

***CHARLES
BRADLAUGH***



***THE IMPEACHMENT
OF THE HOUSE
OF BRUNSWICK***

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY

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By statutes of the 12 and 13 Will. HE., and 6 Anne c. 11, Article 2, the British Parliament, limiting the monarchy to members of the Church of England, excluded the Stuarts, and from and after the death of King William and the Princess Anne without heirs, contrived that the Crown of this kingdom should devolve upon the Princess Sophia, Duchess Dowager of Hanover, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants. Heirs failing to Anne, although seventeen times pregnant, and Sophia dying about seven weeks before Anne, her son George succeeded under these Acts as George I. of England and Scotland.

It is said, and perhaps truly, that the German Protestant Guelph was an improvement on the Catholic Stuart, and the Whigs take credit for having effected this change in spite of the Tories. This credit they deserve; but it must not be forgotten that it was scarce half a century before that the entire aristocracy, including the patriotic Whigs, coalesced to restore to the throne the Stuarts, who had been got rid of under Cromwell. If this very aristocracy, of which the Whigs form part, had never assisted in calling back the Stuarts in the person of Charles II., there would have been no need to thank them for again turning that family out.

The object of the present essay is to submit reasons for the repeal of the Acts of Settlement and Union, so far as the succession to the throne is concerned, after the abdication or demise of the present monarch. It is of course assumed, as a point upon which all supporters of the present Royal

Family will agree, that the right to deal with the throne is inalienably vested in the English people, to be exercised by them through their representatives in Parliament. The right of the members of the House of Brunswick to succeed to the throne is a right accruing only from the acts of Settlement and Union, it being clear that, except from this statute, they have no claim to the throne. It is therefore submitted, that should Parliament in its wisdom see fit to enact that after the death or abdication of her present Majesty, the throne shall no longer be filled by a member of the House of Brunswick, such an enactment would be perfectly within the competence of Parliament. It is further submitted that the Parliament has full and uncontrollable authority to make any enactment, and to repeal any enactment heretofore made, even if such new statute, or the repeal of any old statute, should in truth change the constitution of the Empire, or modify the character and powers of either Parliamentary Chamber. The Parliament of the English Commonwealth, which met on April 25th, 1660, gave the Crown to Charles II., and the Parliament of the British Monarchy has the undoubted right to withhold the Crown from Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. The Convention which assembled at Westminster on January 22d, 1688, took away the crown from James II., and passed over his son, the then Prince of Wales, as if he had been non-existent. This Convention was declared to have all the authority of Parliament—ergo. Parliament has admittedly the right to deprive a living King of his Crown, and to treat a Prince of Wales as having no claim to the succession.

In point of fact two of the clauses of the Act of Settlement were repealed in the reign of Queen Anne, and a third clause was repealed early in the reign of George I., showing that this particular statute has never been considered immutable or irrepealable. It is right to add that the clauses repealed were only of consequence to the nation, and that their repeal was no injury to the Crown. The unbounded right of the supreme Legislature to enlarge its own powers was contended for and admitted in 1716, when the duration of Parliament was extended four years, a triennial Parliament declaring itself and all future Parliaments septennial. Furthermore, it has been held to be sedition to deny the complete authority of the Irish Parliament to put an end to its own existence.

It has been admitted to be within the jurisdiction of Parliament to give electoral privileges to citizens theretofore unenfranchised; Parliament claims the unquestioned right to disfranchise persons, hitherto electors, for misconduct in the exercise of electoral rights, and in its pleasure to remove and annul any electoral disability. The right of Parliament to decrease or increase the number of representatives for any borough has never been disputed, and its authority to decrease the number of Peers sitting and voting in the House of Lords was recognized in passing the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill, by which several Bishops were summarily ejected from amongst the Peers. It is now submitted that Parliament possesses no Legislative right but what it derives from the people, and that the people are under no irrevocable contract or obligation to continue any member of the House of Brunswick on the throne. In order

to show that this is not a solitary opinion, the following Parliamentary *dicta* are given:—

The Honorable Temple Luttrell, in a speech made in the House of Commons, on the 7th November, 1775, showed "that of thirty-three sovereigns since William the Conqueror, thirteen only have ascended the throne by divine hereditary right.... The will of the people, superseding any hereditary claim to succession, at the commencement of the twelfth century placed Henry I. on the throne, "and this subject to conditions as to laws to be made by Henry. King John was compelled solemnly to register an assurance of the ancient rights of the people in a formal manner;" and this necessary work was accomplished by the Congress at Runnymede, in the year 1115. "Sir, in the reign of Henry III. (about the year 1223), the barons, clergy and freeholders, understanding that the King, as Earl of Poictou, had landed some of his continental troops in the western ports of England, with a design to strengthen a most odious and arbitrary set of ministers, they assembled in a Convention or Congress, from whence they despatched deputies to King Henry, declaring that if he did not immediately send back those Poictouvians, and remove from his person and councils evil advisers, they would place upon the throne a Prince who should better observe the laws of the land. Sir, the King not only hearkened to that Congress, but shortly after complied with every article of their demand, and publicly notified his reformation. Now, Sir, what are we to call that assembly which dethroned Edward II. when the Archbishop of Canterbury preached a sermon on this Text, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God'?" "A Prince of the house of

