CHAPTER II – PARLIAMENT

BURGOYNE had been elected Member of Parliament for Midhurst in 1761, but did not take his seat until he returned from Portugal in 1763. And I almost wish he had not, for parliamentary proceedings and debates are, as a rule, terribly tedious to read, though possibly the *Congressional Record* is not much more lively than the British Hansard. I have waded through many pages of the *Annals of Parliament* in mid-eighteenth century and have only once or twice found the reporter's (or rather the compiler's) interpolation (Here a great laugh). How often the scribe might have put in (Here a great yawn), even in modern times, for it is reported of the Marquis of Hartington of the Victorian era that he once yawned terrifically in the middle of - one of his own speeches. I wish some statistician would compute the total amount in sovereigns of the emoluments (a dignified word) received by Speakers of the House of Commons since the appointment first came into existence. The amount would probably be colossal. But, however great, it must have been well-earned, as would be very evident if the same statistician could also reckon the number of yawns that have been yawned in the House during the same period.

In 1765 Burgoyne, like the keen soldier he was, did a sort of grand tour on the Continent to see what foreign armies were like. His reports are, from a military point of view, of considerable interest. Lord Chatham gave him a letter of introduction to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and Burgoyne's letter thanking him ends in such a grand eighteenth-century style that it is worth quoting for the benefit of those interested in the Art of Polite Writing:

"I have the honour to be
"With the most profound respect, attachment
and sense of obligation
"Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servant
"JOHN BURGOYNE."

These were leisurely days indeed.

Just as young officers from the Staff College make, and have for many years past made, in time of peace, tours of continental battle-fields, so did John Burgoyne, Charlotteless, of course, "wander with enthusiasm over what is to a soldier classic ground." He may even have seen a certain Old Peterkin still engaged in the melancholy and monotonous task of digging up skulls on his farm near Blenheim, or rather Blindheim. Unless, of course, old Kaspar cut off his grandson, then Young Peterkin, with a

rixthaler for being such a dreadful little bore with his constant and reiterated parrot-cry as to "what they fought each other for." For this offensive imp, as you will remember, would not take his grandfather's "Nay, that I do not know" as a satisfactory answer.

Burgoyne managed, with some difficulty, to be present incognito at the manoeuvrers of the army of the Emperor of Austria. He thought the infantry the best he had ever seen, the cavalry not quite so good, and the general officers "very knowing," devilish sly, in fact. But he points out that there were no less than three hundred and thirty-eight of them. When one remembers what a general—of those days—cost, directly and indirectly, it seems excessive. Indeed it reminds one rather of the realms of King Goodheart, of whom the Grandest of Grand Inquisitors used to sing:

On every side Field Marshals gleamed,
Small beer were Lords-Lieutenant deemed,
With Admirals the ocean teemed
Throughout his wide dominions.

And though they were knowing, some of them seem to have been past mark of mouth. Burgoyne writes, "Some are superannuated; others owe their preferment (and have no other pretensions to it) to family rank [1] and court intrigue; many have risen by gradual seniority, without faults, and without merits, whom it would be unjust to put by, yet whom the state can never employ for great purposes." He pays a high compliment to the Irish [2] "In the Austrian service many of the most distinguished characters will be found among men of Irish extraction; and in the lower ranks the army swarms with the offspring of the best Roman Catholic families of that country," and he regrets that the Roman Catholic Irish were not allowed to serve as officers in the British Army. In this he was far in advance of his time, for though it was winked at later on in the eighteenth century, it was not until about 1800 that Roman Catholics were admitted to the army with the cognizance of the Crown. In the old Half-Pay Lists at the Public Record Office there is an entry against many an officer's name: "Suspected Papist." Which means that a proved Papist could have drawn no half-pay.

[1] A Daniel come to judgment! (See page 14.)

[2] In the old days the Irish scrapped all over the continent. The Irish Brigade which fought for Louis XIV against William III made the odd stipulation that they should wear the English uniform and fight under the English flag. Which is very Irish, and therefore very difficult to understand.

