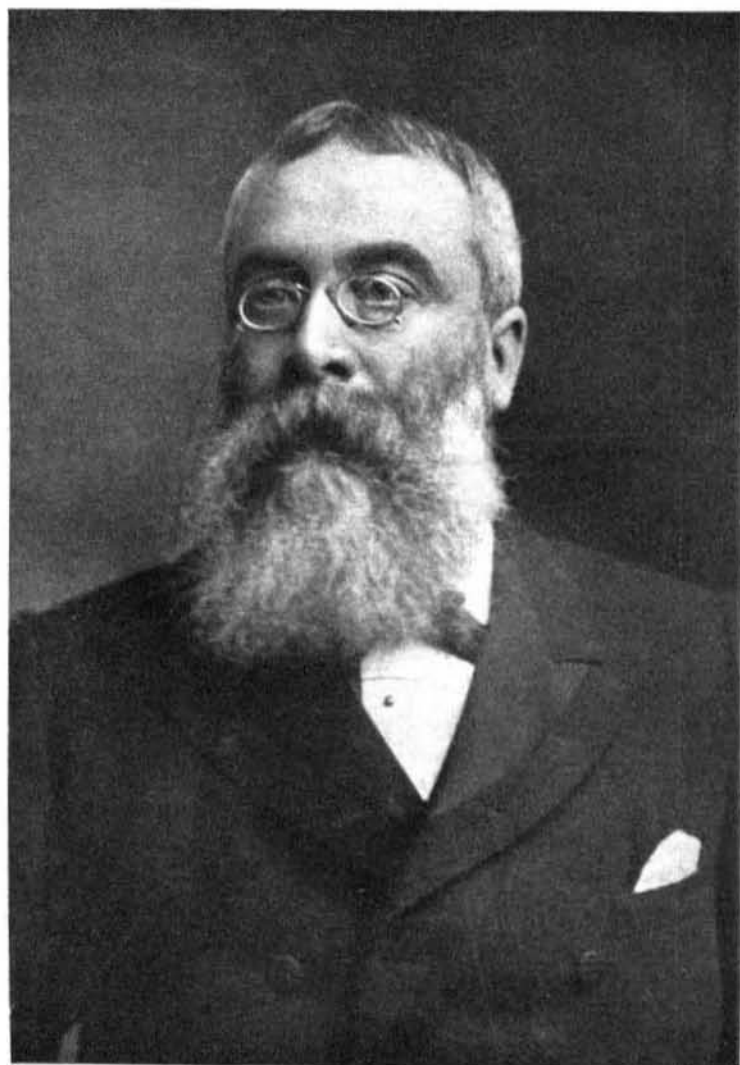


The Survey of London

LONDON

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



SIR WALTER BESANT

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LONDON

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY
SIR WALTER BESANT
c



LONDON
ADAM & CHARLES BLACK

1902

NOTE

It was my husband's ambition to be the historian of London in the Nineteenth Century, just as Stow had been in the Sixteenth Century ; and he projected " The Survey of London," which was to be a record of the greatest, busiest, most wealthy, most populous city in the whole world, as it was from century to century, and as it is at present.

For this great enterprise he had secured the co-operation of many experts in the various special departments of London life and London work, but had retained for his own pen the writing of the general history of London.

This section forms the larger portion of the whole work, and he had practically completed it before his death. It represents the continuous labour of over five years and the active research of half a lifetime. He was wont to refer to it as his *magnum opus*, and it was the work by which he himself most desired to be remembered by posterity.

From this History as a whole, the portion relating to the Eighteenth Century has been chosen for present publication, not only on account of its intrinsic interest, but also because of the fascination that the period had for the author. It will, I think, be pleasing to most readers to find that so much space has been devoted to the Social Life of the period ; in fact, the book may be regarded as a social picture of London in the Eighteenth Century, rather than as a detailed history.

The work is given to the world as my husband left it, and I am content to think that his labour has not been wholly in vain.

MARY GARRATT BESANT.



PREFACE

WITH the accession of the House of Brunswick the necessity of writing a continuous narrative of events in London practically ceases. The Constitution of the City is fixed; there will be no more alterations for a hundred years and more; the points which arise for dispute are of minor importance (such as the question whether the law costs of Aldermen in lawsuits are to be paid out of the City Chest); there will be no more suppressions of the Charter; no more praying the King to grant, out of his great benevolence, a new one; there will be no more putting up, or pulling down, of Mayors and Sheriffs by the King; the rights, privileges, and liberties of the City are secure; and with them those of all other cities in the realm, and those of cities yet unborn.

In religion, toleration at least is won; complete equality has yet to be won. But, on the whole, the old battles are fought out and victory is won. Even George the Third, in his most ambitious dreams of extended prerogative, left the City undisturbed.

The struggle for liberty is not, it is true, completed; the House of Commons has not yet become the voice of the people. But the enemy of liberty is no longer either King or Baron: it is a compact body, part in the Lords, part in the Commons—representing few, indeed, of the old noble houses, which are mostly extinct, but chiefly formed of landowners who, during the last two hundred years, have grown into strength and influence by the growth of their estates, and have become a new aristocracy, not in the least resembling the old class which has passed away.

Another reason why the history of London need be no longer continuous is the changed position of the City with regard to the Crown and politics. The King comes no more to the City for money. Instead of borrowing of the City, he now makes an arrangement with the Bank. This fact, coupled with that of the greatly

increased power of the Lower House, reduces the political importance of the City—if the City could be made to understand this—to the expression of her representatives in the House; the City still preserves her ancient right of approaching the throne, but, as we shall presently learn, that right now conveys with it no power at all, should the King think one way and the City another.

The Survey of London during the eighteenth century may be conveniently divided into subjects. Thus, I have considered the City—(i.) in connection with its extent, its appearance, its streets, its paving, lighting, water supply, means of inter-communication, postal arrangements, improvements, etc.; (ii.) in connection with church and chapel; (iii.) in connection with its government and its trade; (iv.) in connection with its manners and customs; (v.) in connection with society and amusements; and (vi.) in connection with crime, police, punishments, and prisons.

I have then ventured to select from the historical episodes of the century, and the events which belong to the national history, those which more peculiarly belong to London. I hope it will be found that the twenty episodes thus selected do illustrate the condition of civic spirit and opinion. They range from the Accession of George I. in 1715 to the Reform Act of 1832. They are intended to illustrate the advance of trade; the condition of religion, education, and charity; the manners, customs, and ideas of the time; and the attempts made by the citizens to solve certain problems forced upon their consideration in the most disagreeable manner possible. These were problems connected with the order of the City; with the alarming growth of violence, disorder, and lawlessness shown in riots and robberies, outrages in the streets, and house robberies of the most daring kind committed in open day, in the sight of helpless citizens. The prevention of these deeds, the arrest and punishment of the criminals, will occupy a large part of our attention in the following pages.

In short, the conditions of life in this century, with most of its difficulties and anxieties and complaints, were based upon this apparently insuperable trouble of the existence of a mob—brutal beyond all power of words to describe, or imagination to understand: so bestial that one is induced to think there has never been in any town or in any age a population which could compare with them.

The passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, the introduction of steamers on the sea, the beginning of railways on land, make so vast a break between the first third and

the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century, that I feel justified in considering the eighteenth century as lasting down to the year 1837: in other words, there were so few changes, and these so slight, in manners, customs, or prevalent ideas between 1700 and 1837, that we may consider the eighteenth century as continuing down to the beginning of the Victorian era, when change after change—change in the constitution, change in communications, change in the growth and extension of trade, change in religious thought, change in social standards—introduced that new time which we called the Nineteenth Century.

It will perhaps be asked why Literature has no place in these chapters. The answer is that it has been thought best not to confine the survey of literature in London to the eighteenth century, but to devote special chapters to these subjects in a more general manner, including the centuries before and the century after. For, if the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are rich in information and suggestion as to topography, architecture, historical events, literature of all kinds, trade and enterprise, crime and justice, society manners and customs of all kinds, the eighteenth century is far richer. It is now nearly a quarter of a century since I first embodied my studies of this century in fiction (*The Chaplain of the Fleet*, Besant and Rice, 1877). It is thirty years and more since I began to make notes on the social side of London at this period. If it were required to name authorities for any statement advanced, or to give reasons for any conclusion, I could not, probably, do so, since the authority would lie hidden in some obscure history or some long-forgotten, tedious novel.

I must, however, acknowledge my obligations to the latter—the forgotten, the thrice and four times tedious novel of the eighteenth century. One may look in Fielding and in Smollett in vain for all the details of social life, of manners and customs—details beneath the notice of a pen which sought for broad effects and telling situations, and did not stoop to details of apparent unimportance. These I have found in the "twopenny box"; in the limbo of lost satires, forgotten poems, and novels whose authors are not known to lecturers on the period, nor to professors of literature. Their works fill many shelves, the contents of which have all been marked and noted. There is nothing, I may safely say, more tedious than a bad novel of the eighteenth century. There are many points noted in the following pages for which the authority is an allusion, or a statement, in one of these obscurities.

If one may speak with some attempt at precision, it is necessary to name, first of all, the common and obvious authorities, such as Strype's Stow, Maitland, Harrison, Munday, Noorthouck, Malcolm, Lysons, Pennant; maps such as those of Ogilby, Rocque, and Strype; volumes of special histories such as those of Clerkenwell, Islington, and the suburbs; those of St. Paul's, as Longman and Sparrow Simpson; on Westminster Abbey, as Stanley; of foundations, such as Brownlow on the Foundling, Nichols on St. Katherine's-by-the-Tower, Loftie on the Savoy, Douthwaite on Gray's Inn; those on London as a whole, or in part, by writers of the present century, as J. T. Smith, Leigh Hunt, Colquhoun, Hare, Jesse, Brayley, Britton, Cunningham, J. R. Green, Henry Morley, Mayhew, Thornbury, Walford, Buckle, Rendle, Corner, Milman, Norton; with others still living, as Sharpe, Round, Hales, Wheatley, Loftie, Welch, Philip Norman, Price, Gomme, Ordish, Worth; pamphlets of all kinds; MSS. such as those of Place in the British Museum; drawings and illustrations such as those of Hogarth, Scott, the *Vetusta Monumenta*, Strype, Maitland, Pennant, J. T. Smith, Archer, Wilkinson, the Crace Collection, and collections formed during many years by myself.

These are some of the authorities for a book on the City and its people during the eighteenth century.

If any important work or name is omitted in the above list I beg that the omission may be excused as accidental and not intentional.

I have concluded the survey of the century by a brief Chronicle of the principal events.

WALTER BESANT.

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HISTORICAL NOTES

HISTORICAL NOTES

UNDER the head of History or Historical Notes, I have arranged a succession of episodes bearing chiefly on the connection of the City with the political events of the time. The social history of the citizens has been treated in the chapters which follow these political notes.

I.—THE GREAT STORM OF 1703

The Great Storm of November 26-27, 1703, has happily had no successor in violence, as it had no predecessor. The hurricane seems to have been traced right across the continent of Europe. In the words of the historian (1769), it traversed England, France, Germany, and the Baltic, expending itself at last in the icebergs of the north. It is, however, difficult to understand the line which begins with England and goes on "through France and Germany." The compiler of the book before me takes occasion to speak of other great storms: that of 1095, when, it is absurdly said, the beams of the roof of St. Mary-le-Bow—27 feet long—were embedded in the ground 23 feet deep, which is impossible unless Chepe was a quagmire. In 1362 there was a great storm in which many steeples and towers were blown down; in 1566 there was a storm in which the wind blew open the western gates of St. Paul's; in 1607 there was a remarkable rising of the waters and an inundation in the west of England; in 1626 there was a storm of thunder and lightning with a water-spout on the Thames; in 1658, on the day of Oliver Cromwell's death, there was a great storm over the whole of Europe; in 1661 there was another which caused great destruction of property.

The following is the account given by the anonymous writer of *The Storm*¹ in 1703:—

"The 26th in the morning it continued to blow exceeding hard, but not to give apprehensions of danger within doors; toward night it increased. About ten the barometers gave information that the night would be very tempestuous, the mercury sinking lower than had been observed before.

¹ Attributed to D. Defoe.

It did not blow so hard, till twelve o'clock at night, but that most families went to-bed, though many of them with some concern at the terrible wind; but about one, or at least by two, few people, that were capable of any sense of danger, were so hardy as to lie in bed; the fury of the tempest increased to such degree, that most people expected the fall of their houses.

And yet, in this general apprehension, nobody durst quit their tottering habitations; for whatever the danger was within doors, it was worse without; the bricks, tiles, and stones, from the tops of the houses, flew with such force, and so thick in the streets, that no one thought fit to venture out, though their houses were nearly demolished.

Such a shock was given to a well-built brick house in the skirts of the city, by a stack of chimnies falling on the next houses, that the inhabitants imagined it was just coming down upon their heads; but opening the door to attempt an escape into a garden, the danger was so apparent that they all thought fit to surrender to the disposal of Almighty Providence, and expect their graves in the ruins of their house, rather than meet most certain destruction in the open garden; for, unless they could have gone above 200 yards from any building, there had been no security; for the force of the wind blew the tiles point-blank, though their weight inclined them downward; and in several broad streets, the windows were broken by the flying of tile-sherds from the other side, and, where there was room for them to fly, tiles were blown above 30 or 40 yards, and stuck from 5 to 8 inches into the solid earth. Pieces of timber, iron, and sheets of lead, from higher buildings, were blown much farther.

From two o'clock the storm continued and increased till five in the morning, and from five, till half an hour after six, it blew with the greatest violence. The fury of it was so exceeding great for that particular hour and half, that had it not abated, nothing could have withstood its violence much longer.

*'Never was known a night of such distraction,
Noise so confus'd, and dreadful!'*—DRYDEN.

*'Fear chills the heart; what heart can fear dissemble
When steeples stagger, and when mountains tremble!'*—HIST. APP. 315.

In this last part of the time the greatest damage was done. Several ships that rode it out till now gave up all; for no anchor could hold.

Even the ships in the river Thames were all blown from their moorings; from Execution-dock to Limehouse-hole, there were but four ships that rid it out; the rest were driven down into the bite, from Bell-wharf to Limehouse, where they were huddled together and drove on shore, heads and sterns, one upon another, in such a manner as any one would have imagined impossible! The damage was incredible!

Together with the violence of the wind, the darkness of the night added to the terror; as it was just new-moon, the spring-tides being then up about four o'clock,

made the vessels, which were afloat in the river, drive the farther up upon the shore, of all which there were very strange instances!

About eight in the morning it ceased so much that the fears of the people were enough abated to begin to peep out of their doors; but it is impossible to express the concern that appeared in every place! The distraction and fury of the night was visible in every face; and the first business was to visit and enquire after friends and relations. The next day or two was entirely spent in curiosity in viewing the havock the storm had made, which was universal in London and the out-parts."

He proceeds to speak of the damage done in London:—

"The streets were covered with the slates and tiles from the roofs; practically all the roofs in London were stripped of their tiles; so great was the demand that the price of tiles went up from 21s. to 120s. per thousand, while bricklayers' labour rose to 5s. a day. All the winter long a great number of houses remained uncovered and exposed to the wet and cold, while a great many buildings, such as Christ's Hospital, the Temple, Aske's Hospital, Hoxton, and others, were covered with deal boards, and so continued for some years.

