

reason for this practice, at this particular period, is given by one, who was freely admitted to all the councils of the Reformers, and as freely differed from them when they contemplated any resort to physical force. Bamford says, that the Reformers had been frequently taunted by the press with their ragged dirty appearance at their assemblages, with the confusion of their proceedings, and the mob-like crowd in which their numbers were mustered. In preparation for the great meeting of the 16th of August, the Committees issued injunctions for a display of cleanliness, sobriety, and order. He adds, "order in our movements was obtained by drilling," and "peace," according to a subsequent injunction of the Committees, was to be secured "by a prohibition of all weapons of offence or defence; and by the strictest discipline of silence, steadiness, and obedience to the directions of the conductors." Nothing can look more harmless, and even poetical, than Bamford's description of the evening drills. They were, he says, "to our sedentary weavers and spinners, periods of healthful exercise and enjoyment; our drill masters were generally old soldiers of the line, or of militia or local militia regiments. They put the lads through their facings in quick time, and soon learned them to march with a steadiness and a regularity which would not have disgraced a regiment on parade. When dusk came, and we could no longer see to work, we jumped from our looms, and rushed to the sweet cool air of the fields, or the waste lands, or the green lane-sides. We mustered, we fell into rank, we faced, marched, halted, faced about, countermarched, halted again, dressed, and wheeled in quick succession, and without confusion; or, in the gray of a fine Sunday morn, we would saunter through the mists, fragrant with the night odour of flowers and of new hay, and ascending the Tandle hills, salute the broad sun, as he climbed from behind the high moors of Saddleworth."\* Nevertheless, although there were no armed meetings and no midnight drillings, we can understand the fears of one of the Manchester magistrates, who deposed that "when he saw the party with the blue and green banners come upon the field in beautiful order, not until then did he become alarmed."

It was announced that at the meeting of the 16th of August, Mr. Hunt would take the chair. The arrival of the hero of the day, preceded by flags flying, and a band of music, was hailed by a shout from eighty thousand persons. The greater part of this vast assemblage was not composed of the operatives of Manchester. Detachments, each of several thousand persons, came from the neighbouring manufacturing districts, most of these bodies

\* "Passages in the Life of a Radical," vol. i. p. 178.

arriving in that military order for which they appear to have had a considerable aptitude. Bamford was himself the conductor of the procession of his fellow-townsmen of Middleton, who marched five abreast, every hundred having a leader distinguished by a sprig of laurel in his hat, and these leaders being directed by superior officers. The Middleton band had two silk flags, on which were inscribed, 'Unity and Strength, Liberty and Fraternity,' 'Parliaments Annual, Suffrage Universal.' They also bore a crimson velvet cap of Liberty. The number of the Middleton men was three thousand; and they were joined by a similar number of Rochdale people. As they entered Manchester, they found that many other parties had preceded them, including that of the Leeds and Saddleworth Union, bearing a black flag, with the words in white letters, of 'Equal Representation or Death.' It would appear that these ominous words were little in accordance with the loyal spirit of the populace, who are stated to have very generally taken off their hats when the band played 'God save the King.' Mr. Hunt arrives; he mounts the hustings: he has his distinguished white hat in his hand as he bows to the people; he begins to address the assembly amidst a profound silence. After a few sentences he pauses; there is a pressure from the verge of the field towards the hustings; a body of cavalry is striving to make way through the terrified multitude.

