

## PERIOD THE SECOND:

From the Accession of GEORGE the First, to the Commencement  
of the South Sea Scheme:

1714—1720.

## CHAPTER THE NINTH.

*General State of the European Powers at the Death of Queen Anne, with respect to their Inclination or Capacity to promote or obstruct the Accession of George the First.—State of Great Britain.—Character of George the First—not calculated to promote his Cause.*

NO prince ever ascended a throne under more critical circumstances, and with less appearance of a quiet reign, than George the First; whether we consider the state of the European powers, the situation of parties in Great Britain, or his own character.

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Most of the European powers were at this critical juncture, from motives of prejudice, alliance, or personal dislike, averse to the interests of the elector of Hanover; and those who had not taken a decided part against him, with the exception of Prussia and Holland alone, were indifferent, or incapable of shewing their friendship.

State of  
Europe.

Although Louis the Fourteenth had guaranteed, at the peace of Utrecht, the right of the house of Hanover to succeed to the crown of Great Britain, and on the demise of Anne had acknowledged George the First, yet it was well known that his attachment to the Roman Catholic religion, his jealousy of England, and a spirit of magnanimity which he greatly affected, would lead him to assist, if possible, the unfortunate prince, whom he had once publicly received as the lawful successor of James the Second. Though too much exhausted by the late war, to follow his inclinations by any active interference, he connived at the preparations making by

France.

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the Pretender within his dominions; and should any domestic insurrections take place, so as to give hopes of success, he was ready to pour in the whole force of France to promote a restoration.

Spain.

Spain, at this period, was little more than a province of France, and her sovereign Philip the Fifth acted in perfect subordination to the will of his grandfather Louis the Fourteenth, to whose assistance he was principally indebted for the crown. He nourished a violent antipathy to the elector of Hanover, and though prudence and necessity induced him to acknowledge him king of Great Britain, yet his principles and wishes inclined him to favour the Stuarts.

Portugal.

John the Fifth reigned in Portugal, a prince who possessed greater talents and activity than any of the sovereigns of the line of Braganza. But he was already involved in a war with Spain, and though he had some confidence in the promises of assistance from George, yet he depended more on the mediation of France, and was, of course, liable to be biassed by the cabinet of Versailles.

The Emperor.

The emperor Charles the Sixth, the head of the house of Austria, disappointed as well as incensed at the manner in which the peace of Utrecht had been concluded, maintained a gloomy reserve with respect to the affairs of England, and might fairly be supposed rather inimical than otherwise to the interests of George, whose growing influence in Germany, he watched with a jealous circumspection. He well knew that the party in England, which favoured the accession of the house of Brunswick, was extremely weak, and believed that the Elector himself was indifferent to his elevation, and on these accounts he was unwilling to offend his competitor by too great an opposition to his interest\*. In consequence of these motives, he refused †, at the peace at Rastadt, to guaranty the succession of the family of George the First to the crown of Great Britain.

Prussia.

The most powerful among the German princes was Frederic William king of Prussia, who was included in the entail of the act of settlement, and who had espoused Sophia Dorothea, the daughter of George the First. Upon the first news of Anne's illness, he repaired to Hanover, and assured his father-in-law, the elector, that he would assist him with all his forces to maintain his title to the British throne. But the Prussian monarch had not yet established, on a firm basis, his great system of military tactics, and his whole force could only tend to preserve the electorate of Hanover, but could

\* Macpherson's State Papers, vol. 2. p. 638.

† Lord Townshend to Count Stahrenberg Goerde, October 24, 1725.

not afford any effectual assistance to the king of Great Britain in resisting external enemies, or curbing internal opposition.

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Holland.

The United Provinces, enfeebled by exertions above their strength, bending under a vast load of debt, considering themselves shamefully deserted by England, and unwilling to contract new engagements which might again expose them to fresh dangers and new debts, yet were the only state who acted with sincerity and spirit. Conscious that the restoration of the Pretender would be followed by a strict union between France and England, which might prove destructive to their interests, they promoted, to the utmost of their power, the accession of George the First, and received him, as he passed through their country to take possession of his throne, with every demonstration of respect and affection.

Russia was just emerging from Asiatic indolence and barbarity, and rising into importance under the amazing efforts of Peter the Great, who already entertained those jealousies against George the First, which afterwards nearly broke out into open hostilities. But at present he was engaged in a war with Sweden and Turkey; and was not in a situation either to obstruct or assist the accession.

Russia.

Sweden, involved in a destructive war with Russia, Denmark, and Poland, in which she had lost her fairest provinces, and seen her veteran soldiers either exterminated or taken prisoners, was no longer in that proud situation which enabled her to give law to the north. Irritated against George the First for the claims which he had begun to make on Bremen and Verden, Charles the Twelfth would have opposed his accession, if his circumstances and situation had permitted. But he was at this critical moment resident in Turkey, uselessly displaying those instances of romantic bravery and inflexible obstinacy, which characterised rather the leader of a savage horde of Tartars, than a sovereign of a great and civilized people.

Sweden.

Denmark, under the wise administration of Frederic the Fourth, was just beginning to recover from the deep wounds inflicted by a long war with Sweden, which still continued; her commerce languishing, and the resources of the state almost exhausted. The king might consider the accession of his ally, who had long aspired to share the spoils of Sweden, a fortunate occurrence. But Denmark was more likely to derive assistance from George, than George to receive any effectual succour from Denmark. Frederic was at the best but a passive friend, and only in a situation to defend his own territories and conquests, and not to act offensively in his favour.

Denmark.

Poland, under the feeble domination of an elective monarch, was declining fast in the political scale of Europe. Augustus the Second was almost a cypher, totally governed by Peter the Great, to whom he owed his re-establishment,

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Italy.

The Pope.

blishment, and in no respect sufficiently considerable to affect the succession in England.

The small sovereignties, and petty republics of Italy, were of little consideration.

The Pope, no longer a great temporal prince, took no active share in the general affairs of Europe. Innocent the Thirteenth, however inclined to favour the Pretender, possessed neither influence or strength sufficient to obstruct the succession of the Protestant line; he could only offer an asylum to a prince, whose father had sacrificed his crown to his religion; and who, after being driven from place to place as an outcast from society, thought himself fortunate in being permitted to hide his proscribed head within the capital of the ecclesiastical dominions.

Savoy and  
Piedmont.

Savoy and Piedmont, from their critical situation between France and the Milanese, and from the transcendent talents and military skill of several sovereigns, particularly Emanuel Philibert, and Charles Emanuel the First, had risen from a petty principality into consequence. Victor Amadeus, the reigning prince, no less ambitious and enterprising than his great predecessors, had followed their policy, in telling himself to those who bid the highest for his assistance and alliance, and in making gradually small acquisitions, which increased his strength, without giving umbrage to his neighbours, acting in conformity to a proverb, which he is said to have applied to the Milanese: "I must acquire the Milanese province by province, as I eat the leaves of an artichoke."

Of all the European sovereigns who had acceded to the grand alliance, Victor Amadeus alone had reason to be contented with the measures of the British cabinet. Anne had zealously exerted herself in his favour, and obtained for him, at the peace of Utrecht, the kingdom of Sicily; that part of the duchies of Montferrat and Milan, by the cession of which Leopold had detached him from France, and the guaranty of the succession to the crown of Spain, on the failure of the male line of Philip the Fifth. Yet these important advantages had not satisfied the aspiring views of Victor Amadeus. His consort, Anna Maria, grand-daughter of Charles the First of England, and the next in succession after the children of James the Second, had protested against the act of settlement, as contrary to her right by hereditary descent; and he considered the elector of Hanover as usurping a crown which belonged to his son. He, therefore, looked with an evil eye on the peaceful accession of George the First, and with that versatility of politics that marked his character, was already meditating a return to his old alliance with France, which he afterwards effected.

Such was the general situation of Europe at the death of queen Anne; George had more enemies than friends, and his sole dependance was placed on the spirit and vigour of his partisans in England; but the state of this country was not such as to augur success.

The reigns of his two immediate predecessors had been stormy, distracted with factions, and opened a gloomy prospect of a new reign, under a foreign sovereign. The contending political parties, exasperated by long opposition, and all the injuries attending alternate elevation and depression, expressed their rancour in mutual accusation and virulent reproach.

State of parties.

The Tories, who, though extremely powerful, both in respect of numbers and property, were censurable for their arrogance, in pronouncing themselves, exclusively, the landholders and proprietors of the kingdom, reviled their opponents as a faction which leaned for support on the enemies of the church and monarchy, and on the bank, and monied interest, which was as they said raised by usury, and founded on corruption.

The Whigs retaliated by charging the Tories, who formed the bulk of the nation, and included most of the country gentlemen and parochial clergy, with an attachment to the French, and hatred of the Dutch; with all the crimes with which they loaded the framers of the peace of Utrecht, and with favouring the interests of Louis the Fourteenth, because he supported their idol the Pretender. It is a great injustice however, to confound, as they did, the characters of the Tories and Jacobites; for although many of the Tories had, from motives of pique or disappointed ambition, as well as from affection, corresponded with the court of St. Germain, yet it did not follow that they all uniformly entertained the scheme of restoring the dethroned family: Yet the inculpation was not divested of all shew of truth; the general principles of the Tories tended strongly to enforce passive obedience and non-resistance, and as they disapproved the doctrines which occasioned the revolution, censured by implication the Protestant succession. The Jacobites too, disappointed in their towering hopes, favoured this popular misapprehension, by endeavouring to connect the cause and opinions of the Tories with their own. The strong feature of distinction between the Whigs and Tories was, that the Tories were willing to have assented to the resumption of the crown by the Pretender, if he would have embraced the Protestant persuasion; while the Whigs, armed with just diffidence and distrust, and considering the political principles in which he had been educated, no less hostile to their liberties, than his faith was to their religious persuasion, would admit of no compromise, nor on any terms agree to his restoration.

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The Tories were reinforced by the Jacobites, who possessed great credit abroad, and influence at home; who had acquired an unlimited ascendancy in the Clans of Scotland, full of resentment at the act of union, which destroyed their independence; and amongst the Papists of Ireland, who formed the bulk of that kingdom, and were attached to their cause by every tie of religious consideration. The Whigs, to balance the influence of the Jacobites and Catholics, had the assistance of the whole body of Dissenters, who, irritated at the severity of the schism bill, passed under the influence of the Tories, hoped, from a Protestant monarch, and a Whig administration, a repeal of that law.

The Whigs now raised themselves from the despondency into which they had been thrown by the measures of the four last years of the queen, and hailed the new reign as the commencement of their triumph. The Tories, divided and irresolute, concealed their chagrin in a shew of submission, while they meditated new manœuvres for the attainment of power; and the Jacobites, precipitated from the exultation of hope too fondly indulged, submitted for the present, but resolved to embrace the first opportunity of breaking into open rebellion.

Character of  
George the  
First.

George the First, who, by the death of his mother, the electress Sophia \*, succeeded to the throne of Great Britain, in virtue of the act of Settlement, was ill calculated by nature, disposition, and habit, to reconcile these jarring parties, and remove the unfavourable impressions, which it was natural for all people to entertain of a foreigner, destined to rule over them. He was already fifty-four years of age, and had been long habituated to a court of a different description from that of England, to manners and customs wholly repugnant to those of his new subjects. He was below the middle stature, and his person, though well proportioned, did not impress dignity or respect. His countenance was benign, but without much expression; and his address awkward. He was easy and familiar only in his hours of relaxation, and to those alone who formed his usual society; not fond of attracting notice, phlegmatic and grave in his public deportment, hating the splendour of majesty, shunning crowds, and fatigued even with the first acclamations of the multitude. This natural reserve was heightened by his ignorance of the language, of the first principles of the English constitution, and of the spirit and temper of the people. Without taste for the fine arts, except music, or the smallest inclination for polite literature, men of talents had no reason

\* Sophia, grand-daughter of James the First, Electress of Hanover, died the 8th of June, 1714, only two months before queen Anne, in the 84th year of her age.

to expect from his influence, that patronage which had attended them in the preceding reign.

It was currently reported that measures were preparing to evade the laws which excluded foreigners from honours and employments. The example of William was not forgotten, who by his largesses to Bentinck, Zulestein, and Keppel, had given so much umbrage, and George had several mistresses, of whom two the most favoured were expected to accompany him to England, with a numerous train of Hanoverian followers, eager to share the spoils of the *promised land*; to set up a court within a court, and an interest opposite to the true interest of England. It was also maliciously circulated, that he was \* indifferent to his own succession, and scarcely willing to stretch out a hand to grasp the crown within his reach; a report which materially lessened his influence in foreign courts, and tended to produce reciprocal indifference in the English. But he had excellent qualities for a sovereign, plainness of manners, simplicity of character, and benignity of temper; great application to business, extreme exactness in distributing his time, the strictest œconomy in regulating his revenue; and, notwithstanding his military skill and tried valour, a love of peace; virtues, however, which required time before they were appreciated, and not of that specious cast to captivate the multitude, or to raise the tide of popularity.

From this representation, it appears that few circumstances concurred to favour his quiet accession; and yet no son ever succeeded his father on the throne, after an uninterrupted succession of a long line of ancestors, with greater tranquillity than George the First. This success was principally owing to the abilities, prudence, activity, and foresight of the great Whigs, and to the precautions which they had always taken, and now took, to promote the succession in the Protestant line, with whom the Hanoverian agents in London concerted their mode of conduct, and to whom the elector of Hanover, from the first news he received of the queen's death, wholly resigned himself and his cause.

\* Macpherson, vol. 2. p. 638.

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## CHAPTER THE TENTH:

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*Proceedings in Parliament on the Death of Queen Anne.*—*Accession of George the First.*—*Transactions at Hanover.*—*Artful Policy of the King, in his Conduct to the Two Parties.*—*His Arrival in England.*—*Formation of a Whig Ministry.*—*Walpole Paymaster of the Forces.*—*Inveteracy of Parties.*

Proceedings  
on the death  
of the queen.

THE queen had no sooner expired, than the great officers of the realm, in whom the regency bill had vested the executive power, together with certain peers, appointed by the elector of Hanover, in three instruments written by himself, took upon themselves, as lords justices, the administration of affairs till the arrival of the new sovereign, and summoned the privy council.

Proclamation  
of king  
George.

George was proclaimed king, with the usual solemnities, in the cities of London and Westminster; no disorder was committed, or opposition made, and the earl of Dorset was dispatched to carry to Hanover the news of his inauguration, and to attend him to England. The proclamation took place with equal tranquillity at Edinburgh and Dublin.

August 1.  
Meeting of  
Parliament.

On the Sunday, when the queen died, the parliament met pursuant to the act which regulated the succession. Sir Thomas Hanmer, the speaker, being absent, Bromley, secretary of state, moved that the house should adjourn to Wednesday; but sir Richard Onslow opposing this motion, from the consideration that time was too precious to be lost at so critical a juncture, proposed, that the house should adjourn only to the following morning, which was carried. The three succeeding days being occupied in taking the oaths, on the 5th the lords justices came to the house of peers, and the chancellor, in their name, made a speech, declaring that they had, in virtue of the act of settlement, and in conjunction with the privy council, proclaimed the elector of Hanover king; and as several branches of the public revenue had expired by the demise of the queen, recommended the house of commons to make such provisions as were requisite to support the dignity and honour of the crown \*.

Both houses unanimously agreed to addresses of condolence for the death of queen Anne, and of congratulation on the accession of the king; and

\* Journals.

When,

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Walpole supports the motion for an address.

when, in the house of commons, the secretary of state, in moving the address, expatiated on the great loss which the nation had sustained, Walpole seconded the motion, but proposed "to add something more substantial than words, by giving assurances of making good all parliamentary funds;" and Onslow, member for Surry, observed, that the force of the address ought to consist, not in condolence only, but congratulations, and in assuring the king of their firm resolution to support his undoubted title to the crown, and to maintain the public credit. The Whigs acted with extraordinary prudence at this crisis: For when the renewal of the civil list was brought into the lower house, the Tories, under pretence of extraordinary zeal for the new government, proposed one million, which was £. 300,000 more than the revenue of the late queen. But the king's friends, apprehensive that the Tories acted insidiously, either with a view to conciliate favour, or for the purpose of reproaching him afterwards, as oppressing the nation by a higher revenue than his predecessor had enjoyed, did not second the motion, and it was dropped. A bill passed, fixing the same sum which had been granted in the last reign, with two additional clauses, moved by Horace Walpole, for the payment of arrears due to the troops of Hanover, and for a reward of £. 100,000, from the treasury, to any person apprehending the Pretender, if he should attempt to land in any part of the British dominions.

The king's answer to the addresses.

The king having returned an answer to the addresses, the lords justices came again to the house of peers on the 23d of August, and the chancellor intimated his majesty's great satisfaction at the loyalty and affection which his subjects had displayed: other loyal addresses were made in reply; the royal assent was given by the lords justices to the money bills, and parliament prorogued to the 23d of September; and thus ended a session, which was conducted with a degree of tranquillity and unanimity long unknown to their proceedings, and seemed to give a happy omen of a quiet and prosperous reign\*.

Transactions at Hanover.

During these transactions, the eyes of Europe and the expectations of England were naturally directed to Hanover. On the 26th of July, the earl of Clarendon, a zealous Tory, who was appointed envoy extraordinary from the queen, had arrived in that capital; but it was not till the 4th of August that he received his first audience at the palace of Herenhausen. At this interview the elector affected to repose the highest confidence in the promises of the queen, expressed a sense of the obligations which his family owed to her, and

\* Journals—Political State of Great Britain.—Chandler.—Tindal.

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professed himself unacquainted with the demand made by the electress, of the writ for calling his son to the house of peers\*. Craggs, who had been sent with an account of the queen's dangerous illness, arrived there on the 27th, and instantly went to Herenhausen with the letter from the privy council; and on the same night three † other expresses came over, two to the king, and one to Clarendon, with the news of the queen's death. On the receipt of this intelligence, the king summoned his council; and baron Polnitz, who was at Hanover, adds, "many people were pleased to say, that the elector hesitated whether he should accept of the august dignity; but for my part, I fancy that the voyage to England was more the subject of the council's deliberation, than the question whether the crown should be accepted!"

When the council was over, he was complimented on his accession; and gave orders to make preparations for his departure, which he judiciously delayed, that he might obtain from England such information as would assist him in the difficult task of forming a new administration, which he managed with great prudence and dexterity.

Prudent conduct of the king.

George had already conducted himself with so much address, that Clarendon does not appear to have entertained the smallest suspicion of any disinclination to the Tories; and Bernsdorf and Goertz, his two principal ministers at Hanover, corresponded respectively with each party. Bernsdorf espoused the Whigs, Goertz the Tories, so that each party entertained hopes of being called into office. The expectations of the Tories were still farther raised by the conduct of Halifax, who, disappointed of the office of lord high treasurer, by the influence of Townshend, proposed the formation of a motley ministry, recommending, among other Tories, Bromley to be chancellor of the exchequer, and Sir Thomas Hanmer one of the tellers. The hope that the king would accede to this, or some other arrangement, and their "dependance on real credit and substantial power under the new government ||," kept the Tories in suspense, and prevented their opposing his establishment. Yet, though the king did not seem averse to their cause, he appears at that very time to have formed, with the advice of Bothmar, his agent in London, an administration entirely of Whigs, but of this he gave no public indication till after his arrival at the Hague, which occasioned a report, that he was not before decided from which party he should select a cabinet. At the Hague, the ascendancy of the Whigs was manifest, by the publication of the appointment of

\* Correspondence, period 2d. Clarendon's Letter to Bromley—August 7th.

† Tindal, v. 18, p. 388.

‡ Memoirs of Polnitz: Article Hanover.

|| Bolingbroke's Letter to Sir William Wyndham.

Townshend

Townshend to be secretary of state, with the power of nominating his colleague. In fact, Horace Walpole \*, the brother in law and confidential secretary of lord Townshend, by whose recommendation Stanhope was afterwards associated with Townshend as secretary, positively denies that it was ever the king's intention to form a Tory administration.

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The most agreeable accounts being transmitted by Bothmar, that things wore a favourable appearance, the king continued a fortnight at the Hague, receiving the affectionate congratulations of the states, and the compliments of the foreign ministers, and settling with the Whigs the mode of his future conduct, and the members of the new administration to be appointed on his arrival in England.

At six in the afternoon, on the 18th of September, amidst a large concourse of nobility and gentry, George the First landed at Greenwich. He particularly distinguished the Whig lords, did not pay the smallest attention to Ormond and Harcourt, and only slightly noticed Oxford, who was on the following morning admitted to kiss his hand.

Arrival of  
the king.

