

BOOK VIII. THE PERIOD FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE THE THIRD.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. WILLIAM AND MARY.



THE crown of England stood for almost two months in the same position as Mahomet's tomb, for the diadem no longer rested on the head of James, nor had it yet lighted on that of the Prince of Orange. On the 13th of February, 1689, both Houses waited on the Prince and Princess of Orange with a bill and a request that they would put their names to it. This document was a Declaration of Rights, in which it was asserted that "elections ought to be free," that "jurors ought to be duly empannelled and returned," besides a number of those "oughts" which are highly respected at the commencement of a reign, but frequently stand for nothing before the end of it. The Prince of Orange was by no means so squeezable as his name would seem to imply, for he refused to accept the crown unless he could have the power as well as the name of

king, and he stipulated that his wife should have no share in the government. He probably knew the lady's temper pretty well, and felt that neither the country nor himself would have had much peace had she been allowed to interfere, and indeed it was a saying of one of the ancients, whose name we have not been able to learn, that "when a woman rules the roast, a quantity of broils may be looked for." He threatened to return to Holland if Parliament gave his wife any share of his authority, and the once popular but now almost obsolete menace of "If you do I'm a Dutchman, originated no doubt in the intimation of William that he would cut his English connections, and return to his Dutch duchy if his views were thwarted by his adopted countrymen. The insertion of this rare old saying is rather intended to display our own reading than with any idea of its being absolutely essential to the narrative.

A country in want of a king is naturally prone to accept one upon almost any terms; and though England might have been very particular in ordinary circumstances about its chief magistrate, there was so much unpleasantness in being without a person of the sort, that the nation was very anxious to suit itself. William's stipulations were therefore listened to, and it was even arranged that Mary, in whose right alone he had any claim to the British Crown, should have but a nominal share in it.

The Commons voted that James had abdicated, or, in other words, bolted, and thereby shut himself out; while the Lords resolved that the throne was vacant; and thus by two different modes they came to the same conclusion, namely, that there was an opening for any one to "step up," if the terms were agreed upon. After some negotiation it was arranged that William should take the vacant situation, which should be considered to some extent a single-handed place, though nominally filled by "a man and his wife," it being understood that the former should do all the work, and that the latter should make herself generally useless.

It will naturally occur to the curious reader to inquire what has become of the fugitive James, and we shall therefore commission our research to set out as a policeman in pursuit of him. We first trace him to Versailles, where he met with a very friendly reception from Louis the Fourteenth, who made him as comfortable as circumstances would admit, and lent him a lot of French soldiers to play at an invasion with.

Ireland was then, as it has been always, our weakest point, and it was resolved that James should hit us on that unhappy raw, which all our attempts to heal have only tended to aggravate.

James repaired to Brest, where he found himself in the bosom of a ragamuffin crowd of exiles; and forming the best of these into a sort of army, he landed with a force of about two thousand five hundred at Kinsale.

Having taken the English by surprise, James's party obtained a bit of a victory at Bantry Bay, for the numbers of the former being comparatively few, their commander, Admiral Herbert, thought it would be sheer folly not to sheer off, and he made for Scilly, which he acknowledged to a friend was exceedingly ridiculous. James made the most of the opportunity, and summoned an Irish Parliament, which, with true Irish generosity, began voting away money at a tremendous rate before it came in, and had bestowed upon James £20,000 a month, out of nothing a year, within the few first days of their sitting.

The Treasury was of course not in a condition to meet the liberal orders that were made upon it, and James had no means of replenishing it, except with what he brought over in his pocket from France, and this, though it had come some distance, would not go very far, when he began to try the experiment.

Having a scarcity of gold and silver, he deter-, mined to try the effect of brass, which he knew to be in many cases a perfect substitute for both the precious metals, and he ordered that his brazen coinage should pass for a hundred times its value, which has furnished a monumentum cere perennius of his brazen impudence.

His household was poverty-stricken in the extreme, and Black Rod had nothing but an old Awkward Mistake, birch as the emblem of his office. The Court was, in fact, rendered as bad as the lowest alley by the turmoils and turbulence that prevailed in consequence of the shortness of cash, and after some little hesitation, James determined to go to Londonderry for ammunition to carry on the war; but on his arrival the only powder and shot he received came to him in the shape of the firing of the garrison. Finding the place—or rather the inhabitants—unwilling to surrender, James drew off, and arrived in Dublin, where some of the famous Dublin stout in the shape of a few stalwart adherents still sustained him in his enterprise.



William had no doubt a very troublesome part to play, for he was surrounded by a discontented set, which must always arise upon a change of dynasty, when the good things to be given away form a proportion of about one-eighth per cent,—or half a crown in the £100—to the expectations of the would-be recipients. When a plan is fixed upon for dividing £1000 into fifty thousand equal shares of £100,000 each, there will be some probability that the promoters of a revolution will, when the revolution is complete, be all equally and perfectly satisfied. William was speedily

surrounded by a number of adherents to his cause, who had stuck to it with the leech-like intention of drawing upon it to the fullest possible extent; and his hangers-on were consequently more weakening to him than otherwise.

