

and that he being a stranger to the proceedings of this House, and there being a title in the case, and knowing Mr. Musgrave to be a gentleman of the long robe, did intend to give him a guinea for his advice in that matter; but understanding by Mr. Musgrave he had committed an error in so doing, he begged pardon of Mr. Musgrave, as he now did of the House; and he then withdrew.

'Resolved, That the said Mr. Bird be called in, and that Mr. Speaker do reprimand him upon his knees at the Bar.

'And he was called in, and upon his knees reprimanded accordingly, and then discharged' (a).

About 1720, there occurred a scandal in English political history which brought discredit on the English name, and disaster on several of the leading statesmen and politicians. The South Sea Company and the Bank of England were competitors for the funding of the National Debt. The former won by corrupting the leading men of the Ministry and House of Commons. But their sin was soon found out; Parliament was hastily summoned, and met on the 8th December, 1720, for the nation 'could seek for relief nowhere but in Parliament; and, true to its duty, the House effectively and expeditiously investigated the charge, and, on the 28th January following, expelled the guilty members.

The Parliamentary investigation disclosed that while the Company's Bill, authorizing the contract with the Government, was being promoted in Parliament, about £170,000 of paid up stock had been placed to the credit of members of the Ministry and of the House of Commons, as a 'gift,' without any prior 'agreement' or 'understanding' whatever. The members implicated were the Earl of Sutherland, First Lord of the Treasury; Mr. John Aislabie, M.P., Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer; Mr. James Craggs, M.P., Postmaster-General; (a) and Mr. Charles Stanhope, M.P., Secretary of the Treasury. Of these, the Earl of Sutherland and Mr. Stanhope were cleared by a very narrow majority, or as a writer at the time observed, 'by the unworthy partiality of Parliament.' Mr. Craggs died pending the investigation, but his estates were confiscated to make good the losses of the Company; and Mr. Aislabie, who vehemently denied any corrupt intent or bargain in the matter, was expelled the House, and committed prisoner to the Tower.

Equally effective were the measures taken against the incriminated members of the House. Five were expelled the House, and committed prisoners to the Tower; and to make good the losses to the Company, the following sums were levied from their estates:—Sir Theodore Janssen, M.P. for Yarmouth, £200,000; Sir Robert Chaplin, M.P. for Great Grimsby, £35,000; Mr. Jacob Sawbridge, M.P. for Cricklade, £72,000; Mr. Francis Eyles, M.P. for Chippenham, £45,000; and Sir George Caswell, M.P., who had been knighted three years before for 'having loaned the Government large sums of money, at three per cent., when they could get it nowhere else,' £250,000 (b).

The ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament involved in this scandal were, by an Act passed in 1721 (7th George I. c. 28), disabled from holding any office or place of trust under the Crown, and from sitting or voting in Parliament thereafter, in order 'to deter all persons

(a) This minister had acted as a Lord Justice of Great Britain during Queen Anne's reign, in the negotiations respecting the boundaries of the Hudson Bay territories after the Treaty of Utrecht. — *Ontario Boundary Documents*, 360.

(b) The proceedings of the House of Commons in investigating these charges against the Ministers and M.P.s, will be found in 7 *Parliamentary History*, 685-856.

(a) 11 Commons Journal, 275.