The appointment of the new administration had been already announced by previous arrangements. The lords of the regency declared Addison their secretary, and ordered all dispatches to be forwarded to him; to the great mortification of Bolingbroke, who was obliged to stand at the door of the council with his papers, without obtaining admittance. On the 28th of August, an express had arrived from Hanover, bearing orders from the king for removing Bolingbroke from his office of secretary of state; the dismissal was attended with evident marks of displeasure from the lords of the regency, Shrewsbury, Somerset, and Cowper taking the seals, and locking the doors of his office; and on the 17th of September, before the king's arrival, Townshend was sworn principal secretary of state in his place. Stanhope was appointed the other secretary; Cowper, lord chancellor; Marlborough, commander in chief; Wharton, privy seal; Sunderland, lord lieutenant of Ireland; Halifax, first lord commissioner of the treasury; Devonshire, lord steward of the household; Orford, first lord commissioner of the admiralty; Somerset, master of the horse; Walpole, paymaster of the forces, and many of his friends provided for in subordinate offices. The principal employments were filled with Whigs; Shrewsbury, who had been the ostensible means of defeating the schemes of Bolingbroke, having resigned the high trusts of lord treasurer, and lord lieutenant of Ireland, was constituted groom of the stole, and the only Tory who was admitted into a high department,

New mini-  
stry.

\* Letter to Etouff, September 21, 1752. Correspondence, Period II.

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and treated with any degree of confidence, was Nottingham, who was declared president of the council. A new privy council was appointed, and a cabinet formed, consisting principally of Marlborough, Nottingham, Sunderland, Halifax, Townshend, Cowper, Stanhope, and Somers, who, on account of his increasing infirmities, was incapable of filling any active department.

The king, or rather Townshend and Walpole, to whom the formation of the new ministry was principally attributed, have been severely censured for excluding the Tories, and confining all places of trust and confidence exclusively to the Whigs, thus making the monarch the leader of a party, instead of sovereign of his people at large.

Inveteracy of  
parties.

It may not be improper to remark, that in treating of past events, writers are too apt to form a judgment of things according to principles of theoretical justice or fancied perfection, without considering the temper of the times, or making sufficient allowance for the powerful operation of opinions and prejudices. When we consult contemporary accounts, we find that so great was the inveteracy which subsisted between the Whigs and Tories, that neither would have been content with less than the whole power; and such was the temper of the nation at the time of the king's accession, and the animosity derived from the clash of civil and religious opinions, that it would have been impracticable to form a stable coalition between the two parties. In fact, the scheme of uniting the Whigs and Tories was incompatible; for even so late as 1742, when Pulteney attempted to form his new administration on an extended and liberal principle, he would not venture to introduce many Tories; he declared that the basis of the ministry must be a Whig trunk engrafted with Tory branches; and that gradually the grafts would become more and more numerous and thriving. Nor was it till 1744, when the junction ludicrously called the Broad Bottom was arranged, that the great bodies of Whigs and Tories could be brought heartily to coalesce.

## CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH;

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*Rise and Character of Lord Townshend.—Intimacy with Walpole.—Meeting of the new Parliament.—Walpole takes the Lead.—Draws up the Report of the secret Committee.—Manages the Impeachment of Bolingbroke—Ormond and Oxford.—Motives for that Conduct.—Rebellion.—His Activity and Services.—Appointed First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer.—Proceedings in Parliament.—Trial and Execution of the Rebels.*

CHARLES Viscount Townshend, who now took the lead in the administration, was eldest son of Sir Horatio Townshend, who was so highly instrumental in forwarding the restoration of Charles the Second, that in 1682 he was created a peer. Charles took his seat in the house of peers in 1696, and being of a Tory family, attached himself so strongly to that party, that he signed the protest respecting the impeachment of the Whig lords. But his zeal for the Tories soon abated, and even took a contrary direction, to which the representations and conduct of his friend Walpole greatly contributed. He then attached himself to Somers, and acted so cordially with the Whigs, that when William formed a new administration, principally composed of that party, a rumour was confidentially circulated, that he was appointed privy seal \*. In 1706, he was nominated one of the commissioners for settling the union with Scotland; in 1707, captain of the yeomen of the queen's guard, and in 1709, accompanied the duke of Marlborough to Gertruydenberg, as joint plenipotentiary, to open a negotiation for peace with France; he was deputed in the same year ambassador extraordinary to the states general, and concluded with them the barrier treaty. Soon after the change of the Whig administration he resigned his embassy, was removed from his post of captain of the yeomen, and censured by the Tory house of commons for having signed that treaty. During the early part of the reign of queen Anne, on account of his youth, he had acted only a subordinate part, and was not considered as one of the great leaders of the Whig

Character of  
lord Townshend.

\* Letter from Henry Bland to Robert Walpole, February 3, 1701-2. Orford Papers.

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interest, but towards the close of that reign, his services and decisive conduct raised his consequence; and he gained great accession of character, with his party, on being prosecuted at the same time with the duke of Marlborough.

Though naturally of slow parts, he had acquired from long experience, the talent that rendered him an able man of business, which was the sole object of his ambition; he was rough in manners, impatient of contradiction, of a sanguine disposition, impetuous, and overbearing; though inelegant in language, and often perplexed in argument, yet he spoke sensibly, and with a thorough knowledge of his subject\*. He was generous, highly disinterested, of unblemished integrity, and unfulled honour: initiated in diplomatic transactions during the congress at Gertruydenberg and the Hague, he cherished too great an attachment to negotiation, and fond of visionary schemes, was too apt to propose bold and decisive measures, which the more temperate and pacific disposition of Walpole was continually employed in counteracting.

During the two months, which immediately preceded the queen's death, and the interval which ensued between that event and the arrival of the king, he seems to have secured and governed † Bothmar, and the other Hanoverian agents in England; to have supplanted Sunderland and Halifax, and to have obtained the entire confidence of the king, of which he had previously acquired a very distinguished share, by his great reputation for integrity and talents, by the recommendation of pensionary Heinsius, Slingelandt, and other leading men of the Dutch republic, and by his uniform adherence to the cause of the Protestant succession.

Walpole's intimacy with Townshend.

An early and intimate connection had been formed between Townshend and Walpole; they were distantly related, neighbours in the same county, and educated at the same school; they joined the same party, acted under the same leaders, underwent the same persecutions, and co-operated in the same opposition. The marriage which Townshend had contracted with Dorothy Walpole, in 1713, drew closer the bonds of amity, and added an union of blood to the connection of party. Walpole had performed too many essential services to the Hanover family, and was too able a speaker in the house of commons, not to occupy a distinguished situation at the accession of George the First, and his connection with Townshend facilitated his promotion. Soon after the landing of the king, he was appointed, as I have already mentioned, paymaster general of the forces, to which was added the

\* Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, vol. ii. p. 258.

† Macpherson's Papers, vol. 2.

# SIR ROBERT WALPOLE.

paymastership of Chelsea hospital; very lucrative employments, in which he considerably improved his fortune.

A dissolution taking place on the 5th of January, the new parliament met on the 17th of March, and a great majority were Whigs. The temper of the governing party, in regard to the prosecution of the Tories, and the resolution of calling the late ministry to account, evidently appeared from the proclamation for dissolving the parliament. The address of the lords contained expressions highly injurious to the queen's memory, and warmly condemned the peace, and measures of the late administration. But the address of the commons was still stronger. "The speaker having reported to the house the king's speech, Walpole expatiated upon the great happiness of the nation, by his majesty's reasonable accession to the crown; recapitulated the mismanagements of the four last years, and concluded with a motion for an address of thanks to the king, conformable to the several heads of the speech \*." The motion being carried with only one dissenting voice, ~~it~~ was drawn up by Walpole, and contained these strong expressions †: "It is with just resentment we observe, that the Pretender still resides in Lorrain, and that he has the presumption, by declarations from thence, to stir up your majesty's subjects to rebellion; but that which raises the utmost indignation of your commons is, that it appears therein, that his hopes were built upon the measures that had been taken for some time past in Great Britain. It shall be our business to trace out those measures whereon he placed his hopes, and to bring the authors of them to condign punishment." Part of this address being warmly opposed by the Tory members, on the grounds of its being a reflection on the late queen: Walpole observed, ‡ "that nothing was farther from their intentions, than to asperse the late queen; that they rather designed to vindicate her memory, by exposing and punishing those evil counsellors, who had thrown on that good, pious, and well-meaning princess, all the blame and odium of their counsels." He added, "that they must distinguish between censuring ministers, and condemning the peace in general, and condemning particular persons. That they might, in equity and justice, do the first, because the whole nation was already sensible that their honour and true interest had been sacrificed by the late peace; that in due time they would call them to account, who made and advised such a peace; but God forbid they should ever condemn any person unheard."

Walpole shewed, in a subsequent debate, his judgment no less than his zeal. For when Sir William Wyndham endeavoured to prove that the

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1715.  
New parliament.

Moves an address, reflecting on the measures of the late queen.

Conduct towards Sir William Wyndham

\* Journals.  
VOL. I.

† Chandler.  
K

‡ Chandler.  
king

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king's proclamation was of dangerous consequences to the very being of parliament, and being called upon to explain himself, but refusing, many members exclaimed, "To the Tower! To the Tower!" Walpole, foreseeing that he would acquire popularity, should that measure be adopted, observed, "I am not for gratifying the desire which the member, who occasions this great debate, shews of being sent to the Tower; it would make him too considerable: but as he is a young man of good parts, who sets up for a warm champion of the late ministry, and one who was in all their secrets, I would wish him to be in the house when we inquire into the conduct of his friends, both that he may have an opportunity to defend them, and be a witness of the fairness with which we shall proceed against those gentlemen; and that it may not be said, that we take any advantage against them \*." It was principally owing to his influence, that although Sir William Wyndham continued to refuse making any explanation, he was only ordered to be reprimanded by the speaker.

Prosecution  
of the ex-  
ministers.

The threats of the address, which implied a resolution of prosecuting the late ministers, were soon carried into execution. The papers of Bolingbroke, Strafford, and Prior, having been seized and examined, secretary Stanhope presented to the house of commons, those which related to the negotiations for peace and commerce; and a committee of secrecy, consisting of twenty-one members, being appointed to examine if there was any just cause of impeachment, Walpole was nominated chairman, and took the lead in the whole business. He drew up the masterly report, which is remarkable for perspicuity of style, method of arrangement, and for digesting, in so short a compass, such a mass of materials. William Shippen having triumphantly insinuated, that notwithstanding the clamour which had been raised against the late ministry, the secret committee would not be able to bring any proofs of their guilt, Walpole indignantly, though intemperately observed, that he wanted words to express the villany of the late Frenchified ministry; and it was judged proper to hasten the report. Accordingly, on the 9th of June, only two months after the house had ordered the committee to reduce the papers into order, Walpole read the report, which he continued without interruption five hours.

His report as  
chairman of  
the com-  
mittee of se-  
crecy.

It was divided into two parts. The first stated the clandestine negotiations with Mesnager, the French plenipotentiary, which produced two sets of preliminary articles; the one private and special, for Great Britain only, the other general, for all her allies: the deceitful offers of the French

\* Political State of Great Britain.—Chandler.

plenipo-

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plenipotentiaries at Utrecht, with the connivances of the ministry; the negotiation in regard to the renunciation of the Spanish monarchy; the suspension of arms; the seizure of Ghent and Bruges by the duke of Ormond, and his acting in concert with the French general; the journey of Bolingbroke to France, for arranging a separate peace; the negotiations of Shrewsbury and Prior, and the precipitate conclusion of the treaty of Utrecht, with a view of criminating the ministers for having deserted their allies, and betrayed the interests and honour of their country. The second part stated their secret transactions with the Pretender; a letter from Oxford to the queen, containing a brief account of public affairs from August 6, 1710, to June 8, 1714; the desertion of the Catalans, and some other papers of less importance\*.

Impeachment of Bolingbroke, Oxford, and Strafford.

On the conclusion of the report, Sir Thomas Hanmer moved, that the consideration should be adjourned to the 21st; and being seconded by the friends of the late administration, Walpole observed, "he could not but wonder, that those gentlemen who shewed so much impatience to have the report laid before the house, should now press for adjourning the consideration of it. That as for the committee of secrecy, as they had not yet gone through all the branches of their inquiry, he could have wished some longer time had been allowed to peruse and digest several important papers. That for this purpose, they would have deferred three weeks or a month, the laying their report before the house; but that some gentlemen having reflected on the pretended slowness of the committee, since the said report was now before them, they must e'en go through with it †." The motion of Sir Thomas Hanmer being negatived, Walpole impeached Bolingbroke of high treason, and other crimes and misdemeanors; and the question being carried with only a slight opposition of two members, Lord Coningsby stood up and said, "The worthy chairman of the committee has impeached the hand, but I impeach the head; he has impeached the clerk, I impeach the master;" and immediately impeached Robert earl of Oxford and Mortimer, of high treason. On the 21st of June, Stanhope also impeached Strafford of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Walpole draws up the articles of impeachment.

The current of opinion ran so violently against the late administration, that these prosecutions were carried without much difficulty, and with little opposition. The drawing up of the articles of impeachment was entrusted to the committee of secrecy, and consequently to Walpole, who, in conjunction with Stanhope, now principally directed the house of commons. The arti-

\* Reports of the secret committee, in the journals. Abstract of the secret committee, vol. 1. p. 164 to 269.—Tindal, vol. 13. p. 246 to 288.  
† Chandler.—Historical Register, v. 1. p. 276.

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Conduct of  
the parties  
accused.  
Oxford's de-  
fence.  
Walpole's re-  
plication.  
Observations  
on these pro-  
secutions.

cles of impeachment were severally carried up to the house of lords. Ormond and Bolingbroke having absconded, were attainted. Oxford acted a more manly part, supported his prosecution, and defended his conduct with dignity and moderation, and made a calm and firm answer to the accusation of the commons. His defence being transmitted by the lords, was read in the lower house, where Walpole animadverted on it with great acrimony, and drew up a replication.

The prosecution of the leaders of the late administration has been constantly, and in some degree justly, held up by the Tory historians as a striking proof of the spirit of party-resentment and party-vengeance, and no less constantly defended by the Whigs. The argument, however, which Oxford advanced on his trial, which his partisans adopted in both houses, and which has been since urged in his justification, that he had acted only in obedience to the commands of the queen, was more specious than solid. If admitted in the utmost latitude, it would establish the position, that those who gave precipitous counsels to the sovereign, might shelter themselves under the sanction of those very commands which they had dictated. If the voice of the sovereign is sufficient to authorize the servants of the crown in execution of orders, however illegal, it follows then that the crown would be arbitrary; and as the king can do no wrong, no minister would be responsible for the abuse of the executive power. But there is another argument against the impeachment of the late ministers, far more convincing. It was forcibly urged by Sir William Wyndham, that the peace had been approved by two successive parliaments, and declared safe, advantageous, and honourable; should it be even allowed that the measures of the Tory administration were contrary to the honour and interests of the nation, yet with what pretence of justice could ministers be punished? our constitution knows no limits to the power of the king, lords, and commons assembled in parliament; and though a subsequent parliament may annul any laws which a former parliament had decreed, yet it cannot, and ought not to call any ministers to justice for measures which had been sanctioned by the three branches of the legislature. It is far from my intention or wish, to palliate the injustice, or to sanction the malignant spirit of party, yet I may be allowed to examine the principal motives which might have led men of such approved humanity as Townshend, Devonshire, Stanhope, and Walpole, to adopt these severe measures. The Whigs were firmly convinced, that the late queen desired to restore the Pretender, after her death; that Harley and Bolingbroke had, through the secret interest of the Pretender and his agents, obtained the dismissal of the Whig administration; that, with a view to remain in power, they found a peace with

with France to be essentially necessary; and that to obtain that peace, they had not scrupled to use the assistance of the court of St. Germain's, and the co-operation of the Jacobites in England; that they had opened secret negotiations with France, in contradiction to the leading principles of the grand alliance, and that, had not the death of the queen prevented their schemes, they would have set aside the act of settlement, and introduced a popish sovereign on the throne; and it must be confessed, that documents now become public, and then strongly suspected by the Whig leaders, place these facts in so clear a light, as to render them absolutely incontrovertible.

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The imprudent conduct of the Pretender increased the animosity of the Whigs, and hastened the prosecution of his supposed adherents. His manifesto, dated August 29, 1714, sent to some of the principal ministers, contained these remarkable expressions: "Upon the death of the princess our sister, of whose good intentions towards us, we could not for some time past well doubt; and this was the reason we then sat still, expecting the good effects thereof, which were unfortunately prevented by her deplorable death \*." Although from the very nature of the transaction, and the suppression of many papers, they could not procure such legal proof as would be admitted in a court of justice on the condemnation of a criminal, yet the collateral evidence was so convincing, as not to admit of the smallest doubt. It must, however, be confessed, that that part of the report which infers the intention of the late ministry to restore the Pretender, is extremely weak, founded only on vague conjecture and circumstantial evidence; they could not, therefore, venture to lay any great stress on such assertions, as proofs of high treason, but grounded their prosecution on the public events which related to the peace. Though animated by the powerful impressions of a high sense of national disgrace, the recollection of an escape from recent danger, and all the spirit and resentment of party, they confined their attacks to a few victims; they impeached only Oxford, Bolingbroke, and Ormond of high treason, and Strafford of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Imprudence  
of the Pre-  
tender.

As to Bolingbroke, when Walpole brought forward his impeachment, only one member spoke in his defence, and that member was a notorious Jacobite, and when his flight was reported to the house, the bill of attainder against him passed without a single dissenting voice.

Bolingbroke  
attainted.

But the situation and character of Ormond were far different. When Stanhope moved for the impeachment of Ormond, Hutcheson, member for Hastings, made a long speech in his behalf, and urged many palliating circumstances; and Sir Joseph Jekyll, whose principles and conduct had always

Ormond de-  
fended by his  
friends.

\* Tindal, vol. 18. p. 251.

proved

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proved him a sincere friend to the Protestant succession, spoke warmly on the same side. The debate continued above nine hours, and Ormond had so many friends, that his impeachment was carried only by a majority of forty-seven. The proceedings against Ormond would not, in all probability, have been conducted with much asperity, had he preserved the moderation, which, under his circumstances, would have been becoming; but, on the contrary, while his conduct was under inquiry before the secret committee, he lived in an unsuitable style of magnificence, affected to court popularity, and saw with complacency his name made the signal of tumult, and disloyal exclamation. Even after his impeachment, Devonshire had arranged for him a private interview with the king; but far from availing himself of this kindness, and contrary to the promise extorted from him by his Tory friends, he withdrew from the kingdom, and precluded the possibility of a return to his native country, by instantly entering into the service of the Pretender. Having once embraced that desperate measure, he was too honest and zealous to act like Bolingbroke, and obtain a pardon by sacrificing the interests of his new master, or by entering into a compromise with his prosecutors.

The Whigs  
censured for  
the prosecution  
of Oxford.

The warmest advocates for the Whigs must admit, that in the proceedings against the earl of Oxford, party resentment was too predominant. He certainly had, either from inclination, fear, policy, or pique, defeated all the attempts of the Pretender's friends, and had been one great cause of securing the quiet succession of the house of Hanover. On the accession of George the First, he had shewn such unequivocal proofs of his attachment and triumph\*, as disgusted his former friends, and there is not the least doubt that had the queen lived, Oxford would have joined the Whigs, and exerted himself in favour of the house of Hanover. But it is a justice due to Townshend and Walpole, to observe, that they strenuously insisted, Oxford should not be accused of high treason, but only tried for high crimes and misdemeanors†; and that they uniformly opposed his bill of attainder, which was no less warmly supported by Marlborough and his adherents. Oxford acted with great magnanimity during the whole course of his prosecution; and evinced a consciousness of his innocence of the charge of having promoted the succession of the Pretender, by abiding his trial.

Commence-  
ment of the  
Rebellion.

The multiplicity of business protracted the sitting of the parliament till the 21st of September. Before its prorogation, the tumults and riots which preceded the Rebellion had already begun. The earl of Mar set up

\* "The Dragon was thought to shew more joy in proclaiming the king, than was consistent with the obligations he had received from

him; and some of them threw halters in his coach." Charles Ford to Swift, August 5, 1714.

† Correspondence. Period II.

He was hissed all the way by the

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the standard of the Pretender in Scotland, under the name of James the Third. His party increased, and became formidable from the number of disaffected. In this crisis, the vigilance and activity of the ministers was aided by the zeal of parliament. The habeas corpus act was suspended. The earl of Jersey and lord Landsdowne were committed to the Tower; Sir William Wyndham, \* and other suspected persons of the house of commons, were apprehended †; large supplies were voted; a considerable body of men marched under the command of the duke of Argyle, and troops were obtained from Holland, by the representations of Horace Walpole, who was deputed to the Hague for that purpose. The reader will find, in the histories of the times, an account of the partial defeat of the Rebels under the earl of Mar at Dumblain, by the duke of Argyle, which effectually prevented their junction with those in the south; the total route of their force at Preston, by general Carpenter; the landing of the Pretender in Scotland; his short display of mock dignity at Perth; his flight from Scotland, and return to France, and the final suppression of the rebellion. To enter into the detail of these transactions, does not fall within the compass of the present work. It is sufficient for the author of these memoirs to observe, that vigour in counsels, exertion in parliament, readiness to forward every supply, to answer every occasion, and to facilitate the measures of government, increased the reputation of Walpole, and endeared him to his king and country.

Walpole's  
activity at  
this time.

‡ In consideration of his services and useful talents, he was, on the 11th of October 1715, appointed first lord commissioner of the treasury, and chancellor of the exchequer, vacant by the death of the earl of Halifax, and the removal of the earl of Carlisle, who had immediately succeeded Halifax. He was raised to this high station at a very critical juncture; a rebellion in

He is appointed first  
lord of the  
treasury, and  
chancellor of  
the exchequer.