An immense number of chimnies were blown down, many of them falling upon the houses and wrecking them; two thousand stacks of chimneys were thus destroyed; about twenty houses were blown down bodily; the lead on the roofs of churches was simply rolled up like skins of parchment; Westminster Abbey, among other churches, thus lost its leaden roof; a great many turrets on churches were blown down; an enormous number of trees; some thirty or forty persons were known to have been killed, and two hundred maimed and wounded; the guard-house at Whitehall was blown down and nine soldiers injured, but none killed. The damage done to the shipping was beyond the power of calculation; in the river the cables and anchors gave way and the ships, breaking loose, drove about the river and against each other, and on shore one upon the other.

The force of the wind had driven them so into one another, and laid them so upon one another, as it were in heaps, that the whole world may be safely defied to do the like. Those who viewed the place and posture of the vessels, the next day, imagined their situation impossible to describe. There lay, by the best account could be taken, near seven hundred sail of ships, some very great ones, between Shadwell and Lime-house inclusive; the posture is not to be imagined but by those who saw it; some vessels lay heeling off, with the bow of another ship over her waist, and the stem of another upon her fore-castle; the boltsprits of some drove into the cabin windows of others; some lay with their stems turned up so high, that the tide flowed into their fore-castles before they could come to rights; some lay so leaning upon others, that the undermost vessels would sink before the other could float; the number of masts, boltsprits, and yards, split and broke; the staving heads, sterns and carved work; tearing and destruction of rigging; squeezing boats to pieces

between the ships, could not be reckoned. There was hardly a vessel to be seen that had not suffered some damage, in one or all those articles.

Several vessels were sunk in the hurry, but as they were generally light ships, the damage was chiefly to the vessels, but there were two ships sunk with great quantity of goods on board: the Russel galley at Limehouse, laden with bale goods for the Streights, and the Sarah galley laden for Leghorn, sunk at an anchor at Blackwall; she was afterward weighed and brought on shore, yet her back was broke, and so otherwise disabled that she was never afterward fit for the sea. There were several men drowned in the two last-mentioned ships.

Near Gravesend several ships drove on shore below Tilbury-fort, among them, five bound for the West Indies, but as the shore is ousy and soft, the vessels sat upright and easy; the high tides which followed, and were the ruin of so many in other places, were the deliverance of all these ships, whose lading and value were very great, for the tide rising to an unusual height, floated them all off, and the damage was not so great as was expected.

An account of the loss and particulars relating to the small craft in the river, were impossible to collect, otherwise than by generals.

The watermen reckoned above five hundred wherries lost, most of which were not sunk only, but dashed to pieces against each other, or against the ships and shores where they lay. Ship boats without number were driven about in every corner, sunk and staved; of which about three hundred were supposed to be lost. Above sixty barges and lighters were found driven foul of the bridge, and sixty more sunk or staved between the bridge and Hammersmith. Abundance of lighters and barges drove quite through the bridge, and took their fate below, whereof many were lost."

II.—THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE I.

THE City received King George on his arrival with loyalty designedly exaggerated, in order to show Jacobites on how solid a foundation the throne rested, their own delusions and illusions notwithstanding. The Jacobites, however, knowing what was coming, were not persuaded. The order of the procession reads like a reception of Richard the Second, so stately and so magnificent was it.

The loyal addresses of the City, and His Majesty's gracious reply, may be taken here as read.

More assurances of loyalty on the one hand, and of grace and favour on the other, followed when, on Lord Mayor's Day, the King and the Prince and Princess of Wales dined with the City at the Guildhall. The King on this occasion gave £1000 for the relief of poor debtors. It was a picturesque form of charity, usual

and expected when the King dined in the City. On January 20, 1715, a day of rejoicing for the King's accession was appointed.

Early in the same year the citizens of London took the very unusual step, which afterwards became more common, of drawing up a table of instructions for their representatives in the House. They were ordered to ask and to ascertain "by whose advice everything had been done during the last five years." It is not, however, stated whether such inquiries resulted in any information, or whether they were ever made. The Rebellion of the same year probably made it inconvenient to raise the question as to the Queen's advisers during the former reign.



GEORGE I.

After Sir Godfrey Kneller.

There were so many Jacobites, professed or suspected, in the City, that great anxiety prevailed when the Rebellion broke out as to their power and their line of action. The City, through its Corporation, professed a sincere loyalty, and promised to suppress any seditious attempts or tumultuous risings. None, however, of any importance occurred. Probably the Jacobites were cowed by the strength of the Loyalists. Several persons, including the Earl of Oxford, Lord Powis, the Earl of Scarsdale, and Sir William Wyndham, were sent to the Tower, and certain members of the House of Commons were committed to custody. Three men were hanged at Tyburn for enlisting recruits for the Pretender; three more were executed in the same place for high treason. After the suppression of the Rebellion the chief prisoners were brought to London and, being pinioned at Barnet, were ignominiously

led through the streets, to the confusion and rage of the Jacobites. The Lords were sent to the Tower; the rest to Newgate, the Fleet, and the Marshalsea. Lords Derwentwater and Kenmure were executed on 24th February 1716; Lord Nithsdale escaped; General Forster escaped; the estates of Lord Derwentwater were appropriated to Greenwich Hospital.

III.—THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE

The amazing history of the South Sea Bubble has been narrated by many writers. It must be told here with brevity.

What was the South Sea Company, and what were its aims? It was a trading company formed in the year 1711 with the object of trading with Spanish America, *i.e.* Central and South America, if, which was uncertain, *the Spaniards would permit any foreign trade in their possessions.* After the Treaty of Utrecht some limited rights of trade were conceded. These rights were so limited that they cannot in the slightest degree account for the madness and blind possession with which the people, like the swine, rushed down a steep place into the sea. Indeed, without the clearest evidence, it would be difficult to believe the wild rush which followed, were it not for the example of a similar rush for shares which happened in France in the year 1719. That rush was followed, as in London, by a panic. But before the panic had well begun in Paris, the French example was followed in London.

Nobody knows exactly what strange exaggerations, what strange beliefs, what rumours and reports, enabled the people to believe in the Mississippi and the South Sea schemes. To the French Company a vast country, called Louisiana, lying west of the Mississippi, was assigned. To the latter, nothing but an extremely limited permission or privilege to trade. Even if we take into account the profound ignorance of Englishmen as to the geography, the extent, the resources, of South America, it is wonderful that they should dream of inexhaustible mines of wealth to be got at when the Spaniards during two hundred years had found no such mines. Probably they did not estimate the South Sea Company in this way; they regarded its shares like the shares of all the smaller bubbles, just as a means of making money by buying cheap and selling dear. The whole world was engaged in a cut-throat conspiracy to run up the prices of shares—of all shares; it was as if we were all, at the present day, to turn gamblers and promoters of bogus companies.

"There is a gulf where thousands fell;
Here all the bold adventurers came;
A narrow sound, though deep in hell;
'Change Alley' is the dreadful name."

All the stocks went up—daily they climbed higher. The South Sea stock led the



THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE.
From an engraving of the painting by E. M. Ward, A.R.A.

way ; it rose until it reached and passed 1000. Other shares went up in like manner. All classes rushed headlong into the pursuit of sudden and, if they knew it, ill-gotten wealth. Threadneedle Street and Change Alley were turned into counting-houses and blocked with desks and clerks. It was said that the King himself did not disdain to traffic in the shares ; his two mistresses, it was notorious, made fortunes by their gains ; the Prince of Wales was Governor of one company, by which he made £60,000 ; the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos directed two other companies ; noble lords and great ladies jostled petty clerks and hucksters in Threadneedle Street. The usual effects of inflation were observed. Swift is told by the Duchess of Ormond that the King adopts the South Sea and calls it his beloved child . . . that some of her friends are deep in it, and she wishes that "Swift was too." Prior says : "I am lost in the South Sea ; the roaring of the waves and the madness of the people are justly put together. It is all wilder than St. Anthony's dream." Smollett writes : "Luxury, vice, and profligacy increased to a shocking degree. The adventurers, intoxicated by their imaginary wealth, pampered themselves with the rarest dainties and the most costly wines ; they purchased the most sumptuous furniture, equipage, and apparel, though with no taste or discernment. Their criminal passions were indulged to a scandalous excess, and their discourse evinced the most disgusting pride, insolence, and ostentation. . . . All party distinctions, religion, sex, character, and position, were swallowed in this yawning abyss, or in some similar money trap. Gambling was the sole profession."

Again, in the *London Journal*, it is stated :—

"The hurry of stock-jobbing bubbles has been so great this week as to exceed all ever known. Nothing but running about from coffee-house to coffee-house, and subscribing without knowing what the proposals were. The constant cry was, 'For God's sake let us subscribe to something ; we don't care what it is.'"

The craze was not without its satirists and poets :—

"In London stands a famous pile,
And near that pile an Alley,
Where merry crowds for riches toil,
And wisdom stoops to folly.

Here stars and garters too appear
Among our herds, the rabble ;
To buy and sell, to see and hear,
The Jews and Gentiles squabble.

Our greatest ladies hither come,
And ply in chariots daily ;
Or pawn their jewels for a sum
To venture in the Alley.

Longheads may thrive by sober rules
Because they think and drink not ;
But headlongs are our thriving fools,
Who only drink and think not.

What need have we of Judean wealth,
Or commerce with our neighbours?
Our constitution is in health,
And riches crown our labours.

Our South Sea ships have golden shrouds,
They bring us wealth—'tis granted;
But lodge these treasures in the clouds,
To hide it till 'tis wanted."

The collapse of everything, when all the bubbles burst at once, and the South Sea stock, which had reached 1100, sunk to 135, was overwhelming. A great national disaster, it was discovered, had been brought about by the madness of that summer. Ruin and bankruptcy were universal. Then came the inevitable cry against the Directors. One does not understand how far they were simply borne along with the stream. Did they by any false representations or needless promises create the rush? Did they by any words of caution try to diminish the madness? No reproaches, however, were too bad for the Directors. Lord Molesworth said in the House that they ought to be tied in a sack and thrown into the sea. Two of them, Jacob Sawbridge and Sir Theodore Janssen, were expelled the House and committed to the Tower, while their firm—Janssen was a partner of Sawbridge—had to disgorge a quarter of a million. The Earl of Sunderland, First Commissioner of the Treasury, resigned on being charged with receiving £50,000 stock without any consideration. Craggs, Secretary of State, and Aislalie, Chancellor of the Exchequer, were convicted of taking bribes. Craggs died of smallpox during the inquiry, but his estate was confiscated. Aislalie was sent to the Tower. Gibbon's grandfather, one of the Directors, had to give up £50,000 out of an estate worth no more than £60,000. The final collapse of the South Sea scheme was really brought about, or hastened, by the action of the Directors themselves in calling for the prosecution of other bubbles. The smaller bubbles burst as soon as they were pricked; with them burst, to their dismay, the great Bubble itself. The Directors fell into poverty and obscurity; some of them into absolute poverty. John Law himself, the great leader of Rainbow Finance, died in want a few years later. Some of them found themselves, after all their grandeur, in a debtor's prison.

"Behold a poor dejected wretch,
Who kept a South Sea coach of late,
And now is glad to humbly catch
A penny at the prison gate.

Fools lost where the Directors won,
And now the poor Directors lose;
And where the South Sea stock will run,
Old Nick, the first projector, knows."

Some, of course, were fortunate in their dealings. Among them was Guy, the bookseller, at the corner of Lombard Street and Cornhill. A part, not all, of his

fortune was made by lucky speculation in this stock. Among those who lost were Gay, the poet, who had £1000 in South Sea stock, which rose to £20,000; he was advised to sell out, but would not, in consequence of which he lost the whole. The Duke of Chandos had £300,000; he, too, lost the whole. Eustace Budgell lost; Prior lost; and "Tom of Ten Thousand" lost not only his shares but also his reason.

The City supported the action of Parliament in a remarkable petition which may be found in full in Sharpe's *London and the Kingdom*.

IV.—THE CITY AND THE CONSTITUTION

Of civil disputes and constitutional questions the eighteenth century furnishes many examples, but not of the vital importance of those we have already considered. Thus, the Corporation Act of 1661 provided that all municipal and other offices should be held on condition of subscribing a declaration against the Solemn League and Covenant. This Act had been practically forgotten or neglected. It was, however, still possible, even for a constitutional king, to raise the point whether things done by officers who had not subscribed this declaration were legal. The citizens therefore petitioned George I. on the subject, and obtained the repeal of the Act.

"I shall be glad," said the King, who knew how to be gracious on occasion, "not only for your sakes, but for my own, if any defects which may touch the rights of my good subjects are discovered in my time, since that will furnish me with the means of giving you and all my people an indisputable proof of my tenderness for their privileges, and how unwilling I shall ever be to take advantage of their mistakes."

Close upon this victory for the City followed the famous case in which the rights of Aldermen and the Common Council in elections and towards each other were brought under the consideration of Parliament. A custom had grown up for the City, in whatever disputes or actions at law the Aldermen were involved, to pay their costs. During the whole of 1718 a case of disputed election occupied the Courts, and in 1719 was going before the House of Lords, when the City agreed to a compromise. The House of Lords, however, passed a resolution to report on the management of the City treasury and to inquire into the jurisdiction possessed by the Common Council in elections.

A Committee was appointed in accordance with this resolution, which presently met, did its work, and reported. The report was to the effect that in eight years the City had paid £2827 : 10s. on account of law expenses for defending Aldermen. As regards the right of the Common Council to determine matters of disputed elections, the Committee found that such right was based upon a Resolution of January 1642, which had been disclaimed in 1683. Then the House of Lords passed a resolution to the

effect that in maintaining suits at law between citizen and citizen in cases of disputed elections, the Common Council (Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, iii. p. 14) had abused their trust, and been guilty of great partiality, and of gross mismanagement of the City treasure, and a violation of the freedom of elections in the City.

This resolution was not passed unchallenged (Sharpe, p. 14). Sixteen peers entered a vigorous protest on the several grounds: (1) that no evidence had been taken on oath, and that without such evidence they conceived that so heavy a censure ought not to be passed on any individual, much less on so important a body as the Common Council of the City, which had done good service on pressing occasions; (2) that the Common Council had not had due notice given them; (3) that the resolution of the House might be construed as prejudging matters which might come before the House judicially; and lastly (4) that had the Common Council been heard they might have shown that the money had been expended in defence of their ancient rights and privileges, and in order to prevent any encroachment thereon.

When, immediately afterwards, the next dispute arose over an election, the Aldermen refused to allow any interference from the Common Council.

Meantime, disputed elections followed each other in quick succession, and there seemed no probability of any settlement by mutual concession and agreement. The citizens therefore presented a petition to the House of Commons in December 1724, setting forth that at elections by the liverymen of the City many voted who had no right to vote; that those who were not freemen claimed the right to vote at Wardmotes on the ground that they contributed to the charges of their respective wards, while they refused to take up their freedom because the customs of the City limited the testamentary power of a freeman—the wife, by the custom of the City, was entitled to have one-third of the personal estate and the children another third; with other points on which they prayed for the relief of the House and the settlement of their rights, privileges, and forms of election. In reply, a Bill was brought in “for regulating of elections within the City of London, and for preserving the peace, good order, and government of the said City.”

This Bill was vehemently opposed both by the Aldermen and the Common Council. However, it passed, with some amendments, both Houses, and received the Royal assent. By the Bill the Aldermen were confirmed in their right of veto in Acts of the Common Council; but this right was abolished twenty-one years later. Payment of scot was defined; and the restrictions as to testamentary dispositions were abolished.