From the exaggerated contemporary accounts, it is difficult to derive a clear and connected retrospect of the causes which led to such an onslaught upon a peaceable assemblage, as would justify history in continuing to designate it by its original name, 'the Manchester massacre.' To obtain an impartial view of the circumstances we must refer to the statements of the Lancashire magistrates in the papers laid before parliament; to the evidence upon the trial of Hunt and his associates; and to narratives of individuals which have appeared in more recent times. Twenty-five years after these occurrences, sir William Jolliffe supplied to the biographer of lord Sidmouth a circumstantial narrative of the events which he had himself witnessed on the 16th of August, when acting as a lieutenant in the 15th Hussars. His regiment had been quartered in Manchester about six weeks. It was his first acquaintance, he said, with a large manufacturing population; he had "little knowledge of the condition of that population; whether or no a great degree of distress was then prevalent; or, whether or no, the distrust and bad feeling which appeared to exist between the employers and employed was wholly or in part caused by the agitation of political questions."\* There was an

\* "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. iii. p. 253.



ample military force of the regular army, who were stationed in Manchester; and some companies of the 88th regiment, and of the Cheshire Yeomanry, had also been brought into town. Sir William Jolliffe adds, "there was a troop of Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry, consisting of about forty members, who, from the manner in which they were made use of (to say the least) greatly aggravated the disasters of the day. Their ranks were chiefly filled by wealthy master manufacturers; and, without the knowledge which would have been possessed by a (strictly speaking) military body, they were placed, most unwisely as it appeared, under the immediate command and orders of the civil authorities."\* The magistrates had been taking depositions, and deliberating upon some course of action, through the Saturday and Sunday which preceded the meeting. They had been in communication with Lord Sidmouth, who had told them "that he expected occasion to arise for their energy to display itself, and that they might feel assured of the cordial support of the government." Mr. Bond, the London Police Magistrate, had at this time observed to Lord Sidmouth that, "in periods of disorder and approaching insurrection, the most difficult and important point is to ascertain to what extent you shall allow the evil to proceed: for unless there is enough done to indicate great and threatening danger, the better classes will not be convinced of the necessity of interference. You can never, therefore, call the law into execution with any good effect before the mischief is in part accomplished."† Upon this equivocating and most dangerous principle the Lancashire magistrates appear to have acted. They had a warrant ready for the arrest of the leaders of this meeting. They delayed its execution till Hunt and the others to be arrested were surrounded by a multitude, equal in number to one-half of the entire population of Manchester and Salford at that period. This multitude was wedged together in the narrow area of St. Peter's Field, now built over, but then an unenclosed space of about three acres, approached by several principal streets. A small body of constables were stationed close to the hustings, and a continued line of the same civil force maintained a communication with the magistrates, who were assembled at a private house on the south side of the Field. The distance from the hustings to this house was about three hundred yards. The Manchester Yeomanry were stationed in Mosley-street. Two squadrons of the 15th Hussars were in waiting, dismounted, in a street to the north of the Field, at a distance from it of about a quarter of a mile. In this position

\* "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. iii. p. 254.

† *Ibid.*, p. 250.

—the Reform orators ready to begin, the populace eagerly waiting, the cavalry and yeomanry at hand, the magistrates in full conclave—the warrant for the apprehension of the leaders was given to Nadin, the chief constable of Manchester, to execute. He could not carry his orders into effect, he declared, with the civil power at his command. It was immediately determined that the chief constable should have military aid. Bamford, having seen Hunt taking off his white hat, and beginning to address the people, very wisely went out of the crowd to obtain some refreshments after his long march. He heard a noise and strange murmur arising, and "saw a party of cavalry in blue and white uniform come trotting, sword in hand, round the corner of a garden wall, and to the front of a row of new houses, where they reined up in a line." The men in blue and white were the Yeomanry. He went back nearer the hustings to see what this movement meant. The mounted troops were received with a shout which Bamford understood as one of good will. The military shouted again, and dashed forward. There was a general cry in the quarter where he stood, of 'Stand fast,' "The cavalry were in confusion: they evidently could not, with all the weight of man and horse, penetrate that compact mass of human beings; and their sabres were plied to hew a way through naked held-up hands and defenceless heads; and then chopped limbs, and wound-gaping skulls were seen; and groans and cries were mingled with the din of that horrid confusion."\* According to the narrative of Sir William Jolliffe, some one, who had been sent from the place of meeting to bring up the four troops of the 15th Hussars, led the way through a number of narrow streets, and by a circuitous route, to the south-west corner of St. Peter's Field. Without a halt or pause, the commands "front and forward" were given. Their line extended quite across the ground, which in all parts was so filled with people that their hats seemed to touch. The lieutenant of Hussars saw the Manchester troop of Yeomanry "scattered singly or in small groups over the greater part of the field, literally hemmed up and hedged in by the mob, so that they were powerless either to make an impression or to escape." Mr. Hulston the chairman of the magistrates states that when the Hussars arrived, colonel L'Estrange, their commander, asked him what he was to do? "Good God, sir," exclaimed Mr. Hulston, "do you not see how they are attacking the Yeomanry? Disperse the crowd!" The panic-struck magistrate's order was obeyed. The trumpet sounded the charge. The Hussars swept the mingled mass of