\* The following anecdote, relating to the arrest of Sir William Wyndham, places Lord Townshend's firmness of character in a conspicuous point of view.—It was communicated to me by his grandson Lord Sydney. When the intelligence that Sir William Wyndham was concerned in a projected rising in favour of the Pretender, was laid before the cabinet, the duke of Somerset, anxious that his son-in-law, Sir William Wyndham, should not be taken into custody, offered to be responsible for him. The ministers were inclined to give way, for fear of offending a person of the duke's consequence, who, besides his situation of master of the horse, had great influence with the Whigs. The king

was present. The proofs against Sir William Wyndham were so strong, that Lord Townshend deemed it necessary that government should not appear afraid to arrest such an offender, let his rank or connexions be what they might, and moved accordingly to have him taken into custody. Near ten minutes passed in silence before any one ventured to agree with him; when at last, two or three rose at the same moment to second him, and the arrest was decreed. As the king retired into his closet, he took hold of Lord Townshend's hand, and said, "You have done me a great service to-day."

† See State Trials, vol. 1. and Hist. Register.

the

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Proceedings  
in parlia-  
ment.

the kingdom; a faction secretly aiding and abetting the Pretender; divisions in the cabinet, and a disaffected body among the Whigs, already preparing the schism which broke out in the ensuing year; and in the latter part of his life, he often adverted to the difficulty he now experienced in conciliating the discordant members of administration, and supporting the house of Brunswick on the throne.

The king's speech; the zealous addresses of congratulation made by both houses on the suppression of the rebellion; the impeachment and condemnation of the rebel lords, took up the principal attention of both houses, for a considerable time after the meeting of parliament, on the 14th of December; and the petitions in favour of the earls of Derwentwater, Nithisdale, and Kenmuir, were urged with such vehemence, and so warmly supported by several members in the house of commons, as irritated Walpole, and induced him to observe, "I am moved with indignation to see that there should be such unworthy members of this great body, who can, without blushing, open their mouths in favour of rebels and parricides, who, far from making the least advance towards deserving favour, by an ingenuous discovery of the bottom of the present horrid conspiracy, have rather aggravated their guilt, both by their sullen silence and prevaricating answers; the earl of Derwentwater," added he, "pretended, and affirmed, that he went unprepared, and was drawn unawares into this rebellion; yet to my knowledge, he had been tampering with several people, to persuade them to rise in favour of the Pretender, six months before he appeared in arms \*:" and with a view to prevent the house being troubled with any further petitions, which it was determined to reject, Walpole himself proposed an adjournment † to the 1st March, as it was known that their execution was to take place before that time: the motion met with so strong an opposition, that it was carried only by a majority of seven voices. But Walpole proved his indignation to originate in virtuous and disinterested motives, when he stated to the house, that he had been offered £. 60,000 ‡ to save the life of one single person (the earl of Derwentwater). He also spoke, as one of the managers for the commons, in the prosecution of the earl of Wintown, another of the rebel lords; and he seems in every instance to have urged the necessity of adopting severe measures in the present alarming crisis; a mode of conduct so opposite to the natural bias of his temper, which always leaned to the side of humanity, as proved his full conviction, that too much lenity shown to persons taken in flagrant rebellion, would at this period have proved dangerous to the state.

\* Oldmixon, p. 631.

† Political State of Great Britain, 1716.—

‡ Second letter to Robert Walpole, Esquire, 30. Chandler, Tindal.—Enough.

Much has been said of the severity shewn by government to the people who took up arms in favour of the Pretender; and from the accounts of the party writers, it might be supposed, that thousands and tens of thousands had fallen sacrifices to their mistaken principles; that no clemency was shewn to *any* of the rebels; no distinction made between the leaders and their deluded followers. But on a candid investigation of the fact, on the authority of the persons who have condemned these measures, the result will be, that *three* lords were beheaded on Tower-hill; that the judges having found many guilty of high treason in Lancashire, *two-and-twenty* were executed at Preston and Manchester; that of a great number found guilty at London, only *four* were hanged \*. Such were the lenient proceedings against the rebels, which writers, adopting a peevish expression of the great Lord Somers, have magnified into the proscriptions of Marius and Sylla; and fascinated by the metaphorical eloquence of Bolingbroke, have taken in its full latitude his malignant assertion, "That the violence of the Whigs dyed the royal ermines with blood †." In fact, no government can exist, if *all* rebels taken with arms in their hands are permitted to escape with impunity; and too great lenity under a new king, who was a foreigner, struggling against a competitor claiming the crown by hereditary right, and supported by all the Roman Catholics, and the principal Tories, would have been not only imprudent, but even inhuman; because it would have held up impunity to those who should raise the standard of insurrection in future. Nor did it ever happen, on the conclusion of a rebellion for a disputed succession, that so few sacrifices were made to the public security.

\* Smollet, Vol. 2. p. 311.

† Smollet.—Belsham's Memoirs, vol. 1. p. 113.

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## CHAPTER THE TWELFTH:

1716.

*Illness of Walpole.—Recovery.—Septennial Bill.—Impatience of the King to visit Hanover.—Repeal of the restraining Clause in the Act of Settlement.—Misunderstanding between the King and the Prince of Wales, who is appointed Guardian of the Realm.—Departure of the King for Hanover.*

Illness and  
recovery.

May 11th.

THE activity of Walpole's exertions at this important period, and the great corporeal and mental fatigue to which they subjected him, brought on a severe illness, which nearly hurried him to the grave. His recovery was at length effected, but its progress was so gradual, that he was, for a long time, incapacitated from attending to the business of the nation. His restoration to health was forwarded by a temporary retreat to his favourite residence at Chelsea, from which place, he writes to his brother, in these terms: "I have been here about ten days, and find so great a benefit from the air, that I gather strength daily, and hope as much time more will recover me from the lowest and weakest condition that ever poor mortal was alive in, and I shall be able to get to town and do business again." Congratulations on the recovery of a man, to whom the Protestant establishment owed so much, and who was the soul of his party, flowed in from all quarters. Numerous verses were made on the event, and Rowe, the great dramatic poet, did not disdain to write a ballad on the occasion \*.

Septennial  
bill.

During this interval, the septennial bill was brought into parliament. Although Walpole was not able to give this measure his support in the house of commons, yet, as it had been previously arranged with his concurrence, and as he also constantly opposed the repeal, it has always been justly considered an act of his administration.

This memorable bill, which is to be considered as the bulwark of our civil and religious liberties, because it effectually supported the house of Brunswick on the throne; was undoubtedly one of the most daring uses, or, ac-

\* See Collection of Whig Ballads, or Pills to purge State Melancholy, part 2.

ording

according to the representations of its opponents, abuses of parliamentary power that ever was committed since the revolution: for, it not only lengthened the duration of future parliaments, but the members who had been elected only for three years, prolonged, of their own authority, the term of their continuance for four years more. The great body of the Whigs, influenced by these considerations, were, at the first proposition, averse to the measure, and did not agree to give their assistance in support of it, till mature deliberation had convinced them of its necessity. During the debates which took place on this occasion, the arguments of opposition and defence, were not unequal to the importance and dignity of the subject. We, who live at this distance of time, without being heated by the warmth of party, without sufficiently considering the temper and state of the nation, and without weighing the peculiar circumstances which occasioned its introduction, must confess, that in theory, the arguments of those who opposed it, are the most specious and convincing; but if we recur to the events of the times, and the state of the country, we must applaud the wisdom of those who sacrificed speculation to practice. It is the remark of a judicious author, "That the act of septennial parliaments was passed, when the kingdom was threatened with an immediate invasion, when a rebellion had but just been quelled, and when the peace and safety of the nation depended on the use of this power by parliament. Such was the opinion of the people at that time, and the act met with general approbation, from the general conviction of its necessity \*."

That the necessity must have been great and evident, appears from the consideration, that it was supported by men of the first rank, independence, and probity in the kingdom; that in the house of lords, where it was proposed by the duke of Devonshire, there were only 36 voices against it, and that, on being sent to the house of commons, there was a majority of 264 against 121. But whatever opinion might be formed of the justice of the right exercised by parliament, in repealing the triennial bill and substituting septennial parliaments, yet it can scarcely be contested, that it has in effect been highly advantageous to the well-being of the legislature, and to the real interests of the nation. The speaker, Onslow, who was no ill judge of parliamentary proceedings, was frequently heard to declare †, That the passing of the septennial bill formed the era of the emancipation of the British house of commons from its former dependence on the crown and the house of lords. From that period it has risen in consequence and strength

\* Adams's Letter against Paine.

† Communicated by Sir George Colebrook.

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We who live to enjoy the benefits of an act, which has greatly contributed to set bounds to faction, which has relieved us from the mischievous effects of too frequent elections, and from the interference of foreign powers; which has given permanence and independence to our councils, and prevented those frequent changes of men and measures, which left us open to every fluctuation of public sentiment, to every impulse of craft and artifice, we ought not too severely to scrutinize the arguments which were used in support of a measure recommended by the necessity of the times, and which subsequent experience has demonstrated to be no less beneficial and prudent, than bold and decisive. The immediate effect is best ascertained by the unceasing clamors of a desperate faction, whose hopes were at once destroyed by a step which placed at a great distance the chance of influencing the public mind, and producing dangerous ferments by the accustomed means of popular delusion. History enables us to ascertain its more remote consequences; and whoever fairly considers the permanence of peace, the energy of war, and amelioration of jurisprudence which have resulted to the nation; the wisdom of counsel, boldness of eloquence, and increase of importance which have distinguished the commons, since the period of its formation, must acknowledge that many of the most inestimable blessings of our constitution are to be attributed to this measure, which originally appeared to invade its first principles. It is to be hoped, that there are few persons who would desire to replunge the nation into that feverish state which attends frequent elections in cities and counties, and to revive that perpetual enmity which must arise from the frequent agitation of contradictory interests, and the investigation of claims, which can hardly be once decided, before they are again contested.

Observation  
of lord Somers.

Although a question like this cannot be decided by the opinion of any individual, yet surely the judgment of lord Somers, the constant friend of liberty, and the oracle of the revolution, is intitled to some respect, and the time and manner of giving it, render it peculiarly interesting. While the bill was in agitation, Dr. Friend, the celebrated physician, called on lord Townshend, and informed him, that lord Somers was at that moment restored to the full possession of his faculties, by a fit of the gout, which suspended the effect of his paralytic complaint. Townshend immediately waited on Somers, who, as soon as he came into the room embraced him, and said, "I have just heard of the work in which you are engaged, and congratulate you upon it; I never approved the triennial bill, and always considered it in effect, the reverse of what it was intended. You have my hearty approbation in this business,

ness, and *I think it will be the greatest support possible to the liberty of the country* \*."

The impatience of the king to visit his German dominions now became so great, as totally to overcome every restraint of prudence, and suggestion of propriety, and imperiously to demand indulgence, though the unsettled state of the public mind, from the effect of rebellion, hardly yet intirely suppressed, and the prejudice excited by the new measures, both of legislation and prosecution, should have opposed insuperable obstacles to his desire. The ministry were considerably embarrassed on this occasion; and drew up a strong remonstrance, representing the inconveniences which would result from the projected journey. This remonstrance, however, not only failed of success, but so far exasperated the king, that he declared he would not endure a longer confinement in this kingdom. Under these circumstances, the ministry could not venture to make any further opposition. When the act was passed, which settled the succession on the house of Brunswick, it was accompanied with various restrictions, limiting the future sovereign in several instances. Some of these restrictions had been repealed during the reign of queen Anne. But the clause which restrained the king from going out of the kingdom, without consent of parliament, still subsisted. It must be allowed to have been a necessary limitation, and its continuance would have been highly beneficial to the true interests of England. For no circumstance more impeded public business, or more alienated the public mind, than the frequent visits which the two first sovereigns of the house of Brunswick made to the electorate of Hanover. This predilection to their native country, was in them both natural and excusable; yet, for the benefit of England, it ought to have been confined within due bounds, although it is not probable that the parliament would ever have withheld their consent, yet the necessity of obtaining that consent would doubtless have checked the too frequent repetition of the demand, and have prevented the absence of the sovereign in times of public emergency. But at the present juncture, it was considered more respectful to obtain a repeal, than to subject the sovereign to the necessity of obtaining a parliamentary consent, for which messages must have been sent to both houses, previous to each voyage. When the motion was made by Sir John Cope, to repeal the restricting clause, and seconded by Hampden, it passed unanimously, not a single member, amongst many who were dissatisfied with the succession of the Hanover line, venturing to make the slightest opposition to the repeal of a clause, which, however conformable to the hopes of the nation, could not but be considered as invidious and disgraceful to the new sovereign. The ministers were

Chapter 12.

1716.

The king resolves to go to Hanover.

Repeal of the restricting clause in the act of settlement.

\* Communicated by lord Sydney, and Charles Townshend, esquire, who frequently heard this anecdote related by their father, the late honourable Thomas Townshend, son of lord Townshend.

often.

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1714 to 1720.

often obliged to make the most pressing remonstrances, as well to prevent the absence of the king, as to hasten his return; these remonstrances were often ineffectual, but always offensive; and Walpole, during the course of his administration, lamented an evil which he had in vain attempted to remedy, and which nothing but the continuance of the restraining clause, or an absolute cession of the electorate, could have prevented. Some authors, in treating of these long and frequent absences, have thrown out reproachful suggestions on the framers of the act of settlement, for not insisting that a foreign prince should resign his continental dominions before he assumed the possession of the crown. Such a provision did not escape the sagacity of the legislators of the day, and would, most probably, have been carried into effect, but for the obvious certainty that no prince would renounce the quiet possession of his continental dominions, however small, to acquire the brilliant, but precarious dignity of sovereign of a large kingdom, exposed to the evils of a powerful faction, and the dangers of a disputed succession. These considerations deterred the framers of the bill from proposing a measure, which would infallibly have frustrated all their other efforts for the preservation of our civil and religious liberties.

The king's  
jealousy of  
the prince of  
Wales.

This difficult point being adjusted, another question, of equal delicacy, occurred, which related to the method of carrying on the government during the king's absence. The most obvious and natural method was the appointment of the prince of Wales to the regency; but this measure was obstructed by an unfortunate jealousy which the king entertained of his son.

This misunderstanding had already commenced at Hanover, before the death of Queen Anne. Sophia had often behaved to George the First with distance and reserve, and did not always consult him in regard to the affairs of England. She was extremely fond of her grandson, and in several instances, of great importance, had acted in concurrence with him alone, and particularly, the demand of the writ for him to sit in the house of peers, as duke of Cambridge, was made without the knowledge \*, or against the inclination of George the First. This preference of her grandson, naturally created a coldness between the father and son, which was afterwards increased by the artful proposal of the Tories, in voting the civil list, that a separate revenue of £. 100,000 per annum should be settled on the prince of Wales. The motion was negatived by the influence of the Whigs †. The eagerness which the prince expressed to obtain the title and office of regent,

\* Communicated by lady Suffolk, who was then at Hanover, to the late earl of Or-

ford. See also Chap. 8. and Clarendon's Letter to Secretary Bromley. Correspondence, period I.

† Chandler.

augmented the disgust of the king. Conscious that he was infligated in most of his proceedings by the duke of Argyle, his groom of the stole, whose fascinating manners and specious address had gained a great ascendancy over the prince, he insisted on the dismissal of the duke. Under these impressions, the king was unwilling to entrust him with the government, without joining other persons in the commission, and without limiting his authority by the most rigorous restrictions. With a view of forming a regency under those conditions, he submitted his wishes, through the channel of Bernsdorf, to the council. Their answer on this subject, declared, that, "on a careful perusal of precedents, finding no instance of persons being joined in commission with the prince of Wales, and few, if any restrictions, they were of opinion, that the constant tenor of ancient practice could not conveniently be receded from \*." Although he reluctantly submitted to consign to the prince the sole direction of affairs, yet, instead of the title of regent, he appointed him *guardian of the realm and lieutenant*, an office unknown in England since it was enjoyed by Edward the black prince †.

Having made this arrangement, and removed the duke of Argyle from the household of the prince, and from the command of the army in Scotland, he committed to Townshend and Walpole the principal direction of affairs, and, accompanied by secretary Stanhope, took his departure from England on the 9th of July, and arrived on the 15th at Hanover.

Departure  
from Eng-  
land.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH:

1716.

*State and Disunion of the Ministry.—Cabals of Sunderland.—Intrigues and Venality of the Hanoverian Junto.*

WE have hitherto contemplated the ministry in which Townshend and Walpole took the lead, in the highest degree prosperous and respectable. It would naturally be supposed, that union and tranquillity in the cabinet were indispensably necessary to produce such wise counsels and vigorous measures, but this supposition is not verified by fact. The seeds of discontent

Disunion of  
the ministry,

\* Letter from Lord Townshend to Bernsdorf. Correspondence, Period II.

† Political State of Great Britain, 1716.—Tindal.

had

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Sunderland  
discontented.

had already taken root, and were bringing to maturity by the petty intrigues and selfish cabals of those Hanoverian mistresses and ministers who had followed the fortunes of the king.

The principal person who fomented the disunion in the cabinet, was Charles earl of Sunderland, whose father, Robert, is so notorious in the annals of this country, for his great abilities and consummate treachery. He had married Anne, second daughter of the duke of Marlborough, and had served under his father-in-law, both in a military and diplomatic capacity. The origin of the misunderstanding between him and Townshend, may be dated from the death of queen Anne. At that period, Sunderland, as the great leader of the Whigs, and in consideration of his services to the Hanover family, was led to expect that he should be placed at the head of the administration, and become the person under whose auspices the new cabinet was to be formed. Bothmar had represented him as a man who had always shewn more attachment to the king than any other. He had first recommended Sunderland to be lord lieutenant of Ireland, and Townshend to be secretary of state; but on Sunderland's expressing his desire to have that office, Bothmar proposed that Townshend should be provided in another place. This arrangement was first suggested on the 13th of August, yet, on the 31st of the same month, Bothmar expressed his wishes to Robethon, that it might be given to Townshend, although Sunderland had asked for it \*. In fact, the king was at this period influenced by Bothmar, Bothmar was wholly governed by Townshend, and the new administration was principally settled by him. Although Sunderland was received with singular attention by the king on his arrival, yet it is remarkable, that his name does not appear among the lords justices added in the list communicated by Bothmar to the seven great officers of the realm. The aspiring Sunderland, under whom Townshend had hitherto acted a subordinate part, could not brook this preference; though he did not openly shew his disgust, yet he scarcely took any active part in defending the measures of government; he who was before accustomed to make a conspicuous figure in every debate, seems to have remained almost uniformly silent; and from the accession of George the First, till the beginning of 1717, his name seldom occurs in the proceedings of the house of lords. He had been nominated lord lieutenant of Ireland, which he considered a species of banishment, and as a place far below his expectations. Soon after the death of the marquis of Wharton, he was appointed privy seal. But his promotion to this high office did not remove his disgust.

\* Macpherson's Papers, vol. 2.

This spirit of discontent had not been confined to Sunderland. Nottingham, whose Tory principles could never coalesce with a Whig administration, and whose vehement interference in favour of the condemned rebel lords, had given offence, was dismissed from the presidency of the council. Somerset was removed from his post of master of the horse, on account of some indiscreet expressions on the arrest of his son-in-law, Sir William Wyndham.

The earl of Halifax had estimated his services and talents at so high a rate, that he expected to have been appointed lord high treasurer: created first-commissioner, he was highly chagrined; nor was his disgust removed by the garter, the title of earl, and the transfer of the place of auditor of the exchequer to his nephew. Inflamed by disappointed ambition, he entered into cabals with the Tory leaders, for the removal of those with whom he had so long cordially acted; but his death, on the 10th of May 1715, put an end to his intrigues\*.

Marlborough also was among the dissatisfied. Soon after the death of queen Anne, Bothmar says of him, "He is not pleased that he is not of the regency, and that there is any man but the king higher than him in this country †;" and his disgust was not diminished after the king's arrival: For although he was appointed commander in chief, yet he did not enjoy the smallest share of power or confidence. George the First never forgot, that during the campaign of 1708, when he commanded the Imperialists, Marlborough had contrived, that no troops or supplies were sent to the Rhine, but that the whole force was destined for the army in Flanders, by which arrangement he had been obliged to act on the defensive, and could not distinguish his command by any successful operation against the enemy. In consequence of this disinclination, Marlborough, though commander in chief, could not obtain even a lieutenancy for a friend; and he not unfrequently requested Pulteney, who was secretary at war, to solicit in his room, adding, "but do not say it is for me, for whatever I ask is sure to be denied."

To these discontents Walpole alludes in a private letter to his brother Horace, on the removal of Nottingham ‡. "I don't well know what account to give you of our situation here. *There are storms in the air, but I doubt not they will soon be blown over.*" In this instance, however, his prediction was not verified; Sunderland increased his party with a number of disaffected persons. He particularly gained among the Whigs, Carleton, Cadogan, Lechmere, and Hamden; courted the Tories; entered into cabals against his colleagues; and

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1716.

Nottingham returns to the Tories.

Somerset dismissed from the place of master of the horse.

Halifax disaffected.

Dies.

Marlborough dissatisfied.