After the passing of the Bill by the House of Commons, while the minds of the City were still greatly exercised upon it, an abstract was drawn up and circulated in the City. This abstract, in itself sufficiently long, is preserved in Maitland.

In the year 1722 one of the many alarms which seized the country during the

eighteenth century fell upon London. It was an alarm which had very little foundation. Yet there was some; the Jacobites, among whom were many of the High Church party, all the Nonjurors—and, in the minds of the people at least, all the Catholics,—were ceaseless in their activity, conspiring, devising schemes, reckoning forces, and estimating chances of success. As we can now understand, they never had a chance, not even when Charles Edward got as far as Derby. The Protestant interest in the country all along was strong enough to assure the throne of King George. Still, it is in the nature of a defeated faction to conspire. The Jacobites, looking round them in 1721, the year after the catastrophe of the South Sea Bubble, saw London confused, bewildered, half ruined, not knowing which way to look. This time of confusion appeared to be the Jacobites' opportunity. Moreover, the birth of an heir, Charles Edward, fell happily to fan the party's enthusiasm. They asked the aid of France. The Regent refused. He did more: he informed the English ambassador in France that an invasion was in contemplation. On May 8, 1722, the King informed the Lord Mayor that another rising was contemplated; that the plot was unsupported by any foreign power; that he had little to fear of the results, but that he looked to the Lord Mayor to secure the City. "The Court of Aldermen drew up and presented a loyal address. Next, all Papists, reputed Papists, and Nonjurors were ordered to leave the City, and not to reside within twenty miles of it. Pope, in one of his letters, mentions this order, which he, as a Catholic, had to obey. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and troops were kept ready all the summer. So that the conspiracy, for which Bishop Atterbury was arrested, came to nothing.

In 1769 the Common Hall passed instructions to its representatives. These instructions were drawn up under fourteen heads. It will be observed that already, fifty years before the Reform Act of 1832, the City was advocating Reform. The following are the more important points in the "Instructions":—

1. The proceedings in cases of libel and other criminal matters to be confined to Rules of Law, and Constitutional Tribunals.
2. A jealous watch over the Habeas Corpus Act.
3. Privilege of Parliament and Rights of Electors.
4. No meddling with Petitions.
5. No use of public money in Elections.
6. No "constructive" Treason.
7. The interests of Trade.
8. The preservation of Public Faith.
9. The independence of the Magistracy.
10. Jealousy of Military Power.
11. A standing committee on Public Expenditure.
12. Jealousy over the National Debt.

13. Against Placemen in Parliament and the Bribery of Members.

14. Shorter Parliaments.

Similar instructions were drawn up by the electors of Southwark to their representatives. During this year and the next the City was wholly occupied with the case of John Wilkes and the questions arising out of it.

In 1773 the case of the City against certain companies was decided. The goldsmiths, grocers, and weavers refused to obey the Lord Mayor's precept for a Common Hall. The Common Council submitted for counsel's opinion these questions:—(1) The power of the Lord Mayor to call Common Halls; (2) the obligation of companies to obey their precepts; (3) the methods of punishment in case of refusal. The opinion of counsel was wholly in favour of the Lord Mayor's authority. The City solicitor, therefore, filed informations of disfranchisement in the Mayor's Court against the masters and wardens of the three companies concerned. They took the case out of the Mayor's Court and into the Court of the King's Bench. Here Lord Mansfield gave his opinion that every Corporation was the sole judge of its own rights and franchises; and that the Corporation of London had the right of determining the present case solely in its own hands. The City solicitor, therefore, signed judgment of disfranchisement against the masters and wardens of the three companies. The Recorder, however, set the judgment aside, in order to give the parties an opportunity of trying the merits of the case.

On July 14, 1773, the case was heard and decided against the companies. In 1775 this judgment was reversed, and no Lord Mayor has since been able to compel obedience to a summons for a Common Hall.

The agitation against the Excise Bill of Walpole belongs perhaps to this part of civic history. The Bill proposed to change the duty on wine and tobacco from a customs duty, payable on importation, into an excise duty. The goods were to lie in bonded warehouses until taken out for home consumption, when they were to be sold at licensed shops only. Seven revenue officers were to possess the right of search in any house and at any time. This form of tax was peculiarly odious, and met with the most vehement opposition from the citizens of all classes. Walpole himself could not understand the opposition, but then Walpole never could understand the mind of the people. He called their opposition an "epidemic madness," and waited to see it subside as quickly as it had arisen. He was mistaken; this kind of opposition would endure as long as the cause of it. When the mob marched about bawling, "No Slavery; no Excise; no Wooden Shoes," coupling excise with the French and the Pretender, they were capable of going on indefinitely. When the Bill was introduced, the doors of the House were besieged by a noisy crowd whom Walpole, in a moment of irritation, called "sturdy beggars." Sir John Barnard, one of the City members, sprang to his feet to repudiate the charge: "The honourable

gentleman," said he, "talks of 'sturdy beggars'; I do not know what sort of people may be now at the door, because I have not lately been out of the House, but I believe they are the same sort of people that were there when I came last into the House, and then I can assure you that I saw none but such as deserve the name of 'sturdy beggars' as little as the honourable gentleman himself, or any gentleman whatever." The Bill was read a first time, but, owing to the clamour which was still maintained, Walpole thought fit to postpone it for two months. On the day of its withdrawal, Walpole was hustled by the crowd, and pretended that it was a



SIR ROBERT WALPOLE

deep-laid scheme for murder. The right of searching private houses was the thing most hateful in excise duties; any one found with dutiable goods in his house was liable to heavy fine and imprisonment. The liberty of the subject, therefore, was practically in the hands of the excise officers, who could swear away a man's liberty as they chose. Thus it was well known that there was a case in which a man had been confined in a debtors' prison for forty years—until he died, indeed—for having once been in possession of a few pounds of tea. Presumably he had been fined and had been unable to pay the fine. Hence, a lifelong imprisonment. And yet Walpole could not understand this "epidemic madness" of hatred and rage. Did he think, then, that the people liked imprisonment for life?

Finally the Bill was withdrawn. One good effect was produced by the demonstrations outside the House, viz. the passing of resolutions that it was a high crime and misdemeanour to menace or assault a member on his way to or from the House; or to assemble in a threatening and tumultuous manner outside the House; or to incite to such disorderly assemblage.

V.—SALE OF PLACES

A practice which we have agreed to condemn and to prohibit, or make impossible, that of selling places, largely prevailed during the whole of the eighteenth century. Sharpers advertised places for sale; countrymen were caught by the offers and came up to town with money to buy them,—of course they lost it all. The scandal of Mrs. Clarke and the Duke of York is well known. The Lord Mayor looked to the sale of offices during his year of office to recoup some of his expenses,—*e.g.* the office of Coal Meter was sometimes sold for as much as £6000. The following story shows how the sale of places was used as a means of fraud and robbery:—

A certain person—he was in holy orders—inserted advertisements in the daily papers, offering to procure comfortable situations under Government, provided he received an adequate reward for his own services and introduction. Though this mode of swindling was not altogether new, the liberal offers of the advertiser procured him a multitude of applications; and for some time he preyed on the credulity of his customers. At last two of the sufferers by the imposture, a Mr. Willy and a Mr. Rolfe, pursued him to Harwich, whence he was about to embark for the Continent, and brought him back, with all his luggage, to the Dundee Arms, Wapping. Mr. Willy stated to the magistrate that the prisoner had promised to procure him a place in the Ordnance Department; that he produced an instrument with fictitious signatures, which he pretended was the warrant for his appointment; and that he actually carried him to the Court of Exchequer, and made him take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance before the Barons, preparatory to entering upon office. Mr. Willy paid the prisoner £212 for this appointment. The complaint of Mr. Rolfe was of the same nature; he had been defrauded of £98 under similar circumstances. The prisoner was a well-known preacher in London.

VI.—THE REBELLION OF 1745

The threatened invasion of 1744 promised to be a far more formidable affair than the actual invasion of 1745.

Dunkirk was the centre of the preparations, the port where the convoys were assembled, the store-ships, the transports, the munitions of war. What assistance the King of France had promised in the form of troops was also to be sent to Dunkirk. The City proved its loyalty again. The merchants, 543 in number, sent in a separate address; the Bishop of London and his clergy an address of their own; and another was sent in by the Nonconformist congregations of London and Westminster. Here we have a remarkable proof of the leading of London. The City magistrates, the leading people, the clergy, the Nonconformists, all hasten to assure the King of their loyalty. Do the magistrates, clergy, and Nonconformists of York and Norwich, of Dublin and Edinburgh, take the same steps? or are they satisfied to let London speak for them?

It promised to be a very serious invasion indeed; an invasion more serious than any in history, except that of Philip with his great fleet. Happily, the elements once more declared for the Protestants. A storm came—an opportune, welcome, and most useful storm, which destroyed the French transports and made the invasion impossible, except at the cost of another fleet of transport and store ships.

We breathed again. We declared war, however, against France; and we waited events. Since Prince Charles could not get French auxiliaries, he would do without. We know what happened in 1745. When news came that the Pretender's standard was hoisted in Scotland, the City again hastened to assure the King of their loyalty. But what else did they do? For the moment, nothing. They trusted, it would appear, in the army under Sir John Cope. The business of Prestonpans settled that illusion; there was a run upon the Bank of England which was only saved by the efforts of the leading merchants; a camp was formed at Finchley (see Hogarth's famous "March"); subscription lists were opened which were not too zealously filled up.

Then the news came that the Pretender was already at Derby, only 150 miles from the capital. This news arrived on Friday, 6th December—"Black Friday." Instantly all became activity and bustle. In case the Duke of Northumberland should fail to intercept the rebels at Northampton, there was to be the massing of forces north of London ready to meet them. The Royal Exchange became the barracks of the train-bands; Bridewell was a guardroom for the night-guard; the two City marshals were to visit the night-watches in the ward, and to see that the constables did their duty. The King was to take command of the Guards; the

weavers of London offered him 1000 men; the lawyers formed themselves into a regiment, anticipating the "Devil's Own," and volunteered to form a bodyguard to the Royal Family during the King's absence.

All these precautions, however, did not put a stop to the panic. There was another run upon the Bank of England, met by a simple ruse, that of employing agents who presented notes and asked to be paid in sixpences. Fortunately, this condition of anxiety and agitation lasted a very short time. It was learned that Charles Edward was retreating north, and the City breathed once more; the Guards



DUKE OF CUMBERLAND

Walker and Cochrane.

From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds in National Portrait Gallery.

returned, the Volunteers went home, and the City constables resumed their former habits.

The most important duty, after Culloden, was to make another rising impossible, at least in the lifetime of those who remembered the year 1745. This duty, it seems, was performed with little mercy by the Duke of Cumberland. They called him the "Butcher"; but we ought, surely, to consider that, after his severity, though Jacobites continued in the land, there was never any whisper of another rising; and that the country was freed from conspiracies and the suspicion of conspiracies. If by cruelty to rebels this great result was achieved, then surely was "Butcher" Cumberland justified. The City thought so, certainly, for they thanked the King

in an address (May 3, 1746) for appointing the Duke to command—"whose conduct and bravery have, by the blessing of the Almighty, produced this our happy deliverance: a glory reserved for one of your illustrious family, endowed with those princely qualities which render him amiable to those under his command, and formidable to his enemies."

VII.—LONDON AND THE SPANISH WAR

To the City belongs the credit, or the reverse, of forcing on the war with Spain. The London merchants, on their side, had so long disregarded the clause in the Treaty of Utrecht which limited the British trade with Panama to one vessel of 600 tons in the year, that they resented the claim of Spain to the right of search for smuggled goods. This clause was, in fact, another proof of the folly of limitations which cannot be enforced. As might have been expected, there were complaints: the Spaniards boarded and searched the ships with brutality; they ill-used the crews; and when one Captain Jenkin came home with an ear in his pocket—the said ear cut off by a brutal Spanish *guarda costa*—the wrath of the country mounted high and boiled over. Later on it was said that the whole story was an invention; that Jenkin had undoubtedly lost an ear, but it was in a less heroic cause—that, in fact, he had lost it in pillory. Perhaps, however, the story was true after all. A petition was presented to the House of Commons, pointing out the merchants' grievances, and the arbitrary conduct of the Spaniards. The petition was introduced on 3rd March 1738, by Alderman Percy, who obtained leave to read it. The City were undoubtedly right in their protest. If the Spanish right of search was allowed, where was the limit? Were they allowed to board and to search ships bound for every port in America? In that case, as they pointed out, "the trade of His Majesty's subjects to America will become so precarious as to depend in a great measure upon the indulgence and justice of the Spaniards, of both which they have given us for some years past such specimens as we humbly think this nation can have no cause to be satisfied with."

The House learned further, with indignation, which Walpole vainly endeavoured to assuage, that there were no fewer than twenty English sailors languishing in Spanish prisons. After long and spirited debates the House of Commons addressed the King on the subject. Their action was followed by the House of Lords. To both Houses the King returned his customary answer, with assurances of his care to obtain satisfaction and security. Walpole, meantime, anxious to avert war, was ready to accept an understanding with Spain. When, however, the articles of the Convention concluded (January 14, 1739) became known in the City—they left the question as to the right of search unsettled—the Court of Common Council was

summoned immediately, and a resolution, unanimous, except for three "placemen," was passed for preparing a petition against the Convention. The petition is interesting from many points of view, and especially as showing that English trade was still conducted much in the old spirit—of war, and piracy, and murder. It may be found in full in Maitland.¹

This petition gave occasion for a debate, sharp and acrimonious, in both Houses. Finally the Convention was accepted, first by the Lords with a majority of twenty-one,—but thirty-nine of them protested. In the House of Commons the Convention was carried by 262 contents against 235 non-contents—absentees 61. It was remarked that of the 262 contents, 234 were "placemen," whose places amounted annually to £212,956 : 13 : 4, or an average of nearly a thousand pounds each. These lofty moralists, in fact, had sold themselves to the Minister. Would it be possible, one asks with curiosity, to purchase supporters in the House at the present day on those terms?

One fact connected with this persistent agitation of the City for war with Spain is curious, as it illustrates the return of that contempt for trade which was common under Henry the Third; which vanished when the City proved its power in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; which was changed into respect and honour under the Tudors. A German court; the increased power of the House of Commons, where the members nearly all represented the country interest; a long succession of wars calling the younger sons to the pursuit of arms; the severance of the old connection of the landed gentry and the City; the establishment of two camps, so to speak—that of the nobility in the new quarter, which we call the West End, and that of the merchants in the City and the suburbs, north, east, and south, but not west; the increase of wealth among the country gentry, so that yeomen during this century became squires, and squires became the territorial nobility: all these things together contributed to raise up a barrier not to be passed between trade and gentility. The Ministers expressed this feeling in a manner which seems to us to demand no other word than that of "brutal." They represented the merchants and the Common Council as a contemptible body of tradesmen and mechanics, who could know nothing about affairs of State. They printed lists of the Common Council, with the addition of their callings and their companies; these lists they dispersed about the avenues of both Houses, and sent about the country by post, with the following verses from the *Book of Ecclesiasticus* (xxxviii. 27, 31, 32, 33):—

"27. So every carpenter and workmaster, that laboureth night and day; and they that cut and grave seals, and are diligent to make great variety, and give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and watch to finish a work:

31. All these trust to their hands; and every one is wise in his work.

¹ *Hist. of London*, vol. i. p. 593.

