prince Leopold. There were long debates as to the sums to be voted by Parliament in consequence of these projected alliances. The marriage of the duke of Cambridge was solemnized on the 1st of June; those of the duke of Clarence and the duke of Kent on the 13th of July. The daughter of the fourth son of George III., by his marriage with the sister of Prince Leopold, was born on the 24th of May, 1819. It is a remarkable example of the vanity of human fears, that the people who wept, as a people without hope, for the decease of Charlotte Augusta, should have realized through her premature death precisely such a female reign, of just and mild government, of domestic virtues, of generous sympathy with popular rights, of bold and liberal encouragement of sound improvement, as they had associated with her probable career,—a reign more congenial to the spontaneous love of the people than they could have thought, in that season of disquiet, was a possible blessing to be reached in a few coming years.

On the 10th of June the Prince Regent announced from the throne his intention forthwith to dissolve the Parliament. The word prorogation was not mentioned. At the close of the royal speech the Lord Chancellor in formal terms notified the will and pleasure of his Royal Highness "that this Parliament be now dissolved, and this Parliament is dissolved accordingly." When the Commons returned to their House, Mr. Manners Sutton, the late Speaker, offered to read the speech at the table, as is usual after a prorogation. Mr. Tierney objected to any such proceeding, as implying some approbation of this mode of dissolution, which he

* "Memoir of Sydney Smith," vol. ii. p. 181.

considered as an insult to Parliament. Mr. Manners Sutton said that this was a case in which there was no precedent, there having been no such dissolution since that of the Oxford Parliament in the reign of Charles II. The motive for this extraordinary proceeding was, apparently, that no delay should arise in summoning a new Parliament. It had been a stormy session; and it was not desirable in the view of the ministry, that the same Parliament should re-assemble in consequence of the demise of the Crown, which then appeared to be an event very likely speedily to happen. The Proclamation for calling a new Parliament was issued the same day as that on which the dissolution took place. The writs for the new Parliament were made returnable on the 4th of August.

The elections were all over by the middle of July. Sydney Smith wrote to Earl Grey, "I congratulate you on the general turn of the elections, and the serious accession of strength to the Whigs." There probably never was a general election in which there was a more revolting display of the violence which too often attended protracted contests. In Westminster, the government candidate, sir Murray Maxwell, a distinguished naval officer, was nearly killed by the brutality of the mob, who were outrageous that he stood before Burdett on the poll. In this stronghold of popular opinions, it was creditable to the good sense of the middle classes that Romilly was returned with Burdett, and that Hunt, who continued the contest to the end of the fifteen days allowed by law, had only eighty-four votes. Romilly's high character secured him a triumphant return at the head of the poll, though he had not spent a shilling, nor solicited a vote, nor made his appearance on the hustings. He never took that place in Parliament which the reverence of his fellow citizens had awarded him. On the 29th of October he lost his wife, to whom he was most tenderly attached. In a paroxysm of insanity he died by his own hand on the 2nd of November.

On the 17th of November took place the death of Queen Charlotte, at the age of seventy-five. For fifty-seven years she had shared the political anxieties, and watched over the mental aberrations of the King, who had since 1811 ceased to be conscious of the sympathy of wife or child. Under the Regency Bill she was appointed the Custos of the king's person. During the Regency she had presided over the Court ceremonies with the same decorum which she had always maintained, and which did something to preserve the appearance of virtue, however the reality might be sacrificed in royal retreats which her scrupulous eye might not care to explore. Richard Rush, the plenipotentiary from the

United States, who was presented to her Majesty in the February preceding her decease, describes her deportment with a strong feeling of respect: "During the whole interview there was a benignity in her manner, which, in union with her age and rank, was both attractive and touching."*

At the Congress of the Allied Sovereigns and of the ministers of the several powers, at Aix-la-Chapelle, the duke of Wellington, associated with Lord Castlereagh, represented Great Britain. The only object of the Congress was to determine with regard to the continued occupation of the French territory by the troops of the Allies, of which Wellington was generalissimo. On the 2nd of October, the evacuation was unanimously agreed upon. By the Treaty of Paris, the possible occupation had been fixed at five years. The fears of the more timid of the French Royalists inclined the representatives of the continental powers, with the exception of Russia, to prolong the occupation for the whole term. Louis XVIII. and his ministry had more confidence in the security which had been established, during the three years which had sufficed to restrain any attempt to shake the government by popular violence. The duke of Wellington was satisfied with the state of things which he had witnessed during that period. A French historian says that sufficient justice had not been done to the duke, "for the liberal and faithful manner in which he protected the interests of France throughout all the negotiations with foreign powers. . . . He was of opinion that this measure of precaution ought to cease, seeing France had not only duly discharged her stipulated payments but that her government appeared to present the character of order and duration."†