Walpole too secure.

\* Tindal, vol. 28. p. 371. † Macpherson's Papers, vol. 2. p. 640. ‡ Walpole Papers.

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Hanoverian  
venality.

Character of  
the duchess  
of Kendal.

was prepared to use all his efforts, and employ any opportunities which might offer, to prejudice the king against them \*; nor were such means and opportunities wanting.

One of the greatest difficulties which Townshend and Walpole had to encounter, arose from the management of the German junto, who principally governed the king. This junto, at his accession, and for some time after, consisted of his two mistresses, the duchess of Kendal and the countess of Darlington, and his German ministers and favourites.

Erengard Melesina, baroness of Schulenburg, and princess of Eberstein, was the favourite mistress of George the First, when electoral prince, and after his separation from his wife, the unfortunate Sophia, princess of Zell, he is said to have espoused her with his left hand, a species of marriage not uncommon in Germany. She accompanied the king to England, and was, in 1716, created baroness of Dundalk, countess and marchioness of Dungannon of the kingdom of Ireland; and, in 1718, made a peeress of Great Britain, by the title of baroness of Glastonbury, countess of Feverham, and duchess of Kendal †, by which title she is commonly known. Her influence over the king was so considerable, that the different parties in the cabinet, and the leaders in opposition, paid the most obsequious court, and even the empress of Germany maintained a private correspondence with her, with a view to induce the king to renew the connection between England and the house of Austria. This ascendancy is the more surprising, when it is considered that she did not possess much beauty of countenance, or elegance of person; for the electress Sophia, pointing her out to Mrs. Howard, said ‡, “Do you see that maukin? you would scarcely believe that she has captivated my son;” and according to Sir Robert Walpole, (whose opinion, however, as he did not readily speak in any foreign language, and she could not converse in English, must be received with caution) her intellects were mean and contemptible. Money was with her the principal and prevailing consideration, and he was often heard to say, she was so venal a creature, that she would have sold the king’s honour for a shilling advance to the best bidder §. She affected great and constant regularity in her public devotions, frequently attending several Lutheran chapels in the same day. The minister of the Lutheran church in the Savoy, refused to admit her to the sacrament; but she was received at the church of the same communion in the city ||.

\* Walpole’s letter to Stanhope, July 30th, 1716.—Correspondence, Period II.

† Extinct Peerage.

‡ From Lord Orford.

§ Etough.—Minutes of a conversation with Sir Robert Walpole.

|| Etough.

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1716.

Character of  
the countess  
of Darlington.

His other mistress, whom he brought over with him to England, was Sophia Charlotte, of the house of Offen. She was sister of the celebrated countess of Platen, mistress of the elector Ernest Augustus, and wife of baron Kilmanseck, from whom she was separated. On the death of her husband, in 1721, she was created countess of Leinster in the kingdom of Ireland, baroness of Brentford, and countess of Darlington\*. She was a woman of great beauty, but became extremely corpulent as she advanced in years. Her power over the king was not equal to that of the duchess of Kendal; but although she was younger, and more accomplished than her rival, several persons about the court, conceiving her influence to be greater than it really was, ineffectually endeavoured to rise by her means. Her character for rapacity was not inferior to that of the duchess of Kendal.

Character of  
Bothmar.

The Hanoverian ministers who had the principal influence over the king, were baron Bothmar, count Bernsdorf, and Robethon. Baron Bothmar had been the king's principal agent in England during the latter years of queen Anne. By his advice George had almost uniformly acted; and it was principally owing to his interposition, that Townshend was entrusted with the chief power, and became the head of the new administration. Bothmar now conceived that his services could not be too amply rewarded by the minister to whose elevation he had greatly contributed; he took umbrage on finding that his recommendations were often rejected, and that sufficient respect was not paid to his opinion.

Bernsdorf.

Count Bernsdorf, of an illustrious family, solid talents, and considerable experience, was the minister whom George consulted in foreign affairs. On his arrival in England, he was anxious to increase his consequence, and improve his fortune. But finding his views opposed by Townshend and Walpole, he became disgusted, and joining with Bothmar and the mistresses, was prepared to forward any attempt which might be made to drive them from the helm.

Robethon.

The party was farther strengthened by the accession of Robethon, the king's French secretary. This man was of a French refugee family, and became private secretary to king William, from whose service he entered into that of the house of Brunswick. He soon became confidential secretary, first of the duke of Zell, and afterwards of George the First, when elector of Hanover, and was the person employed in carrying on the confidential correspondence with England†. This private intercourse gave him a considerable ascendancy over his master; and being a man of address, great knowledge of mankind, and well acquainted with the leading members in both houses of parliament,

\* Extinct Peerage.

† Macpherson's Papers, vol. 2.

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he was enabled to act a conspicuous part. His situation with the king rendered him insolent and presumptuous; his necessities were great, and his venality was so notorious as to excite the displeasure, and call forth the remonstrances of Townshend and Walpole; consequently, he became their inveterate enemy, zealously promoted the views of Sunderland, and attached himself to those who were labouring to obtain their dismissal.

Two Turks  
in the service  
of the king.

To these persons of ostensible consequence, must be added two Turks, known by the names of Mustapha and Mahomet\*. They had been taken prisoners by the Imperialists in Hungary, and had served the king when electoral prince, who was wounded in that campaign, with such zeal and fidelity, that he took them to Hanover, brought them to England, and made them pages of the back-stairs. Their influence over their master was so great, that their names are mentioned in a dispatch of count Broglie to the king of France, as possessing a large share of the king's confidence. These low foreigners obtained considerable sums of money for recommendation to places.

Rapacity and  
ambition of  
these persons.

These mistresses, ministers, and favourites, coming from a poor electorate, considered England as a kind of land of promise, and at the same time so precarious a possession, that they endeavoured to enrich themselves with all possible speed†. With this view they sold their influence over their master at a high price, and disposed of all the places and honours which the king could confer, without the intervention of his English ministers. Their venality arose to so great a height, as obliged Walpole to remonstrate against them; but the king almost sanctioned the abuse, by replying with a smile, "I suppose you are also paid for your recommendations‡." Private emoluments, and concealed advantages, did not however satisfy their rapaciousness; they began to aim at the honours of rank and pre-eminence. The ladies were desirous of being made peeresses; Bothmar and Bernsdorf, aspired to a seat in the house of lords; while Robethon, affected to content himself with the title of baronet. To these pretensions, which the conduct of William had sanctioned, the act of settlement presented an insuperable barrier. In-

\* Pope has mentioned one of these Turks in terms of approbation, in his moral essays, Epistle 2nd, to a lady.

† From peer or bishop 'tis no easy thing,

‡ To draw the man who loves his God, or king,

"Alas! I copy (or my draught would fail)

From HONEST MAH'MET, or plain parson  
"Hale."

Portraits of the two Turks are on the great

stair-case in Kensington palace. Lyson's Environs of London, vol. 3. p. 103.

† During the whole reign of George the First, after the resignation of the duke of Somerset, no master of the horse was appointed; the profits of the place were appropriated to the duchess of Kendal. The emoluments of the mastership of the buck hounds, were also reserved for one of the Germans.

‡ From Lord Orford.

terest soon enabled them to discover that the regulations of that act did not extend to Ireland; the baroness of Schulenberg was gratified with the title of duchess of Munster, and the Irish establishment loaded with pensions. But this advancement did not satisfy that ambitious woman, who was less gratified by this title, than irritated against Townshend and Walpole, for opposing her demand of being created an English peeress. The ministers and secretary, animated with a similar rancour, behaved with great insolence towards the leaders of the cabinet, insomuch that Walpole once, in the presence of the king, rebuked the presumption of an impertinent assertion, by the stern reproof, "*Mentiris impudentissime* \*." In consequence of these repeated altercations, the Hanoverian crew endeavoured to counteract, by their intrigues, the influence of Townshend and Walpole, and infuse into the king's mind, such suspicions and prejudices as, assisted by other intrigues, ended in the dismissal of those able ministers.

These, and many other mischiefs, which were the necessary consequences of the introduction of a foreign family, cannot be concealed or controverted. Yet, while we relate and deplore them in their full latitude, let us not so far forget the blessings derived from the same source, as to overlook our escape from still greater evils. This event, which was occasionally productive of great inconveniences, was the price paid for the preservation of our religion and constitution. The option was necessarily made between Hanover and Rome; between civil and religious liberty, accompanied by temporary disadvantages, or papal and despotic tyranny, followed by sure and permanent degradation.

\* From Lord Orford.

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1716.

Revised by  
Townshend  
and Walpole

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## CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH:

1716.

*Acquisition of Bremen and Verden.—Alliance with France.*

Acquisition  
of Bremen  
and Verden.

HANOVER now became the centre of the most important negotiations. The two great objects of these negotiations were to complete the acquisition of Bremen and Verden, and to secure tranquillity at home, by a strict union with France.

At the peace of Westphalia, the archbishopric of Bremen, and bishopric of Verden, were ceded to Sweden. But their commodious situation, between the territories of the house of Brunswick and the sea, rendered them a desirable object of acquisition to the dukes of Zell and Brunswick, and those princes had formed several attempts to obtain possession, but had always failed of success. At length George the First obtained what his ancestors could not accomplish. Frederic the Fourth of Denmark, having, in 1712, conquered Holstein, Sleswic, Bremen, and Verden, and unable to retain them, or even to resist the arms of Sweden, on the return of Charles the Twelfth from Turkey, found it prudent to cede a part, that he might not be deprived of the whole. He accordingly concluded a treaty, which though long settled, was not ratified till the 17th of July, 1715, with George, as elector of Hanover; by which it was agreed, that Bremen and Verden should be put into the possession of the king of England, on the condition, of paying £. 150,000, and declaring war against Sweden. In consequence of this treaty, George joined the coalition against Sweden, and a British fleet was, in 1715, dispatched to the Baltic, with the pretence of protecting our trade against the Swedish depredations, but for the real purpose of compelling Sweden to accept a sum of money as an equivalent for those dominions.

The king of Sweden, provoked at the conduct of George the First, and well aware, that in the capacity of elector only, he would not have joined the confederacy against him, directed his efforts of vengeance against the English; his ministers at London, and at the Hague, caballed with the disaffected in England, and preparations were making to invade Great Britain, with a considerable army, in favour of the dethroned family.

The Pretender did not fail taking advantage of this transaction, to render the new \* king odious to his English subjects; and he artfully observed,

\* Tindal, vol. 18. p. 451.

in his new manifesto, "Whilst the principal powers engaged in the late wars enjoy the blessings of peace, and are attentive to discharge their debts, and ease their people, Great Britain, in the midst of peace, feels all the load of a war, new debts are contracted, new armies are raised at home, Dutch forces are brought into these kingdoms; and by taking possession of the Duchy of Bremen, in violation of the public faith, a door is opened by the usurper to let in an inundation of foreigners from abroad, and to reduce these nations to a state of dependence on one of the most inconsiderable provinces of the empire."

The advocates for Townshend and Walpole, have asserted that they uniformly counteracted the acquisition of Bremen and Verden, and that their opposition to that favourite object of Hanoverian politics, was the principal cause of their subsequent disgrace. But whatever blame or merit results from that measure, attaches to them; for I discover among the papers committed to my inspection, unequivocal proofs, that they approved, in the strongest manner, the proposed acquisition. Slingelandt, afterwards pensionary of Holland, and the confidential friend of lord Townshend, had declared, in a letter dated March 10th, 1717, "As much as the crown of Great Britain is superior to the electoral cap, so much is the king interested to sacrifice Bremen and Verden for a peace, rather than continue any longer in a war." But Townshend was so far from approving the sacrifice, that he observed in answer; "I am of opinion, that every attempt should be made to induce the king of Sweden to make peace, without depriving him of any of his dominions situated out of the empire, for in regard to his German provinces, I must tell you frankly, without any partiality to the pretensions of the king, but simply with a view to the interests of Great Britain and Holland, that we must not suffer Sweden to retain any longer those gates of the empire, which, since the peace of Westphalia, she has never made use of but for the purpose of introducing confusion and disorder, or of turning Germany from the pursuit of its true interests against France." And in another part of the same letter, he adds, "I lay it down as a principle, that for the advantage and tranquillity of Europe, the king of Sweden ought to be deprived of those provinces which have supplied him with the means of doing so much mischief."

Horace Walpole, in his pamphlet, "The Interest of Great Britain steadily pursued," has amply expatiated on this subject, and explained the motives which induced his brother to favour this purchase. "It is the interest of this country," he observes, "that those two provinces, which command the navigation of the Elbe and Weser, the only inlets from the British seas into Ger-

many,

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1714 to 1720.

Treaty with  
France

many, and which, in case of any disturbance in the North, are most capable of protecting or interrupting the British trade to Hamburgh, should rather be annexed to the king's electoral dominions, than remain in the hands of Denmark, who has frequently formed pretensions on that city; or of Sweden, who has molested our commerce in the Baltic."

The next great object which the British cabinet had in view, was to secure the tranquillity of Great Britain, by forming such alliances with the European powers, as would counteract the intrigues of the Pretender abroad, deprive him of foreign assistance, and awe his followers into submission.

Townshend and Walpole were well aware, that the danger of invasions and interior troubles, did not so much proceed from the efforts of the disaffected at home, as from the hopes of assistance from France. If the prospect of French interposition could be removed, or the effect counteracted, tranquillity would be the necessary and unavoidable consequence. To attain that great end, only two methods could be adopted; the one to form so intimate a connection with the emperor and Holland, as to set France at defiance; and the other to secure the friendship of France, and to employ the public and private efforts of that power, which had hitherto either openly or covertly promoted the restoration of the dethroned family, and encouraged the efforts of the Jacobites in Great Britain, against that very family, and in support of the Protestant succession.

No charge was ever more frequently or more violently urged against the principles of the administration, which Walpole either directed, or in which he co-operated before he acquired the power and influence of prime minister, than that of deserting the house of Austria, our natural ally, and of joining with France, our inveterate enemy. I shall therefore lay before the reader the motives which induced the two brother ministers to prefer, at this particular juncture, the connection with France to the union with the House of Austria. To Townshend and Walpole is undoubtedly due the credit or reproach of having first formed the project of that alliance, and of having carried that scheme into execution, in opposition to the opinion of Sunderland and Stanhope, and in direct contradiction to the first views of the Hanoverian ministers.

Death of  
Louis the  
Fourteenth.

The death of Louis the Fourteenth, on the 1st of September 1715, had given a new aspect to the affairs of France and of Europe, and hastened the final conclusion of those complicated negotiations which the treaty of Utrecht had entailed upon a British administration. Although, during the latter days of that bigotted and ambitious monarch, the blessings of peace were the constant theme of his conversation, a passion for glory, and the frenzy of war,

war, still lurked in his heart. His cabals with the mal-contents in England, his connivance at the intrigues of Ormond and Bolingbroke at Paris, the permission of providing arms and ammunition, and the preparations making at Dunkirk for an attack upon England, were too manifest to escape observation.

Under these circumstances, the earl of Stair, who had superseded Prior in his embassy at Paris, made secret overtures to the duke of Orleans, who was apprehensive lest the king of Spain should wrest the regency out of his hands; and at a meeting with the abbe du Bois, the confidential agent \* of the duke of Orleans, promised him the assistance of England to secure the regency to the duke on the death of Louis the Fourteenth, and his succession to the crown of France, should the dauphin, afterwards Louis the Fifteenth, die without issue. Stair reiterated these assurances in a personal interview with the duke; who solemnly pledged himself not to assist the Pretender, and to demolish the sluices at Mardyke. The same offers were renewed, in a still stronger manner, on the death of the king of France. Hints were at the same time thrown out, that the true way to establish a perfect understanding between the two countries, would be to send the Pretender out of Lorraine, and his two adherents, Ormond and Bolingbroke, out of France. But the duke of Orleans had no sooner succeeded in annulling the testament of Louis the Fourteenth, and secured to himself the regency without restrictions, than he ceased to express himself so warm a friend to George the First; but while he gave assurances that he would demolish Mardyke, answered nothing positive with respect to the Pretender, Ormond, and Bolingbroke, and secretly assisted, or at least connived at, the invasion of Great Britain.

Conduct of  
the regent.

When these attempts of the Pretender had failed of success, and the standard of rebellion was overthrown, the regent found it his interest † to court the friendship of England, whose assistance might be necessary in securing to him the crown of France in case of the death of Louis the Fifteenth, who was a weak and sickly boy. It was generally suspected that Philip the Fifth would not think himself bound by his renunciation of the crown of France; and as Spain, under the administration of cardinal Alberoni, was beginning to awake from her lethargy, and to make vast preparations both by land and sea, du Bois suggested that the sole purpose of these exertions was to assert the rights of Philip to the crown of France. The regent ac-

\* Hardwicke State Papers, vol. 2.

† The sudden change of behaviour of the regent and his court, occasioned by the suppression of the rebellion, appears in lord Stair's Journal, "A la cour on est tout étonné; les plus sages commencent à traiter le Chevalier

de St. George du Pretendant. Il y a deux jours qu'il étoit le roy d'Angleterre par tout, et tout le monde avoit levé le masque. Il n'y avoit plus un seul François, quasi personne de la cour, qui mettoit le pied chez moy."

Hardwicke's State Papers, vol. 2. p. 550.

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1714 to 1720.

Alliances  
with the Em-  
peror and  
Holland.

Vigorous and  
prudent mea-  
sures of the  
British cabi-  
net.

cordingly renewed his overtures; but the king, incensed at his former equivocal conduct, would not cordially listen to his offers, and opened a negotiation with the court of Vienna and the States General for a separate defensive alliance. In consequence of these resolutions, the ancient alliance with the United Provinces was renewed at Westminster on the 16th of February, and a new defensive treaty with the Emperor on the 25th of May; and the British cabinet informed the regent, that the departure of the Pretender to the other side of the Alps, was an indispensable preliminary. In vain France attempted to prevent the union of the three powers, by offering to conclude a defensive alliance with Great Britain and the United Provinces, and in case of a war with the Emperor, to observe a neutrality in the Low Countries. The insidiousness of this proposal, did not escape the observation of Townshend, who, in a letter to Horace Walpole, reprobated it as chimerical and full of delusion\*; and expressed a determination to form such alliances with the Emperor and the States General, as would let the French see, that if they had a mind to fall out with one of them, they would certainly bring the rest into the quarrel.

These vigorous measures alarmed the regent; and induced him now to court, with zeal and sincerity, the friendship of England. Stair availed himself of these favourable sentiments, to promote the success of the negotiation. But his address, and the influence which he had gained over the regent, gave umbrage to Torcy, d'Huxelles, and the French ministers who were averse to the treaty; and they had interest sufficient to have the negotiation transferred

\* Letter from Townshend to Horace Walpole, 27th December 1715. Walpole Papers.

"This morning the three mails, which came in from Holland, brought me your letters of the 27th and 31st N. S. which I have read to his majesty, who was glad to see that the French ambassador was disappointed in his hopes of the great effects his proposal of neutrality for the Austrian Low Countries, in case of a war, would have in Holland. Indeed the project seems so chimerical, and is so full of delusion, that it was hardly fit to be seriously offered by one, or received by the other. And none but France, who is used to contrive such amusing schemes, could pretend to propose to stipulate with a third power, a neutrality for the dominions belonging to another, who may not consent to it. For what could such a convention between the Dutch and the French signify, if the emperor, who is master of the

country, should not think it for his interest to mind it? Methinks we are giving opportunities to France to play over the same game they did after the peace of Ryfwick, when the terrible apprehensions of a new war, made us and the Dutch run into the measures of the Partition Treaty, which was believed might be a wonderful preservative against a war, but in effect, proved the source, and the chief occasion of it. We here, the States may be sure, shall not be fond to engage in a new war, who feel the effects of one at present in our bowels; let us, therefore, keep to our old maxims, and unite strongly together. 'The way to avoid a war, is not to be much afraid of one, and to form such an union among the allies, as to let the French see, that if they have a mind to fall out with one of us, they will certainly bring all the rest into the quarrel.'

to the Hague, under the direction of Chateauneuf, the French ambassador, who was hostile to the whole transaction.

Horace Walpole, as minister from England, conducted the business with great ability. He counteracted the intrigues of Chateauneuf, and threw a momentary spirit into the weak and wavering counsels of the Dutch republic. He saw and appreciated the advantages which would result from an alliance with France, in insuring domestic security and foreign tranquillity. He was apprehensive lest the insidious conduct of the regent might so far excite a just, though imprudent indignation in the king and ministry, as to induce them to reject all overtures of accommodation with France, and laboured incessantly to avert what he justly considered so great an evil \*.

In a conference with pensionary Heinsius, of which Horace Walpole gives an account in a private letter to Lord Townshend, he details, in a few words, the advantages which would result to the king and nation, from an alliance with France †.