Burgoyne also noted the horse-breeding studs for which Hungary has always been famous. And, practical soldier that he was, he gives details about "the caps made so as to let down and cover the ears and neck in inclement weather, and the Hungarian trousers and half-boots without stockings," the general object of the uniform being to "unite as much as possible lightness, warmth and ease." And yet, in later years, in spite of these notes, Burgoyne was destined to command in North America Brunswick troops who were, as regards uniform and equipment, about as fit for fighting in the thickly-wooded country there as the White Knight. He gives details about the Prussian infantry drill and shows great admiration for its simplicity. Later on this was introduced into the British Army by Dundas, who, from his attachment to it, was affectionately known as "Old Pivot." Burgoyne finds the Prussian cavalry indifferent, and he is very critical about the rank and file in general, many of whom are "strangers, deserters, prisoners and enemies of various countries, languages and religions."* As the King of Prussia had a royal weakness for kidnapping any one who looked a likely soldier, this is not astonishing. The result was, as Burgoyne points out, "Their army is more harassed with precautionary guards against their own soldiers deserting than against the enemy, and, after an unsuccessful action, the number missing usually trebles the number to be accounted for by death or capture." Not lost, in fact, but gone behind. He gives the King of Prussia full credit for his secrecy. "He is jealous of prying eyes in all his employments. If he means to manoeuvre ten thousand men in private, he shuts up a country as effectually as his palace." Poor Burgoyne! When he came down from Canada, not so much like "a wolf on the fold" as an invader whose march had been widely heralded as though by advance agents, he was to find how difficult it is to keep anything secret in the field, especially if there is a lady (or ladies) in the case.

His report on the French Army is mixed. He greatly admires their cavalry, though he notes that their horses are much inferior to British horses, and he also very shrewdly observes, "The Prussian severity of command together with the free use of the stick is very ill-suited to a nation where even in the lowest classes a blow is regarded as an irreparable disgrace." And no doubt this, in a minor way, helped toward the French Revolution. "Monsieur the Marquis," Charles Darnay's uncle, had, we may be pretty sure, been an officer in this army.

Lord Chatham, to whom Burgoyne's *Reflections and Observations*

*Whjch might be said of much of the German riffraff which let him down on the Hudson in 1777.

noting, as is natural, his own arm, cavalry, and whatever pertains to it, were sent, thanked him for them in very flattering terms. They are, in effect, the comments of a very keen if slightly pedantic soldier, always with a peculiar interest. They are what military attaches, or military observers as they used to be called, have covered reams and reams of paper with: sometimes these have been noted and acted on, more often pigeonholed and forgotten. The classic instance, in the latter class, is furnished by Colonel Stoffel, the Cassandra of the Second Empire. As French Military Attaché in Berlin from 1866 to 1870 he narrowly observed the Prussian Army and sent in to Paris detailed reports showing what a fine fighting machine was being put together across the Rhine. These were pigeonholed. Had any one dared to bring them to the notice of, and explain their significance to, the Emperor, Napoleon III could not but have realized that his army, though "ready to the last gaiter-button," as the French Field-Marshal rather vaingloriously put it, had as much chance of marching *à Berlin* as it had of marching to Timbuctoo. The moral is, Destroy all pigeonholes: they have ever been the curse of Ministries of War, as we shall see later in the case of "that man."

There is, by the way, a remarkable instance in the history of the United States Army. General Emory Upton, who died in 1881, wrote *The Military Policy of the United States,* which is now a military classic. "Yet his voice was as the voice of one crying in the Wilderness: the Government did not even print his Report, it was filed in Manuscript and forgotten among the millions of documents in the archives of the War Department." It was ultimately discovered and, thanks to the wisdom of Mr. Secretary Root, printed in 1903.

Horace Walpole never lost an opportunity of saying something unpleasant about Burgoyne, and now we come to the reason for the Horatian bitterness and backbiting. A nephew of his, Major Walpole, serving in Burgoyne's regiment we have already made his acquaintance—had applied to Lord Townshend, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, for the appointment of aide-de-camp. The matter was naturally referred to Burgoyne. He wrote to Lord Townshend a very honest letter. The Major was a slacker who had been on leave for a year. Burgoyne said "he could not help complaining aloud of the impropriety of his solicitations." He added, "If after this representation Major Walpole thinks proper to persevere in his application, I have only to hope that he may speedily find from your lordship's patronage a rank more worthy of his attention, and that an opening may be made in my regiment for a Major whose views of future preferment will rest upon a diligent discharge of a present trust." And Major Walpole probably said "Od rot

him," for Burgoyne's testimonial to him was pretty plain speaking, and unusual in an age when family influence was all-powerful.