Lancaster was invited over from banishment, and elected by the people to the throne" on the fall of Richard II. "I shall next proceed to the general Convention and Congress, which, in 1461, enthroned the Earl of March by the name of Edward IV., the Primate of all England collecting the suffrages of the people." "In 1659, a Convention or Congress restored legal Monarchy in the person of Charles II."

William Pitt, on the 16th December, 1788, being then Chancellor of the Exchequer, contended that "the right of providing for the deficiency of Royal authority rested with the two remaining branches of the Legislature;" and again, "on the disability of the Sovereign, where was the right to be found? It was to be found in the voice, in the sense of the people; with them it rested." On the 22d December, Mr. Pitt said that Mr. Fox had contended that "the two Houses of Parliament cannot proceed to legislate without a King." His (Mr. Pitt's) answer was: "The conduct of the Revolution had contradicted that assertion; they had acted legislatively, and, no King being present, they must, consequently, have acted without a King."

Mr. Hardinge, a barrister of great repute, and afterwards Solicitor-General and Judge, in the same debate, said: "The virtues of our ancestors and the genius of the Government accurately understood, a century ago, had prompted the Lords and Commons of the realm to pass a law without a King; and a law which, as he had always read it, had put upon living record this principle: 'That whenever the supreme executive hand shall have lost its power to act, the people of the land, fully and freely represented, can alone repair the defect.'"

On the 26th December, in the House of Lords, discussing the power to exclude a sitting Monarch from the throne, the Earl of Abingdon said: "Will a King exclude himself? No! no! my Lords, that exclusion appertains to us and to the other House of Parliament exclusively. It is to us it belongs; it is our duty. It is the business of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain, and of us alone, as the trustees and representatives of the nation." And following up this argument, Lord Abingdon contended that in the contingency he was alluding to, "the right to new model or alter the succession vests in the Parliament of England without the King, in the Lords and Commons of Great Britain solely and exclusively."

Lord Stormont, in the same debate, pointed out that William III. "possessed no other right to the throne than that which he derived from the votes of the two Houses."

The Marquis of Lansdowne said: "One of the best constitutional writers we had was Mr. Justice Foster, who, in his book on the 'Principles of the Constitution,' denies the right even of hereditary succession, and says it is no right whatever, but merely a political expedient.... The Crown, Mr. Justice Foster said, was not merely a descendable property like a laystall, or a pigstye, but was put in trust for millions, and for the happiness of ages yet unborn, which Parliament has it always in its power to mould, to shape, to alter, to fashion, just as it shall think proper. And in speaking of Parliament," his Lordship said, "Mr. Justice Foster repeatedly spoke of the two Houses of Parliament only."

My object being to procure the repeal of the only title under which any member of the House of Brunswick could

claim to succeed the present sovereign on the throne, or else to procure a special enactment which shall for the future exclude the Brunswicks, as the Stuarts were excluded in 1688 and 1701, the following grounds are submitted as justifying and requiring such repeal or new enactment:—

1st. That during the one hundred and fifty-seven years the Brunswick family have reigned over the British Empire, the policy and conduct of the majority of the members of that family, and especially of the various reigning members, always saving and excepting her present Majesty, have been hostile to the welfare of the mass of the people. This will be sought to be proved at length by a sketch of the principal events in the reign of each monarch, from August 1st, 1714, to the present date.

2d. That during the same period of one hundred and fifty-seven years, fifteen-sixteenths of the entire National Debt have been created, and that this debt is in great part the result of wars arising from the mischievous and pro-Hanoverian policy of the Brunswick family.

3d. That in consequence of the incompetence or want of desire for governmental duty on the part of the various reigning members of the House of Brunswick, the governing power of the country has been practically limited to a few families, who have used government in the majority of instances as a system of machinery for securing place and pension for themselves and their associates; while it is submitted that government should be the best contrivance of national wisdom for the alleviation of national suffering and promotion of national happiness. Earl Grey even admits that "Our national annals, since the Revolution of 1688,

present a sad picture of the selfishness, baseness and corruption of the great majority of the actors on the political stage."