\* "If I may venture to give your lordship my own sentiments upon this matter, it is very natural to think that France has two views in her present conduct; 1<sup>o</sup>, if the regent should propose to enter into new engagements with his majesty, and the States, and they should accept of his proposal, and make a treaty with him, he may design by that means to amuse and disarm them, and thereby have a better opportunity to attack either; or 2<sup>do</sup>, if the regent's offers of this nature should be rejected, he may hope to take an advantage of such a refusal, and to insinuate, both in England and Holland, that his majesty has a design to keep his forces on foot; and to quarrell with France; by not forgetting what is past, nor being willing to come to a better understanding with the regent; and if such a notion should once take place, it would have a very ill effect in both countrys; but to disappoint France in these two views, may it not be advisable not to talk directly against an alliance with France, to prevent further mischiefs, at least no further than to show how necessary it is, after the regent's late conduct, to conclude the defensive treaty with the Emperour, preferable to any other whatsoever, since it cannot be expected that his majesty should seek the friendship and confidence of France, after the usage he has received from her; and if the regent should make any proposition for an alliance with his majesty, and the States, it may be so far received as to have it leisurely con-

sidered, and his majesty has reason and right enough to insist upon some certain articles to be made part of that treaty, which, if accepted and executed, may put us out of all apprehensions of the Pretender; and if rejected, will expose the regent's ill designs to all the world. In the mean time, I suppose, that the defensive alliance with the Emperour should be promoted as much as possible, and a force by sea and land, sufficient for our security, be kept up. For as on one side we must take care of not being duped by France, we must on the other avoid being thought desirous of a quarrell, and irreconcilable, even for our own security, and the preservation of the peace."

† "The present situation of affairs in England can by no means be agreeable to him. On one hand, it can't be safe or prudent for his majesty to break his troops and disarm himself, until he has reason to believe, that France has abandoned the cause of the Pretender; on the other side the people of England may grow uneasy at the burthen and expence of a standing army; so that it is certainly the intent both of his majesty and his ministry, to have a friendship and confidence with France, that by having nothing to apprehend from thence, the government may return to its natural constitution of guards and garrisons, and enjoying perfect ease and repose; and I added, that it is evident, by his majesty's whole conduct, that he has done all that is possible for him to gain the regent's amity and good will."

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Conclusion  
of the al-  
liance with  
France

Townshend had previously adopted the same sentiments; and it was in a great measure owing to his suggestions, that the British cabinet opened a negotiation for a defensive alliance with France. But the deceitful behaviour of Chateaufort, and the dilatory proceedings of the Dutch, enforced the necessity of more expeditious and decisive measures. Lord Stair dexterously counteracted the intrigues of the French ministers at Paris, by contriving to place the negotiation in the hands of the abbe du Bois, who repaired to Hanover, where the business was carried on by secretary Stanhope under the immediate auspices of the king. The negotiation was conducted with such secrecy and dispatch, that an interval of a few days only elapsed between the arrival of du Bois, and the adjustment of the preliminaries\*.

August 21.

After a few conferences, Du Bois agreed, in the name of the regent, to send the Pretender beyond the Alps, and to demolish the port of Mardyke†, called by Lord Townshend, in a letter to Horace Walpole, "that terrible thorn in the side of England," on condition of confirming the article in the treaty of Utrecht, which guaranteed the succession of the crown of France to the house of Orleans, should Louis the Fifteenth die without issue.

\* Correspondence, Period II.

† One of the articles in the treaty of Utrecht, expressly stipulated the demolition of Dunkirk, from which port the trade of England and Holland had been incommoded during the late war. The king of France had literally fulfilled this article; but had, at the same time, opened a new canal at Mardyke, which would have been equally prejudicial to the trade of Great Britain. Prior, at that time ambassador at Paris, was ordered to present a memorial, pressing the performance of the 9th article of the treaty of Utrecht. The king of France declared in express terms, that Mardyke was not Dunkirk, and that the treaty of Utrecht did not deprive him of the natural right of a sovereign, to construct such works as he should judge most proper for the preservation of his subjects. The truth is, that the English plenipotentiaries had been extremely negligent; in stipulating the demolition of Dunkirk, it could not be their intention that

another and a better harbour should be made on the same coast: But that stipulation should have been inserted; and it was natural that all advantages should be taken by the French, on whom such articles were imposed‡, and according to Lord Stair §, Prior, ambassador at Paris, seemed altogether unknowing as to the affair of Mardyke; to have had no instructions while the canal was making; and to have concerned himself no further about it, since he delivered the memorials. The earl of Stair prosecuted the affair with greater zeal and vigour; it now became an object of importance, and lord Townshend observes to Horace Walpole, "The article of Mardyke is in truth the chief and most essential point for the interest of England, for which his majesty has occasion to desire this alliance."

July

‡ Tindal, vol. 18. p. 327. 331.

§ Hardwicke's State Papers, vol. 2. p. 128.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH:

1716.

*Situation of Affairs at Home.—Conduct of the Prince of Wales.—Precarious and perplexed Situation of Townshend and Walpole.—Departure of Sunderland.—Causes of the King's Displeasure against Townshend and Walpole.—Their Opposition to his continental Politics.—Walpole's Resistance to the Payment of the German Troops.—Intrigues and Arrogance of the Hanoverian Ministers.—Sunderland arrives at Hanover.—Cabals with the German Junto.—Gains Stanhope.—Prevails on the King to dismiss Townshend.*

WHILE Townshend was thus successfully employed in restoring consequence and dignity to the British negotiations abroad, and in securing tranquillity at home; while Walpole was conducting the affairs of finance with wisdom and ability, and laying a plan to reduce the interest of the national debt, an active cabal was undermining the favour of the brother ministers; advantage was taken of the king's proneness to jealousy; every engine was employed against them at Hanover; and after a short, but manly struggle, Townshend was dismissed, and Walpole resigned his employment.

This change in the administration, was derived from the misunderstanding between the king and the prince of Wales; the opposition of the cabinet to some of the plans of continental politics proposed at Hanover; the intrigues and arrogance of the Hanoverian junto; and the cabals of Sunderland and Stanhope.

*Causes of the change in administration.*

On the king's departure, the prince of Wales had assumed the internal administration of affairs, and such part of foreign transactions as could not be carried on at Hanover. The rebellion having been suppressed, and tranquillity restored, the people became gradually more and more satisfied with the new government. The king's enemies imputed this satisfaction, which was the natural consequence of events, to the good conduct of the prince, and likewise affected to spread abroad, that many acts of grace, the opening of the communication from Dover to Calais, and the dispensing with passports, were owing to the same cause. Reports of his affability and condescension to all persons, without distinction of parties, were circulated, with a mischievous intention to decry the coldness and reserve of the king; and

*Conduct of the prince of Wales.*

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his partial acquaintance with the English tongue, was magnified, and represented as a proof of his earnest desire to accommodate himself to the customs of the nation. He increased his popularity by a short progress into Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, and addresses were preparing in several places, extolling his wisdom in the administration of affairs, and the graciousness of his manners \*. These, and other circumstances, together with the extreme popularity † of the princess of Wales, were not concealed from the king, and could not fail to augment the disgust he had already entertained against his son. The prince still farther offended the king, by shewing particular attention to the duke of Argyle; by his reserve to the ministers in England, and by the court which he paid to the Tories.

While the ministers were thus exposed to the resentment of the prince, for their superior attachment to his father, rumours were circulated that their favour was declining with the king. In several letters to Stanhope, Walpole bitterly complains of their irksome situation; and, in the extremity of his chagrin, compares himself and his colleagues, to galley slaves, chained to the oar ‡. In this uneasy situation, they judged it necessary for the king's service, to remove the prejudices, and to acquire the confidence of the prince, which their prudence and address had no sooner effected, by destroying the credit of Argyle, than they awakened the suspicions of the king, who was feelingly alive to sentiments of jealousy towards his son.

Opposition to  
continental  
politics.

Another cause of the king's displeasure was, the opposition of the cabinet to the continental politics, and their unwillingness to plunge the country into a war with Russia. A dispute had arisen between the duke and nobles of Mecklenburgh, in which the duke was supported by Peter the Great; the nobles by the Emperor, the king of Prussia, and George the First, as elector of Hanover. George was influenced by Bernsdorf, who, being a noble of that duchy, was irritated against the Czar. Though these potentates embraced contrary sides, their views were the same, the possession of the duke's territories.

Those who indiscriminately censure the conduct of Walpole, have not scrupled to assert, that he embarked in every scheme of aggrandizement which interest or ambition might suggest to the sovereign: on the contrary, in this affair, he and Townshend displayed that manly resistance which does honour to their character, and refutes such groundless accusation. In the course of this quarrel, Bernsdorf proposed to Stanhope the wild and daring project of seizing the ships, disarming the forces of the Czar, by means

\* Tindal, vol. 19. p. 33. 38.

† Political State of Great Britain, vol. 12. p. 140.

‡ See Correspondence, Period II.

of the Danes, and arresting and detaining his person until his troops should evacuate Denmark and Germany. Townshend reprobated, in the strongest terms, this violent proposal; represented that the prosecution of the war in the north, would be the ruin of England, declared that parliament could not be induced to sanction such a profusion of the public money, for purposes foreign to her real interests; recommended a peace with Sweden, and strongly urged the necessity of obtaining that blessing by some equivalent restitutions. The freedom of remonstrance used on this occasion, incensed the king, who declared that he considered his dearest interests sacrificed to the parsimony of the English ministry. His resentment was still farther inflamed against Walpole, by his declaration of the impracticability of replacing the money advanced for the pay of the troops of Munster and Saxe-Gotha, till the receipt of the sums appropriated by parliament to that use. The anger of the king rose so high, that Walpole was reproached with having broken his promise; the minister vindicated himself with becoming spirit, and declared, that though he could not venture to contradict the king's assertion, yet, that if he had ever made such a promise, it had escaped his memory.

The rapacity and ambition of the German favourites had received several checks from the spirit and inflexibility of Townshend and Walpole; they had hoped to appropriate to themselves large sums from the grant of the French lands in the island of St. Christopher, ceded at the peace, and the duchess of Munster had engaged for a sum of money to procure a peerage for Sir Richard Child, a violent Tory. Both these measures were counteracted, to the great mortification of the whole junto. The haughty and interested mistress, accustomed to domineer over the ministers of the electorate, could ill brook to be thwarted by the English cabinet. Robethon displayed his resentment by the most insolent demands, and petulant reproofs\*.

When the earl of Sunderland arrived at Gohre, although he had already secured the powerful aid of the Hanoverian junto, by the promise of obtaining a repeal of the disqualifying clause in the act of settlement, yet his intrigues had no other chance of being attended with success, unless he could gain secretary Stanhope, who owed his appointment solely to the influence of Townshend, and the friendship of the Walpoles, and possessed their implicit confidence. As Townshend himself, on account of his wife's pregnancy, declined going to Hanover, his colleague was to be entrusted with that important service; he was to keep the king steady to his ministers in England, and to watch and baffle the intrigues which might be formed to remove

Influence of  
the Germans.

Arrival and  
intrigues of  
Sunderland,  
at Hanover.  
October 22.

Gains Stan-  
hope.

\* See Correspondence, Period II. *passim*. Political State of Great Britain, vol. 12. p. 477.  
them.

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them. Stanhope appeared peculiarly qualified for this task. A long and intimate connection with Walpole, had bound them in the strictest ties of friendship, and when Walpole recommended him to Townshend, he answered for his integrity, as for his own. - Stanhope himself had made no application for the office of secretary. His frequent residence in camps, and skill in the profession of arms, rendered him, in his own opinion, more fit for a military than a civil station; and when Walpole proposed it, he considered the offer as a matter of raillery, and applied his hand to his sword \*. It was not till after much persuasion, and the most solemn assurances, that his compliance would materially contribute to the security of the new administration, that he was induced to accept the post.

One of the principal charges which Stanhope had received from his friends in England, was to be on his guard against the intrigues of Sunderland; who had, under pretence of ill health, obtained the king's permission to go to Aix-la-Chapelle. Although, at the time of his departure, he had given the most positive assurances of repentance and concern, for his late endeavours to remove his colleagues, and after the most solemn professions of friendship and union, had condescended to ask their advice for the regulation of his conduct at Hanover, to which place he intended to apply for leave to proceed. Townshend and Walpole suspected his sincerity; they had experienced his abilities; they knew his ambition, and they dreaded the ascendancy which he might obtain, through the channel of the Hanoverians, over the king. But they implicitly trusted in the sagacity and integrity of Stanhope, either to prevent his appearance at Hanover, or, if he came, to counteract his views. Stanhope, however, did not follow their directions, for when Sunderland demanded access to the king, instead of opposing, he promoted the request with all his influence †.

The mode of correspondence adopted, during his continuance at Hanover, sufficiently proved the unbounded confidence placed in Stanhope. Walpole wrote in his own hand, occasional letters of the most private nature, in which he represented the internal state of affairs, the behaviour of the prince, the sentiments of individuals, and the conduct of Bothmar and other persons who were caballing against them. In addition to this mode of communication, Stephen Poyntz, the confidential secretary of lord Townshend, was appointed a supernumary clerk in the secretary of state's office. His principal employment was to lay before Stanhope such occurrences and observations as Townshend and Methuen, who acted as secretary of state during the absence of

\* From Lord Orford.

† See Correspondence.—September 8th. Period II.

Stanhope,

Stanhope, thought improper to be inserted in their public dispatches. He was never to write but through the channel of a messenger, and Stanhope was requested to communicate these letters to the king, under the strongest injunctions of secrecy, or to withhold them at discretion. With the same precautions, and by the same conveyance, Stanhope was to send, under cover to Poyntz, such particulars as the king might judge improper and inconvenient to be laid before the prince, or the cabinet council\*.

In this confidential correspondence, Townshend and Walpole stated freely their objections to the continental politics, declared their dissatisfaction at the interference of the Hanoverians, and their contempt at their venal and interested conduct. They therefore put it in his power to betray their private sentiments, and to increase the aversion of the Hanoverian junto. The seduction therefore of Stanhope from his former friends, was a master-piece of art, as the defection of the person in whom they placed the most implicit confidence, rendered every attempt to baffle the efforts of Sunderland ineffectual, because the mine was not discovered until it was sprung.

At what precise period, or by what inducement Stanhope was gained by Sunderland, cannot be positively ascertained; but from the general disinterestedness of his character, I am led to conclude, that he did not lightly betray his friends, or yield to the suggestions of Sunderland from venal or ambitious motives. The private information I have received, and the letters which passed between Stanhope and Walpole, seem to prove, that Sunderland had convinced him, that the English cabinet were secretly counteracting the conclusion of the alliance with France, that their opposition to the northern transactions was a dereliction of the principles on which the revolution was founded; and he was made to believe that his friend Walpole had broke his word with the king in the affair of the Munster and Saxe-Gotha troops.

This coolness of Stanhope towards the two ministers was still further augmented by the transactions in Holland, and the conduct of Horace Walpole, whose frank and open character scorned to disguise his sentiments, and refused to follow orders which he considered as repugnant to honour and plain dealing. He had censured the proceedings at Hanover, in regard to the politics of the north, in terms still stronger than those used by Townshend. He lamented that the whole system of affairs in Europe, should be entirely subverted on account of Mecklenburgh. To Horace Walpole had been intrusted the secret negotiation of the defensive treaty with France, and while it was carrying on, the strictest secrecy was enjoined. Afterwards it was thought prudent to remove the negotiation to Hanover, where, as has been

\* Poyntz to Secretary Stanhope, 1716. Correspondence, Period II.

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already observed, it was conducted by secretary Stanhope himself, and Du Bois, and the proceedings communicated to Horace Walpole. During its progress he had solemnly assured the pensionary and greffier, that no treaty would be concluded separately from the Dutch; but the urgency of affairs, and the king's impatience to settle the preliminaries before the regent of France could avail himself of the dissensions with Russia to support the Czar in the affair of Mecklenburgh, rendered it impolitic to wait for the dilatory proceedings of the Dutch republic, and full powers were therefore forwarded to him and lord Cadogan, as joint plenipotentiaries at the Hague, to sign the treaty with Du Bois, without farther delay. On the receipt of these orders, Horace Walpole earnestly exhorted Sunderland and Stanhope at the Hague, to intercede with the king to dispense with his signing the treaty, and requested lord Townshend to obtain permission of the prince of Wales for his return to England, under pretence of ill health. He declared, in the most positive and unequivocal manner, that no consideration on earth should induce him to comply; that he would relinquish all present and future advantages, and lay his life at the king's feet, rather than be guilty of so nefarious an action. These repeated remonstrances had their effect, and permission was at length granted from Hanover, that he might depart, and leave to Cadogan the signature of the treaty.

During his residence at Gohre, Sunderland received many marks of favour, and by his consummate address soon acquired the full confidence of the king. He found it no difficult matter to select, from the numerous transactions in which Townshend had been employed, some apparent instances of disrespect, or of neglect in his department. But it is remarkable, that notwithstanding the known zeal of Townshend for the French treaty, that although he was the original adviser and promoter of it, and had gradually surmounted the indifference of the king \*, the opposition of Sunderland, the disapprobation of Stanhope, and the objections of the Hanoverian ministers, yet it was now alledged as a crime against him, that he had purposely delayed its signature. This extraordinary imputation was conveyed to him in letters from the king, Stanhope, and Sunderland. The letter from the king is missing, but that of Sunderland † will give a striking proof of the influence he had already gained over his master, and the imperiousness of his character, when he delivered his censures in so harsh and authoritative a manner to the prime minister in England.

While the answer to the charge was expected at Hanover, Sunderland.

\* Lord Townshend's letter to the king.

† Correspondence, Period II. November 11.

urged another subject of complaint, which made a still greater impression on the king, and contributed to the successful issue of his intrigues. He availed himself, with great address, of the misunderstanding with the prince of Wales. He insinuated to the king, that Townshend and Walpole were caballing with the duke of Argyle and the earl of Ilay; that their repeated remonstrances to draw him from Hanover, were only so many feints to cover their own insidious designs; that their great object was to detain him abroad; and by urging the necessity of transacting the public business, to induce him to invest the prince of Wales with fuller powers, and enable him to open the parliament, and to obtain an increased, permanent, and independent interest. The effect of these representations was aided by the anxious solicitude which the prince discovered, on all occasions, to open the parliament in person, and by his imprudence in pressing Stanhope, by means of a letter from Townshend, to obtain a speedy answer, announcing the king's definitive resolutions\*.

When these insinuations, seconded by the Hanoverian mistresses and ministers, had made a deep impression, with a view to obtain a satisfactory proof of these intentions, Sunderland advised the king to demand of the cabinet council, the heads of the business to be brought forward in the next session; and to declare that he was desirous of passing the winter at Hanover, if any expedient could be adopted for summoning the parliament, and transacting affairs. This demand being forwarded to the minister, the council instantly deliberated on the message, and Townshend, anxious to gratify the inclination of the king, transmitted a favourable answer, by his confidential friend and brother-in-law Horace Walpole, who had just arrived from the Hague. He was so anxious to convey this dispatch with all possible speed, that he quitted London on the 13th of November, the evening of its signature, left the Hague on the 17th, and, travelling night and day, arrived at Gohre on the 22d. He flattered himself with a favourable reception, as the messenger of good tidings, but found the state of affairs far different from that which his sanguine expectations had suggested.

He found the king devoted to Sunderland, and exasperated against his brother and Townshend, to whom the letters on the delay in signing the French treaty, expressive of his high indignation, had just been forwarded. He found him still greatly dissatisfied with their opposition to the plan of northern politics, and disgusted with the backwardness of Walpole to advance the subsidies for his troops of Saxe Gotha and Munster, and so strongly

\* Correspondence.

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impressed with the danger of permitting the prince of Wales to open the parliament in person, as to declare that no consideration should induce him to consent to the grant of discretionary powers for that purpose. He found Stanhope displeased with the conduct of Townshend, and convinced that his negotiations for the peace with France, and for the operations in the north, were counteracted by the English cabinet.

The frankness and warmth of his temper, impelled him without disguise to speak plain truths, and to expostulate with a manly freedom and dignified spirit which astounded Sunderland, and disconcerted Stanhope. He reminded Stanhope in particular, that he owed his high situation to Townshend and his brother; he remonstrated with him for having concurred with their enemies, and affirmed that the suspicions he had entertained against Townshend were totally groundless. He candidly avowed, that if blame was incurred by any delay of signing the treaty with France, that blame must attach solely to him, whose delicacy prevented him from affixing his name to an act, after he had solemnly assured the leading men in Holland, that England would not conclude a separate treaty. He finally answered for the honour and friendship of the brother ministers in England.

Stanhope, affected with these remonstrances, so forcibly urged by his friend, acknowledged that he had been deceived by false suggestions; spoke of Townshend and Walpole in terms of praise and affection; expressed a high sense of his obligations to them; requested that what was past might be forgotten, and what was to come might be improved; and promised in the most solemn manner to use his influence with the king, which he represented as very considerable, in favour of those who had committed to him his present trust. Horace Walpole was fully satisfied with these declarations. Stanhope seemed to act in conformity with his promises, and to labour to efface the ill impressions which the king had entertained of his ministers in England. Sunderland appeared confounded; the Hanoverians abashed; and the king inclined to recover his former satisfaction and complacency.

While these favourable symptoms of returning good will and harmony apparently prevailed, the answer of Townshend to the charges of delaying the signature to the French treaty, arrived at Gohre. To Sunderland's insolent reproofs he did not condescend to make any reply; to Stanhope he wrote only a few lines, testifying his concern and indignation at being betrayed by one in whom he placed the most implicit confidence; but his answer to the king\*, contained a full and dignified refutation of the malicious calumnies and misrepresentations of his enemies; and was written in a style

Townshend  
justifies him-  
self.