The members of the new Parliament having assembled on the 14th of January, and Mr. Manners Sutton having been re-elected Speaker, the Prince Regent's speech was delivered by commission on the 21st. The most important passage in that speech was in connection with the announcement of the death of the Queen:—"His Royal Highness has commanded us to direct your attention to the consideration of such measures as this melancholy event has rendered necessary and expedient with respect to the care of his Majesty's sacred person." This was the preliminary to a Bill appointing the duke of York as a successor to the Queen in the office of King's Custos. In a committee on the Civil List it was proposed that the sum of 10,000*l.*, which her Majesty had received on account of this office, should be continued to the duke of York.

* "Residence at the Court of London," p. 134.

† Capefigue—"Histoire de la Restauration," tome i. p. 478.

The Windsor establishment was proposed to be reduced from 100,000*l.* to 50,000*l.* The motion of Mr. Tierney, that these charges should be defrayed out of the privy purse, was negatived by a majority of 95. The proposed allowance to the duke of York was the subject of continued and animated debate. The repugnance to this measure was not confined to the ordinary parliamentary Opposition. Lord Grenville thought that there was "something very revolting in paying a sum of 10,000*l.* per annum to superintend the condition of his father, that father being the sovereign of the country."* He was apprehensive that this would be a very general feeling. Sydney Smith did not probably express himself too strongly, after the House, on the 22nd of March, had divided upon the question, that the clause granting 10,000*l.* a year to the duke of York should stand as part of the Royal Household Bill, and the majority for the clause had been 59:—"You see this spirited House of Commons knows how to demean itself when any solid act of baseness, such as the 10,000*l.* to the duke of York, is in agitation."† Mr. Charles Williams Wynn, in a letter to the marquess of Buckingham, shows that there were other reasons for this measure than the desire to put a large sum into the somewhat empty pockets of the king's son:—"The duke of York's anxious wish was to have avoided the question, by declining all salary; but general Grenville says, 'the Regent compelled him to take it.' And one of the duke's most intimate friends, who came down to vote for him last night, told Phillimore, in confidence, that the answer to the duke's request was, 'So, sir! you want to be popular at our expense.'"‡

The state of the currency, and the question of the resumption of cash payments, were subjects of paramount importance in the deliberations of this session. Secret Committees of both Houses had been appointed to inquire into the state of the Bank of England. Early in April both committees presented Reports, recommending that a Bill should be forthwith passed to prohibit the continuance of the payment in gold by the Bank of their notes issued previous to the 1st of January, 1817, in conformity with the voluntary notice to that effect of the directors. The circulation of these notes having been unusually large, and the price of gold being about 3 per cent. above that of paper, six or seven millions had been rapidly withdrawn from the Bank coffers. It was stated in the Reports of the Committees that the measure which they recommended had for its object to facilitate the final and complete res-

* "Court of England during the Regency," vol. ii. p. 316.

† "Memoir of Sydney Smith," vol. ii. p. 177.

‡ "Court of England during the Regency," vol. ii. p. 321.

toration of cash payments. Mr. Peel, who had been first returned to Parliament in 1809, and who was now, at the age of thirty-one, member for the University of Oxford, was chosen chairman of the Committee of the House of Commons on the currency question. He then filled no office under government. In the agitation of this question he first signally manifested that remarkable quality of mind which led to the most important results of his statesmanship. Early in February Mr. Wynn wrote, "Peel, who is the chairman of the Bank Committee, professes, I find, to have as yet formed no opinion on the subject, but to be *open to conviction*; and the same is the language of the duke of Wellington."* On the 24th of May the ministerial resolutions were proposed to the House of Commons by Mr. Peel. The Resolution which he had to submit to the House had been adopted unanimously by the Committee. In consequence of the evidence before the Committee, and the discussions upon it, his opinion with regard to this question had undergone a material change. "He was ready to avow, without shame or remorse, that he went into the Committee with a very different opinion from that which he at present entertained; for his views of the subject were most materially different when he voted against the resolutions brought forward by Mr. Horner in 1811, as the chairman of the Bullion Committee. . . . He now, with very little modification, concurred in the principles laid down in the fourteen first resolutions submitted to the House by that very able and much lamented individual. He conceived them to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system."† Founded upon the resolution thus proposed, the Act for the gradual resumption of cash payments, commonly known as Peel's Act, was passed on the 23rd of June. By this measure the restriction upon cash payments was continued until February, 1820; and it was provided that from the 1st of February to the 1st of October, the public should be entitled to demand payment of notes in gold bullion, in quantities of not less than sixty ounces, at the rate of 81*s.* per ounce; and that the same mode of payment in bullion, at a gradually reduced rate per ounce, should continue till the 1st of May, 1822, after which date current gold coin of the realm might be demanded in exchange for notes. The Bank anticipated this period, resuming the payment of its notes in specie on May 1, 1820.