On the 19th of October he opened the second session of his first Parliament, and was soon pestered by the pecuniary importunities of the Princess Anne of Denmark, who declared that her income was scarcely enough to keep her in gloves and Denmark satin slippers; and that she must have £70,000 a year settled upon her, quite independent of her brother-in-law and her sister.

A family quarrel ensued upon this demand, and Queen Mary insisted that Nancy must be mad” to prefer a request so shamefully exorbitant. The matter was eventually compromised, by a settlement of £50,000 a year on “Sister Anne,” who was completely under the influence of Churchill, now Earl of Marlborough.

In the beginning of 1690, William dissolved the Parliament; and a new one met on the 20th of March; when the king announced his intention of going to Ireland, and intimated his necessity for cash to enable him to undertake the journey. He requested the assistance of the Commons in settling the amount of his revenue, upon which he proposed to borrow a considerable sum, thus acting on the dangerous and unprofitable system of drawing a salary in advance, and spending to-day what will not come to-morrow. He intended, in fact, to eat his pudding first, and to have it afterwards, or rather to eat his own, and then come down upon that of other people to supply the deficiency.

The Commons, instead of checking this improvidence, granted him £2,200,000, which was presented to William in the shape of an elegant extract from the pockets of his people.

Money was not all that the new king required, for he was anxious to cement his power, and like all those who feel the doubtful character of their claims, was continually insisting on their being formally recognised. Bills were passed, though not without some

difficulty, abjuring James and his title to the crown; but some nobles objected to take the oaths, and Lord Wharton, who was a very old man, declared he was unwilling to go swearing on to the end of his days, that "he had taken so many affidavits, he scarcely knew one from the other, and he must beg to be excused from any more oath-taking during the brief remainder of his existence."

The Parliament having served its purpose, in a pecuniary point of view, was prorogued rather early, and William started for Ireland. Previous to the king's departure, the queen very reasonably suggested that as he could not take the royal authority away with him, it would be a great deal like a dog in the manger, if he refused to let her have the enjoyment of the sovereign power during his brief absence. With some reluctance he consented to the arrangement, observing coarsely, that he knew she would make a mess of it, but as he should not be gone very long, it did not much signify.

With this surly concession, having agreed to a temporary transfer of the sceptre into her grasp, he quitted her, with the discouraging and discourteous words, "There, take it! and let all the world see how right I was in preventing you from having a hand in the use of it."

On his arrival at Belfast he began to look about him for James, whose army was at length pounced upon on the banks of the Boyne, and a battle became unavoidable. William was looking about him, when the enemy loading two immense field-pieces, aimed them both at him; but, as between two stools, one often goes to the ground, so, between two cannon balls, one may occasionally come off without injury. William, when he saw the balls bouncing by him, may have thought that he was lucky in escaping a ball'd head, but he soon received a real wound on the shoulder, which positively tore his coat, and grazed the skin, to the utter horror of Lord Coningsby, who stuffed his pocket-handkerchief into the sleeve, to staunch the blood that might have been, but, fortunately, was not, flowing. William was more frightened

than hurt, and his officers were more frightened than William, while the enemy were more frightened than either, and allayed their trepidation by giving out that William was certainly dead, which we need not say was a mere penny-a-line report, without the smallest foundation. A poultice soon set his shoulder to rights, and at all events enabled him to put it to the wheel, which he did, by calling a meeting of the officers at nine in the evening.

He told them he should cross the river the next day, and he gave orders about their dress, observing to them playfully, that as they would have to pass through the tide, they had better make themselves as tidy as possible. Hearing that the enemy wore cockades, made of white paper, he remarked that he would not have his men in such foolscaps, but that he desired to see them all with green boughs in their hats; and in this very guyish guise the soldiers of William met the adherents of James in combat.

The gallant Duke of Schomberg, who was extremely touchy, had been somehow or other offended at the Council of War, and had retired in a huff to his tent, exclaiming pettishly, "Settle it yourselves how you like, for it seems I'm nobody." In vain did some of his comrades call after him, "Schomberg, Schomberg! Come back, come back;" for the general withdrew within his quarters, and letting down his camp-curtains, sat smoking his pipe with interjectional mutterings to himself on that fruitful topic to a gentleman in the sulks—"The obstancy of some people."

The order of battle being formed, a copy of it was sent to him, when, snatching it from the messenger with a loud "Umph!" he declared that he had scarcely made up his mind whether he should obey or light his pipe with the document.

Having looked at it, however, the old soldier gave a whistle of satisfaction as if in an ardent anticipation of the work before him; and putting on his armour as coolly as if he had been dressing for dinner, he made his way to the spot appointed for the coming contest.

His reception by his sovereign and his fellow-soldiers was

cheerful if not cordial; but it was evident by the twinkle of the veteran's eye, that Schomberg was "himself again" when he stood in the presence of an enemy.