\* November 11. See Correspondence, Period II.

and:

and manner, expressing without disguise the high opinion which he entertained of his own character.

This manly and spirited letter appeared to have its due effect. The king, convinced that he had hastily and unjustly accused lord Townshend, candidly acknowledged his mistake. Stanhope, highly affected with a letter from his friend Walpole, justifying himself and Townshend from the malicious imputations laid to their charge, renewed his protestations of gratitude and devotion, and requested the interference of Horace Walpole to bring about a thorough reconciliation, and to re-establish the former harmony and good understanding. The king commissioned him to convey the strongest assurances of restored confidence in his faithful counsellors in England; and Horace Walpole quitted Gohre with a full conviction that all resentment had totally subsided, and that Stanhope was sincere; and he was as anxious to return to England with the good tidings, as he had been eager to repair to Hanover with the letter from the cabinet council.

His journey being somewhat retarded by unforeseen accidents on the road, and by the difficulty of crossing Maesland Sluys, he did not arrive in London till the 10th of December. He instantly executed his commission; delivered to Townshend and his brother Stanhope's letter, containing the strongest assurances of devotion and friendship; announced the king's favourable declarations; reconciled all parties, and re-established, as he thought, the most perfect harmony and good understanding in the cabinet. But he had scarcely effected this happy reconciliation, before dispatches were brought from Stanhope, announcing the king's command to remove Townshend from the office of secretary of state, and to offer him the lord lieutenancy of Ireland. As Brereton, who conveyed these dispatches without being apprised of their contents, could not have quitted Gohre more than three days subsequent to the departure of Horace Walpole, it was obvious that he had been duped and deceived, that the plan for the removal of Townshend had been then settled; and that the solemn promises, made by Stanhope, were never intended to be fulfilled. A letter from Sunderland to one of his friends, of the same date with those that brought the dismissal of Townshend, fully proved the motives which had influenced the king to countenance this proceeding. It accused Townshend, Walpole, and the chancellor, of caballing with the prince of Wales and Argyle, and forming designs against the king's authority \*. In fact, the letter from the cabinet council, which Horace Walpole had conveyed to Gohre, was the death warrant of Town-

Chapter 15.

1716.

Removal of  
Townshend.

\* See Townshend's letter to Slingelandt, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1717. Correspondence.

hend's.

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hend's administration. It contained many expressions and opinions highly unfavourable to the sentiments and inclinations of the king, and wholly opposite to the views of the Hanoverian junto. By the demand, that full and discretionary powers should be sent to the prince of Wales, it confirmed the opinion suggested by lord Sunderland, that the object of the ministers in England, was to exalt the son above the father, and to shew that the business of parliament could be transacted by the prince of Wales. It irritated the king to such a degree, that the immediate removal of the minister would have been the inevitable consequence, had not the presence of Horace Walpole, and his expostulations with Stanhope, disconcerted, for a short time, the plans of Sunderland. But the favourable impressions which his representations and the manly reply of Townshend had effected, were soon worn off by the suggestions of the Hanoverian junto; the king's jealousy again returned with redoubled force, and Townshend was dismissed.

Townshend declines the lord lieutenancy, Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>.

His letter to the king.

Townshend received the unexpected account of his dismissal with no less surprise than indignation. In his letter to the king, he announced his resolution to decline the offer of the lord lieutenancy, with great dignity and spirit.

" \* I have received with deference, and with the utmost submission, your majesty's commands, intimated by M. secretary Methuen, depriving me of the office of secretary of state. I most humbly demand permission to remind your majesty of what I said, when you did me the honour to confer on me that employment; that I should esteem myself happy, if I had as much capacity as zeal and affection for your majesty's service, in which case I am sure that your majesty would have every reason to be satisfied with my services. I can venture to affirm with truth, that the desire of testifying my gratitude has been the only motive capable of hitherto supporting me under the fatigues of my employment. I am highly sensible of the honour which your majesty confers on me, by condescending to appoint me lord lieutenant of Ireland: But as my domestic affairs do not permit me to reside out of England, I should hold myself to be totally unworthy of the choice which your majesty has been pleased to make, if I were capable of enjoying the large appointments annexed to that honourable office, without doing the duty of it. I trust that your majesty will grant me the permission to attend to the private affairs of my family, which I have too much neglected. Yet I will venture to assure your majesty, that whatever may be my situation, your majesty will always find me a faithful and grateful servant, anxious to promote, with all his power, your majesty's service; having the honour of being, with

\* Townshend Papers.—See the French letter, of which this is the original draught, in the Correspondence.

the most inviolable attachment, sire, your majesty's most humble, most obedient, and most faithful subject and servant."

Chapter 16.  
1716 to 1717.

In a short letter to Stanhope, Townshend calmly reproached him for the duplicity of his conduct, and particularly dwelt on the violation of the promises which he had made to Horace Walpole. But Stanhope had to encounter the still severer reproaches from his confidential friend, Walpole. To him he opened himself in a private letter, which was delivered twenty-four hours before that which announced the dismissal of Townshend. In this apology he was extremely anxious to justify his conduct, and to attribute his acquiescence to the positive commands of the king, who bitterly complained of the warmth and impracticability of Townshend's temper and manner, and he imputed solely to his influence, that the disgrace of the minister was softened by the offer of the lord lieutenancy. He took merit to himself for having removed the prejudices which the king had entertained against Walpole, and earnestly exhorted him to employ his interest with lord Townshend to accept the proffered dignity. The reader will find, in the correspondence, this specious justification of his conduct, and the reproachful answers of Walpole, who after complaining of the hardship with which Townshend was treated; observed, that it was still more unjust to load him with false imputations to justify such ill treatment, and concluded with expressing his resolution to act invariably with him.

Walpole reproaches Stanhope.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH:

1716—1717.

*Discontents in England and Holland at the Disgrace of Townshend.—Sunderland and Stanhope, and the Hanoverians, are alarmed.—Apologize for their Conduct.—The King prevails upon him to accept the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland.—Motives for his Conduct.—Townshend and Walpole coldly support Government.—Sunderland increases his Party.—Townshend dismissed from the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland.—Walpole proposes and carries his Scheme for reducing the Interest of the National Debt.—Resigns.—Many of the leading Whigs follow his Example.—Weakness of the new Administration.*

**T**HE precipitate manner in which Townshend was removed from the office of secretary of state, was occasioned by a violent burst of resentment and jealousy in the king. But as soon as the first emotions of anger had subsided,

Alarms on dismissal of Townshend.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

subsided, and the first raptures of triumph among those who had obtained his disgrace had given way to sober and serious reflection, the whole body began to be alarmed at the fatal consequences which seemed likely to ensue from that event.

In England.

Reports were transmitted from England, that these measures had excited very serious discontents and mistrusts amongst the monied men in the city; that the greater part of the Whigs were highly exasperated; that of the cabinet council, Devonshire, Orford, Cowper, Walpole, and Methuen adhered inviolably to the fallen minister, and that their secession might create a dangerous division, and distract the plans already concerted for the ensuing session. But above all considerations they dreaded the opposition of Walpole, who took a principal lead in the house of commons; and whose ability for the affairs of finance was so well understood, as to render it difficult to supply his place at the head of the treasury at this particular juncture, when he was forming a scheme, which had been highly applauded by the king, for reducing the interest of the national debt.

In Holland.

These apprehensions were not confined to England, but extended to foreign parts, and particularly Holland. Many calumnious imputations having been insinuated by Sunderland and the Hanoverians, Townshend wrote a full and spirited justification of his and Walpole's conduct, and detailed the real motives which had occasioned their disgrace, in a letter\* to his confidential friend, Slingelandt, afterwards pensionary of Holland; who strongly expressed regret at his dismissal, and concern at his refusal to accept the lord lieutenancy of Ireland.

This letter had a very striking effect over his friends in Holland. Pensionary Heinsius, Fagel, Slingelandt, Duvenvoirde, and other leading men in that republic, expressed the most serious concern at the fatal consequences which might result to the united interests of the two countries from this fatal division; and reprobated a measure, which, according to their opinion, was calculated to make the crown totter on the head of the king. The opinion of these men, warmly attached to the English interest, had great weight with George the First, during the short time which he passed at the Hague, on his return to England.

Apprehensions of Sunderland and Stanhope.

The terror of Sunderland and Stanhope on this occasion, is fully proved by the extraordinary attention they now paid to Townshend and Walpole. Sunderland apologized for having accused them of caballing with the duke of Argyle; and acknowledged that the report had originated from a misrepresentation of Lord Cadogan, whose hasty temper was well known. He ex-

\* Correspondence.

pressed his regret and repentance for having written an insolent letter\* to the earl of Orford, in which he had insulted the cabinet ministers who adhered to Townshend. Both he and Stanhope vied in making the most artful excuses for their past conduct; declared that they did not in the smallest degree contribute to his disgrace, and threw the whole blame on the Hanoverians. They finally expatiated on the danger to the true Whig interest, if Townshend now deserted his tried friends. Stanhope wrote in the strongest manner to Walpole, and used every argument to appease his resentment. He renewed his asseverations, that the removal of the minister was the sole determination of his royal master, pronounced it an impossible attempt to think of persuading the king to recall his commands; expressed his apprehensions of the dangerous consequences, if Walpole and the other leaders of the Whigs should deem it necessary to resign; and repeated his earnest entreaties to prevent things from being carried to such extremities as he dreaded to think of. He exhorted Methuen, who declared his resolution of acting with Walpole, not to desert the good cause; and throw the king into the hands of the Tories; but solicited his humble interposition with Townshend and Walpole: "They may possibly," he added, "unking their master, or (what I do before God think very possible) make him abdicate; but they will never force him to make Townshend secretary †." On their arrival in England, they acted in the same abject manner, and continued to make the most humble submission.

The king himself treated Townshend with the most flattering marks of distinction. He apologized in person for the precipitation with which he had deprived him of the seals, and acknowledged that he had been imposed upon by false reports; he sent Bernsdorf to represent the fatal effects which would be derived from his opposition at this period. That artful minister offered him, in his master's name, a restoration to his former favour, and every satisfaction which he could desire; declared that the king having taken from him the seals, could not immediately restore them consistently with his own honour; promised that no other changes should be made; intreated him to accept the proffered dignity. He assured him that he might consider that office only as a temporary post, and he permitted to resign it at pleasure, in exchange for any other he should prefer ‡.

As it was impossible, after the insolent letters of Sunderland, and the insidious conduct of Stanhope, that he could ever repose any confidence in those who had thus insulted and deceived him, he would have acted a nobler

Chapter 16.  
1716 to 1717.

Conduct of  
the king.  
1717.

Townshend  
accepts the  
lord lieutenancy.

\* See letter from M. Duvenvoirde to Lord Townshend.—Correspondence.

† Letter from Stanhope to Methuen.—Correspondence.

‡ Duvenvoirde to Lord Townshend.—Correspondence.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

and a wiser part, had he declined accepting any office. Had he persisted in his refusal of the lord lieutenancy, had Walpole, Devonshire, Orford, Cowper, Methuen, and Pulteney, instantly resigned on his dismissal, the party of Sunderland was so weak and insufficient, that he could not have obtained a majority in parliament. But Townshend, mollified by the solicitations of the king, overcome by the importunities of his friends in Holland, and dreading the consequences of a disunion of the Whigs at this moment, when an invasion from Sweden was threatened, at length accepted the vice-royalty, and remaining in England, assisted at the deliberations of the cabinet. All the friends of Townshend were suffered to continue in their places. Methuen, who had acted as secretary of state during the absence of Stanhope, now succeeded to the southern department. Walpole remained at the head of the treasury: and the great body of the Whigs still appeared to act with union and cordiality.

Proceedings  
in parliament.

Feb. 21.  
March 4.

In consequence of this apparent amity, the opposition in the commons was so trifling, that the address, thanking the king for laying before the house the paper proving the projected invasion from Sweden, passed unanimously \*; and when the estimates relating to the land forces were presented, the motion for putting off the consideration, was carried by a triumphant majority of 222 voices against 57 †.

Fresh divisions.

But the good understanding between the different members of administration, did not long continue. It soon appeared, that the king's promises of favour, made by Bernsdorf to Townshend and Walpole, were not fulfilled; and that the king placed his chief confidence in Sunderland and Stanhope. New divisions took place; Townshend and Walpole continued to defend the measures of government, but their support was cold and formal, and so different from their former zeal, as plainly shewed extreme dissatisfaction. Sunderland had now considerably increased his party, and thought himself sufficiently strong to carry on the public business, and defy the opposition. In this situation, an open rupture in the cabinet was unavoidable. The first public symptoms of this difference appeared in the house of commons. On a motion that a supply be granted to enable the king to concert such measures with foreign princes and states, as may prevent any apprehensions from the designs of Sweden for the future: Walpole, who on all such occasions used to give a great bias to the house, maintained a profound silence, and the resolution was carried by a majority of only 4 voices ‡.

9th.

As it was evident that this mode of inimical proceeding originated from

Journals.—Chandler.

† Chandler.

‡ Journals.

the

the party of which Townshend was leader, he received, on the same evening, a letter from Stanhope, announcing his dismissal.

Chapter 16.  
1716 to 1717.

Townshend's  
dismissal.

Walpole re-  
signs.

The king himself so highly appreciated the services and talents of Walpole, that he dreaded his resignation, and was persuaded to remove Townshend, under the belief that he would still remain at the head of the treasury. When Walpole, therefore, on the following morning, requested an audience, and gave up the seals, the king was extremely surprised. He refused to accept his resignation, expressed a high sense of his services in the kindest and strongest terms; declared that he had no thoughts of parting with so faithful a counsellor; intreated him not to retire, and replaced the seals in his hat. To this Walpole replied, with no less concern than firmness, that however well inclined he might be to obey his majesty's commands, yet it would be impossible to serve him faithfully with those ministers to whom he had lately given his favour, "They will propose to me," he said, "both as chancellor of the exchequer, and in parliament, such things, that if I agree to support them, my credit and reputation will be lost; and if I disapprove or oppose them, I must forfeit your majesty's favour. For I, in my station, though not the author, must be answerable to my king and to my country for all the measures which may be adopted by administration." At the conclusion of these words, he again laid the seals upon the table; the king returned them not less than ten times, and when the minister as often replaced them on the table, he gave up the struggle, and reluctantly accepted his resignation, expressing great concern and much repentment at his determined perseverance. At the conclusion of this affecting scene, Walpole came into the adjoining apartment, and those who were present, witnessed the anguish of his countenance, and observed that his eyes were suffused with tears. Those who immediately entered into the closet, found the king no less disturbed and agitated\*.

These removals were soon followed by an almost total change in the administration. Devonshire, Orford, Methuen, and Pulteney, resigned; Stanhope was appointed first lord of the treasury, and chancellor of the exchequer; Sunderland and Addison secretaries of state; the duke of Bolton lord lieutenant of Ireland, and the duke of Newcastle lord chamberlain; the earl of Berkley first lord of the admiralty, and the duke of Kingston retained the office of privy seal, to which he had been nominated in the preceding year, on the resignation of Sunderland, who was made treasurer of Ireland for life.

Further  
changes.

\* This interesting anecdote is taken from a letter of Horace Walpole to Etouge, dated Wotton, October 12, 1751. See Correspondence.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH:

1717—1719.

*Walpole proposes his Plan for reducing the Interest of the National Debt.—His Resignation excites warm Debates.—Altercation with Stanhope.—Remarks on the baneful Spirit of a systematic Opposition to all the Measures of Government.—Walpole not exempted from that Censure.—His uniform Opposition, and Influence in the House of Commons.*

Walpole's  
scheme for  
reducing the  
national  
debt.

THE resignation of Walpole happened at a time when he was exerting his abilities for finance, in the arrangement of a scheme highly advantageous to the country. When he was first placed at the head of the treasury, the national debt amounted to 50 millions, and although the common interest of money had been reduced in the late reign to 5 per cent. yet the interest of some of the debts were as high as 8, and none lower than 6; so that the average was 7 per cent. The difference between this rate of interest, and that on private mortgages, presented a *real* fund for lessening the public debt.

This debt was considered under two heads; redeemable, and irredeemable. The redeemable, or such debts as had been provided for by parliament with a redeemable interest of so much per cent. the public had a right and power to discharge whenever they were able, either by providing money for such proprietors as insisted upon money, or by offering new terms, in discharge of all former conditions, which, if accepted by the proprietors, was to be deemed an actual redemption of the first debt, as if it had been paid off in ready money. As for the irredeemable debts, or long and short annuities, nothing could be effected without the absolute consent of the proprietors. The only method, therefore, to treat with them, was to offer such conditions as they should deem advantageous\*.

Upon these principles Walpole gave the first hint of this great scheme, by proposing to borrow £. 600,000, bearing interest only 4 per cent. and to apply all savings, arising from the intended redemptions, for the purpose of re-

\* Tindal, vol. 19. p. 102.

ducing and discharging the national debt, which was the first resolution ever taken in parliament in order to raise or establish a *general* sinking fund \*. When he brought his scheme into the house, the project appeared so well digested and advantageous, that the opposition which had been intended was converted into approbation, and every article was agreed to.

Chapter 17.  
1717 to 1719.  
March 23,  
1717.  
April 10th.

Unfortunately for the completion of this great arrangement, the able projector was no longer in office. On bringing in the bill, Walpole gave a hint that he had resigned his places, by saying, "that he now presented it as a country gentleman, but hoped that it would not fare the worse for having two fathers, and that his successor would take care to bring it to perfection †." The difficulties which he had to encounter in this scheme, will appear from the consideration, that no reduction of interest could be made without the consent of the public creditors themselves. It was solely by his address and management, that the companies of the Bank and South Sea agreed not only to reduce their own interest, but to furnish large sums for the discharge of such other creditors as should refuse to comply with an equal reduction; a striking proof of the general esteem in which he was held by the proprietors of the national debts; of their regard for his judgment, and confidence in his equity.

The resignation of Walpole caused a great sensation in the house of commons, where regret for the want of his talents for finance, seemed to prevail, and he was as much inveighed against for resigning, as he was afterwards reviled for remaining in power. His withdrawing from government at this crisis, was called a defection; a criminal conspiracy, with a view to embarrass the king, and to force him to comply with his unwarrantable demands. In answer to these accusations, Walpole justly observed, "That persons who had accepted places in the government, had often been reflected on for carrying on designs, and acting contrary to the interest of their country; but that he had never heard a man arraigned for laying down one of the most profitable places in the kingdom: that for his own part, if he would have complied with some measures, it had not been in the power of any of the present ministers to remove him; but that he had reasons for resigning his employments, with which he had acquainted his majesty, and might, perhaps, in a proper time, declare them to the house. In the mean while, the tenour of his conduct should shew, that he never intended to make the king uneasy, or to embarrass his affairs ‡."

Defends his  
resignation.

\* *Historical Register for 1717*, p. 150.—  
Some Considerations concerning the Public  
Funds, 1735, p. 11.

† Chandler.  
‡ Chandler.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

Reflected on  
by Stanhope.

But a more serious charge was brought against him by Stanhope, who observed, in the heat of debate, that "he would endeavour to make up by application, honesty, and disinterestedness, what he wanted in abilities and experience. That he would content himself with the salary and lawful perquisites of his office; and, though he had quitted a better place, he would not quarter himself upon any body. That he had no brothers, nor other relations to provide for; and that upon his first entering into the treasury, he had made a standing order against the late practice of granting reversions of places." Walpole, touched with these insinuations, complained in the first place of breach of friendship, and betraying private conversation. He then frankly owned, that while he was in employment, he had endeavoured to serve his friends and relations; than which, in his opinion, nothing was more reasonable and just. "As to the granting of reversions," he added, "I am willing to acquaint the house with the meaning of the charge which is now urged against me. I have no objections to the German ministers, whom the king brought with him from Hanover, and who, as far as I had observed, had behaved themselves like men of honour; but, there is a mean fellow\*, of what nation I know not, who is eager to dispose of employments. This man, having obtained the grant of a reversion, which he designed for his son, I thought it too good for him, and therefore reserved it for my own son. On this disappointment, the foreigner was so impertinent as to demand £. 2,500, under pretence that he had been offered that sum for the reversion; but I was wiser than to comply with his demands. And I am bold to acknowledge, one of the chief reasons that made me resign was, because I could not connive at some things that were carrying on †."

Conduct in  
opposition.

When Walpole asserted in the house, that he never intended to embarrass the affairs of government, he either was not sincere in his professions, or if he was, did not possess that patriotic and disinterested firmness which could resist the spirit of party; for almost from the moment of his resignation, to his return into office, we find him uniform in his opposition to all the measures of government. We see him leagued with the Tories, and voting with Sir William Wyndham, Bromley, Shippen, and Snell; and we observe, not without regret at the inconsistency of human nature, Shippen expressing his satisfaction, that Walpole, when contending for the service of his country, was no more afraid than himself of being called a Jacobite by those who wanted other arguments to support their debates ‡. We find him even opposing the mutiny bill, that necessary measure for the regulation of

Mutiny bill.

\* Alluding to Robethon.

† Chandler.