In 1768, King George made Burgoyne governor of Fort William, North Britain, which added considerably to his income. He was now quite a figure in London, smiled on at Court, and a friend of Johnson's[1] friend, the great Sir Joshua Reynolds, who is said to have painted Burgoyne's portrait. Tom Taylor, Sir Joshua's biographer, says, "They must have been in the constant habit of meeting in the Green Room of Drury Lane, at the dinners of the Thursday Night CIub, [2] at the Star and Garter, at every place of amusement where the gay, the witty, and the well-bred of London gathered together." There have been two famous Star and Garters near London, one at Greenwich and one, more famous, on Richmond Hill. Sir Joshua had a villa almost next door to the latter. About 1890 this "villa," which means a good-sized house, was to let, and I remember being vastly pleased by the notice-board which described it as "Once the Property of the *late* Sir Joshua Reynolds."

But the Royal Borough of Richmond is full of strange bits of bygone history; you may, for example, see there The Original Maid of Honor Shop. Perhaps it should be explained that maids of honor are a kind of cheesecake and excessively good, even to those whose livers resent pastry. Visitors to Richmond who take any turning to the right from the crowded street which leads up to the picturesque old bridge will find themselves in a real Kate Greenaway Green which has, with its red-brick Queen Anne houses, so old-world an air that one would never be astonished to see there a Sir Plume, clouded cane and all, coquetting with some Lady Gay Spanker, all be-patched and be-powdered, and vastly obleeged and coquettish, bless her. Undoubtedly many ghosts must saunter there—if only one could meet them! And on the other side of Richmond Green, toward the river, there is still a bit left of Richmond Palace where Queen Elizabeth died. [3]

At the General Election of 1768 Colonel Burgoyne and Sir Henry Hoghton, Lord Derby's nominees, stood in the Whig interest for Preston, in opposition to Sir Peter Leicester and Sir Frank Standish—two

---

[1] Oddly enough there is no mention of Burgoyne in Boswell's *Johnson,* except a curious remark of Johnson's about the Convention of Saratoga, which I will quote when we get to Saratoga.

[2] Not Night-Club—probably much more cheerful than those dreary, if dissipated, haunts.

[3] She was born at Greenwich Palace, which fact impelled Doctor Johnson to write the lines:
Pleased with the spot which gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth.

delightful names which might have come straight out of some Sheridan comedy. It was a spirited election, Eatanswill had nothing on it. As Mr. Shaw so pleasantly says, Burgoyne literally fought it, a loaded pistol in each hand.There was much rioting, and an inhabitant of the town writing in March, 1768, said, "The contest here is attended with imminent danger, I have just escaped with many friends."

There are some interesting notes about this election in Lord Kenyon's Manuscripts, where it is noted, November 10, 1768, "This day was presented by Lord Strange the petition of Sir Henry Hoghton and Col. Burgoyne, complaining of a false return and partiality in the late election for Preston. There is another petition from the inhabitants setting forth that they were rejected by the Mayor. . . . Col. Burgoyne gives out that he hath engaged Government on his side and is sure of success." On March twenty-fourth of the following year we read, "Yesterday the information against Burgoyne came on at six o'clock in the morning and lasted
thirteen hours, when Burgoyne and several others of the defendants were found guilty. . . . An indictment was tried at Lancaster against one of Burgoyne's mobbers for plundering Jackson, the linen-draper's house, and forcing him to deliver up his money on his knees." And finally on May ninth of the same year we are told, "This morning Sir Joseph Yates, after a very pathetic and proper speech, wherein he laid it on very hard upon the Colonel, pronounced the judgment of the Court, viz., fined Burgoyne £1,000, but no imprisonment, and the fine was paid in Court." Others were fined one hundred pounds and given three months' imprisonment and "the three sergeants and drummers six months imprisonment, but no fine, being poor." The writer adds, "I do think they should have sent the Colonel to keep Mr. Wilkes [1] company as well as the rest, and then everybody would have been satisfied; most people think that part was wanting to make the sentence complete."