32. Without these cannot a city be inhabited; and they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down:

33. They shall not be sought for in public counsel, nor sit high in the congregation; they shall not sit on the judges' seats, nor understand the sentence of judgment; they cannot declare justice and judgment; and they shall not be found where parables are spoken."

This method of warfare was not likely to make the City more kindly disposed towards the Ministers: they showed their opinion of Walpole by refusing to nominate Sir George Champion as Lord Mayor, because he had voted for the Convention. They took this strong step without haste or temper, and followed it with a document which showed that, tradesmen or mechanics though they were, they could still act with dignity and a full sense of responsibility. The City, in fact, prevailed. The King declared war against Spain. On October 22, 1739, the formal proclamation took place at St. James's, Charing Cross, Chancery Lane, Wood Street, and the Royal Exchange. The proclamation was welcomed with extravagant joy; with the burning of bonfires and the ringing of bells. "They ring their bells now," said Walpole bitterly: "but before long they will be wringing their hands."

In 1742 the merchants presented another petition to both Houses, praying for stronger convoys, and pointing out the loss of valuable cargoes and vessels in consequence of insufficient protection.

The petition was referred to a Committee of the whole House. It is gratifying to find that at a time when the House of Commons was filled with a horde of venal placemen, always at the command of the Ministers, the electors of the City had the courage and the intelligence to draw up another paper of instructions for their members begging them to guard against the packing of the House with placemen.

VIII—THE EARTHQUAKES OF 1750

On February 8, 1750, between twelve and one o'clock in the day, a very distinct and smart shock of an earthquake was felt throughout London and Westminster. In the Courts of King's Bench and Chancery, then being held in Westminster Hall, the barristers and judges stopped the case before them and ran out, in terror, thinking that the building would fall upon their heads; in the West End houses the furniture shook; the pewter on the shelves rattled (remember that, as yet, except in the best houses, the plates were all of pewter); in Southwark a hay-loft over a slaughter-house was thrown down; chimneys fell in Leadenhall Street, in Billiter Street, and in Horselydown. It is needless to add that the terror naturally caused by a phenomenon so threatening, so entirely beyond control, of which no one knows when it may occur again, or with what increase of violence, was abundantly indicated by what was said and done by the Londoners under the first impression of trembling

awe. It was understood as a Divine warning against the sins of the City and the West End; many admirable exhortations to repentance were solemnly pronounced from the pulpits; such organs of opinion as then existed were inundated with meditations, reflections, prophecies, and pieces of the Higher Morality.

But what were the terrors of the first experience as compared with those of the second? For, exactly four weeks later, but early in the morning, when most of the people were still asleep in their beds, at half-past five, another and a more dreadful earthquake was felt. Those who were already up observed that the open ground, as in St. James's Park, visibly moved; lightning flashed in all directions; even the fish, it was said, showed their alarm by jumping high out of the water—but considering the very small number of visitors to the Park at five on a cold March morning, the report may be said to require confirmation; while the dogs, who are always terrified by anything outside their experience, howled in a most melancholy manner. China was upset and broken; pewter, which could not be broken, was once more thrown off the shelves; the bells were set ringing; from the West Towers of Westminster Abbey stones were dislodged; one girl was reported to have been thrown out of bed, getting a broken arm; chimneys and coping-stones were thrown down. In a word, there occurred a second earthquake, more violent than the first, yet not so violent as to cause any serious damage.

It was soon learned, to the general consternation, that the second, like the first, was confined to London and its environs. What could prove more convincingly that the warning, thought to be directed against London by the first attack, was really and certainly Divinely so intended? The Bishop of London hastened to accept this view, and issued an address upon the subject, in which he improved the occasion with great plainness of speech. One hopes that the Bishop's address did good. One is inclined to think that it might have been productive of a great improvement of morals had it not been for the unlucky craze which followed. Meantime, a good many people—those who could afford it—were running away out of town. The *Evening Post* remonstrated with these runaways. It was not the place, said the *Post*, but the people, who were warned; it was necessary, for instance, if people must needs leave London, to leave their vices behind them. And, in their hasty flight, it was greatly feared that the vices had been packed up with the shirts. Other papers declared that the visitation was not supernatural at all, but quite natural, and in accordance with the phenomena of nature—perhaps only “an airquake.” The theory of this extraordinary kind of quake, which has never since returned, probably reassured the sinful, who stayed where they were, and, so far as one can learn, in the renewed enjoyment of all their vices.

Then there arose a new report, which spread like wildfire, running into every house by one door and out by the other; filling every street, every lane, every court; insomuch that there was no place or part of London which had not heard it.

This rumour was a prophecy that the two last earthquakes were but forerunners, warnings, indications, of what was to follow; and that on the 8th of April would take place an earthquake, a third shake far worse than its two predecessors, which would completely destroy the whole of London and Westminster and the suburbs. This belief, in the excited state of the popular brain, found immediate and universal credence. Those who did not believe it, acted as if they did. The prophecy was subsequently traced to a private soldier in the Horse Guards. Now, one must not understand by this a private soldier of the Guards, such as we know him at the present day. The private soldiers of the Horse Guards were people who followed all sorts of occupations or callings: and especially the minor, less considered, unclassed professions, which were generally ill paid. For instance, they were draughtsmen; surveyors; calculators for builders; designers; teachers of mathematics, languages, fencing, fine writing, fortification, and the Art of War; accountants; statisticians; and so forth. Their pay was not nearly enough for the maintenance of their families—for they were mostly married men; but it supplemented their earnings. Moreover, as a Guardsman could not be arrested for debt, there were always in the ranks certain broken tradesmen who, but for this sanctuary, would have been languishing in the Fleet. It was, no doubt, one of these learned and professional gentlemen who, by dint of comparing texts and manipulating verses out of that prophet of Israel who has done so much for the modern Prophet and Interpreter, arrived at the conclusion that London must inevitably, and by Divine order, pronounced thousands of years before the event, perish by earthquake on the 8th day of April 1750.

When the day drew near, the people began to run out of town. When the evening of the 7th arrived, there was not a single person, it is stated with that kind of exaggeration which proves the case, save the bedridden and the sick, who was left in the houses. One may imagine the agonised terrors of those who were left to await, alone and forsaken, the earthquake in their beds. The whole of the City of London, the City of Westminster, the Borough, the suburbs, the West End, were out in the streets, or out in the fields, during that awful night. Many thousands lay in boats on the river—all the boats were engaged for the purpose; many thousands lay in the fields outside the town—they were then very easy of access,—for instance, the district between the Tottenham Court Road and the Foundling Hospital, north of the British Museum, was all fields; people paid enormous sums for lodgings in the country; great ladies sat in their coaches, crowding the roads; all night long they sat thus, waiting in terror and suspense, expecting every moment the thunder and rumblings and roarings and the agitation of the world, when the proud pinnacles and spires of London should topple and fall and lie levelled in one common ruin.

The earthquake was to happen on the morning of the 8th. Morning means, at longest, from midnight to midday. They waited, therefore, all that time. When

midday arrived, nothing at all had happened. The Prophet of the Guards had therefore, fortunately, proved a false prophet. The world went home again and took its breakfast—a morning draught of small-beer with a crust and a lump of salt beef—and presently went to work again, the earthquake forgotten; and the great ones of the town, once more, without further reproach, fell to practising and prosecuting their vices; and so two good earthquakes were thrown away and wasted. The Bishop of London's address, meantime, had circulated 40,000 copies; and one feels certain that had it not been for the unfortunate craze and panic, followed by a sense of full security, repentance and amendment would have ensued. They put the Guardsman into prison for being a false prophet, and so he disappears from history.

IX.—DEATH OF BYNG

On the loss of Minorca the Common Council drew up another letter of instructions for their members. They were to demand a strict inquiry into the causes of the recent disasters in Minorca and North America; they were to urge the dismissal of the foreign mercenaries; they were to vote for no supplies till this was done; they were to demand a reduction in the number of places and placemen; to restore, if possible, triennial parliaments; with one or two other points. The paper is interesting as showing the resolution of the City to reform the House of Commons if that were possible.

Above all things, however, the City demanded the execution of Byng. He had been tried and had been found guilty of not having done what he might have done to save the island. The City clamoured for his death; papers were posted up on the Royal Exchange—"Shoot Byng, or look out for your King." Byng was accordingly shot on the quarter-deck of the *Monarque* at Portsmouth. One is ashamed of the panic wrath shown by the City on this occasion: in its madness of humiliation it demanded the death of some one. There were two on whom punishment might fall—the Admiral and the Minister. It is always possible to say of a defeated commander that he might have done more; it is not possible, except in the pages of history about to follow, to say that a Minister might have done more. Therefore, Byng was made the victim.

X.—TEST AND CORPORATION ACTS

The Test and Corporation Acts could be made, and were sometimes made, the means of gratifying intolerance and oppression. Thus, in the year 1742, a Dissenter named Robert Grosvenor, on being elected to the office of Sheriff, declined to take

the Sacrament by the Anglican rite in order to qualify. The Corporation cited him before the Court of King's Bench, which decided against his claim for exemption. The Corporation, therefore, passed a bylaw which imposed a fine of £400 upon any one who should decline to stand for the office after being nominated, and a fine of £600 upon one who should refuse to serve after election. They then proceeded deliberately to choose and nominate Dissenters in order to fine them. It seemed as if the City proposed to bleed the Nonconformists slowly to death, and in six years they had amassed the sum of £15,000 by these fines, which went towards the building of the Mansion House—a fact which is little known or remembered among the guests of the Lord Mayor at this day. In 1754 the Dissenters resolved to fight this intolerable claim, from which they had now suffered for twelve years. The occasion chosen was the election of George Streatfield and Alexander Sheafe, both Dissenters, as Sheriffs. Both refused to serve; both were fined; both refused to pay the fine; and against both were proceedings, in consequence, instituted. The Sheriffs' Court decided against them; that was to be expected; they appealed to the Court of Hustings, which also decided against them. That, too, had been expected. They appealed to a special commission of five judges, who in 1762 reversed the previous decisions. Then the Corporation took the case up to the House of Lords, where it was heard in 1767, and judgment was given in favour of the Nonconformists, who were henceforward exempted from taking office, without having to pay fines. In 1779 Dissenting ministers and schoolmasters were relieved of the necessity of signing the Thirty-Nine Articles. It was not until 1812 that the Quakers' Oath Act, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act were repealed; while Unitarians were only tolerated by law in 1813, when the statutes of William III. and George III., which made it blasphemy to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, were finally repealed.

XI.—JOHN WILKES AND THE CITY

The career of, and the long-continued contest carried on by John Wilkes, belong to the national history, even more than to that of London. There are, however, certain points and episodes in his life which concern the City especially. Thus, the arrest of Wilkes, his publisher and his printer, for the famous "No. 45," under a "General Warrant," was a most iniquitous and unconstitutional proceeding. Wilkes, it will be remembered, was released in accordance with the judgment of Chief Justice Pratt.

When one Williams, bookseller of Fleet Street, was put in the pillory for republishing *The North Briton*, the people maintained, during the whole time of his standing before them, a continuous roar of acclamation. When Wilkes first stood for

Middlesex, the mob paraded the town and broke the windows of everybody supposed to be his enemy. When Wilkes was sent to the King's Bench Prison, the mob took the horses out of the carriage and dragged it themselves to the other end of London.

The arbitrary invasion of the rights of electors in refusing to admit Wilkes as member for Middlesex was met by meetings of the electors and by petitions showing the encroachments upon the liberties of the people by the Ministers. These petitions came from the Freeholders of Middlesex, from the City, and from Westminster. The King gave no answer. The City, however, exercised their right of personally calling upon the King. This meant that they demanded an answer. They got one in the shape of an assurance that the King would not invade any of their rights. But he did not promise to redress their wrongs.

Another remonstrance was offered by the City. It was on this occasion that Beckford made his famous speech. The King's reply to the remonstrance was as follows :—

"I should have been wanting to the public as well as to myself, if I had not expressed my dissatisfaction at the late address. My sentiments on that subject continue the same; and I should ill deserve to be considered as the father of my people, if I could suffer myself to be prevailed upon to make such a use of my prerogative, as I cannot but think inconsistent with the interest, and dangerous to the constitution of the kingdom."

Then the Lord Mayor, Beckford, made the spirited reply which has immortalised him :—

"Will your Majesty be pleased to so far condescend as to permit the Mayor of your loyal City of London to declare in your royal presence, on behalf of his fellow-citizens, how much the bare apprehension of your Majesty's displeasure would, at all times, affect their minds? The declaration of that displeasure has already filled them with inexpressible anxiety and with the deepest affliction. Permit me, sire, to assure your Majesty, that your Majesty has not in all your dominions any subjects more faithful, more dutiful, or more affectionate to your Majesty's person and family, or more ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes in the maintenance of the true honour and dignity of your crown.

We do therefore, with the greatest humility and submission, more earnestly supplicate your Majesty that you will not dismiss us from your presence without expressing a more favourable opinion of your faithful citizens, and without some comfort, some prospect, at least, of redress.

Permit me, sire, farther to observe, that whoever has already dared, or shall hereafter endeavour by false insinuations and suggestions to alienate your Majesty's affections from your loyal subjects in general, and from the City of London in particular, and to withdraw your confidence in and regard for your people, is an enemy to your Majesty's person and family, a violator of the public peace, and a

betrayed of our happy constitution as it was established at the glorious and necessary Revolution."

The King made no reply. When the matter was referred to the Common Council, Beckford produced his speech and read it. Therefore, one observes, it was premeditated, composed, and written before the presentation of the remonstrance.



LORD MAYOR BECKFORD

The Court passed a formal vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor for vindicating at the foot of the throne the loyalty and affection of the citizens of London.

Beckford was succeeded by Brass Crosby, a man of equal patriotism and courage. In the first month of his office there arose the question whether the Lords of the Admiralty had the power to issue press warrants to be executed in the City. Wilkes, naturally, was the Alderman who raised the question. It was a

question of very great importance, because it seemed to touch the City's right to be subject to no other magistrate than one of their own choice. The following queries were laid before counsel, with their opinion, as subjoined (Maitland, *Contin.* p. 120).

Query 1. May the Lords of the Admiralty of themselves, by virtue of their commission, or under the direction of the Privy Council, legally issue warrants for the impressing of seamen?

Query 2. If yea, is the warrant annexed in point of form legal?

Query 3. Is the Lord Mayor compellable to back such warrants? If he is, what may be the consequence of a refusal?

The Lord Mayor further informed the Court that no one was to be arrested within the City except by a constable; that he had furnished the lieutenants of the pressgangs with lists of all the constables; and they were not to arrest any freeman or the servant of a freeman. In order to induce sailors to enter without impressment, the Court offered a sum of forty shillings for every able seaman, and twenty shillings for every ordinary seaman, over and above the bounty granted by His Majesty, not exceeding one month from the date of the order.

The Court returned to the grievance in the right of election, and it was resolved that another petition and remonstrance should be drawn up. They were by this time used to strong language, and therefore did not hesitate to express themselves plainly.

"We have seen the known law of the land, the sure guardian of Right, trodden down; and, by the influence of daring Ministers, arbitrary discretion, the law of tyrants, set up to overthrow the choice of the electors, and nominate to a seat in Parliament a person not chosen by the people.

Your Majesty's throne is founded on the free exercise of this great right of election; to preserve it inviolate is true loyalty; to undermine it is the most compendious treason against the whole constitution."

