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### THE REVOLT

OF THE

### British American Colonies, 1764-84.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The effect produced by the surrender of the army under Earl Cornwallis on the public mind of Great Britain was most disastrous. Hitherto the people had stood by the King and his ministers in upholding the dignity of the British Parliament and the honor of the British name, but the factious opposition in the Commons, by dint of perseverance and the fortunate concatenation of events, began to exercise a control over the masses by no means commensurate with their honesty or patriotism, and to obtain a confidence which they did not deserve.

As the people were heavily burthened to pay for the mismanagement of the creatures of the opposition, and as the whole events of the war were elaborately misrepresented, it is no wonder they should tire of a contest which seemed intolerable, or that they should charge on the ill will and determination of the Colonists to separate from them the direct effect of the folly and blunders of the officers in command of their armies. The events of the war in Georgia and the Carolinas was held to prove that the Colonists were irreconcilable enemies of England, whereas in truth such a feeling did not pervade one-third of the mass of the population, who were exasperated by having the Royal troops quartered upon them and taking food and the means of transport without paying for it. Thus the Earl of Cornwallis' army, as acknowledged by Stedman, his Commissary-General, lived entirely upon the people from the capture of Charlestown to that of Yorktown, which acts in both Carolinas lost all their friends to the Royal cause.

The British Parliament assembled on the 28th November, 1781, and the King's speech fairly stated the exact situation in which affairs then were, and urged a more vigorous and united prosecution of the war. An ad-

dress of thanks being made in the usual form was the occasion of a furious onslaught on the administration, the opposition putting forth the idea that if they agreed there to they would bind themselves to support the King in prosecuting the American war, and an amendment of an opposite tendency was offered by Mr. Fox—it was rejected by a majority of 281 against 129. In the course of the debate it appeared that the ministers of the Crown were not perfectly agreed amongst themselves, but the general idea was to carry on the war directly against France and Spain, and against the Colonies by simply holding the posts already in their possession. This would undoubtedly be the true policy to follow. The revolted Colonies cut off from the seaboard could not carry on offensive operations, their resources were exhausted, and, as afterwards proved, they could not have borne another campaign. France was in even a worse condition—the naval supremacy which had been established with the aid of Spain had passed away without any advantage: another campaign would have swept her armaments from the seas. Nor would Spain have fared better; in the contest she had acquired Florida, and if it was continued she would probably have lost Cuba. At all events her Colonial possessions which she could not defend were sure to be seized in detail, and a monopoly of the trade of the Spanish Main would have fully compensated the people of Great Britain for any sacrifices they might make in upholding their own superiority. But the opposition loudly maintained that it was necessary to put an end to the contest to save the nation from bankruptcy and ruin, and as people are more ready to believe evil in anticipation as well as intention they at last succeeded in persuading the public that the contest was ruinous and success was impossible; and on this ground, the strongest they could adopt as being that on which they expected to be supported by the nation, they continued to impede the public business in the House of Commons by repeated motions, calculated to embarrass ministers, till on the 22nd of February they succeeded in carrying a vote for addressing His Majesty to direct his minis-

ters no longer to wage an offensive war against the revolted Colonies, and to assure him they would heartily concur in those measures calculated to accelerate the return of peace. This resolution, one of the most fatal ever carried in the British House of Commons, was carried by 234 against 215, and led to the resignation of the Administration about the end of March. It was succeeded by a cabinet composed of the Marquis of Rockingham, First Commissioner of the Treasury; the Earl of Shelburn and Mr. Fox, Secretaries of State; Lord Camden, President of the Council; the Duke of Grafton, Privy Seal; Lord John Cavendish, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Admiral Keppel, First Commissioner of the Admiralty; General Conway, Commissioner-in-Chief of the Forces; the Duke of Richmond, Master-General of the Ordnance; Colonel Barre, Treasurer of the Navy, and Mr. Burke, Paymaster-General. The patriots were at last provided for and had waded to power by the waste of treasure to their country and at the expense of its best interests. History has glorified those men with the name of great, but their influence on the affairs of the British Empire was simply disastrous. That they were the abettors and allies of the traitors in the Colonies, who planned the revolution and sought foreign aid to carry it out is undeniable, and the records of the British House of Commons will tell how manfully they played their parts in thwarting every measure undertaken to redeem that country's lost prestige, retain the Colonies, or chastise the insolence of the unscrupulous foreign element, who made the quarrel a pretext for interference. Every disaster, therefore, which occurred while it aided their objects in the attainment of power gave them credit with the people, who were not careful to note how steadily they plotted for the accomplishment of their own prophesies. England has seen many administrations during her career of representative government, but it may safely be said that the Rockingham cabinet was at once the most mischievous and incapable that ever held the reins of power, not excepting that of the famous Duke of Newcastle.