4th. That a huge pension list has been created, the recipients of the largest pensions being in most cases persons who are already members of wealthy families, and who have done nothing whatever to justify their being kept in idleness at the national expense, while so many workers in the agricultural districts are in a state of semi-starvation; so many toilers in large works in Wales, Scotland, and some parts of England, are in constant debt and dependence; and while large numbers of the Irish peasantry—having for many generations been denied life at home—have until lately been driven to seek those means of existence across the sea which their own fertile land should have amply provided for them.

5th. That the monarchs of the Brunswick family have been, except in a few cases of vicious interference, costly puppets, useful only to the governing aristocracy as a cloak to shield the real wrong doers from the just reproaches of the people.

6th. That the Brunswick family have shown themselves utterly incapable of initiating or encouraging wise legislation. That George I. was shut out practically from the government by his utter ignorance of the English language, his want of sympathy with British habits, and his frequent absences from this country. A volume of history, published by Messrs. Longmans in 1831, says that "George I. continued a German princeling on the British throne—surrounded still by his petty Hanoverian satellites, and so

ignorant even of the language of his new subjects, that his English minister, who understood neither French nor German, could communicate with him only by an imperfect jargon of barbarous Latin." He "discarded his wife, and had two mistresses publicly installed in their Court rights and privileges." Earl Grey declares that "the highly beneficial practice of holding Cabinet Councils without the presence of the sovereign arose from George the First's not knowing English." Leslie describes George I. as altogether ignorant of our language, laws, customs and constitution. Madame de Maintenon writes of him as disgusted with his subjects. That George II. was utterly indifferent to English improvement, and was mostly away in Hanover. Lord Hervey's "Memoirs" portray him as caring for nothing but soldiers and women, and declare that his highest ambition was to combine the reputation of a great general with that of a successful libertine. That George III. was repeatedly insane, and that in his officially lucid moments his sanity was more dangerous to England than his madness. Buckle says of him that he was "despotic as well as superstitious.... Every liberal sentiment, everything approaching to reform, nay, even the mere mention of inquiry, was an abomination in the eyes of that narrow and ignorant prince." Lord Grenville, his Prime Minister, said of him: "He had perhaps the narrowest mind of any man I ever knew." That George IV. was a dissipated, drunken debauchee, bad husband, unfaithful lover, untrustworthy friend, unnatural father, corrupt regent, and worse king. Buckle speaks of "the incredible baseness of that ignoble voluptuary." That William IV. was obstinate, but fortunately fearful of losing his crown, gave way to progress

with a bad grace when chicanery was no longer possible, and continued resistance became dangerous.

7th. That under the Brunswick family, the national expenditure has increased to a frightful extent, while our best possessions in America have been lost, and our home possession, Ireland, rendered chronic in its discontent by the terrible misgovernment under the four Georges.

And 8th. That the ever increasing burden of the national taxation has been shifted from the land on to the shoulders of the middle and lower classes, the landed aristocracy having, until very lately, enjoyed the practical, monopoly of tax-levying power.

CHAPTER II. THE REIGN OF GEORGE I

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On August 1st, 1714, George Lewis, Elector of Hanover, and great-grandson of James I., of England, succeeded to the throne; but being apparently rather doubtful as to the reception he would meet in this country, he delayed visiting his new dominions until the month of October. In April, 1714, there was so little disposition in favor of the newly-chosen dynasty, that the Earl of Oxford entreated George not to bring any of his family into this country without Queen Anne's express consent. It seems strange to read in the correspondence of Madame Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orleans, her hesitation "to rejoice at the accession of our Prince George, for she had no confidence in the English;" and her fears "that the inconstancy of the English will in the end produce some scheme which may be injurious to the French monarchy." She adds: "If the English were to be trusted, I should say that it is fortunate the Parliaments are in favor of George, but the more one reads the history of English revolutions, the more one is compelled to remark the eternal hatred which the people of that nation have had towards their kings, as well as their fickleness." To-day it is the English who charge the French with fickleness. Thackeray says of George I. that "he showed an uncommon prudence and coolness of behavior when he came into his kingdom, exhibiting no elation; reasonably doubtful whether he should not be turned out some day; looking upon himself only as a lodger, and making the most of his brief tenure of St. James's and Hampton Court, plundering, it is true,

somewhat, and dividing amongst his German followers; but what could be expected of a sovereign who at home could sell his subjects at so many ducats per head, and make no scruple in so disposing of them?" At the accession of George I. the national debt of this country, exclusive of annuities, was about £36,000,000; after five Brunswicks have left us, it is £800,000,000 for Great Britain and Ireland, and much more, than £110,000,000 for India. The average annual national expenditure under the rule of George I. was £5,923,079; to-day it is more than £70,000,000, of which more than £20,000,000 have been added in the last twenty years. During the reign of George I. land paid very nearly one-fourth the whole of the taxes; to-day it pays less than one-seventieth part; and yet, while its proportion of the burden is so much lighter, its exaction from labor in rent is ten times heavier.