The King coldly replied that he saw no reason to change his opinion already indicated upon these points. Then followed the great contest in which Brass Crosby stood out manfully for the liberty of the press. It had of late been the custom of the papers to publish, under fictitious names, the speeches in the House of Commons. The printers of the *Middlesex Journal* and the *Gazetteer*, John Wheble and R. Thompson, began to publish the speeches with the names. The House, indignant at this breach of privilege, addressed the throne, asking for a royal proclamation offering a reward of £50 for the apprehension of the two men. This was granted, and, on the strength of the proclamation, one Carpenter arrested Wheble, and brought him before Wilkes, the sitting Alderman. Never before had Wilkes obtained an opportunity so excellent for annoying his enemies. On the ground that there was no other reason than the proclamation for arresting Wheble, Wilkes ordered him to be discharged; he then bound over Carpenter to answer for his

offence; and he wrote to Lord Halifax stating what he had done, because such an arrest was a direct violation of the rights of an Englishman and of the chartered privileges of the City.

At the same time Wheble addressed a letter to the Speaker. He said that he had found a piece of paper on which he had asked for counsel's opinion. The importance of the case is so great that the documents are here produced in full (Maitland, *Contin.* p. 127):—

"CASE FOR MR. MORRIS'S OPINION

Feb. 21, 1771.

'Ordered, That J. Wheble do attend this House upon Tuesday morning next.

Ordered, That the Service of the said Order, by leaving a Copy of the same at the usual Place of Abode of the said J. Wheble, be deemed equal to personal Service, and be good Service.

J. HATSELL, Cl. Dom. Com.'

THE above Writing, which is by some supposed to be a Copy of an Order, or pretended Order, of the House of Commons, was left, upon Friday, February 22nd, 1771, at the House of Mr. John Wheble, within the City of London, being put into the Hands of one of his Servants by a Person who stiled himself Messenger to the House of Commons.

Upon Thursday, February 28th, a Person called at Mr. Wheble's house, and shewed a Paper Writing, which he pretended to be some Warrant or Authority from the Speaker of the House of Commons, directing him to take John Wheble into Custody, for his Contempt in not obeying the Orders of the House for his Attendance on that House.

Upon Saturday, March 9th, a Paper, in the Form of a Royal Proclamation, appeared in the *Gazette*, intituled, by the King, A Proclamation for apprehending John Wheble and R. Thompson.

Mr. Wheble did not appear to the above Summons, neither has he been apprehended upon the pretended Warrant of the Speaker, or the pretended Proclamation.

QUESTIONS

I. Suppose the Paper Writing first above mentioned to be a Copy of a genuine Order of the House of Commons, is John Wheble, at whose House the same was left, by Law requirable to attend agreeable to the tenor thereof?

II. If John Wheble is so requirable to attend by Law, he having neglected to do so, what Penalties is he liable to, and by what Means would it have been legal to proceed against him?

III. If the pretended Warrant of the Speaker is authentic, was John Wheble obliged to pay Obedience thereto, by surrendering himself a prisoner to the Person who carried with him the same, and called himself a Messenger of the House?

IV. Taking the Paper which appeared in the *Gazette* really to be the King's Proclamation, is 'the same a legal Process, and a sufficient Warrant to such as may venture to act under it?

Upon the whole, Mr. Morris is desired to give his Opinion on the above stated Case to Mr. Wheble, and as Counsel to advise what Conduct he ought by Law to observe upon this occasion.

COUNSEL'S OPINION

I have attentively perused the above-written Case.

To the first Question, I am most clearly and decisively of Opinion, that Mr. Wheble is not compellable by Law to attend the House of Commons in pursuance of the written Order above stated.

2nd Qy. The first Question being answered in the Negative, the second requires no consideration ; but if the Attendance was legally requirable, pursuant to the above Order, it would not be difficult to shew what Penalties the refusing Party would be liable to upon resort to the legal Courts of Justice, which would have Cognizance of such offences.

3rd Qy. If the Summons be invalid, the subsequent Warrant by the Speaker must necessarily be invalid also ; for the Defects of the Summons were not cured by any appearance of Mr. Wheble. A form of a Warrant no more makes a legal authority (for so much the Word imports) than a Constable's Staff makes a Peace-Officer. If the Warrant were legal, a Messenger of the House is not a proper person for executing it ; but only the Sergeant at Arms, and the Deputy-Sergeant.

But these are Trifles with Respect to the Question ; for the Answer is most plain and positive, that the Speaker of the House of Commons is no more a Magistrate appointed to issue Warrants of apprehension, than the House itself is a Court of Justice appointed to punish.

4th Qy. This Question admits of no Hesitation or Dispute. The pretended Proclamation of the King is clearly illegal. Proclamations have no intrinsic Force in this Country ; nor have they any at all but by special Act of Parliament.

Upon the Whole, I do advise Mr. Wheble to pay no Attention or Obedience either to the above-mentioned Summons, Warrant of Apprehension, or Proclamation. All are equally unjust and illegal. Mr. Wheble will be protected in his Resistance by Magna Charta, and by numerous Statutes which confirm our invaluable Code of Liberties. The Proclamation, moreover, seems to me to levy a Cruel War upon two Individuals without Colour of Law ; and I do give it as my Opinion, that Mr. Wheble may well institute an action upon the Case, against the Counsellors, Promoters, Aiders, Abettors, and Publishers thereof.

LINCOLN'S INN,
March 14th, 1771.

R. MORRIS."

The arrest of Thompson, the other offender named, was in the same way pronounced illegal, and the man discharged. The House of Commons then tried the arrest of a third printer, one Miller of the *Evening Post*, by a Speaker's warrant sent by a messenger of the House. He was brought before the Lord Mayor, the Court being attended by the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms to demand, in the name of the Speaker, that the man Miller should be given up to him. The Mayor refused ; it was contrary, he said, to the laws and constitutions of the City, that a freeman should be arrested on any warrant without the signature of a magistrate of the City.

No more flagrant violation of the privileges of the City had ever been attempted by Crown, Lords, or Commons. The City was deeply indignant. When Crosby and Oliver the Sheriff drove to the House by order of the Speaker, they were followed by hundreds of people, who, on their return, took out the horses and dragged the carriage themselves. Crosby, who was suffering from gout, had only time to say that he had acted according to his oath in protecting the Charters of the City. He was then obliged to sit down, and was carried out. Wilkes, for his part, refused to attend except as member for Middlesex. This was on March 19, 1771. The Court of Common Council moved a vote of thanks to the three, and resolved to stand by them. The King and the House were furious. On the 25th of March Crosby was sufficiently recovered to go out again. Once more he was

escorted by thousands. Again he was compelled by pain and feebleness to go home. The House, therefore, proceeded to the case of Oliver, whom they ordered to the Tower.

The Common Council answered this order by resolving upon keeping a table for Oliver during his confinement.

On the 27th the Lord Mayor once more attended the House with half the City.



JOHN WILKES

He was, like Oliver, ordered to be imprisoned in the Tower. The mob, meantime, held all the approaches to the House. Lord North and Charles Fox were assaulted, and the former narrowly escaped. At the Court of Common Council held next day Crosby declined the favour of a "table" at the City's expense; and Oliver wrote a letter, in which he spoke very openly,—but plainness of speech no longer did any good.

"The last ten years have afforded the City of London, in particular, every instance of neglect, unkindness, insult, and injury; their petitions have been rejected,

slighted, ridiculed; their property unjustly conveyed to others; their charters violated; their laws contemned; their magistrates imprisoned. The power that consumes us has the plainest and most odious marks of despotism, abject abroad and insolent at home."

For some reason the House proceeded no further with Wilkes than to summon him three times; each time he refused to attend except as member for Middlesex. On May the 10th, when the House rose, the two prisoners came out of the Tower. They were welcomed with a discharge of the Artillery Company's guns, and the City was illuminated. The mob also broke all the windows in the Speaker's house, lest there should be any doubt as to their opinions. A few days later, when the case of the messenger of the House of Commons was considered, a *Noli Prosequi* was obtained on the ground that it was unbecoming to use the King's name for prosecuting a messenger of the House of Commons.

The Court of Common Council passed a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen Oliver and Wilkes. They also voted a silver cup, value £200, to the Lord Mayor, and two others, value £100 each, to Oliver and Wilkes.

They then, undaunted by repeated rebuffs and snubs, proceeded to draw up another remonstrance and to court another rebuff, which they duly received.

In March 1771 the City drew up yet another remonstrance—drawn up and presented to receive another snub. It is incredible that the City did not by this time understand that their remonstrances were absolutely futile. Wilkes did not attend with the Mayor. In April he claimed his seat again and was again refused. The City understood by this time, however, that the only way of getting reforms was through the House itself, and it is a proof of the isolation of English towns at that time that no attempt seems to have been made to create a patriotic spirit in the boroughs of the country or to ascertain the feeling of the electors. As regards the members for the City, they were made to sign an engagement to use their best endeavours to shorten the duration of Parliaments; to exclude pensioners and placemen from the House; to establish a fair and equal representation of the people in Parliament; and to redress the grievances and secure the constitutional rights of their fellow-subjects in Great Britain, Ireland, and America. Also solemnly to promise not to accept from the Crown or its Ministers any place, pension, contract, title, gratuity, or emolument whatsoever.

In October 1774 Wilkes was elected Lord Mayor; and in the same month he was again returned for Middlesex. The House gave way; the long battle of ten years was over: the man who had been expelled the House, who had been outlawed, who had been fined and imprisoned, who had been four times running expelled, who had defied the House when it imprisoned his friends, who had been successively elected Alderman, Sheriff, and Lord Mayor,—now entered the House supported by half a dozen members of his own nomination, and invested with the

insignia of the first magistracy in England. No one opposed him; he took his seat without a word of opposition. More than this, he was able to cause the various resolutions as to his own expulsion to be expunged.

XII. REVOLT OF THE COLONIES

The factious spirit which prevailed in the City is shown by the unseemly quarrels among the Aldermen over an election during Wilkes's year of office. We need not linger over this trouble. A far more important matter, that of the Revolt of the American Colonies, next occupied the attention of the City. Had the Government the right of taxing any part of His Majesty's dominions which was not represented in Parliament? The answer, to us, is perfectly plain and simple. By every upward step in freedom; by the lessons of 1643-49; by the deposition of James; by the conduct of William; by the constitutional reigns of George the First and George the Second;—this great law of English liberty had been asserted, claimed, and granted. We are amazed that it was not acknowledged by George the Third and his Ministers; yet Lord North, while he repealed all other taxes on the Colonies, maintained that on tea, in order to assert his pretended right to tax the Colonies without their consent.

The majority in the new House of Commons, to which Wilkes was elected, a House, like its predecessor, of placemen and obedient voters, was in favour of upholding this right, even at the risk of civil war with colonies united for the first time in defence of their liberties—the one and only cause in which colonies so widely different could be expected to unite. Happily, the City at this juncture behaved with so great a sense of true patriotism and so deep a responsibility as to their own duty, that one regrets the political impotence into which London had now fallen. They might have learned by the ill success of their late remonstrances that, though the King received their petitions, he was not in the least degree moved by them; nor had they the least effect in creating or changing public feeling. Outside London, one asks whether there were any country towns, or municipalities, which ever heard, save by private letter or by report, of the Common Council's struggle for the liberties of the nation?

Chatham, as is well known, spoke to the House of Lords with burning eloquence against the conduct of the Ministers. The House of Commons passed a Bill for shutting out the Colonists from the Newfoundland fisheries; the Common Council in vain protested against a law which could not be enforced and would only madden those at whom it was directed. The City then drew up another remonstrance. Apart from commercial considerations and the ruin of manufacturers, they referred the question to the liberties of Englishmen.

This remonstrance was presented by the Lord Mayor. The City members, the Court of Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and the Livery also attended in a body. The King received them, and replied by expressing his astonishment that any of his subjects should encourage the rebellious spirit of the Colonists. The next day, however, the Lord Chamberlain wrote to Wilkes saying that the King would receive no more addresses on the throne save from the body corporate of the City. Wilkes replied, urging the ancient and uncontested right of the Livery to present addresses to the King on the throne; he also pointed out that the answer of the King to the City's remonstrance would probably be taken by the Americans as a fresh proof of his anger against them.

The Committee of Association of New York addressed a letter to the City of London, urging it to use all its efforts for the restoration of honour and peace. A copy was sent to every member of the Court. At the next meeting of the Court resolutions were passed condemning the Ministers for their advice to the King, and adopting a new remonstrance. This, which was stronger and more outspoken than any of the preceding, the King refused to answer except at levee. The Common Council, therefore, published their remonstrance without presenting it. They then proceeded to consider the letter from New York, and, in reply, drew up another remonstrance praying the King to suspend hostilities in America. This was received, and obtained the usual reply. Next, the Committee of Philadelphia appealed to London as the "Patron of Liberty" to mediate in the restoration of peace. What was to be done? The City had appealed to the King, time after time, with no result. The majority in the House of Commons, as was said in the last remonstrance, were "notoriously bribed to betray their constituents and their country"; it was worse than useless to address such a House; that great and venerable guardian of the nation's liberties was degraded into an instrument for trampling them down. It was decided, therefore, to address the electors of the whole country—a step which should have been taken as soon as the obstinacy of the King and the determination of the Ministers to destroy the liberties of the people were understood. This address pointed out most clearly that the country could get nothing out of the war, even if it was successful: nothing at all, except certain injury to trade, certain loss in commercial relations, enormous expenditure, and the establishment of arbitrary power over the Colonies.

"We lament the blood that has been already shed; we deplore the fate of those brave men who are devoted to hazard their lives—not against the enemies of the British name, but against the friends of the prosperity and glory of Great Britain; we feel for the honour of the British arms, sullied—not by the misbehaviour of those who bore them, but by the misconduct of the Ministers who employed them, for the oppression of their fellow-subjects; we are alarmed at the immediate, insupportable expense and the probable consequences of a war which, we are convinced, originates in violence and injustice, and must end in ruin."

At the same time the City sent petitions to both Houses, with no result; and the war continued.

On October 31, 1776, in the House of Lords, upon the motion for an address of confidence to the King, an amendment was moved by the Marquis of Rockingham and seconded by the Duke of Manchester. The amendment was an earnest protest against the folly and wickedness which led to the Rebellion of the American Colonies.

The protest was lost by 91 to 26; and so a great opportunity of concession and conciliation was thrown away. The City was consistent with itself and persistent in its action. In March 1776 the Common Council implored the King to suspend hostilities in order to attempt a reconciliation. George replied, evidently in that amazing ignorance as to the real questions and the real issues at stake which is the only explanation of his obstinacy, that he was ready to extend clemency "as soon as the rebellion was at an end." Only three months later the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Early in 1778, when public subscriptions were asked for in support of the war, the City of London refused to give anything. Conciliatory measures were advanced, and perhaps, even at that late period in the contest, peace might have been arranged. But France now entered into alliance with America, and the war became one which must, for the sake of honour, be fought out to the end. Spain joined France. There was no longer any thought of peace. The conduct of the war belongs to the history of the country.