\* "Passages in the Life of a Radical," p. 207.



human beings before them. "People, yeomen, and constables, in their confused attempts to escape, ran one over the other; so that, by the time we had arrived at the end of the field, the fugitives were literally piled up to a considerable elevation above the level of the ground." \* According to sir William Jolliffe, the Hussars drove the people forward with the flats of their swords; but, as was inevitably the case in such a situation, the edge was also used. He considers that it redounds highly to the forbearance of the men that more wounds were not received, when the vast numbers are considered with whom they came into hostile collision. "In ten minutes," says Bamford, "from the commencement of the havoc, the field was an open and almost deserted space. The sun looked down through a sultry and motionless air. . . . The hustings remained, with a few broken and hewed flag-staves erect, and a torn and gashed banner or two dropping; whilst over the whole field were strewed caps, bonnets, hats, shawls, and shoes, and other parts of male and female dress; trampled, torn, and bloody." † In the evening the people assembled in great numbers at the end of Oldham-street, using menacing language. Two companies of the 88th regiment of foot and a squadron of Hussars being stationed there as a night piquet, were assaulted with stones as the darkness came on. A magistrate having read the Riot Act, about thirty shots were fired by the 88th, wounding three or four persons. The number of those killed on this unhappy day did not exceed six, of whom one was a special constable, and another one of the Manchester Yeomanry, who was struck off his horse by a brick-bat. About seventy persons were received in the Infirmary, suffering from sabre wounds, fractures or contusions. Many more are supposed to have returned to their homes without proclaiming their injuries.

Hunt, and eight or ten of his companions, having been seized upon the hustings, were brought before the magistrates upon a charge of high treason. The government having abandoned that charge, they were held to bail, or detained for the want of bail, to be tried for a misdemeanour, upon the charge of having conspired to alter the law by force and threats. The Lord Chancellor had urged upon the Cabinet that the persons arrested should be indicted for high treason. The law officers had recommended that they should be indicted for misdemeanour; and lord Eldon asks, "Who will be bold enough to command them to institute prosecutions, such as they think they can't maintain? Without all doubt, the Manchester magistrates must be supported; but they are very

\* Sir W. Jolliffe's account. † Bamford, p. 208.

generally blamed here. For my part, I think if the assembly was only an unlawful assembly, that task will be difficult enough in sound reasoning. If the meeting was an overt act of treason, their justification is complete. That it was such, and that the Birmingham meeting was such, is my clear opinion." \* The Manchester magistrates were "supported:" and although they were "very generally blamed here," lord Sidmouth addressed letters to the lord-lieutenants of Lancashire and Cheshire, expressing, upon the special authority of the Prince Regent, "the great satisfaction derived by his Royal Highness from their prompt, decisive, and efficient measures for the preservation of the public tranquillity."