‡ Chandler, vol. 6. p. 156.

military discipline, and in the heat of argument, making use of this memorable expression, "He that is for blood, shall have blood": But though he spoke thus strenuously against the bill, he voted for it, and secured a large majority. Being reproached for this apparent inconsistency, he justified himself by declaring, that although in the debate he was of opinion that mutiny and desertion should be punished by the civil magistrate, yet he was convinced that those crimes should be punished by the martial law, rather than escape with impunity \*. We find him taking an active part against the repeal of the occasional and schism bills, notwithstanding his animated declaration, on a former occasion, that the schism bill had more the appearance of a decree of Julian the apostate, than a law enacted by a protestant parliament, since it tended to raise as great a persecution against our protestant brethren, as either the primitive christians ever suffered from the heathen emperors, or the protestants from popery and the inquisition †. In support of the question for reducing the troops, he afforded a striking instance of inconsistency, by enlarging on the common topic of the danger of a standing army in a free nation, and by insisting that 12,000 men were fully sufficient. Yet at this very period, a rebellious spirit continued to subsist in England, and prevailed still more in Scotland. Although the king of Sweden's design to support the Pretender had been discovered, yet he still persisted in his resolution, and waited only for a favourable opportunity of carrying his project into execution. The queen of Spain, and cardinal Alberoni, had revived war in the south of Europe, and were forming vast preparations; and the reception and encouragements given to the adherents of the Pretender, were sure symptoms of their inclinations in his favour. Walpole was well aware of all these circumstances, and could not be ignorant that the reduction of the army must have been attended with fatal consequences, and therefore his support of this measure could be dictated only by party resentment.

We find him, who had spoken with such heat and force of argument against the makers of the peace of Utrecht, who had been the indefatigable chairman of the secret committee, and had drawn up that able report, which brought such heavy accusations against Oxford, now grown languid and lukewarm in the prosecution, absenting ‡ himself from the committee so often, that another chairman was chosen in his place, and ironically complimented by Shippen, that he who was the most forward and active in the impeachment, had abated in his warmth since he was out of place §. At length, by

Chapter 17.  
1717 to 1719.

Schism bill.

Speaks for  
the reduction of the  
army.

Acquittal of  
Oxford.

\* Hardwicke Papers.  
† Chandler, 1712.—Tindal.

‡ Tindal.  
§ Chandler.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

Inquiry into  
the conduct  
of lord Ca-  
dogan.  
June 4th.

his connivance, a feigned quarrel as to the mode of proceeding took place between the two houses, and no prosecutors appearing on the day fixed for the continuance of the trial, Oxford was unanimously acquitted.

Walpole also, and the Whigs in opposition, whom Shippen humorously called his *new allies*, zealously supported the inquiry into the conduct of lord Cadogan, for fraud in the charge of transporting the Dutch troops, at the time of the rebellion, to and from Great Britain. Walpole spoke in this debate near two hours, and in the course of his speech, strained his voice so high, and used such violent efforts, that the blood burst from his nose, and he was obliged to retire for some time from the house \*. In answer to his arguments, it was ably observed by Lechmere, that the inquiry was frivolous, the result of party malice, and of the same nature with those which had been instituted against Marlborough, Townshend, and Walpole himself; and he justly observed, that those persons who were now most zealous about the inquiry, had been silent about these pretended frauds while they were in place. But the advocates for the inquiry were so powerful, that it was negatived only by a majority of 10 voices †.

Influence in  
parliament.

Supports the  
Swedish sub-  
sidy.

But whatever were the motives by which Walpole was guided, he considerably influenced the house of commons, during the whole time of his opposition. Three days after his resignation, Stanhope having moved for granting the sum of £.250,000 to enable the king to concert measures against Sweden; and Pulteney, who had just resigned his place of secretary at war, having spoke with great vehemence against a German ministry, the motion was in great danger of being lost, till Walpole closed the debate, by observing, "That having already spoken in favour of the supply, he should now vote for it;" and the motion, in consequence of his interference, was carried without a division ‡. A few words in favour of Mr. Jackson, who had offended the house by declaring that there were amongst them a set of men who made it their study and business to embarrass the government, saved him from the Tower. And when Shippen said, "the speech from the throne seemed rather calculated for the meridian of Germany, than of Great Britain," and urged, as the only infelicity of his majesty's reign, that he was unacquainted with our language and constitution; a few palliating expressions from Walpole would have been attended with the same effect, if the inflexible orator had not maintained what he had advanced, and by that obstinacy occasioned his own commitment §. Even in the article of supplies, he occasionally prevailed against the ministry. In speaking for the diminution of the army

December  
4th 1717.

\* Chandler.

† Historical Register.—Chandler.

‡ Historical Register.—Chandler.—Tindal.

§ Chandler, vol. 6. p. 157.

estimates, his proposal, that £.650,000, instead of £.681,618, should be granted for defraying the charges of guards and garrisons \* was adopted; and in the same session, when the ministry demanded £.130,361, for the pay of reduced officers, and the Tories would only grant £.80,000, Walpole proposed a medium of £.99,000; and his motion was carried without a division.

Chapter 17.  
1717 to 1719.

December  
9th 1718.

South Sea  
loan applied  
to the sinking  
fund.

January 12,  
1719.

A proposal from the South Sea company, for advancing £.700,000, having been accepted by the house, some of the members were for applying it towards the present and growing necessities of the government. But in a grand committee of ways and means, Walpole, in favour of his sinking fund, insisting that the public debts already incurred should be first considered, a resolution was taken, and a bill afterwards brought in, directing the application of this money, agreeably to his sentiments. "It is indeed plain," adds a virulent pamphleteer, who decried the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, that "in all transactions of money affairs, the house relied more upon his judgment than on that of any other member †."

Thus it appears that Walpole, even when in opposition, almost managed the house of commons; and being in opposition he could not gain that ascendancy, by the means of corruption and influence, which were afterwards so repeatedly urged against him, and which the same virulent author calls "some *SECRET MAGIC* of which he seemed to have been a perfect master." In fact, the magic which he applied, was derived from profound knowledge of finance, great skill in debate, in which perspicuity and sound sense were eminently conspicuous, unimpeached integrity of character, and the assistance of party.

Walpole was no less vehement in his opposition to those measures of government which related to foreign affairs, and which, at this time, embraced a very large field for approbation or censure. The fatal consequences of the peace of Utrecht, placed England in a very delicate situation between the opposite pretensions of Spain and Austria. To satisfy both was impracticable; but the alliance with France, concerted by Walpole and Townshend, and the necessity of opposing the unjust schemes and dangerous intrigues of Cardinal Alberoni, compelled Great Britain to side with the Emperor. Yet though it was generally known that Spain, in concert with Sweden, meditated a descent on our coasts, to overturn the established government, and set the Pretender on the throne; though Philip the Fifth grasped at the poi-

Foreign  
transactions.

Chandler, vol. 6. p. 175.

† History of the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, p. 113.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

cession of Gibraltar and Minorca, and the subversion of the regent's power in France; and the ambition of his consort, Elizabeth Farnese, aimed at the acquisition of the Italian provinces for her son; though a Spanish fleet had been sent into the Mediterranean, and a Spanish army had over-run the kingdom of Sardinia, and threatened the reduction of Sicily, no attempts seem to have been wanting on the side of England, to induce the king of Spain, by persuasions, to adopt pacific measures. Immediate preparations were arranged with the Emperor, France, and the United Provinces, and every proper measure was concerted with those powers to prevent hostilities. Cadogan was sent to the Hague, Dubois came to London, and settled with the ministry, terms for an accommodation between the Emperor and the king of Spain \*. George the First even proceeded so far as to propose the cession of Gibraltar †, on the consideration of an equivalent, and permitted the regent duke of Orleans to make the offer to the king of Spain, if he would ratify the terms specified in the treaty, called the quadruple alliance, passed at London on the 2d of August 1718, between the Emperor, England, and France, and afterwards acceded to by the United Provinces.

By this alliance, the Emperor renounced all claims to the crown of Spain, consented, that Tuscany, Parma, and Placentia, as male fiefs of the empire, should descend, in default of male heirs, to Don Carlos, eldest son of Elizabeth Farnese, by Philip the Fifth. In return for these concessions, the Emperor was to be gratified with the possession of Sicily, in lieu of which territory, Sardinia was to be allotted to Victor Amadeus. The terms to be imposed on Philip were, the renunciation of all claims to the dominions of the Emperor, in Italy, and the Netherlands. Three months being allowed to Philip for the acceptance of these conditions, Stanhope himself employed this interval in conducting the negotiation in person: he repaired to Paris, and after adjusting measures with the regent proceeded to Madrid. In a conference with Alberoni, he represented that a French army was preparing to invade Spain, and that a British squadron, under the command of admiral Byng, was sailing for the Mediterranean, with orders to attack and destroy the Spanish fleet, if Sicily was not evacuated: he even gave a list of the number and force of the Ships, to convince him of their evident superiority ‡. These overtures were rejected with haughtiness and even contempt. Stanhope's immediate departure from Spain became the signal for war; the French troops advanced, admiral Byng attacked, captured and destroyed the greater part of the Spanish fleet. The king of Spain, disap-

\* Tindal, vol. 19, p. 167.

† See Chapter on Gibraltar, in Period IV.

‡ Earl Stanhope's Letter to Secretary Craggs; Hardwicke Papers.

pointed in his hopes of making an impression on England, by the death of Charles the Twelfth, and the defection of the Czar, was compelled to dismiss Alberoni, and to accede to the quadruple alliance.

During the whole progress of these transactions, Walpole strenuously opposed the conduct of government. On the motion, made by Sir William Strickland, for an address of thanks to the king for his unwearied endeavours to promote the welfare of his kingdoms, and to preserve the tranquillity of Europe, and to assure him that the house would make good such exceedings of men for the sea service, for the year 1718, as his majesty should find necessary \*, Walpole observed, that, such an address had all the air of a declaration of war against Spain. In the following sessions, when secretary Craggs laid before the house, copies of some of the treaties relating to the quadruple alliance, alluded to in the speech from the throne, Walpole no less warmly objected to the words in the motion for an address, expressing the entire satisfaction of the house in those measures which the king had already taken; he urged, "That it was against the common rules of prudence, and the methods of proceeding in that house, to approve a thing before they knew what it was; that he was thoroughly convinced of, and as ready as any person in that assembly, to acknowledge his majesty's great care for the general peace of Europe, and the interest of Great Britain; but that to sanction, in the manner proposed, the late measures, could have no other view than to screen ministers, who were conscious of having done something amiss, and, who having begun a war against Spain, would now make it the parliament's war: and concluded, by expressing an entire dissatisfaction at a conduct contrary to the law of nations, and a breach of solemn treaties †." When Craggs, in reply, gave an abstract of the articles of the quadruple alliance, Walpole, after reiterating his professions of duty and affection to the king, distinguished between him and his ministers, and expressed his unwillingness to approve the measures pursued, until the treaties on which those measures were founded had been fully and maturely examined ‡. Craggs having presented the translations of the remaining treaties, and the king having sent a message, that he had declared war against Spain, Walpole combated the address, and while his brother Horace made a long speech against the quadruple alliance, and particularly argued that the grant of Sicily to the Emperor in exchange for Sardinia, was a breach of the treaty of Utrecht, he himself exclaimed against the injustice of attacking the Spanish fleet before the declaration of war §. But the answer given to this vio-

Chapter 17  
1717 to 1719

Opposes the  
war with  
Spain.

March 17.  
1718.

Nov. 11.

Nov. 13.  
Dec. 17.

Chandler.

† Chandler.

‡ Chandler.

§ Chandler, vol. 6. p. 191.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

Objects to  
the quadruple  
alliance.

lent declamation by the ministerial advocates, was not unreasonable. They stated, that the blame could attach only to Spain; the conduct of the king and ministers was agreeable to the law of nations, and to the rules of equity. Was it just to attack Sardinia, without any previous declaration of war, and while the Emperor was engaged with the Turks? Was it just to invade Sicily, without the least provocation? And was it not just in the king of England to vindicate the faith of treaties, and to protect the trade of his subjects, which had been violently oppressed? But though Walpole might in this, and other instances, appear influenced by the spirit of party, yet the arguments which he and his friends urged against the articles of the quadruple alliance, are proved by experience to have been well founded; for although the accession of Spain seemed to complete the peace of Utrecht, since the Emperor acknowledged Philip king of Spain, and Philip renounced all claims to the Netherlands, the Milanese, Naples, and Sicily, yet those two princes were too much irritated to enter cordially into this scheme of pacification: both parties had made cessions without relinquishing their respective pretensions, and it will be difficult to decide, whether the Emperor or Philip were most dissatisfied with the quadruple alliance.

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH:

1718—1719.

*Origin and Progress of the Peerage Bill.—Opposition and Speech of Walpole.—Bill rejected.*

Motives for  
the introduction  
of the  
peerage bill.

**I**N opposition to the peerage bill, Walpole employed all his talents and eloquence, and bore the most conspicuous part in obtaining its defeat.

This bill was projected by Sunderland; his views were, to restrain the power of the prince of Wales, when he came to the throne, whom he had offended beyond all hopes of forgiveness, and to extend and perpetuate his own influence, by the creation of many new peers. The unfortunate misunderstanding between the king and his son, which had recently increased to a very alarming degree, favoured the success of his scheme; and the king, from a motive of mean jealousy, was induced to give up this important and honourable branch of his royal prerogative, and to strip the crown of its  
brightest

Chapter 18.  
1718 to 1719.

brightest jewel. Sunderland had little difficulty in acquiring a large majority in the house of lords, in favour of a measure which so highly increased their power; the whole body of the Scotch peers in the upper house were gained by the promise of an hereditary seat, and many of the lords, who from form opposed the bill, were secretly not averse to its passing. Being secure of the lords, he relied for success in the house of commons, on the known abhorrence of the Whigs, who formed a large majority, to the creation of the twelve peers, during the administration of Oxford; he had been witness to their repeated and vehement asseverations, that the crown ought in future to be deprived of a prerogative which by that act had brought dishonour on Great Britain, and endangered the liberties of Europe. Even the Whigs in opposition he thought could not venture to obstruct a bill of such a nature, without losing the confidence of their party. Under these circumstances, a bill to limit the number of peers was proposed.

The king sent a message to the house, that, "he had so much at heart the settling the peerage of the whole kingdom, on such a foundation as might secure the freedom and constitution of parliament in all future ages, that he was willing his prerogative should not stand in the way of so great and necessary a work \*." In consequence of this message, a bill was brought in "to settle and limit the peerage in such a manner, that the number of English peers should not be enlarged beyond six of the present number, which, upon failure of issue male, might be supplied by new creations: that, instead of the sixteen elective peers from Scotland, twenty-five should be made hereditary on the part of that kingdom; and that this number, upon failure of heirs male, should be supplied from the other members of the Scotch peerage †;" after a strenuous opposition from Cowper, and some partial objections from Townshend and Nottingham, the bill was twice read, and the articles agreed to without division; but on the day appointed for a third reading, Stanhope observed, "That the bill having made a great noise, and raised strange apprehensions; and since the design of it had been so misrepresented, and so misunderstood, that it was like to meet with great opposition in the other house, he thought it advisable to let that matter lie still till a more proper opportunity ‡."

The king's  
message.  
2d. March.14th.  
Bill with-  
drawn.Its unpopu-  
larity.

The unpopularity of the measure, and the ferment it had excited in the nation, were the motives which induced Sunderland to withdraw the motion at the moment of certain success in the house of lords. In vain the pen of

\* Journals of the House of Lords.—Chandler.

† Lords Journals.

‡ Ibid.

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1714 to 1720.

Walpole's  
pamphlet.

Addison had been employed in defending the bill, in a paper called *The Old Whig*, against Steele, who attacked it in a pamphlet intitled *The Plebeian*, and whose arguments had greater weight with the public. Walpole also published a pamphlet on the same side of the question, "*The Thoughts of a Member of the lower House, in relation to a Project for restraining and limiting the Power of the Crown in the future Creation of Peers* \*." In this publication, he explained the nature of the bill, and exposed the views of those who introduced it, with a perspicuity of argument, and simplicity of style adapted to all capacities, and calculated to make a general impression.

Sunderland's  
efforts.

The minister, however, did not relinquish his darling bill. During the interval between the prorogation and meeting of parliament, he exerted every effort to engage a majority in its favour. Bribes were profusely lavished, promises and threats were alternately employed, in every shape which his sanguine and overhearing temper could suggest. He affected to declare, that it was the king's desire, and not the act of the ministry; he did not attempt to conceal that it was levelled against the future government of the prince of Wales, whom he represented as capable of *doing mad things* † when he came to the throne. He declared that the necessary consequence of its rejection would be the ruin of the Whigs, and the introduction of the Tories into the confidence and favour of the king; expressed his surprise that any person who styled himself a Whig should oppose it; and exerted himself in the business with so much heat and violence, that in endeavouring to persuade Middleton, lord chancellor of Ireland, who refused to support the measure in the British house of commons, the blood gushed from his nose ‡.

Meeting of  
the Whigs at  
Devonshire  
house.

These efforts were attended with such success, that at a meeting held by the leaders of the Whigs in opposition, at Devonshire house, Walpole found the whole body lukewarm, irresolute, or desponding: several of the poets secretly favoured a bill which would increase their importance; others declared, that as Whigs, it would be a manifest inconsistency to object to a measure tending to prevent the repetition of an abuse of prerogative against which they had repeatedly inveighed; those who were sincerely averse to it, were unwilling to exert themselves in hopeless resistance, and it was the prevailing opinion that the bill should be permitted to pass without opposition. Walpole alone dissented, and reprobated, in the strongest terms, this resolution as dastardly and impolitic. He maintained that it was the only point on which they could harass administration with any prospect of success;

\* Royal and Noble Authors, vol. 2. p. 140.

† Lord Middleton's conversation with Lord Sunderland. Correspondence, Period II.

‡ See Lord Middleton's Letters and Minutes. Correspondence, Period II.

that

that he would place it in such a light as to excite indignation in every independent commoner; that he saw a spirit rising against it among the Whigs, and particularly among the country gentlemen, who were otherwise not averse to support government. He said, that he had overheard a member of the house of commons, a country gentleman, who possessed an estate of not more than £. 800 a year, declare to another with great warmth, that although he had no chance of being made a peer himself, yet, he would never consent to the injustice of giving a perpetual exclusion to his family. He was convinced, he added, that the same sentiment would have a strong effect upon the whole body of country gentlemen; and concluded his animated remonstrances, by declaring, that if deserted by his party, he himself would singly stand forth and oppose it. This declaration, urged with uncommon vehemence, occasioned much altercation, and many persuasions were made to deter him from adopting a measure which appeared chimerical and absurd; but when they found that he persisted, the whole party gradually came over to his opinion, and agreed that an opposition should be made to it in the house of commons\*.

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1718 to 1719.

The bill was again introduced to the notice of parliament, at the opening of the session, by the following artful expressions in the king's speech: "If the necessities of my government have sometimes engaged your duty and affection to intrust me with powers, of which you have always, with good reason, been jealous, the whole world must acknowledge they have been so used, as to justify the confidence you have reposed in me. And as I can truly affirm, that no prince was ever more zealous to increase his own authority, than I am to perpetuate the liberty of my people, I hope you will think of all proper methods to establish and transmit to your posterity, the freedom of our happy constitution, and particularly to secure that part, which is most liable to abuse. I value myself upon being the first, who hath given you an opportunity of doing it; and I must recommend it to you, to compleat those measures, which remained imperfect the last session †."

Bill passes the lords.

This speech was made the 23d of November; on the 25th, the duke of Buckingham brought the bill into the house, where it was only opposed by Cowper. It was committed on the 26th, ingrossed on the 28th, passed the 30th, and sent down to the house of commons on the 1st of December ‡. At this period the bill had undergone no alteration from that proposed in the

Sent to the commons.

\* See Speaker Onslow's Remarks on Opposition. Correspondence.

† Journals.—Chandler.

‡ Journals.—Chandler.

Period II.  
1714 to 1720.

last session; but it was understood, that in order to conciliate the commons, the king was willing to give up another branch of his prerogative, that of pardoning in cases of impeachment, and the lords would wave their privilege of *scandalum magnatum* \*.

This memorable bill was read a second time on the 8th of December†, and a motion made for committing it, gave rise to a long and warm debate: it was principally supported by Craggs, secretary of state, Aislabie, chancellor of the exchequer, Lechmere, attorney-general, and Hampden; it was opposed by Sir Richard Steele, in a very masterly speech, by Smith, Sir John Parkington, Methuen, and Walpole.

Walpole's  
speech.