On February 27, 1782, General Conway carried a resolution that the use of force to put down the Colonies was impracticable. Lord North resigned. Rodney's victory over De Grasse, and Lord Howe's relief of Gibraltar, somewhat soothed the national humiliation; and on September 3, 1783, the Peace of Paris was signed, and on the 6th of October was proclaimed in the City. And so, at last, we closed the most discreditable chapter in the whole history of England; in which London was from the outset—it is a most honourable and even a most glorious fact—on the side of justice and liberty; in which the King, his Ministers, and a complaisant House of Commons were on the side of tyranny and illegal oppression. Unfortunately, the City had lost her old, and had not yet acquired her new, authority.

XIII.—LONDON AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Many persons—among them the most intelligent and the most reflecting—looked upon the early steps of the French Revolution with an eagerness of hope and expectation which they did not try to conceal. Who could believe that a revolution which began with so much promise should lead to such wholesale

massacres of innocent blood? Who could believe that a chivalrous nation would descend to such infamies as the unspeakable treatment of the Queen and the slow murder of the Dauphin? Who could foresee that a movement which seemed at first to set free a great people, would lead to a military despotism and an attempt at universal domination?

The eighteenth century prepared itself slowly and unconsciously for the events of its last decade; scholars, historians, and philosophers considered and discussed continually the questions of constitution, government, rights, and liberties. Its travellers wandered over the whole of Europe and elsewhere, observing and reporting on the condition of the people. Everywhere they found kings whose rule was absolute; everywhere they found intolerance in religion; prohibition of free thought; a press muzzled and fettered; judges subservient and corrupt; privileged classes who paid no taxes; the people ground down by exactions, without a voice in the government, without representatives. When they published, or narrated, these things at home, the examination of their own institutions, if only by comparison, was inevitable. They found in this, the boasted land of liberty, a king always trying to filch something more for his prerogative: whose stupid obstinacy in taxing people without representatives had lost England's most magnificent possessions; a civil list blackened by crowds of pensioned favourites; not a tenth part of the people represented; intolerance of free thought; the common people rough and ignorant to the last degree; the army and navy maintained by a barbarous system of flogging which had no parallel even in the Middle Ages; merchants enriched by a trade in slaves far more extensive and more cruel than that formerly carried on by the Saxons; the press rigorously watched; free expression called blasphemy; Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews still under disabilities; a penal code so terrible that juries refused to convict, even with the clearest evidence; and a House of Commons which was the mere tool—the paid, purchased, ignoble tool—of the Government. Worse still, this despicable body prided themselves on being gentlemen and affected to despise tradesmen. Was there ever a worse time for England? Looking around him, the English philosopher could not possibly admit that the British Constitution was the best of all possible constitutions. And when the French Revolution began, undertaking the most sweeping reforms, he could not choose but believe that this was a movement rich in promise, full of generous and noble and humane endeavour, and that this movement would serve as an example to his own country. The frightful excesses which followed damped his ardour. Yet there remained some who continued faithful to their first hopes; and even the long war of twenty-three years which followed, when, for a time, the very existence of Great Britain was in danger, when the Conqueror marched north and south and east throughout a prostrate continent, calling all his own,—even these things failed to extinguish in these men the ardent love of liberty which had moved their hearts at the outset: moved

their hearts to the very depths: moved all that was in them of generosity and nobility.

In November 1789 the "Revolution Society" was constituted. In the present condition of our liberties, the Society does not seem very formidable. But at that time, not only was the House of Commons a sham, but every attempt at free thought or advocacy of reform was treated as a case of treasonable libel. Thus, the following propositions seemed audacious and threatening to the last degree. To us they only seem ill-timed and brought forward at a time when all conservatives were trembling with terror at the uprooting of everything they held precious, in France. As yet the Reign of Terror had not begun. The Society sent an Address of Congratulation to the National Assembly (*Annual Register*, 1789):—

"The Society for commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain, disdaining national partialities, and rejoicing in every triumph of liberty and justice over arbitrary power, offer to the National Assembly of France their congratulations on the revolution in that country, and on the prospect it gives to the two first kingdoms in the world, of a common participation in the blessings of civil and religious liberty. They cannot help adding their ardent wishes of an happy settlement of so important a revolution, and at the same time expressing the particular satisfaction with which they reflect on the tendency* of the glorious example given in France to encourage other nations to assert the unalienable rights of mankind, and thereby to introduce a general reformation in the Governments of Europe, and to make the world free and happy."

On July 10, 1790, the same Society passed a resolution rejoicing in the complete success of the French Revolution. On November 4, 1790, at a dinner, the President, Dr. Richard Price, who had received the freedom of the City for his *Observation on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, announced that he had received letters and addresses of respect and fraternal affection from many cities, towns, and societies in France, addressed to the Revolution Society of England. On November 4, 1791, the Society reported more expressions of friendship from French cities. By this time the glorious Revolution had begun to thirst for blood.

Hitherto the friends of the French Revolution had firmly believed that it was making for a period of universal peace:—

"Brave and generous Frenchmen!" (the Society writes), "who not only make the utmost bounds of your own empire partakers of the common bliss, but invite England to help in liberating the whole world! Hearts thus expanded with goodwill to mankind are worthy of freedom. The Great Original considers you as such while (at the cost of but little blood) he gives unto you a great portion of liberty, and at her shrine has caused the grand monarch to bow, the nobles to fall, and, though last and reluctant, the priests to yield to her sway. Our wish, our hope is, that the gift may be permanent, enduring to the end of time. With a nation thus exalted, England shall esteem it her high honour to be allied; while their joint efforts shall be to teach neighbouring nations to know their own worth, and cultivate among them peace and goodwill."

The Revolution Society, in its enthusiasm for the French Revolution, was followed by the "London Corresponding Society," by the "Society for Con-

stitutional Information," and by the "Friends of the People." There were also numerous clubs in London and Westminster established for the purpose of "disseminating seditious principles," *i.e.* of advocating reform. Societies with the same objects were also founded in the principal towns of the country. The Government was greatly alarmed, but obstinately resolved not to yield to any importunity. On November 18, 1792, the English residents in Paris held a grand banquet of sympathy with the Revolution. The toasts included "The Republic of France"; "The Armies of France"; "Perpetual Union between the Free Countries of England, France, America, and the Netherlands"; "The Abolition of Hereditary Titles"; and many others. Sir Robert Smith and Lord Edward Fitzgerald on the spot laid down their titles.

The Association in Support of the Constitution was founded to counteract these revolutionary societies at the end of the year 1792. The strength of the existing Constitution was also demonstrated by the support of all the leading merchants and bankers in the City. There followed, however, a series of addresses, remonstrances, and representations for and against. Meantime, the Government resolved on prosecuting Thomas Paine as "a wicked, seditious, and ill-disposed person," the author of a libel against the Government, called *The Rights of Man*, 2nd part. The life of Paine, of which this action is a single episode, and not one of great importance, does not belong to the history of London. While the action was preparing, the defendant received the intelligence that he had been elected by the Pas de Calais their member at the National Convention. He therefore left the action to take care of itself, and quitted England to join the Convention. The case was tried in his absence (December 8, 1792), and in spite of a spirited speech from Erskine, Paine was found guilty and sentenced to banishment. The result was certain from the outset; the action was evidently intended to intimidate the revolutionary societies, some of whom had gone so far as to send delegates with letters of congratulation to the National Convention sitting at Paris.

Looking back with a larger power of surveying the whole ground, it becomes truly amazing that in the year 1792 any one should be so ill acquainted with the country as to be capable of believing a Republic possible. There might be a prolonged riot, with the destruction of a great many buildings; it would become a riot like the Gordon Riots, without a single respectable man on its side; the whole of the rank, wealth, intellect, religion, law, the whole of the army and the navy, would be ranged on the side of the King, the Church, and the Lords. No mere riot can be successful in the long-run; an orderly Government, resting on the suffrages of a whole united, intelligent, and educated people, was ludicrously impossible. Never was there a time when a Republic was less possible. Where was that intelligence—that union? In the country the villagers were totally

illiterate, horribly poor, absolutely under the rule of squire and parson. In London the craftsman, driven out of the City to make room for warehouses and quays, lived apart, no longer cared for by his employer, his former company, or his former parish. He had ceased to belong to any company; there were no schools for his children; he went to no church; the Government was represented in his eyes by the hangman and the cat-o'-nine-tails; his condition had never in the whole history of London been so low, not even when he first crossed the sea and landed on the coast of Essex, a wild fighting-man, ignorant, if you please,—yet with a religion which he understood, laws which he obeyed, institutions which he maintained, freedom for which he fought and was ready to die. The East Saxon was a man far, very far in advance of the eighteenth-century working-man of London; so was the Londoner of the after age who ran to the Folk Mote at the summons of St. Paul's bell, and chose his portreeve or his sheriff; so was the Londoner of the fifteenth century who went out to depose the Prodigal King; so was the grave and sober Puritan, Anabaptist, Fifth Monarchy Man, of Cromwell's time. In every age, except that of the eighteenth century, the working-man of London had been a responsible individual, a separate factor. He was no longer a person to be considered at all; he had no longer a vote for anything; three generations of gin-drinking had reduced him to a besotted condition, in which he was no longer able to think, or to reason, or even to combine in the simplest manner for his own interests.

Yet there were two mobs in London, and one was intelligent. King, Church, Landlord, Capital, are still strong among us, whether for good or for evil. A hundred years ago they were one hundred times as strong; and their strength was chiefly used for what seems to us, who cannot perhaps put ourselves in their place, influence in a wrong direction. At least, however, they could keep order and could repel the enemy; it is certain that had the "Friends of the People" got their way, there would have been no order at all, but a misrule worse than that in France, and perhaps as tigerish. It is, however, the besetting weakness of generous souls to believe that the rest of the world is as generous as themselves. In other words, the classes in power had the strength to keep in power, while the classes out of power had no strength to make themselves even felt.

The Court of Common Council, on the 29th of November 1792, passed a strong resolution in support of King and Constitution. The Corresponding Society was regarded by the Government with greater anxiety than any of the other bodies. This society had numerous branches scattered about the country; among its members were many of the better sort, the educated middle-class. Their publications were numerous; their meetings were earnest; their objects were definite, well known, and were very rightly considered dangerous. They met at taverns where debating societies were held, and under the disguise of some question

connected with ancient Greece or Rome they carried on their arguments and proposed their schemes for reform in the state of Great Britain. Thus, for instance, a meeting was called for a certain evening at the King's Arms, Cornhill, nominally in order to discuss some question of ancient history; really to talk what was then called treason—we now call it Reform. On this occasion, when the orators arrived, they found that the peace-officers held the place, and refused access to the room. At a meeting of Common Council a few days afterwards, the Mayor, Sir James Sanderson, received the thanks of the Court for his conduct on that occasion, though there were some who murmured that it was arbitrary and illegal.

The massacres of September frightened the whole world, and effectually destroyed in this country any hope of reform, parliamentary or otherwise, for forty years to come. All moderate men drew back in alarm, but the young and enthusiastic, and the hot-heads, continued to meet and circulate papers and to talk reform—not treason and rebellion. In order to defeat these people, whose real power was enormously exaggerated by suspicion and ignorance, the Government appointed paid magistrates in Westminster and in all the suburbs. Then the friends of Government organised a society called the "Crown and Anchor," the avowed purpose of which was "the protection of liberty and property against the daring attempts of republicans and levellers." This society proceeded to deny that any alteration was necessary or desirable in the existing conditions of the State, and hunted down with the greatest jealousy the pamphlets and papers circulated by the Corresponding Society and other associations.

After this there followed such a panic as had not been seen in the City since the year 1642, when they thought that Charles was marching upon them. Perhaps the whole business was purposely organised by the "Crown and Anchor." The wildest rumours were afloat: the French were coming up the Thames, and would burn, sack, and destroy the City; there was to be an insurrection of the disaffected, comprising all the members of the Corresponding Society; there were to be risings of the mob simultaneously in every part of the City; not only would the City be sacked, but the Church would be overthrown, the Throne abolished, and the King treated after the manner that had been dealt out to Louis the Sixteenth. Nothing, in fact, was too wild to be believed at this moment. Great preparations were made for the defence of the Tower; the fortifications were strengthened; more cannon were mounted; barricades were erected; warlike stores were laid in; soldiers were stationed in the villages round London; and a company of militia was to be on guard day and night in case of an alarm. During this alarm the principal merchants met together and drew up a resolution, declaring their intention of standing up for the Constitution. The resolution was in a few hours signed by 8000 persons, including all the leading citizens. It greatly

strengthened the hands of the Government, who could now rely on the popularity of the war upon which they were about to embark, and upon the firm support of the City. No doubt, too, it was taken into consideration that whatever cause the City espoused was sure to win in the long-run. The citizens certainly understood this point. They might remind the King that, only sixteen years before, they had most solemnly, and time after time, remonstrated with him on his treatment of the American possessions. And where were those possessions now?

This support of the City also encouraged the Government in their prosecution of various members of the Corresponding Society and others. When we read the trials of these reformers born before their time;—the gross unfairness; the bullying; the straining of weak points; the exaggeration of the meaning of words;—we must remember that judge, counsel, and jury alike firmly believed in their own minds that the prisoners were ready and eager to hand over the City and the country to pillage, fire, and murder; that they wanted to set up a Republic and to maintain it by the guillotine; that they wished to destroy not only the Church established, but all religion as well. This fact, I say, should be borne in mind when we read of the trials that followed. War was declared. The Court of Common Council presented an address to the King, assuring him of their loyalty. They also offered a bounty of fifty shillings to every able seaman, and twenty shillings to every able landsman, who should enter the navy at Guildhall. Yet the immediate consequences of the war were highly disastrous to the City in the shape of a great number of bankruptcies and a general stagnation of trade. For the assistance of trade, exchequer bills, to the amount of five millions, were issued for the relief of such persons as might apply to the Commissioners. Then the prosecutions began. They belong to the national history.

Pitt proposed the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which was carried in spite of opposition, especially that of Sheridan, who declared that no treasonable practices existed in the country; that the Ministers knew this; and that their object was to create a panic and so gain increased power over the people. The Act was suspended; John Horne Tooke, the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce, John Thelwall, Bonney, Richter, Corbett, and others, were arrested on the charge of high treason. This was in May. They were not brought to trial till the late autumn. Meantime a change took place in men's minds—the City mind. The panic subsided; there were no indications of any treasonable designs; there was no rising of the mob. The consequences might have been determined: the whole nine prisoners, one after the other, obtained a verdict of Not Guilty.

XIV.—THE FRENCH REFUGEES

In 1792 arrived an enormous number of fugitives from France. They got over in all kinds of ways. For instance, an English fisherman after lobsters on the French coast picked up two boats loaded with fugitives; they were bruised and battered with stones thrown at them from the patriots, their countrymen; they were obliged to swim to the boats; and they implored the fisherman to take them over. He did so, and landed them at Southampton a day or two later. The Brighton packet from Dieppe brought over 500 emigrants; among them were the Bishop of Avranches, the Dean of Rouen, and 72 priests. They had fled from Rouen to Dieppe on foot. Here they took refuge in a hotel. The news of their arrival ran through the town, and the people were assembling with the purpose of murdering them all, when the fugitives learned that the tide was up and that there was just time for them to get on board the packet and escape.

The "case" of the unfortunate French clergy in England was drawn up for them by Edmund Burke. The following is an extract (*Annual Register*, 1792, p. 122):—

"It is well known that a cruel and inhuman persecution is now, and hath for some time past been carried on by a fraction of atheists, infidels, and other persons of evil principles and dispositions, calling themselves philosophers, against our brethren, the Christians of France.