However great might have been the satisfaction of the Prince Regent at "the conduct of the magistrates and civil authorities of Manchester, as well as of the officers and troops, both regular and yeomanry cavalry," † there was a very widely spread feeling of indignation both against magistrates and military, in every part of the kingdom. Strong resolutions and addresses were adopted in public meetings of boroughs, and cities, and counties, little heeding a rough reply which the Prince Regent made to the Address of the Common Council of the City of London at the beginning of September. In populous counties and in moderate towns the excitement was equally great. Twenty thousand persons assembled at a county meeting at York, called by the high sheriff upon the requisition of many influential freeholders. Amongst those requisitionists was earl Fitzwilliam, who, for this offence, was summarily dismissed from his office of lord-lieutenant of the West Riding. In the south as well as in the north, the excitement was equally great. In the town hall of Reading we ourselves heard an harangue of remarkable eloquence from a young native of that town; and when he exclaimed,

"We must be free, or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakspeare spake,"

a shout went up from his fellow-townsmen that he must have well remembered in the merited success of his after life. That young man was Thomas Noon Talfourd.

The government alarmists of that period were in a condition of almost helpless terror. Eldon described the people of this country as divisible into two classes,—the one class insane, who manifested their insanity in perfect apathy, eating and drinking, as if

\* "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. ii. pp. 338, 339.

† Letter of Sir B. Bloomfield to Lord Sidmouth.



there was no danger of political death, yea, even to-morrow; contrasted with the other class, in which he included the Cokes and Bedfords, who hallooed on an infuriate multitude to acts of desperation. "The country," said the Chancellor, "must make new laws to meet this state of things, or we must make a shocking choice between military government and anarchy."\* Parliament was called together, with the very unwilling assent of lord Liverpool, to make these new laws, which were known as the Six Acts. They were Acts to prevent delay in the administration of justice in cases of misdemeanour; to prevent the training of persons in the practice of military evolutions; to authorize justices of the peace to seize and detain arms; to more effectually prevent seditious meetings and assemblies. These four had especial reference to the disturbed districts, though they applied to the whole kingdom. The two other Acts were for the prevention and punishment of blasphemous and seditious libel, and to subject certain publications to the duties of stamps upon newspapers. These measures were eventually passed, although resisted at every stage. The Houses adjourned on the 29th of December. Lord Campbell describes "the unconstitutional Code called the Six Acts," as "the latest violation of our free Constitution." The old spirit of liberty would appear to have departed from England when public meetings could not be held without the licence of magistrates; when private houses might be searched for arms; and when a person convicted a second time for publishing a libel might be transported beyond the seas. And yet the measures of ministers hardly came up to the expectation of the ultra-Tories of that day. The temper of some who belonged to the parliamentary majority may be estimated from the tone of two letters of lord Colchester. Mr. Bankes highly approved of the measure for compelling printers to enter into recognizances, and for banishing for an indefinite term of years for a second offence for libel. "My only doubt is whether we have gone far enough in our endeavour to restrain and correct the licentiousness and abuse of the press; it is a tremendous engine in the hands of mischievous men, of which the crop never fails; and the universal rage for spreading education among the poor renders them more exposed to ill impressions, through that medium, than they were in our younger days."† Lord Redesdale is for root-and-branch work that would have been worthy of the French reign of terror: "There is a very bad spirit abroad, but I think it will be kept under. I doubt whether it would not have been fortunate for

\* "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. ii. p. 340.

† "Diary of Lord Colchester," vol. iii. p. 104.

the country if half Manchester had been burned, and Glasgow had endured a little singeing. We shall again only scotch the snake, not kill it. So we did in 1794. I would have permitted the National Convention at that time to have met, but the ministers did not dare to hazard the consequences. Actual rebellion is generally subdued. Smothered rebellion lurks long under the ashes."\* Moderate Whigs, such as Sidney Smith, thought that with an administration determined to concede nothing, there would be a struggle which would end, not in democracy, but in despotism. "In which of these two evils it terminates, is of no more consequence than from which tube of a double-barrelled pistol I meet my destruction." †

