

## September Anniversary.



THE LORDS AND COMMONS AT WHITEHALL DECLARE THE THRONE VACANT BY THE FLIGHT OF JAMES.

## ABDICATION OF JAMES II.

In the death of James the Second, which occurred at St. Germain's on the 16th September, 1701, it has been truly said that "Britain was happily delivered from the perverse and incurable dynasty of the Stuarts." James was a weak and narrow minded bigot, with a cold and ungenerous temper, and from the time he ascended the throne, seems to have acted with a steady determination to render himself absolute, and to proceed by every direct and indirect means to overthrow the established church. But these innovations in religion and government gradually united opposing interests, and a large body of the nobility and gentry concurred in an application to the Prince of Orange. All confidence being destroyed between the King and the people, it became an easy and safe invasion, and James was compelled to seek safety by flight on the night of the 13th of December, 1688. He crossed the Thames at Lambeth, and made his way with all speed to Feversham, where he embarked in a Custom-house hoy. It blowing a strong gale at the time, the master of the little vessel wanting more ballast, ran into the western end of the Isle of Sheppy, where the people seized the disguised King as a *fugitive Jesuit*, treating him with proportionable rudeness, and carried him back a prisoner to Feversham. Then he made himself known; and told the rabble, who had been calling him "a hatchet-faced Jesuit," that he was their King, procured pen, ink, and paper, wrote a note to Lord Winchilsea, the Lieutenant of the county, who hastened to him to rescue him out of the rude hands of that rabble rout of fishermen, sailors, and smugglers, who took his money, but refused to let him go. Never, perhaps, did a fallen despot present so miserable a spectacle. His mind was a complete wreck: he told the mob that the Prince of Orange was seeking his life, and he screamed for a boat! a boat! that he might escape. When he was conducted by Lord Winchilsea from the public house to a private house in the town, he fell a weeping, and deplored his great misfortune in losing a piece of the wood of the true cross, which had belonged to Edward the Confessor. On the night of the 23rd of December he rose from his bed, dressed himself, and, with his natural son, the Duke of Berwick, and two or three servants, walked down to the beach and put off in an open boat. On the following morning he reached a fishing smack which had been hired for the voyage, and, passing the guard-ships at the Nore without molestation or challenge, he landed on the morning of the 25th, at the small town of Ambletuse.

James was enabled in March, 1689, to make an attempt for the recovery of Ireland. The battle of Boyne, fought in June 1690, compelled him to return to France. All succeeding projects for his restoration proved equally abortive, and, on the 25th of December the lords spiritual and temporal, to the number of about ninety, who had taken their places in the House of Lords, requested William to take upon him the administration of affairs and the disposal of the public revenue

and to issue writs for a "Convention" to meet on the 22nd of January; and on the following day an assembly of such persons as had sat in Parliament in the reign of Charles II., to the number of about a hundred and fifty, together with the Aldermen of London and fifty of the Common Council, having met at St. James's pursuant to the desire of the prince, immediately proceeded to the Commons' House, and there agreed upon an address similar to that of the Lords. The prince despatched circular letters, accordingly, to the several counties, universities, cities, and boroughs; and in the meantime the country, the fleet, and all that remained of James's army, submitted quietly to his authority. In Ireland it was very different; but in Scotland men were as prompt in their obedience as in England.

The two Houses then adjourned to the 28th, on which day the Commons, having re-assembled, resolved themselves into a Committee of the whole House to take into consideration the state of the nation. Mr. Hampden was in the chair. Dolben, son of the late Archbishop of York, "was the bold man who first broke the ice, and made a long speech tending to prove that the King's deserting his kingdom without appointing any person to administer the government, amounted, in reason and judgment of law, to a demise." This opinion was taken up and defended by several other members. The Tories, including Sir Edward Seymour, who had been one of the first to join the Prince of Orange, made a vain effort to procure an adjournment; and the Committee, after a stormy debate of many hours, voted the resolution—"That King James II., having endeavoured to subvert the constitution by breaking the original contract between king and people, and, by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons, having violated the fundamental laws, and withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, has *abdicated* the Government, and that the throne is thereby become vacant." Mr. Hampden was ordered to carry up this resolution to the Lords, and to request their concurrence, which they finally gave on the 12th of February. The penances and mortifications to which James subjected himself hastened his end, and he had been dying all the summer of 1701. On Friday, the 2nd of Sept., a few days before the conclusion of the grand alliance, he was seized with a fainting fit in the chapel of the palace of St. Germain. He was pretty well the next day, but on Sunday he fell into another fit and lay for some time without life or motion. James lingered till the following Friday, the 16th of September, and then expired in the 67th year of his age. His body lay exposed four-and-twenty hours in the midst of priests and monks, who sang the office for the dead all the night through, and in the morning celebrated masses at two altars erected in the room. The body was deposited in the church of the English Benedictine monks in Paris, there to remain "till it should please God to dispose of the people of England to repair, in some measure, the injuries they did him in his life, by the honours they should think fit to show him after his death."