The contending forces having a river between them, found their ardour a great deal damped, for it is not easy to be valorous with the water up to one's waist, and with every desire on both sides to make a splash, the soldiers could only dabble in hostilities without plunging deeply into them. William put his nag boldly across the stream, but the English had to deplore the loss of the gallant old Duke of Schomberg, who, there is too much reason to believe, was killed in mistake by one of his own men, though, we must confess, we always look with very great suspicion on these so-called accidents. James had taken his station at a most respectable distance from danger during the whole of the affray, and he no sooner saw that he had lost the day than he determined not to lose a minute in making his escape from England. He galloped on horseback to Dublin, hastened to Waterford, and embarked for France with a wretched retinue. William returned to England, and sent the Duke of Marlborough to Ireland, who reduced several places, and by putting the screw upon Cork, made it pull out very handsomely. The bishops now began to feel very uncomfortable about their allegiance, and to doubt the validity of its transfer from James to William, though the truth seems to be that they had not found the transfer fee so large as they had expected. Several were deprived of their temporalities—the surest way of bringing them to their senses; but there were numerous instances of disinterestedness, in which a blindness to the advantages of the see was honourably conspicuous. William troubled himself comparatively little about what was going on at home, but was far more anxious to carry on with success the league against France; and to further this object he repaired to the Continent, where a warfare of a rather paltry character was persisted in. The hostilities, though of a contemptible kind, were sufficiently costly to render it necessary for William to return in the

course of a few months, and ask for more money from the English Parliament. Large grants were made, but not without a great deal of grumbling, for John Bull always pays, though he parts with his money very reluctantly, and sometimes takes out half its value in surly remonstrances against being compelled to put his hand into his pocket.

The general discontent was considerably aggravated by a necessity for the revival of the odious poll-tax, which was a regular rap on the head to all except paupers, children, and servants; for with these exceptions

everybody or rather every head was charged so much a quarter for the privilege of remaining on its owner's shoulders.

William continued riding backwards and forwards between England and Holland, but he paid the former the compliment of making it his purse on every occasion.

His majesty was constantly taking abroad with him both money and men, the former being invariably spent and the latter severely wounded, before the king came home again.

Occasionally some impression was made on a French fort, but the damage done to the enemy cost more than it was worth to the English, whose patience and pockets continued to be taxed for the continental freaks of the foreign king they had permitted to rule over them.

There were some able leaders on the side of the British, and among the most conspicuous may be cited Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who threw fresh coals on to the fire of enthusiasm that occasionally burned up among the English.

It would be wearisome to make a list of the various journeys of William to the Continent and back; nor, indeed, would the document amount to anything more interesting than a time-table, were we to take the trouble of preparing it.

His people might with reason have complained that they never saw anything of him, unless he wanted something from them, and at length on the 12th of November, 1694, when William

condescended to meet his Parliament and request the favour of £5,000,000 to “carry on the war,” the opposition led by Mr. Harley, the statesman, not the low comedian forced upon his majesty’s acceptance a bill for the summoning of triennial Parliaments.

The assent he gave to this unpalatable measure has been attributed to the anxiety he felt on account of the dangerous illness of his wife, which may very naturally have incapacitated him for any serious resistance to a demand which Parliament urged with wonderful unanimity and energy. Poor Mary was seized with an attack of the small-pox, and it is a curious mark of the unfeeling character of the punsters of that happily remote age, that her malady was made the subject of a pun, which, as it was new at the period of which we are writing, we may be allowed for the three thousand and eighty-fourth time to chronicle.

When it was known that her majesty had caught the small-pox, or rather that the small-pox had caught her majesty, it was remarked with a savageness that loses none of its ferocity from the fact of its being a bitter truth, that she was “very much to be pitted.

Whether the queen ever heard this unfeeling and poverty-stricken joke, the chroniclers do not relate, and we cannot answer with certainty for its having been the death of her; but, as she actually died, the supposition we have suggested is exceedingly feasible. She expired on the 28th of December, 1694, in the thirty-third year of her age, to the great grief of her husband, and the regret of the nation in general; for though she was not particularly beloved either by one or the other during her life, there was a decent show of sorrow on the part of both at losing her. William no doubt felt the bereavement in more ways than one, for he had a servant the less to wait upon him, a dependant the less to bully, and a subject the less to domineer over. He lamented her less as a partner and friend than he missed her as a companion and housekeeper. She was certainly a devoted wife, but the devotion of a woman to her husband’s interests is, after all, only a second selfishness, which, when viewed in a proper light, is far more prudent than respectable.

Her inveterate dislike of her sister, with whom she refused to be reconciled even on her death-bed, convinces us that it was not altogether a warmth of heart that bound her to her husband; and we therefore set her down as a cold unfeeling person who could sacrifice all other ties for the sake of one which she believed to be of the most importance to her interests.

We should not, however, be doing justice to the character of Mary if we were to omit to state that she was exceedingly skilful in the use of the needle, and by working curious devices on chairs or carpets, she in one way at least set a pattern to the female portion of the community.