In this persecution a vast multitude of persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions, and particularly the clergy, have suffered in a grievous manner. Many of them have been, with circumstances of great barbarity and outrage, put to death, and their bodies, according to the customs lately prevalent in France, treated with savage indignities.

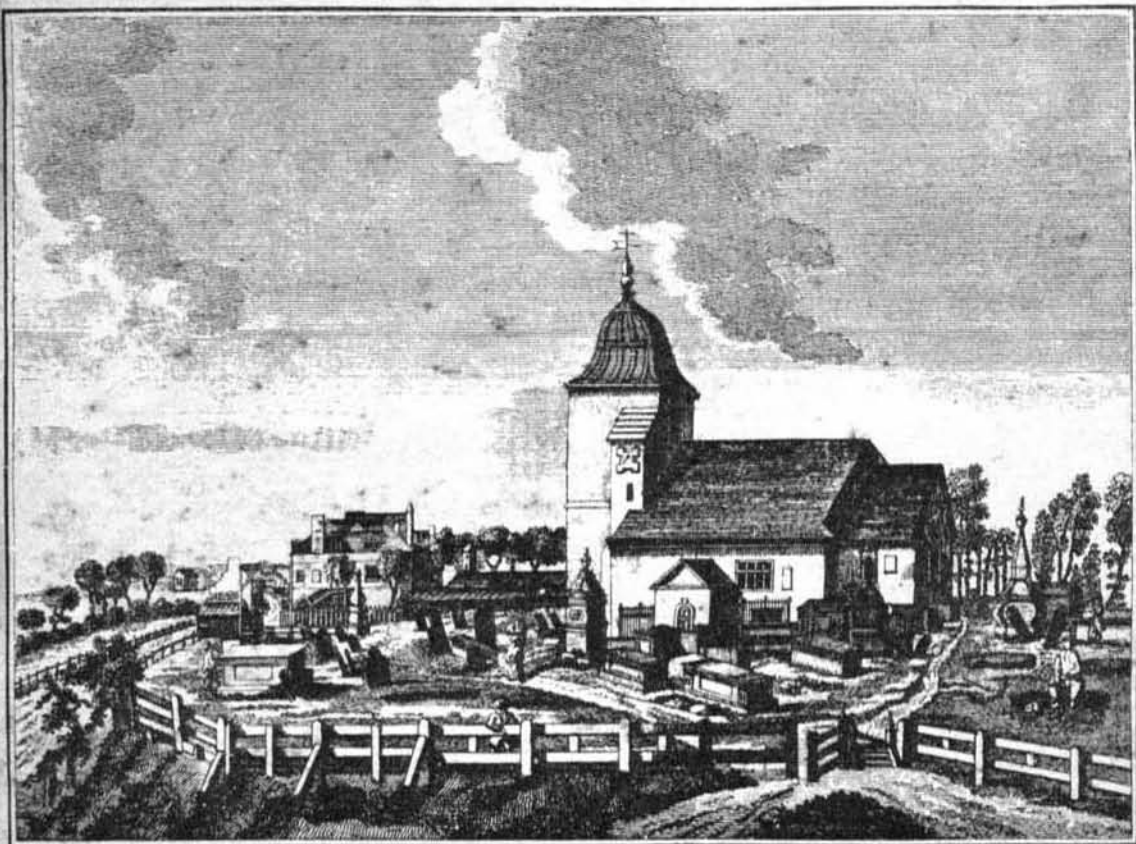
Several women, of whom some were of rank, dedicated to religion, in the peculiar exercise of a sublime charity, by an attendance upon the sick in hospitals, have been stripped naked, and in public barbarously scourged. Thousands of other respectable religious women, mostly engaged in the education of persons of their own sex, and other laudable occupations, have been deprived of their estates, and expelled from their houses, in which they had purchased a property by the portions given to them by their parents. These respectable women are many of them far advanced in years, and labouring under great infirmities; the major part are near the declining period of life, and all are utterly in conversant in the affairs of the world, and in the means of procuring themselves any subsistence. They by whose charity they scantily subsisted under every species of insult, vexation, and oppression, before their expulsion from their houses by the cruelty of the philosophic faction, are now, for the most part, themselves obliged to fly their country, or are reduced to almost an equal degree of penury with those they had been accustomed to relieve.

Many thousands of the parochial clergy, after having been driven from their livings and houses, and robbed of their legal property, have been deprived of the wretched pensions which had been by public faith stipulated to be paid to them when that robbery and expulsion were ordered; and have been exposed to perish by famine. Others, in very great numbers, have been arbitrarily thrown into unwholesome and incommodious prisons, and kept there for a long time without any redress, against all law, and against the direct orders of the supreme magistrate of their new constitution, whose duty it was to see that no illegal punishment should be executed.

At length, after a tedious imprisonment (suffered with a mildness, a patience, and a constance,

which have not been denied by their very persecutors, whose rage and malice, however, these examples of Christian virtue have failed in the least degree to mitigate), the municipal bodies, or the factious clubs who appoint and guide them, have by their proper authority transported into a foreign kingdom a considerable number of the said prisoners in slave-ships.

At the same time, all the rest of the clergy, who by lying hid, or flying from place to place, have hitherto escaped confinement, and endeavoured in private to worship God according to their consciences and the ancient fundamental laws of their country, are hunted out like wild beasts; and a decree of the National Assembly itself has now ordered them, in terms the most insulting and atrocious ever used by



OLD ST. PANCRAS CHURCHYARD

From an old engraving made for *Walpole's New and Complete British Traveller*.

any public assembly, to quit the kingdom within fifteen days, without the least preparation or provision, or, together with those imprisoned and not yet exiled, to be instantly transported to the most wild, uncultivated, and pestiferous part of the whole globe, that is to Guiana in South America.

All this has been done without calling upon one single person, of the many thousand subjects to this severe and iniquitous sentence, as well as to all the cruel preceding oppressions, to answer to any specified offence or charge whatsoever.

Several of the said clergy (some of whom are aged and infirm persons) to avoid imprisonment and the other various vexations above mentioned, and, in many cases, to prevent the commission of further crimes in the destruction of their respective flocks for their attachment to their pastors, have been obliged to fly their country, and to take refuge in the British dominions, where their general exemplary behaviour has greatly added to the compassion excited by their unmerited sufferings.

They have hitherto received charitable assistance from the voluntary bounty of some worthy individuals; but this resource becoming daily more and more inadequate to the increasing number and wants of those whose sufferings claim relief, it has been proposed to open a general subscription in their favour; especially as at the present moment the effect of the late horrid decree must be expected to render such a measure more than ever necessary."

A meeting was called and a committee appointed, of which Mr. John Wilmot, one of the Masters in Chancery, was chairman. A very large subscription was raised by this and by other committees formed for the purpose.

These refugees remained in England until the re-establishment of religion enabled them to return. Many remained until 1814. Some remained altogether. They formed colonies and settlements in London; there was a large colony of them in the Brill, St. Pancras; many lie buried in Old St. Pancras Churchyard. There was another large colony at Hampstead; the Roman Catholic church there was built for them. Their poverty, their devices to earn a livelihood, their shifts and their miseries, may be found in Chateaubriand's autobiography.

XV.—LONDON AND THE GREAT WAR

The war began with a declaration by the French Republic. The Court of Common Council presented an address of loyalty to the King; assuring him "of the readiness and determination of the citizens to support the honour of the crown and the welfare of the kingdoms."

An evil custom prevailed of allowing the recruiting-offices to be at the town taverns—they were too often brothels as well. Here the country lads were inveigled by women and persuaded first to drink and then to enlist, generally when they were too drunk to know what they were doing. Once enlisted, they were not allowed to go out of the house until they were marched off to their respective regiments or depots. Any tales, however improbable, were believed of these places. At the beginning of the war there were riots, in which the mob destroyed the recruiting-offices in and around London. Depressed trade, scarcity of work, dearth of provisions, also combined to make the war unpopular. The King was greeted with cries of "Peace! Peace! Give us bread! No Pitt! No Famine! No War!" Stones were thrown at his carriage windows. When he had alighted at St. James's, the carriage, on its way to the King's Mews, was demolished by the mob with stones and bludgeons. The King went back to Buckingham Palace in a private carriage with only two footmen. He was recognised, however, and beset by ruffians, who might have proceeded to any extremity, but for the arrival of a troop of Horse Guards. Three or four persons who had been conspicuous in the hooting were arrested, and one, at least, was sentenced to a period of five years' imprisonment.

and pillory. He had also to find security at the end of five years for £1000. His name was Kyd Wake, and it is not known whether he found that security at the end of his time. It is significant, however, that he was sent to Gloucester Gaol. There was no desire to court another Gordon Riot and another destruction of Newgate.

The negotiations for peace which were opened in March 1796 continued off and on during the whole of that year. They ended in nothing, the British Ambassador being ordered to leave Paris in December. Then it was that Pitt raised £18,000,000 by his famous "Loyalty Loan." What happened illustrates the difference between the time when London was the King's Chamber, and the eighteenth century. Pitt sent a letter to the Common Council on the 1st of December pointing out that a cordial response to the proposed loan on the part of the Common Council would probably produce an excellent effect throughout the kingdom. The Mayor replied stating that he had already considered the subject of an aid to the Government, and had called a Council for the 5th of December. But Pitt had written to the Bank of England at the same time, or one day before. The Directors did not wait for the five days. They opened the subscription on the very day—December the 1st. At two o'clock the subscription began; at half-past eleven the list was closed; the loan was fully subscribed; the Common Council, chagrined at having to take the second place, subscribed £100,000. Other loans and advances, absolutely necessary for the conduct of the war, so far crippled the City that the Bank remonstrated with Pitt. "More demands upon them, they said, would be ruin. In February 1797 an Order in Council was passed prohibiting the Bank from making any payment in specie, and in consequence the Directors issued a notice that they intended for the time to pay in notes; in order to make this possible, the Government authorised the Bank to issue notes for sums lower than five pounds and made these notes legal tender in every case except for the payment of the army and the navy.

In the same year, frightened no doubt by the prospect of a long and perhaps unsuccessful war, and by the panic over the bank riots, the Common Hall passed a



KING'S MEWS

From an old print.

vote praying the King to dismiss his Ministers as the first step towards obtaining a speedy, honourable, and permanent peace. The King refused to receive the remonstrance except at a levee; the Livery refused to send it except to the King upon his throne, a right which they claimed. Another resolution against the Ministers was drawn up. On the other hand, a declaration of confidence in the Ministers received the signature of 2096 Liverymen. A meeting in favour of peace was next held in Palace Yard, Westminster, when a remonstrance was adopted even stronger in words than that of the Livery.

Dark indeed was the prospect and gloomy the situation in this year—1797. For now, not only were the French destroying the commerce of the country, but the very defenders, those on whom we most relied—our sailors—turned upon us. The mutiny of Spithead, followed by that of the Nore, was enough to make one believe that the sun of Great Britain had set for ever.

The City had yet to learn that they were in the hands of a most obstinate, tenacious, and powerful Minister serving under a monarch equally obstinate and tenacious. They continued to draw up petitions and to forge remonstrances. The Corresponding Society held another great meeting at Somers Town with the intention of passing resolutions and drawing up petitions. There was an immense assemblage; but although the people were orderly, the Riot Act was read and the soldiers dispersed the meeting without bloodshed. Again, when Pitt proposed increasing the assessed taxes, there were resolutions and meetings against the Act from the Common Hall, from the City of Westminster, from the wards and parishes of the City, condemning the measure. Yet Pitt passed it.

All this proved that the heart of the people was not with the war. They felt their own losses, and they had as yet little in the way of success in arms to cheer them on. Therefore it was wisely resolved to make a display and to create enthusiasm by a show of triumph. There had been three admirable naval victories: that of Lord Howe in June 1794; of Sir John Jarvis in February 1797; that of Admiral Duncan in October 1797. A day was therefore appointed for a National Thanksgiving, when the King and Queen, the Royal Family, the Officers of State, the Houses of Parliament, and the Mayor and Sheriffs attended a thanksgiving service at St. Paul's with a procession finer than had been seen in the memory of man. Such a manifestation could not fail of producing its effect. A voluntary subscription for the service of the country was opened. About two millions were raised in this way.

The air at this time was thick with rumours and threats: the French were about to descend upon our coasts; they would land in Ireland; the Irish were ripe for rebellion; it was necessary to increase as much as possible the defences of the country. The London Volunteers of this time were formed, practically of every able-bodied man in the City. The spirit of the City was rising. When the news

arrived of Nelson's victorious action at the Nile, a public subscription was opened for the widows and orphans of those who had fallen. Nelson himself presented to the City the sword of the surviving French Admiral, which was ordered to be placed in the most conspicuous position in the Court of Common Council. The thanks of the Court, with a sword worth two hundred guineas, were voted to Nelson, and the freedom of the City, in a box worth one hundred guineas, was presented to Captain Berry.

Caricaturists have made capital out of the London Volunteers of 1798, but it is certain that great efforts were made to render them as efficient as was possible.



A VOLUNTEER ENCAMPMENT

From a print published by P. Sandby, St. George's Row, London, May 1783.

They were trained and drilled; they numbered, in London alone, over 12,000; they were reviewed by the King, and performed all the evolutions required of them creditably.

On December 6, 1799, a meeting was held at the London Tavern to consider the relief of the poor, whose distress was very great. There had not been a general subscription for the purpose since the year 1795, when about £4000 had been collected. This money was spent in establishing soup-kitchens and giving gratuitous meals. The number of persons relieved was 40,000; the number of meals distributed was 750,000. It was resolved to renew the subscription of 1795.

The high prices of flour and corn caused, in 1800, certain serious riots at the

Corn Exchange. On September 15, about 1000 persons assembled and began to hiss and hoot the cornfactors and the mealmen. Some they hustled and some they pelted with mud. One they rolled in the kennel, and when he took shelter in a house they broke the windows. The Lord Mayor went in person, accompanied by one of the Sheriffs and an Alderman, to address the people and persuade them to disperse. In this laudable attempt he was only partially successful. A court of Aldermen was held, in which it was pointed out that violence only defeated its own object; that if prices could not go down, no dealers in corn would have orderly access to the Exchange. A royal proclamation against these riots was issued on the following day, which dealt with this as well as many other riots all over the country. The proclamation produced no effect in London, while tumults and riots against corn-dealers, butchers, bakers, cheesemongers, and all dealers in provisions continued for several days longer. The mob was kept down by the efforts of the City Volunteers. At the same time the Common Council thought the condition of the poor so serious that they addressed a petition to the King on the subject.

The King received the address graciously, and informed the Mayor that he had already convened the Parliament. Meetings were held by the freeholders of Middlesex on the same subject. They were unanimous in protesting that the principal cause of the scarcity and the high prices was the war, and that their representatives should be instructed to vote against its continuance whenever they found it possible.

Among the many addresses presented by the City to the King is one which should not be passed over, on the Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Their sentiments are as follows:—

"We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons, of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, approach the throne with the liveliest sentiments of congratulation on the very important event of the legislative union of your Majesty's kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. Unshaken as we are in our firm allegiance to the best of kings, we contemplate with peculiar satisfaction every circumstance which, in its design or operation, can tend to the security and honour of your Majesty's crown, and thereby to the declared first object of your Majesty's heart, the welfare and prosperity of your people. The accomplishment of this great measure, founded in wisdom, and demonstrative of that paternal regard which your Majesty has ever evinced for every class of your subjects, the union of the two kingdoms, particularly affords, at this momentous crisis of public affairs, the gratifying prospect of consolidating the joint interest, energy, and resources of the empire, and of confirming, by a mutual participation of the peculiar blessings of each, the prosperity and happiness of both kingdoms."