The mystery man of the age, the Man in the Literary Mask, Junius, got hold of this and made great play with it. He attacked the Duke of Grafton [2] and charged him with having given Burgoyne three thousand five hundred pounds "to re-imburse him for that fine of £1,000," and went on to charge "the noble Colonel with unfair play in the gaming-

[1] Jack Wilkes, the demagogue. We shall meet him again later.

[2] Grafton rather laid himself open to attack. He had the amiable but indiscreet weakness of taking his *chère arnie* (Fanny Parsons) to the Opera when it was known that the Queen would be present. And when there was a race-meeting at Newmarket, despatch-boxes could wait, he had better business to despatch. "He thought the World should be postponed to a Whore and a Horse-race." Very flattering for *cette dame,*

houses and with watching with the soberest attention for a fair opportunity of engaging a drunken young nobleman at piquet." Even Horace Walpole remonstrated against this—not that a young nobleman should have got drunk, for in this age that was their nightly custom, but that Burgoyne should have been accused of foul play. Horry says, "Junius was thought unjust, as Burgoyne was never supposed to do more than play very well." Burgoyne himself, when some one brought this charge up against him in the House of Commons, said, "If the wretch Junius is now lurking here in any corner of the House, I would tell him to his face that he was an assassin, a liar and a coward." In his day, of course, Junius "intrigued," to use a modern cant-word, his contemporaries as much as Fiona Macleod did the last generation, and the authoress of *The Young Visiters* did the present. And, of the three, one would very much rather read *The Young Visiters.* Procurio will, it is to be hoped, live forever, while Junius will be of no interest to any one save to the Dryasdusts who arise in every age and write enormous tomes proving that Shakespeare could have spelled his name in thirty-six different ways—what a trial he would have been nowadays to his banker—and that the *Iliad* was not written by Homer but by "somebody else of the same name." You can see them at work doing this any day in the Reading Room at the British Museum.

In the House of Commons Burgoyne appears to have been a bit of a free-lance. He voted according to his conscience, which, on occasion, King George thought "so extraordinary" that I almost imagine it was a mistake. We heard of the Falkland Islands in 1916. Their previous, and only important, mention in the history books was in 1770. A Spanish admiral had descended on them, driven out the English garrison and "taken the rudder off the only English vessel in the harbour." [1] It was some months before the Spanish Government made a very grudging, half-hearted apology. This made Burgoyne's blood boil and he said in the House, "Spain gave fifteen minutes to an officer to evacuate a garrison; Great Britain slept four months after the insult. It has been the fashion to maintain (I have seen it in print and I have heard it in conversation) that military men were prejudiced judges in questions of this nature. Sir, I disdain the idea, and denounce it in the name of my profession. The man who would wantonly promote bloodshed, who upon private views of advantage or ambition would involve Europe in war, would be a promoter of ferocity—a disgrace to his profession, to his country, and to human nature. But there are motives for which a soldier may wish for war; these

[1] A Captain Walsingham said in the debate that "if the Spanish admiral had attempted to remove the rudder from a ship of his, he would have thought it his duty to knock his head off."

are sense of satisfaction due for an injury inflicted; a desire to make a return to our country for the honours and rewards we receive at her hands; a zeal to be the forward instrument to battle for the honour of the Crown, and the rights of the people of Great Britain." This is very eloquent, of course, but I think I prefer the breeziness of the sailor, Captain Walsingham; the Navy has a habit of putting things in a nutshell.

In 1771 Burgoyne voted for the Royal Marriage Act, [1] which later on, was to prove poor Mrs. Fitzherbert's undoing on her marriage with that punch-drinking rascal Prinny, better known as the Prince Regent and the "First Gentleman in Europe." It is odd to read that George III wrote to Lord North, "Had Burgoyne failed to do so, I should have felt myself obliged to name a new Governor for Fort William."

