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THE PROTESTANT RIOTS OF 1780.

(From the Dublin Review, April, 1873.)

(CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.)

In this state of agitation of the public mind came forth from the Association its celebrated "Appeal to the People of England."

To tolerate Popery, is to be instrumental in the perdition of immortal souls, and of millions that only exist in the presence of God, and is the direct way to provoke the vengeance of a holy and jealous God against our fleets and armies.

A million and a half of people are not to be despised; he might be told he was uttering treason; but they should keep the King to his coronation oath.

He concluded a wild, incoherent harangue, by moving,—"That the petition of the Scotch Papists be read, that the House come to the resolution of dismissing the same, and of giving no encouragement whatever to the Roman Catholic religion in Scotland."

From this extract a just idea may be formed of the character of that infamous appeal, in which, after twelve months of busy plotting in secret, the Protestant Association proclaimed itself to the world, and more than hinted at its future work.

Will any gentleman answer, that the people shall pay more taxes without a revolt at home? I mention the possibility of a revolt, because our Constitution has borne so much already.

Notwithstanding frequent outbursts such as these, which were usually accompanied with his favorite threat, that he had "120,000 able men in Scotland, who would quickly remedy the state of things," no notice was taken by the Government, who, unfortunately, fell into the blunder of mistaking a malignant enthusiast for a harmless fool.

Under such a leadership as that of the dangerous man whom we have been endeavoring to depict, it will be easily imagined that the thousands who swelled the lists of the Association (and who were mostly from the turbulent classes) began to grow impatient of mere speech-making and of the dull occupation of voting resolutions against the Catholic Relief Bill.

At a general assembly of the members of the Committee of the Protestant Association, it was unanimously resolved, that in account of the noble zeal

for the Protestant interests which has distinguished the public conduct of Lord George Gordon, his lordship shall be requested to accept the position of President of our Association.

Lord George Gordon was third son of Cosmo, Duke of Gordon. At an early age he entered into the navy, but retired from the service during the American war.

Scotland, he said, was ripe for insurrection: all the inhabitants, except the Papists, were ready.—They had invited him to be their leader, and he had accepted the post, for he preferred death to religious slavery, and would perish with arms in his hands or prevail.

And on May 9th the following advertisement appeared in the public press:— This is to give notice, that in compliance with a petition addressed to the President of the Protestant Association, the committee has resolved that another general meeting of Protestants be held before the London petition is presented to the House of Commons.

This delay was to give time for the presentation of petitions from other parts of England, from Wales and Scotland, before the appearance of the monster petition of London.

The Popish Relief Bill was carried so rapidly that the people had no time to oppose it, or to make themselves acquainted with the consequences. Indulgence to Papists is inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution, endangers the succession of the House of Hanover, and threatens the country with destruction.

After this plain speaking, a resolution was put that "the whole body of the Protestant Association do attend at St. George's Fields on Friday next, at ten o'clock, to accompany Lord George Gordon to the House of Commons, on the deliverance of the Protestant petition."

Protestant Association! Whereas no hall in London can contain 40,000 persons, it has been resolved that we do meet on Friday next, the 2nd, in St. George's Fields, at ten o'clock.—that this Association do divide into four sections, namely, London, Westminster, Southwark, and Scotch, the Protestants of the city on the right, the Protestants of Westminster on the left, the borough of Southwark forming the main body, and the Scotch residents in London the rear division.—that all do wear blue cockades to distinguish them from the Papists, and also from those who approve the late Act in favour of Popery.—that the magistrates of London, Westminster, and Southwark, are requested to attend to overawe any evil-minded persons who may wish to disturb the legal and peaceable department of his Majesty's Protestant subjects.

Thus for three entire days was the Government in possession of full intelligence of the dangerous and illegal proceeding that had been resolved upon; yet it did nothing; and this inexplicable and criminal apathy not unnaturally gave rise afterwards to the charge against it of having encouraged this rising, so as to be able to throw odium for the future upon all popular demonstrations.

President himself. Indeed, he seems to have lost but little time in giving the profligate wretches who everywhere crowded round him the clearest idea of what sort of work was shortly to be put into their hands.

sanction by their presence the acts of those who were about to break the law, was a masterpiece of the mediocre genius of John Wesley, and excited universal derision. Forty thousand men bent upon violence, and already guilty of seditious language, wanted protection, and looked to the civil power for it!

By the hour of ten on the ever-memorable morning of June 2nd, 1780, the open space, known then as St. George's Fields, Southwark, presented the lively appearance of a military parade-ground on a day of national rejoicing. Drums beating, bands playing, banners flying, and forty-five thousand men, all wearing blue cockades and marshalled in their ranks with almost soldierly precision, told the affrighted citizens of London and Westminster that the Protestant Association was ready to carry out the fiercest menace of its furious President.

It was not yet noon when the screeching of the bagpipes and the clamour of many voices proclaimed the near approach of the man who was destined to be the author of more crime and misery than perhaps in his sane moments even he could have contemplated without concern.

It was half-past two in the afternoon when a great shout announced the arrival at their place of destination of the three divisions of the "No-Popery Mob." Obeying the instructions given them beforehand, many of them rushed forward to secure possession of all the avenues from the outer gate up to the very entrance of both Houses, which latter they attempted, but in vain, to force.

The Speaker of the House has just declared that you are here under the pretence of religion, but you are a good people and have a good cause. Mr. Rous has just moved that the civil power be sent for; but don't you wind, keep yourselves cool and be steady.

A gentleman coming up and endeavoring to dissuade him from continuing his discourse, Lord George called out in a loud voice to the mob: "This is Sir Michael le Fleming, and he has just spoken for you like an angel; but as for Mr. Burke, I am sorry for him."

Several of the mob cried out, "Do you wish us to go, Georgie?" To which he replied:— You are the best judges of what you ought to do; but I will tell you how the matter stands. The House is going to divide upon the question whether your petition shall be taken into consideration to-

moment in danger of being murdered by the rioters under the very windows of their committee-room. At this intelligence the members rose manfully in a body, and carried by acclamation a proposal of Lord Radnor that they should proceed at once with drawn swords to his rescue.

In the midst of the wildest disorder, with the roaring of the mob without, and in momentary danger, should the doors be forced, of being slaughtered at their posts, the members of both Houses, nevertheless, maintained their presence of mind, and yielded nothing either of their dignity or privilege in the face of brute force.

while in the Commons Dunning censured the ministers for having neglected to commit Lord George Gordon the first night that he threatened them with the cut-throats of the Association, and went so far as to accuse them of engaging the mob to insult and overawe the Opposition.

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