It was in this Session of Parliament that sir James Mackintosh succeeded to a great trust which devolved upon him by the death of sir Samuel Romilly—the advocacy of amendment in the crimi-

* "Court of England during the Regency," vol. ii. p. 303.

† Hansard, vol. xi. col. 677.

nal laws. On the 2nd of March, he moved for a Select Committee "to consider of so much of the Criminal Laws as relates to capital punishment in felonies." He did not propose, he said, to form a new criminal code, nor to suggest the abolition of the punishment of death, nor to take away the right of pardon from the crown; he did not aim at realizing any universal principle. His object was to bring the letter of the law more near to its practice, under which the remission of the law formed the rule and the execution the exception. "It is one of the greatest evils which can befall a country when the criminal law and the virtuous feeling of the community are in hostility to each other. They cannot be long at variance without injury to one, perhaps to both. One of my objects is, to approximate them; to make good men the anxious supporters of the criminal law, and to restore, if it has been injured, that zealous attachment to the law in general, which, even in the most tempestuous times of our history, has distinguished the people of England among the nations of the world."* The proposition of sir James Mackintosh was opposed by the government, but, upon a division, the numbers in favour of the motion were 147; against it, 128. The Report of the Committee recommended the repeal of many capital punishments. Six bills, embodying some of these recommendations, were introduced by Mackintosh in the Session of 1820.

The determination of the Lord Chancellor to stand, without yielding an inch, upon the ancient ways, was put to the test by a remarkable occurrence in 1818. In the Court of King's Bench, in the celebrated case of Ashford and Thornton, an "appeal of murder" was prosecuted, which involved such a "trial by battle" as Shakspeare has exhibited between "the armourer and his man."† Lord Campbell says, as regards the appeal of murder in 1818, "I myself saw the appellee, on being required to plead, throw down his gauntlet on the floor, and insist on clearing his innocence by battle—as the judges held he was entitled to do." Lord Campbell adds, that it was the opinion of many great lawyers that this appeal of murder, which might be brought after an acquittal before a jury, and in which the Crown had no power to pardon, was a glorious badge of the rights and privileges of Englishmen. "Yet Lord Chancellor Eldon, to the amazement of the House of Peers and of the public, moved the second reading of a Bill, sent up by the Commons, to reform those practices, which he described as abuses, and, notwithstanding their antiquity, attacked in the most unsparing man-

* Hansard, vol. xxxix. col. 784.

† Henry VI., Second Part, act 2, scene 3.

ner."* The conversion of lord Eldon to the support of any legal innovation was the more remarkable, inasmuch as he was opposed to a great popular authority, the Common Council of the City of London, who petitioned Parliament that the people might not be deprived of their ancient and undoubted right of appeal in criminal cases.

In this session, the question of Parliamentary Reform was again agitated by sir Francis Burdett. He proposed that, early in the next session, the House should take into its consideration the state of the representation. The occasion was remarkable for the first declaration of the opinions of lord John Russell, who had entered the House of Commons in 1813, at the age of twenty-one. Lord John did not agree with those who opposed all and every system of Reform. He agreed in the propriety of disfranchising such boroughs as were notoriously corrupt; he would restrict the duration of Parliament to three years. "He could not, however, pledge himself to support a measure that went the length of proposing an inquiry into the general state of the representation, because such an inquiry was calculated to throw a slur upon the representation of the country, and to fill the minds of the people with vague and indefinite alarms."† At the close of the session, lord John Russell announced his intention, on the next meeting of Parliament, to propose the disfranchisement of Grampound, the corruption of which borough had become notorious. He intimated that he should propose also to adopt the principle which had not yet been recognized by the House—the principle of admitting the unrepresented large towns into a share of the representation. In the session of 1820, these proposals were brought forward by him in certain resolutions, which were met in a conciliatory spirit by the government. Eventually Grampound was disfranchised in 1821, and it was agreed by the Commons that the two vacant seats should be given to the town of Leeds. The Lords, however, rejected this extension of the representation to great towns, and assigned two additional members to the county of York. The moderate Reformers had become hopeful, when lord Castlereagh gave his assent to lord John Russell's motion in 1820. Sidney Smith writes to earl Gray, expressing his opinion that this assent "includes every thing that is important; that a disfranchised borough may be taken out of the surrounding hundred and conferred elsewhere; or rather, that it need not necessarily be thrown into the surrounding hundred."‡

On the 3rd of May, the fervid eloquence of Mr. Grattan was

* "Lives of the Chancellors," chap. 203.