On this occasion he forsook his usual mode of debating, which was plain, and seldom decorated with metaphorical ornaments, and, with great animation, began his speech by introducing this classical allusion:

“Among the Romans, the temple of fame was placed behind the temple of virtue, to denote that there was no coming to the temple of fame, but through that of virtue. But if this bill is passed into a law, one of the most powerful incentives to virtue would be taken away, since there would be no arriving at honour, but through the winding-sheet of an old decrepit lord, or the grave of an extinct noble family: a policy very different from that glorious and enlightened nation, who made it their pride to hold out to the world illustrious examples of merited elevation,

“*Patere honoris seirent ut cuncti viam.*

“It is very far from my thoughts to depreciate the advantages, or detract from the respect due to illustrious birth; for though the philosopher may say with the poet,

*Et genus et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,  
Fix ea nostra voco;*

yet the claim derived from that advantage, though fortuitous, is so generally and so justly conceded, that every endeavour to subvert the principle, would merit contempt and abhorrence. But though illustrious birth forms one

\* Words spoken in derogation of a peer, a judge, or other great officer of the realm, are called *scandalum magnatum*, and, though they be such as would not be actionable in the case of a common person, yet when spoken in disgrace of such high and respectable characters, they amount to an atrocious injury, which is redressed by an action on the case, founded on

many ancient statutes; as well on behalf of the crown to inflict the punishment of imprisonment on the slanderer, as on behalf of the party to recover damages for the injury sustained.—Blackstone's Commentaries. B. 3. C. 8.

† See Journals.—Chandler, by mistake, says the 7th.

undisputed

Chapter 18.  
1718 10 1719.

undisputed title to pre-eminence, and superior consideration, yet surely it ought not to be the only one. The origin of high titles was derived from the will of the sovereign to reward signal services, or conspicuous merit, by a recompense which, surviving to posterity, should display in all ages the virtues of the receiver, and the gratitude of the donor. Is merit then so rarely discernible, or is gratitude so small a virtue in our days, that the one must be supposed to be its own reward, and the other limited to a barren display of impotent good-will? Had this bill originated with some noble peer of distinguished ancestry, it would have excited less surprise; a desire to exclude others from a participation of honours, is no novelty in persons of that class: *Quod ex aliorum meritis sibi arrogant, id mihi ex meis ascribi nolunt.*

“ But it is matter of just surprise, that a bill of this nature should either have been projected, or at least promoted by a gentleman \* who was, not long ago, seated amongst us, and who, having got into the house of peers, is now desirous to shut the door after him.

“ When great alterations in the constitution are to be made, the experiment should be tried for a short time before the proposed change is finally carried into execution, lest it should produce evil instead of good; but in this case, when the bill is once sanctioned by parliament, there can be no future hopes of redress, because the upper house will always oppose the repeal of an act, which has so considerably increased their power. The great unanimity with which this bill has passed the lords, ought to inspire some jealousy in the commons; for it must be obvious, that whatever the lords gain, must be acquired at the loss of the commons, and the diminution of the regal prerogative; and that in all disputes between the lords and commons, when the house of lords is immutable, the commons must, sooner or later, be obliged to recede.

“ The view of the ministry in framing this bill, is plainly nothing but to secure their power in the house of lords. The principal argument on which the necessity of it is founded, is drawn from the mischief occasioned by the creation of twelve peers during the reign of queen Anne, for the purpose of carrying an infamous peace through the house of lords; that was only a temporary measure, whereas the mischief to be occasioned by this bill, will be perpetual. It creates thirty-one peers by authority of parliament; so extraordinary a step cannot be supposed to be taken without some sinister design in future. The ministry want no additional strength in the house of lords, for conducting the common affairs of government, as is sufficiently

\* Lord Stanhope.

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1714 to 1720.

proved by the unanimity with which they have carried through this bill. If, therefore, they think it necessary to acquire additional strength, it must be done with views and intentions more extravagant and hostile to the constitution, than any which have yet been attempted. The bill itself is of a most insidious and artful nature. The immediate creation of nine Scotch peers, and the reservation of six English peers for a necessary occasion, is of double use; to be ready for the house of lords if wanted, and to engage three times the number in the house of commons by hopes and promises.

“ To sanction this attempt, the king is induced to affect to wave some part of his prerogative; but this is merely an ostensible renunciation, unfounded in fact, or reason. I am desirous to treat of all points relating to the private affairs of his majesty, with the utmost tenderness and caution, but I should wish to ask the house, and I think I can anticipate the answer; Has any such question been upon the tapis, as no man would forgive the authors, that should put them under the necessity of voting against either side\*? Are there any misfortunes, which every honest man secretly laments and bewails, and would think the last of mischiefs, should they ever become the subject of public and parliamentary conversations? Cannot numbers that hear me testify, from the solicitations and whispers they have met with, that there are men ready and determined to attempt these things if they had a prospect of success? If they have thought, but I hope they are mistaken in their opinion of this house, that the chief obstacle would arise in the house of lords, where they have always been tender upon personal points, especially to any of their own body, does not this project enable them to carry any question through the house of lords? Must not the twenty-five Scots peers accept upon any terms, or be for ever excluded? Or will not twenty-five be found in all Scotland that will? How great will the temptation be likewise to fix English, to fill the present vacancies? And shall we then, with our eyes open, take this step, which I cannot but look upon as the beginning of woe and confusion; and shall we, under these apprehensions, break through the Union, and shut up the door of honour? It certainly will have that effect; nay, the very argument advanced in its support, that it will add weight to the commons, by keeping the rich men there, admits that it will be an exclusion.

“ But we are told, that his majesty has voluntarily consented to this limitation of his prerogative. It may be true; but may not the king have been deceived? Which if it is ever to be supposed, must be admitted in this case.

\* He here probably alluded to the misunderstanding between the king and prince of Wales.

It is incontrovertible, that kings have been over-ruled by the importunity of their ministers to remove, or to take into administration, persons who are disagreeable to them. The character of the king furnishes us also a strong proof that he has been deceived; for although it is a fact, that in Hanover, where he possesses absolute power, he never tyrannised over his subjects, or despotically exercised his authority, yet, can one instance be produced when he ever gave up a prerogative?

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1718 to 1719.

“ If the constitution is to be amended in the house of lords, the greatest abuses ought to be first corrected. But what is the abuse, against which this bill so vehemently inveighs, and which it is intended to correct? The abuse of the prerogative in creating an occasional number of peers, is a prejudice only to the lords, it can rarely be a prejudice to the commons, but must generally be exercised in their favour; and should it be argued, that in case of a difference between the two houses, the king may exercise that branch of his prerogative, with a view to force the commons to recede, we may reply, that upon a difference with the commons, the king possesses his negative, and the exercise of that negative would be less culpable than making peers to screen himself.

“ But the strongest argument against the bill is, that it will not only be a discouragement to virtue and merit, but would endanger our excellent constitution; for as there is a due balance between the three branches of the legislature, it will destroy that balance, and consequently subvert the whole constitution, by causing one of the three powers, which are now dependent on each other, to preponderate in the scale. The crown is dependent upon the commons by the power of granting money; the commons are dependent on the crown by the power of dissolution: The lords will now be made independent of both.

“ The sixteen elective Scotch peers, already admit themselves to be a dead court weight, yet the same sixteen are now to be made hereditary, and nine added to their number. • These twenty-five, under the influence of corrupt ministers, may find their account in betraying their trust; the majority of the lords may also find their account in supporting such ministers; but the commons, and the commons only, must suffer for all, and be deprived of every advantage. If the proposed measure destroys two negatives in the crown, it gives a negative to these twenty-five united, and confers a power, superior to that of the king himself, on the head of a clan, who will have the power of recommending many. The Scotch commoners can have no other view in supporting this measure, but the expected aggrandizement of their own chiefs. It will dissolve the allegiance of the Scotch peers who are not

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amongst the twenty-five, and who can never hope for the benefit of an election to be peers of parliament, and almost enact obedience from the sovereign to the betrayers of the constitution.

“The present view of the bill is dangerous; the view to posterity, personal and unpardonable; it will make the lords masters of the king, according to their own confession, when they admit, that a change of administration renders a new creation of peers necessary; for by precluding the king from making peers in future, it at the same time precludes him from changing the present administration, who will naturally fill the vacancies with their own creatures; and the new peers will adhere to the first minister, with the same zeal and unanimity as those created by Oxford adhered to him.

“If when the parliament was made septennial, the power of dissolving it before the end of seven years had been wrested from the crown, would not such an alteration have added immense authority to the commons? and yet, the prerogative of the crown in dissolving parliaments, may be, and has been oftener abused, than the power of creating peers.

“But it may be observed, that the king, for his own sake, will rarely make a great number of peers, for they, being usually created by the influence of the first minister, soon become, upon a change of administration, a weight against the crown; and had queen Anne lived, the truth of this observation would have been verified in the case of most of the twelve peers made by Oxford. Let me ask, however, is the abuse of any prerogative a sufficient reason for totally annihilating that prerogative? Under that consideration, the power of dissolving parliaments ought to be taken away, because that power has been more exercised, and more abused than any of the other prerogatives; yet in 1641, when the king had assented to a law that disabled him from proroguing or dissolving parliament, without the consent of both houses, he was from that time under subjection to the parliament, and from thence followed all the subsequent mischiefs, and his own destruction. It may also be asked, Whether the prerogative of making peace and war has never been abused? I might here call to your recollection the peace of Utrecht, and the present war with Spain. Yet who will presume to advise that the power of making war and peace, should be taken from the crown?

“How can the lords expect the commons to give their concurrence to a bill by which they and their posterity are to be for ever excluded from the peerage? How would they themselves receive a bill which should prevent a baron from being made a viscount, a viscount an earl, an earl a marquis, and a marquis a duke? Would they consent to limit the number of any rank of peerage? Certainly none; unless, perhaps, the dukes. If the pretence for  
this

this measure is, that it will tend to secure the freedom of parliament, I say that there are many other steps more important and less equivocal, such as the discontinuance of bribes and pensions. Chapter 18.  
1718 to 1719.

“That this bill will secure the liberty of parliament, I totally deny; it will secure a great preponderance to the peers; it will form them into a compact impenetrable phalanx, by giving them the power to exclude, in all cases of extinction and creation, all such persons from their body, who may be obnoxious to them. In the instances we have seen of their judgment in some late cases, sufficient marks of partiality may be found to put us on our guard against committing to them the power they would derive from this bill, of judging the right of latent or dormant titles, when their verdict would be of such immense importance. If gentlemen will not be convinced by argument, at least, let them not shut their ears to the dreadful example of former times; let them recollect that the overweening disposition of the great barons, to aggrandize their own dignity, occasioned them to exclude the lesser barons, and to that circumstance may be fairly attributed the sanguinary wars which so long desolated the country \*.”

The effect of this speech on the house, exceeded the most sanguine expectation; it fixed those who had before been wavering and irresolute, brought over many who had been tempted by the speciousness of the measure to favour its introduction, and procured its rejection by a triumphant majority of 269 against 177. Bill rejected.

\* The substance of this speech is collected from memorandums in Sir Robert Walpole's own hand-writing, among lord Orford's papers.—See also, Onslow on Opposition, Correspondence, Period II.—Historical Register, 1719.—Chandler.

## PERIOD THE THIRD:

From the South Sea Act, to the Death of GEORGE the First :

1720—1727.

## CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH:

1720.

*Origin and Progress of the South Sea Company.—Their Project for liquidating the National Debt.—Espoused by the Ministry.—Opposed by Walpole.—Accepted by Parliament.—Walpole reconciles the King and the Prince of Wales.—Forms a Coalition with Sunderland.—Townshend appointed President of the Council.—Walpole Paymaster of the Forces.—Retires into the Country.*

Origin of the  
South Sea  
Company.

THE commencement of this period forms a memorable æra in the political life of Sir Robert Walpole, and holds him forth as the restorer of the national credit, which the fatal effects of the South Sea scheme had brought to the brink of destruction.

The South Sea Company owed its origin to a chimerical project, formed by Harley in 1711, for the purpose of restoring the public credit, which had been greatly affected by the dismissal of the Whig ministry, and of establishing a fund for the discharge of the navy and army debentures, and the other parts of the floating debt, which amounted to £. 9,471,325; and was afterwards increased to £. 10,000,000. With a view to settle a fund for paying the interest of 6 per cent. on these arrears, which amounted to the annual sum of £. 568,279, all the duties upon wines, vinegar, tobacco, India goods, wrought silks, whale fins, and a few other duties, were rendered permanent. In order to allure the creditors with the hopes of advantages from a new commerce, the monopoly of a trade to the South Sea, or coast of Spanish America, was granted to a company composed of the several proprietors of this funded debt, which being incorporated by act of parliament, took the appellation

pellation of the South Sea Company \*. The great advantages to be derived from this commerce, had been held forth and exaggerated from the time of our first voyages to Spanish America, in the reign of Elizabeth, and had been still farther increased by the reports of the buccaneers. The considerable riches which France had brought from America, since the establishment of Philip the Fifth on the throne of Spain, had contributed to raise the sanguine expectations of the British merchants; a rumour, industriously circulated, that four ports on the coasts of Peru and Chili, were to be ceded by Spain, inflamed the general ardour; the prospect of exchanging gold, silver, and rich drugs for the manufactures of England, were plausible allurements for an enterprising and commercial nation; and the mines of Potosi and Mexico, were to diffuse their inexhaustible stores through the medium of the new company.

The famous act of parliament, which incorporated the subscribers of the debts, under the name of the governor and company of merchants of Great Britain trading to the South Seas and other parts of America, was called the earl of Oxford's master piece, and considered by his panegyrists as the sure means of bringing an inexhaustible mine of riches into England. But in fact this scheme was settled on a false foundation; for by the peace of Utrecht, Spain and the Indies being confirmed to Philip the Fifth, that monarch was too jealous to admit the English to a free trade in the South Sea, and instead of the advantageous commerce which Oxford had held forth, the company obtained only the *+* *asiento* contract, or the privilege of supplying the Spanish colonies of America with negroes for 30 years, with the permission of sending to Spanish America an annual ship, limited both as to tonnage and value of cargo, of the profits of which the king of Spain reserved one fourth, and five per cent. on the other three fourths *†*. But this disappointment was attempted to be counteracted by the declaration made by Oxford, that Spain had permitted two ships, in addition to the annual ship, to carry merchandize, during the first year to the northern coasts of Spanish America, and a pompous nomination of the several ports where the company had leave to trade, and settle factories. But the grand benefits of this commerce were never realised. The first voyage of the annual ship was not made till 1717, and in the following year, the trade was suppressed by the rupture with Spain. Their effects, factories, and servants were seized and detained, notwithstanding

Progress and  
suspension of  
their trade.

1713.

\* James Poslethwayt's Historical State of the South Sea Company.—Anderson on Commerce, vol. 3. p. 43. Tindal, vol. 17. p. 361.

*+* *Asiento* is a Spanish word; signifying a firm or contract.

*†* Anderson, vol. 3. page 55.

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1720 to 1727.

Plan of liqui-  
dating the  
national debt.

ing the agreement in the assiento, which allowed, in case of a rupture, eighteen months for the removal of their effects.

Such was the state of the South Sea Company, when the ministry, instead of attempting to lessen the national incumbrances, by the only just and successful means, a clear and inviolable sinking fund, adopted the visionary schemes of projectors, and gave to the South Sea Company the power of fascinating the minds of the public, and spreading an infatuation similar to that which had recently involved France in a national bankruptcy. The grand point which government had in view, was the reduction of the irredeemable annuities, created in the reigns of William and Anne, for a period of 89, 96, and 99 years, amounting nearly to £. 800,000 per annum, as no effectual measures could be adopted to lessen the public debts, whilst these annuities remained irredeemable.

Proposal laid  
before parlia-  
ment.

In order to effect this liquidation, the minister accepted proposals from the South Sea Company, for reducing the debts to a redeemable state: as the object of the ministers, who had previously and secretly arranged the scheme with the directors, was to surprise the house of commons into the measure of granting this extensive privilege to the South Sea Company, and of preventing competition, they entertained the most sanguine hopes of success, from the specious advantages which they held forth to the public as the necessary consequences. They accordingly laid the business before a committee of the house of commons \*. Aislabe having opened the proposal of the South Sea Company, and declared that, if it was accepted, the national debt could be liquidated in twenty-six years, was followed by secretary Craggs, who after congratulating the chancellor of the exchequer, on the clear and intelligible manner in which he had explained the business, and the nation on the prospect of discharging the debt sooner than was generally expected, concluded by observing, that no other regular motion could be made, than that the chairman should report progress, and desire leave to sit again, as he took it for granted, that every gentleman was ready and willing to receive the proposal according to the scheme which had been so well explained. On sitting down a profound silence ensued, and continued for almost a quarter of an hour, until the secretary again rose, and made the motion in form. Thomas Brodrick†, member for Stockbridge, then rose, and after observing, that until the national debt was discharged, we could not properly speaking, call ourselves a

Objected to

\* Journals.

† Brother of lord Middleton, lord chancellor of Ireland.

nation, and that therefore every proposal, tending to that great end, ought to be received and considered: He added, that the first gentleman who spoke, appeared to recommend this scheme exclusively, and the secretary had agreed with him; but it was to be hoped, that with a view of obtaining the best bargain for the nation, every other company, or any society of men, might be also at full liberty to deliver in their proposals. This observation disconcerted and confounded the ministers. They felt themselves embarrassed, and being unable to give any reasonable arguments in favour of such a conduct, they had recourse to violent assertions and personal reflections. Aislachie, in particular, having used some unguarded expressions, "*that things of this nature must be carried on with spirit*," was interrupted by Sir Joseph Jekyl, who observed, with much warmth, "It is this spirit which has undone the nation; our business is to consider thoroughly, deliberate calmly, and judge of the whole upon reason, not with the spirit alluded to." Aislachie, in attempting to explain, betrayed so much embarrassment, that he excited the laughter of the house. Walpole then rose, and put a momentary stop to these indecorous altercations. He applauded the design, agreed in general to the propriety of the scheme, but declared that some parts required amendment, and a few others were unreasonable, concluding strongly in favour of receiving all proposals, which seemed to be almost the general opinion. Lechmere replied, but instead of confining himself to the subject in debate, he poured forth invectives against the scheme which had been proposed by Walpole, for the payment of the national debt, and gave the preference to that before the house. Walpole, irritated by this virulent attack, rose again, and with no less asperity, but with more calmness and skill, retorted on Lechmere: he proved, from papers \* which he held in his hand, that the member who spoke last had unfairly represented facts, exposed his deceitful mode of reasoning, entered minutely into the scheme, and laid open its fallacy in many material points. Lechmere, still farther provoked, again attempted to reply, but met with repeated interruptions. In vain the chairman called to order, and ex-

Walpole favours an open competition.

\* Among the Orford Papers, are several notes and memorandums in Sir Robert Walpole's hand writing, which contain comparative accounts of the two proposals, and give the preference to that of the bank. These are probably some of the papers from which he

made his statements to the house, but as they were written merely for his own private use, and consist principally of figures, with few specific references, little use could be made of them. The magnitude of the South Sea project, will appear from one of these notes.

South Sea, present capital	—	—	—	11,746,844	8	10
Purchase of the redeemable debts	—	—	—	15,924,218	12	10½
Irredeemables	—	—	—	15,057,493	13	8
And including the original capital, the whole stock is	—	—	—	£. 42,728,556	15	4½

claimed.

Period III.  
1720 to 1727.

claimed, "Hear your member." The whole house repeatedly cried out, "We have heard him long enough." The chairman quitted the chair, and the speaker having resumed it, the house unanimously agreed to receive all proposals, and to resolve itself into a committee the following Wednesday, to consider farther of the subject \*.

Proposal of  
the bank.

In consequence of these resolutions, the bank of England laid a proposition before the commons, offering still more advantageous terms, and as it was supposed, that considerable benefits would accrue to those whose scheme was accepted, a strong competition prevailed between the bank and South Sea company, who endeavoured to outbid each other. The South Sea company had offered to give £.3,500,000; but the bank, having bid £.5,500,000, the company were so irritated, that at a general court, the directors were instructed to obtain the preference, *cost what it would* †, and they succeeded, by the offer of paying the enormous sum of

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£.7,567,500, as a gratuity to the public. This proposal being laid before the house of commons, was warmly opposed by Walpole, who spoke in favour of the bank. In vain he displayed the fallacy of the South Sea scheme, and the great difference between that and the bank, by shewing, that the company was not limited in the price they were to put on the stock made over to them; whereas the bank offered a specific sum of £.1,700 stock, for every hundred pounds in the long annuities, and the same proportion for the short annuities. In vain he urged, that it countenanced the pernicious practice of stock jobbing, by diverting the genius of the nation from trade and industry; that it held out a dangerous lure for decoying the unwary to their ruin by a false prospect of gain, and to part with the gradual profits of their labour, for imaginary wealth. In vain he insisted, that if the proposal of the South Sea company should be accepted, the rise of their stock ought to be limited. In vain he dwelt on the miseries and confusion which then prevailed in France, from the adoption of similar measures. In vain he argued, that as the whole success of the scheme must chiefly depend on the rise of the stock, the great principle of the project was an evil of the first magnitude; it was to raise artificially the value of the stock, by exciting and keeping up a general infatuation, and by promising dividends out of funds which would not be adequate to the purpose. In vain he predicted, that if the establishment succeeded, the directors would become masters of the government, form an absolute aristocracy in the kingdom, and controul the resolutions of the legislature; or if it did not succeed, the failure would cause

Walpole  
speaks against  
the South Sea  
scheme.

\* No account of this extraordinary debate is to be found in any publication:—The substance is taken from a letter of Thomas Bro-

derick to lord chancellor Middleton, January 24th. See Correspondence, Period III.

† True State of the South Sea Scheme.