George I. came to England without his wife, the Princess of Zelle. Years before, he had arrested her and placed her in close confinement in Ahlden Castle, on account of her intrigue with Philip, Count Konigsmark, whom some say George I. suspected of being the actual father of the Electoral Prince George, afterwards George II. To use the language of a writer patronized by George, Prince of Wales, in 1808, "The coldness between George I. and his son and successor, George II., may be said to have been *almost coeval with the existence* of the latter." Our King, George I., described by Thackeray as a "cold, selfish libertine," had Konigsmark murdered in the palace of Heranhausen; confined his wife, at twenty-eight years of age, in a dungeon, where she remained until she was sixty; and when

George Augustus, Electoral Prince of Hanover, tried to get access to his mother, George Lewis, then Elector of Hanover, arrested Prince George also, and it is said, would have put him to death if the Emperor of Germany had not protected him as a Prince of the German Empire. During the reign of George II., Frederick, Prince of Wales, whom his father denounced as a "changeling," published an account of how George I. had turned Frederick's father out of the palace. These Guelphs have been a loving family. The *Edinburgh Review* declares that "the terms on which the eldest sons of this family have always lived with their fathers have been those of distrust, opposition, and hostility." Even after George Lewis had ascended the throne of England, his hatred to George Augustus was so bitter, that there was some proposition that James, Earl Berkeley and Lord High Admiral, should carry off the Prince to America and keep him there.

Thackeray says: "When George I. made his first visit to Hanover, his son was appointed regent during the Royal absence. But this honor was never again conferred on the Prince of Wales; he and his father fell out presently. On the occasion of the christening of his second son, a Royal row took place, and the Prince, shaking his fist in the Duke of Newcastle's face, called him a rogue, and provoked his august father. He and his wife were turned out of St. James's, and their princely children taken from them, by order of the Royal head of the family. Father and mother wept piteously at parting from their little ones. The young ones sent some cherries, with their love, to papa and mamma, the parents watered the fruit with their tears. They

had no tears thirty-five years afterwards, when Prince Frederick died, their eldest son, their heir, their enemy."

A satirical ballad on the expulsion of Prince George from St. James's Palace, which was followed by the death of the newly-christened baby Prince, is droll enough to here repeat:—

The King then took his gray goose quill,
And dip't it o'er in gall;
And, by Master Vice Chamberlain,
He sent to him this scrawl:

"Take hence yourself, and eke your spouse,
Your maidens and your men;
Your trunks, and all your trumpery,
Except your chil-de-ren."

The Prince secured with nimble haste
The Artillery Commission;
And with him trudged full many a maid,
But not one politician.

Up leapt Lepel, and frisked away,
As though she ran on wheels;
Miss Meadows made a woful face,
Miss Howe took to her heels.

But Belenden I needs must praise,
Who, as down stairs she jumps,
Sang "O'er the hills and far away,"
Despising doleful dumps.

Then up the street they took their way,
And knockt up good Lord Grant-ham;
Higgledy-piggledy they lay,
And all went *rantam scantam*.

Now sire and son had played their part,
What could befall beside?
Why, the poor babe took this to heart,
Kickt up its heels, and died.

Mahon, despite all his desire to make out the best for the Whig revolution and its consequences, occasionally makes some pregnant admissions: "The jealousy which George I. entertained for his son was no new feeling. It had existed even at Hanover, and had since been inflamed by an insidious motion of the Tories that out of the Civil List £100,000 should be allotted as a separate revenue for the Prince of Wales. This motion was overruled by the Ministerial party, and its rejection offended the Prince as much as its proposal had the King.... In fact it is remarkable.... that since that family has reigned, the heirs-apparent have always been on ill terms with the sovereign. There have been four Princes of Wales since the death of Anne, and all four have gone into bitter opposition." "That family," said Lord Carteret one day in full Council, "always has quarrelled, and always will quarrel, from generation to generation."

"Through the whole of the reign of George I., and through nearly half of the reign of George II.," says Lord Macaulay, "a Tory was regarded as the enemy of the reigning house, and was excluded from all the favors of the Crown. Though most of the country gentlemen were Tories, none but Whigs were appointed deans and bishops. In every County, opulent and well-descended Tory squires complained that their names were left out of the Commission of the Peace, while men of small estate and of mean birth, who were for toleration and excise, septennial parliaments and standing