† Hansard, vol. xl. col. 1496.

‡ "Memoir," vol. ii. p. 192.

heard for the last time in the House of Commons in support of the measure nearest his heart, that of Catholic Emancipation. He moved, that the state of the laws by which oaths or declarations are required to be taken as qualifications for the exercise of civil functions, as far as affected His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects, should be taken into consideration by a Committee of the whole House. After the speech of Grattan, the House was impatient to divide. The numbers were 241 for the motion; 243 against it. In the new Parliament, on the 28th of April, 1820, sir Henry Parnell gave notice that Mr. Grattan would, on the 11th of May, submit to the House a motion for the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities. The great Irish orator had arrived in London in a state of much debility, and his friends remonstrated that the exertion that he contemplated would be attended with serious injury to his feeble health. His answer was, "I should be happy to die in the discharge of my duty." He died on the 14th of May, at the age of seventy.

On the 13th of July, Parliament was prorogued by the Prince Regent in person. There was a passage in the Royal Speech calculated to renew the alarm that appears to have subsided at the beginning of the year, when the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act had been deemed no longer necessary. The Prince Regent now said, "I have observed with great concern the attempts which have recently been made in some of the manufacturing districts to take advantage of circumstances of local distress, to excite a spirit of disaffection to the institutions and government of the country." There had been considerable interruption to the prosperous state of trade from February to July. The number of bankruptcies was unusually great; credit was very generally impaired; the demand for labour was of course proportionably affected, and the rate of wages was necessarily lower. At the same time the price of food had been steadily advancing. There had been meetings of the operative classes in Lancashire and at Glasgow, to consider the low rate of wages, and to appeal to public sympathy upon their distressed condition. Gradually, however, at these meetings the peaceably disposed were borne down by the turbulent, and the speeches assumed that character of political violence that justified the terms of the Prince Regent's speech. Parliament, however, separated without any expectation that serious mischief was at hand. Many of the members of the Cabinet were seeking a temporary repose from their official labours. The Lord Chancellor, perplexed by events which we shall now have to describe, writes to his brother in August, "Your exhortations to the King's servants, I

doubt, can't reach many of them, for, with exception of Liverpool, Castlereagh, Sidmouth, Wellington, Van, and myself, they are all, eight in number, in different parts of Europe."*

At a great open air meeting at Stockport on the 28th of June, sir Charles Wolseley, bart., was the chairman, there commencing a career which ended in the jail, and might have ended on the scaffold. He told his audience that he was one of those who had mounted the ramparts of the Bastille at the commencement of the French Revolution, and he would never shrink from attacking the Bastiles of his own country. On the 12th of July, at a meeting held at New Hall Hill, near Birmingham, sir Charles Wolseley was elected "legislatorial attorney and representative" for that town. The government naturally became alarmed, and caused sir Charles Wolseley, and a dissenting preacher, to be indicted for seditious words spoken by them at the meeting at Stockport. Wolseley was arrested at his own house, Wolseley Park, in Staffordshire. At a great assembly in Smithfield, where Hunt presided, Harrison was arrested; and on being conveyed to Stockport, the constable who arrived there with him was attacked and shot. These events produced great alarm. Lord Sidmouth, in a private letter of the 15th of August, expressed his opinion that "the laws were not strong enough for the times, but that they must be made so." Nevertheless, he thought the plentiful season was unfavourable for sedition, and that at Manchester there was happily an increased demand for labour.† The attention of the Home-office had naturally been directed to Manchester with some anxiety, for a public meeting had been called by the Reformers, who had now taken the name of Radicals, for the ninth of August, to elect a "legislatorial attorney" as representative of that place. The magistrates, in consequence, issued a notice declaring such a meeting to be illegal, and requiring the people, at their peril, to abstain from attending it. The design was relinquished; and another meeting was advertised to be held in St. Peter's Field, in Manchester, for the purpose of petitioning for a Reform of Parliament. One great cause of alarm at the beginning of August was derived from representations made to the Lancashire magistrates, that in the neighbourhoods of Bury, of Bolton, and of Rochdale, there were nightly assemblies of great numbers of men, who met together for the purpose of learning and practising military training. There is no evidence that these meetings for drill had been long continued, or that there had been any attempt to conduct the drillings in secret. A very plausible

* "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. ii. p. 336.

† "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. iii. p. 249.