Parliament had adjourned to the 15th of February, 1820. An event, not unexpected at any time during the last year or two, called the Houses together at an earlier period. George the Third died at Windsor Castle on the evening of the 29th of January. Six days before the death of the king, his fourth son, the duke of Kent, expired at Weymouth. This was a sudden event. The father had for nine years been secluded from the world, a sufferer under the most fearful infirmities. He lived on to his eighty-second year. The son, of robust constitution, had braved, in his habit of regular exercise, the pelting rain of a wintry morning; on his return from his walk, had remained in his wet boots; was attacked by feverish symptoms, and died in three days. The duke of Kent's infant daughter was then eight months old. The Prince of Wales and the duke of York had no child to succeed. To the duke of Clarence had been born a daughter on the 27th of March, but the infant had died on the day of its birth. It seemed probable that Alexandrina Victoria might wear the crown; and on this probability those who knew the admirable qualities of the duchess of Kent felt hopeful and confident that the nurture of the royal child would fit her for her high destiny.

The last night of the Regency passed into the first morning of the reign of George the Fourth, as an event that would be scarcely marked as an epoch in English history. With one exception, that of the position of the Queen, it would be productive of no political vicissitudes; it would excite no hopes and no fears in the public mind. After a formal meeting, there would be a new parliament; and the statutes of the existing parliament would have a new title-page. Few then living would remember the very different feelings with which the transition from George the Second to George the

\* "Diary of Lord Colchester," vol. iii. p. 107.

† "Memoir of Sydney Smith," p. 185.



Third was regarded. But the young as well as the old would be impressed with the fact that there had been only one king of Great Britain and Ireland during sixty years. The slightest historical knowledge would attest that these sixty years would be for ever memorable as an era of vast change and tremendous struggle, in which all that constituted the greatness and glory of our country might have been overwhelmed if the nation had not been heart-whole. The old king who was gone had plunged the country into difficulty and danger by his unyielding will at one period; but he had well sustained the national spirit by the same quality of mind during another crisis of greater peril. He had passed away, and his people looked back with reverence upon his private virtues, and were willing to forget his kingly faults.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

English Literature in the three latter decades of the reign of George III.—The Poets: Cowper.—Crabbe.—Burns.—Darwin.—Wordsworth.—Southey.—Coleridge.—Scott.—Byron.—Shelley.—Keats.—Narrative character of Poetry.—Campbell.—Rogers.—Leigh Hunt.—Moore.—Crabbe's latter delineations of manners.—More evangelical spirit in the body of the people.—Theological Literature.—Writers for the Stage.—The Novelists.—Godwin.—Holcroft.—Dr. Moore.—Burney.—Scott; the Waverley Novels.—The Edinburgh Review.—The Quarterly Review.—Blackwood's Magazine.—Essayists.—Wilson.—Lamb.—Hazlitt.—Leigh Hunt.—De Quincey.—Political Economists.—Scientific Discovery.—Herschel.—Davy.—Dalton.—Wollaston.—Travellers.—Two great mechanical inventions of the Steam-boat and the Printing Machine.—Chronological Table of British Writers.

THE termination of a reign, even under the circumstances which rendered the change of sovereignty from George the Third to George the Fourth merely nominal, nevertheless offers a fit resting place, at which we may pause in the narrative of public events, and look back upon matters which belong as essentially to the life of a people as their political condition.

The great outburst of the French Revolution has always been associated with the Literature which preceded it. This Literature, like that of every other period in which Literature has a marked distinctive character, was the reflection of the thoughts that were seething in the minds of men. It took the form of a fanatical and intolerant irreligion. It gave expression to the belief that existing principles and forms of government were ill-adapted to promote the welfare of the governed, and that worn-out institutions must be replaced by others endowed with a new vitality. The whole spirit of political opposition excited by the corruption of the government, not being able to find a vent in public affairs, had taken refuge in Literature. As irreligion in France had become a general passion, the writers, one and all, stimulated the prevailing unbelief in Christianity, under the false conviction that political society and religious society were regulated by analogous laws.\* The revolutionary doctrines thus propagated by the most subtle and the most eloquent of writers very largely influenced, if they did not produce, the great convulsion upon which Europe looked with fear and wonder.

\* See De Tocqueville, "Society in France before the Revolution," chap. xiv.