We next find him as an authority on that dreary subject Economics, or Political Economy, as this "dismal science" used to be called. The East India Company had been getting into debt. Burgoyne, who had often had a similar experience, wrote in the most sensible and Micawberish manner upon this: "It is impossible to produce anything out of nothing: the Company have no money, and therefore it is impossible that they should pay any of their creditors." One can not help thinking that this is an echo of some letter which, in earlier days, he may have sent on his own behalf to some Mr. Moses Shentpershent of the period. He is very modern in his phraseology. He says of one scheme which had been put forward to assist the company: "What a noble harvest would such a scheme produce for the Bulls and the Bears, and what a crop of ruin for those who were not perfectly in the secret." And he goes on with a warning to North. "A Minister who would be concerned in a business of this sort would deserve to be hanged, and I am confident that if Lord North thinks of it at all, it is from his not being at all acquainted with the ways of 'Change Alley.' "

These were the days of shaking the pagoda tree and returning from Hindoostan with lacs and lacs of rupees, and ivory, apes and peacocks and all the rest of it. Burgoyne does not spare John Company and alludes caustically to "the rapacity of their servants abroad and the knavery of the directors at home." "Knaves" and "Directors" coupled together! We have indeed advanced far in the last hundred and fifty years: such a concatenation is, of course, impossible nowadays. In April, 1772, Burgoyne moved for a Select Committee to Inquire into the Affairs of the

---

[1] George III himself was said at the time, by gossips, to have secretly married a pretty little Quakeress, Hannah Lightfoot. He also had a great admiration for Lady Sarah Lennox, later mother of the Napier soldiers. He wanted to get married, since, as he told Lord Bate, "his passions were similar to those of other young men."

East India Company. He made a spirited speech: the "honour of the nation"— honor ever came first in Burgoyne's eyes—asked for it; the servants of the company had misconducted themselves; its affairs were "huddled together in one promiscuous tumult and confusion" and his peroration, in spite of its eighteenth-century pomposity, has really a fine appeal to humanity: "The fate of a great portion of the globe, the fate of great States in which your own is involved, the distresses of fifteen millions of people are involved in this question. Good God! What a call! The native of Hindoostan, born a slave—his neck bent from the very cradle to the yoke—by birth, by education, by climate, by religion, a patient, submissive, willing subject to Eastern despotism, first begins to feel, first shakes his chains, for the first time complains under the pre-eminence of British tyranny!" This ended in 1773 with the impeachment of Clive. As Macaulay puts it: "Burgoyne, a man of wit, fashion and honour, an agreeable dramatic writer, an officer whose courage was never questioned and whose skill at that time was highly esteemed, appeared as the accuser." Clive made a spirited and humorous defense. He complained that he had been "examined by the Select Committee more like a sheep-stealer than a Member of this House." He added: "I am sure, Sir, if I had any sore places about me, they would have been found: they have probed to the bottom: no lenient plasters have been applied to heal: no, Sir, they were all of the blister kind, prepared with Spanish flies and other provocatives." He ended by suggesting that "as the heads upon Temple Bar had tumbled down, Jacobitism having apparently come to an end, [1] his head should be put upon the middle pole and should have as 'supporters' on either side those of the late Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the India Company." "The House," says the Parliamentary History, "burst out into applause and remained in a fit of laughter for nearly ten minutes."

But not long afterward Clive committed suicide. [2] And Burgoyne was soon to set out upon that Great Adventure which ended in the death of his military reputation, and which was to cause him more bitterness than Clive ever felt.

[1] Temple Luttrell jocularly said in the House that Bute, "that mighty Northern Thane," had had them taken down and kept as honored relics "in an interior cabinet." These heads, which included that of the old villain Simon Lovat, gave rise to Goldsmith's famous witticism. He and Johnson had been in Westminster Abbey and when they were in Poets' Corner, Johnson, pointing to the great names all round them, quoted the lines:
Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.
From the Abbey they "took a stroll down Fleet Street." (Which words, by the way, Johnson never used: they were put in his mouth by the late George Augustus Sala.) When they reached Temple Bar, "Goldy," pointing to the heads there, slyly repeated the quotation:
Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

[2] Had he lived he would in all probability have been sent to North America. He might perhaps have been as successful a general there as he was in Hindoostan.