The eighteenth century closed upon London more dismally than can be well understood. A tedious and exhausting war abroad; the trade of the country carried on by the protection of convoys; French privateers swarming in the Channel; bankruptcies everywhere; and, to crown all, a succession of cold and rainy summers causing a failure of the harvest, and wheat running up to more than £7 a quarter. The distress, indeed, was very terrible. A placard was put up on the Monument

calling on the people to rise. Soup-kitchens were opened at which, in the winter of 1798, over 40,000 persons were relieved; the Archbishop of Canterbury moved in the House of Lords that every one should resolve not to consume more than one quartern loaf a week; bakers were forbidden to sell bread that was not at least twenty-four hours out of the oven; the distilleries were stopped; the importation of rice and fish was encouraged; the culture of potatoes was recommended; it was forbidden to make starch of wheat. There were riots, with the sack and wreck of certain houses. The felons of Cold Bath Fields Prison rose in revolt. The Volunteers, however, put down the tumults without bloodshed.

To those of us who are accustomed to think of the spirit of the people as indomitable and courageous in the highest degree, it will be disagreeable to discover that there was a general feeling at the end of the century that the country had seen her best days and was entering upon a period of decline. The ill success of the military operations in the war of 1793-1802 assisted to strengthen this belief. Colonel George Hanger (1798) says:—

"When first I trod the paths of pleasure in this gay town, my country was arrived at the very height of national grandeur, and was not as yet on the decline. She was powerful, and respected all over the world; both her fleets and armies were victorious wherever they went; the country was rich, from many years' peace, after a glorious seven years' war. It was then that Great Britain, in the hour of her insolence, drew the jealousy and vengeance of the European powers. There was abundance in every part; the necessaries of life were at a moderate price; the people were happy, joyful, and contented; the middle man then lived well; the nobility and gentlemen were in general in a state of opulence; and there was scarcely such a thing to be seen in the land as a poor gentleman."

It was, perhaps, partly this prophetic feeling of decline which made Colonel Hanger desire an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the United States:—

"Should I live to a good old age, I am confident that I shall hear of the northern and southern powers in America waging war with each other; when one party will solicit assistance from France; the other from Great Britain. It will then depend on the judgment of those men who, at that period, may be at the head of the French and British Councils, whether or not they will interfere in American disputes. In my humble opinion, it would be better for both countries to let them settle the matter amongst themselves. I will be so bold as to offer another opinion. We should give up Canada and Nova Scotia to the Americans, provided we could make this sacrifice the foundation of an alliance offensive and defensive with the United States; then we never should be obliged to send the prime of the British army to die like rotten sheep in the West India Islands. In America we could recruit forces for the West Indies with men inured to an hot climate, who would not suffer death and sickness in any degree equal to the new levies sent from England; with the additional advantage of keeping our army entire and in full vigour at home. I anxiously hope and trust I shall live to see the day when an alliance, offensive and defensive, will be formed between the two countries, as Great Britain and America may together defy the united powers of all Europe."

On October 10, 1801, General Lauriston arrived from Paris with the ratification of peace. The news was received with the utmost joy. Peace was not, however, proclaimed until April 29, 1802.

A great crowd gathered before the house of M. Otto, the French Minister, in

Portman Square. He had arranged an illumination with the word "Concord," a word unknown to them, which they confused with "Conquered," clearly a French insult. M. Otto, therefore, substituted the word "Amity." The crowd next discovered that there was no crown over the letters "G.R." M. Otto expressed his regret at the omission, which was promptly rectified.

On November 17, 1802, the French Ambassador, M. Andreossi, arrived and was welcomed in London.

After little more than a year, the war began again, to be continued for twelve long years. At first an invasion was threatened; to meet that danger the King was empowered by the House to levy the whole people *en masse*. The London Volunteers were increased from 12,000 to 27,000. A patriotic fund for relief, aid, and reward amounted to £18,000. After the battle of Trafalgar, the body of Lord Nelson was brought home and buried in great state in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Once more the Livery endeavoured to get at the King with a remonstrance; once more the King refused to receive it, except at a levee.

It seems as if the constant reiteration of these remonstrances deprived them of whatever importance they might have had. It was ridiculous to keep on remonstrating to no effect. Moreover, the effect of the remonstrances was greatly impaired by the repeated assurances of loyalty and fidelity to the throne. What was the use of telling King or Regent that he had been trampling on the liberties of the country, violating rights, keeping Ministers in place who were destroying trade, when the next day the Mayor appeared with an address assuring His Majesty of their cordial support? Such, however, was the practice of the City. Had they refused any loyal address until a remedy of grievances was under consideration, they might have received a respectable attention from King and Ministers. Looking back, also, at the situation, we can understand the difficulties of the Government; we can well understand that the time, in the midst of the longest and most difficult war in which the country was ever engaged, was inopportune for the discussion of grievances. We can hardly expect to find Parliamentary Reform brought forward in the midst of a great war. The chance of bringing it forward arose from the House committing to prison a man named John Gale Jones for publishing an attack against its proceedings. Sir Francis Burdett publicly questioned the right of the House to commit any man to prison. Consequently the House proved its right by committing Burdett himself to the Tower. He refused to obey, and was therefore taken there by armed force. The Government apprehended a riot, and applied to the Mayor for permission to place troops in the storehouses along the river. The Mayor replied that he would keep the City quiet, but that the troops could only come on the express understanding that they were under the orders of himself or the City Marshal.

There was, after all, a riot, and the soldiers were roughly handled by the people, and at last, being forced in self-defence to fire, they killed a man named Ebrall and

wounded others. Nothing, however, was done in consequence. The Livery called a special Common Hall to protest against the assumption by the House of Commons of the power of committing to prison the people of England for offences cognisable in the usual courts of law. They therefore drew up a petition, or remonstrance, to the House, which was couched in stronger words than had ever been used before. No good came of this remonstrance; none was expected; the great thing was to get it



Watke and Cockerell.

RIGHT HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL

From the painting by George Francis Joseph, A.R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

passed by the Common Hall and made public. They sent in another petition to the same effect, which was received in the same manner.

On the commencement of the Regency the Court of Common Council drew up an address, a remonstrance, and a petition on the subject of parliamentary reform. Nothing came of it. There was no more chance of reform under the Regent than under the old King. The murder of Spencer Perceval, however, put a stop to agitation for reform; and the cheering events of the next two years,—the retreat of the Grand Army; the break-up of Napoleon's power; the revolt of Holland; the exhaustion of France; the abdication of May 1814,—made even the Court of

Common Council—even the Livery in Common Hall—acquiesce for the moment in existing evils, even in the evil of such a House of Commons.

At this time it was believed that peace would follow immediately, an expectation which proved unfounded; it was not till after four months more of fighting that Bonaparte resigned. The restoration of peace was accompanied by the arrival of the Czar and the King of Prussia. On this occasion, when all the world was mad with joy, loyalty, patriotism, and gratitude,—when the conduct of the Ministers and the memory of the remonstrances were put away and covered up,—the City was equal to the occasion, and distinguished itself by giving such a feast as should illustrate to these foreign potentates its own wealth and magnificence. This dinner cost, in fact, £20,347:5:2. When the Kings had departed the City remembered the Duke of Wellington, and on the 19th of July gave him, too, an entertainment. Rejoicings for peace were also celebrated by a great outdoor *fête*, at which there were fireworks, balloons, and a sham fight on the Serpentine. To crown all, the war with America was concluded. Happily for Britain, too, the last action at sea terminated in the striking of the American flag—the *President*—to the British frigate, the *Pomone*.¹

The escape of Bonaparte from Elba, and the short war ending with Waterloo, do not seem to have caused much anxiety in London. In the House it was stated that the Allies were prepared to place a million of men in the field; it was known that France was exhausted; nothing could establish the power of Bonaparte except a quick succession of victories. Waterloo was fought on the 18th of June. On the 23rd of November news of the restoration of peace arrived; and the customary illuminations followed.

Such, briefly, is the history of London in connection with the great war. The citizens witnessed its commencement with a kind of dismay. They must choose between war, they were told, or massacres and riots such as those of France. If they chose war, then they must expect sacrifices, losses, bankruptcies, the capture of noble argosies, the expenditure of treasure incalculable. If peace, then the triumph of the man whom they associated with anarchy would be allowed and encouraged. They were between the devil and the deep sea. They chose the sea—it was a natural choice for an Englishman,—and after many years and much buffeting by storm and many wrecks, they put into port again, triumphant and successful. As for their trade, it grew and expanded during this time as if it had been a period of peace; the British possessions in India and the Far East were consolidated and strengthened; and the French power in the Indian Ocean was greatly injured by the taking, and the keeping, of the Mascarenhas group—yet we foolishly gave back the island of Bourbon. The wealth of London, despite taxation and the burdens of the war, actually increased during the war.

¹ The *Pomone* shares the credit of this exploit with the *Endymion*, whose captain boarded her simultaneously with that of the *Pomone*.

XVI.—LONDON AT THE END OF THE CENTURY

In one respect London, at the close of the eighteenth century, was certainly inferior to that of a hundred years before. The political power of the City decreased during the whole of the century. We have seen the City presenting remonstrance after remonstrance, with no result whatever; the opinion of the City was unheeded, either by King or by Ministers. We have observed and recounted many reasons for this decay of power and influence. We must take into account certain social reasons. Thus, we must remember the great change introduced into London by the yearly influx of the country gentry. For six months in the year the great majority of the country gentry were living at the West End—which was not the City. Next, the House of Commons, at this most miserable period in our constitutional history, was, as we have seen, the mere servant of the Government. Half the members were nominees, place-holders, place-seekers. Then, again, the character of the Corporation itself was lowered. Formerly the Aldermen and the Common Council had been, on the whole, merchants of the very highest repute and standing in the City; they were also men of good family, as has already been pointed out more than once; they were either the younger sons of ancient families—such as Whittington, Brembre, and Gresham—or they were the sons of these younger sons, as is manifest from their coats-of-arms. Towards the end of the last century they were too often retail tradesmen of humble origin—illiterate, ill-mannered, the contempt alike of the scholar and the aristocrat.

The younger sons had long ceased to enter the City; the continual wars of the century demanded their services in the army and the navy; the gentleman and the merchant became divided during this century by a chasm difficult to bridge over. The country yeoman, meantime, his estates increasing in value, had become a country squire; the country squire looked down upon trade and the City; the country clergyman, even, himself often a younger son, looked down upon trade. It was considered that a gentleman could only take money when it came in the form of rent, and could only traffic in land. The London merchant ceased to be educated at Eton and Cambridge; what he was in 1815 may be learned from Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*. Now, Thackeray himself represented the point of view of a gentleman.

The Corporation of London has now been changed again; it is once more composed for the most part of educated and cultured gentlemen: Alderman Gobble is no more; he lies under a pyramid of granite at Kensal Green. The City has ceased to make remonstrances and to send up petitions for redress; the business of grievance and redress, they now understand, belongs to the House of Commons.

It must, however, be clearly understood that in the eighteenth century the social position of the City, the social consideration of the citizens, went steadily lower and lower, and that part of the decay in power was due to the decay in social consideration. I have elsewhere dwelt again upon this point, which is of the greatest importance in the history of the City. Meanwhile the seditious feeling, which most excited the fears of the citizens in 1792, was dead, so far as could be discerned, in 1815. The Friends of the People and the Corresponding Societies had disappeared. The country had passed through the furnace of disaster and affliction, and had come out of it strong in the upholding of the Constitution established, of King, Church, Lords, and Commons. There remained, however, a few in whom the desire for reform was kept alive. Of these the world was to hear more in good time.

XVII.—AFTER THE WAR

Whether a war ends in glory or humiliation, victory or defeat, at the conclusion cometh the hour of reckoning. Then we understand, for the first time, the penalties we have to pay for the excitement and the glory of war. Then the country begins to realise the treasures which have been lavished, the blood that has been spilt, the heavy price which has been paid—never fully understood until the declaration of peace. Then it realises the price which has still to be paid, the price which no one considers when the country plunges into war. The heavy burden of debt, in this case a burden which many reflecting men feared would become intolerable and make Great Britain a bankrupt among the nations; the sudden cessation of the enormous demands for the armies and the fleets which in time of war create activity of trade; the consequent collapse of trade; the fall in prices of agricultural products; the swarms of discharged soldiers and sailors—after the year 1815 there were thousands of foreign seamen who, having entered our service and being dismissed at the close of the war, were literally starving in the streets; the discontents, riots, robberies, accusations, recriminations: these were among the penalties paid by the country for her struggle of two-and-twenty years. And the people had looked forward with so much hope to the return of peace and the halcyon days when the sword should be turned into a reaping-hook! Those who were children when the war first began had grown into manhood while the war continued. Those who were young men when the war began were in middle age before the war ended. The burdens of the time were terrible; all day long and every day the voice of war cried continually, "Bring out your young men." But still they fought on. There is not, I think, any story in the world's history more wonderful than that of Great Britain during this long war—now single-handed, now with this combination of allies, now

with that, contending against the greatest captain and the greatest conqueror of any time, and beating him in the end.

The country consented to go on because the people hoped that peace would come at last. It came; but alas! it brought not the expected halcyon days. The destitute sailors crowded to the Mansion House for relief; they came to the number of two hundred a day. In the country ricks were fired—there was an epidemic of this mischief.

The high prices of agricultural produce in the war times had been of immense benefit to the landowners. In the towns, of course, these high prices had been a corresponding burden and grievance. The peace opened the ports to foreign grain, and the price of wheat went down; the first Corn Law was passed, against the protests of all the manufacturers and merchants, who protested that the trade of the country and the industries would go across to France and Holland.

The Government suspended the Habeas Corpus Act and proceeded to make arrests on charges of sedition. It is reasonable to suppose that the Regent and the Ministers did really believe that the distresses, the discontents, the riots, and the outcry for reform were due to natural causes only, unavoidable on the termination of the long war. They were sincere, we must believe, in thinking that if agitators could only be kept quiet the people would speedily settle down; as for the representation, it is quite certain that there were then a great many, as there are a few even now, who sincerely believed that the people have no right to interfere at all with the Government of the country, and that such a constitution as was then in force, which gave the conduct of affairs to a few families, and reduced the House of Commons to a body composed of servile nominees and placemen, was the wisest and the fittest that could be designed.

Moreover, because we cannot believe that the Regent and his Ministers really desired mischief to the country, we must remember that the French Revolution, with all its crimes, was fresh in the memory of men still young. They thought of the massacres; of the Reign of Terror; of a king, whose only fault was stupidity, sent to a shameful death; of the White Lily who laid her poor head upon the guillotine after treatment which, when one considers it, makes us wonder that all Frenchmen do not perpetually hang their heads for the shame and the disgrace of it; of an innocent boy tortured into insensibility. They could not but remember these things: of the real lessons taught by the rude upheaval they could not judge; it was too early in the century. We ourselves have hardly arrived at the power of reading clearly and impartially those lessons.

I mean, in a word, that we may credit both the Regent and the two Houses of Parliament and the Ministers with holding the sincere conviction, founded chiefly on what they called the lessons of France, that reform was revolution; that it was massacre; that it was the destruction of religion, and the sweeping away of the