

November Anniversary.



ANNIVERSARY OF THE LANDING OF THE PRINCE OF ORANGE, AT TORBAY, NOV. 5, 1688.

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THE Fifth of November has a two-fold interest in our calendar, it being the anniversary of two of the most important events in our history—the discovery of “the Gunpowder Plot” in 1605, and “the Revolution” in 1688. The latter we have selected for our present illustration.

In 1688, the disgraceful acts of James II., having placed the country in a position of great difficulty, the heads of the several parties in the state joined in applying to James's son-in-law, William, Prince of Orange, for his assistance to save the public liberties; and he, at last, made up his mind to comply with their solicitations; and having arranged his preparations with consummate skill, he sailed from Holland with an army of about 14,000 men, composed partly of Dutch troops, and partly of English regiments in the service of the States, and landed at Torbay, on the coast of Devonshire, on Nov. 5, 1688. On the 8th he made a public entry into Exeter, where he remained for some days before any of the principal people of the country joined him; on the 21st he quitted Exeter on his march to London. On December 18th, the Prince, arrived with his army in London. Thus, with unparalleled ease and rapidity, was that unenviable and bloodless revolution effected, which changed the Royal line, and firmly established the Constitution of these realms.

William III. of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and King of England, was born at the Hague, in 1650. He was the son of William, Prince of Orange, and of Henrietta Maria, daughter of Charles I. He married the Princess Mary, daughter of James I. Duke of York; and succeeded to the stadtholdership in 1672; and was crowned with Mary, April 11, 1689. The year following William went to Ireland, where he defeated James at the battle of the Boyne. In 1691 he headed the confederated army in the Netherlands; took Namur in 1695; and in 1697 he was acknowledged King of England by the treaty of Ryswick. On the death of Mary, 1693, the Parliament confirmed to him the Royal title. His death was accelerated by an injury he had sustained in a fall from his horse.

The good Bishop Burnet being present, thus describes “the last scene of all” in the eventful life of this great Prince:—“The King's strength and pulse were still sinking as the difficulty of breathing increased, so that no hope was left. The Archbishop of Canterbury and I went to him on Saturday morning, and did not stir from him till he died. The Archbishop prayed on Saturday some time with him, but he was then so weak, that he could scarce speak, but gave him his hand, as a sign that he firmly believed the truth of the Christian religion, and said he intended to receive the sacrament. His reason and all his senses were entire to the last minute. About five in the morning he desired the sacrament. When this was done, he called for the Earl of Albemarle, and gave him a charge to take care of his papers. He thanked M. Auverquerque (or Overkirk) for his long and faithful services. He took leave of the Duke of Ormond, and called for the Earl

of Portland; but before he came his voice quite failed; so he took him by the hand, and carried it to his heart with great tenderness. He was often looking up to heaven, in many short ejaculations. Between seven and eight o'clock the rattle began; the commendatory prayer was said for him, and, as it ended, he died (on Sunday, the 8th of March), in the fifty-second year of his age, having reigned thirteen years and a few days.

“Perfection is not to be expected in a sovereign until the realization of the dreams of the Fifth-monarchy men: both as a sovereign and as a man William had faults and weaknesses and unamiable qualities; although these have all been grossly exaggerated by zealots of various and most opposite parties, the high churchmen detesting him on account of his indifference to the forms of church government, and both high and low on account of his toleration; the Jacobites heaping obloquy upon his name, because he practically upset the theory of the divine right of Kings; the Tories because he naturally preferred the Whigs, who had most contributed to his promotion; and the Republicans, then and in all subsequent times, because he did not try again the experiment which had been tried, and which had signally failed—because he was not his own opposite, a De Witt, and a Republican,—a sort of character which, rightly or wrongly, was then reproached by the vast mass of the nation, and which could no more have achieved the Revolution of 1688 than it could have changed and reformed the dynasty of the Celestial Empire. But William III. was the first of our rulers that really solved the problem of constitutional monarchy; and since his solution of that problem the duties of our princes have been easy and natural. Before his time all was riddle and uncertainty, and the constitution not understood, because it had never properly been put into practice. If now and then he stumbled, it should be remembered that what to after sovereigns has been a plain, broad, and beaten path, was then an unexplored and dark passage, where nearly every step was an experiment. Our admiration of the ability, and the real genius in state affairs, of this illustrious Prince, must rise to the highest pitch if we look closely into the complicated nature and surpassing difficulties of his situation. A stadtholder in Holland with Republic forms—a King in England and Scotland, with constitutions which had never properly been defined—the ruler, in fact, of the Dutch, the English, the Scotch, and the Irish, who had all separate interests, jealousies, and animosities;—compelled, by the very constitution which he called into life or efficacy, to trust Ministers whom there was no trusting with safety,—engaged at the same time in an almost uninterrupted war with the greatest power in Europe, or undermined by the intrigues of that power, which was even more formidable in diplomacy than in arms,—and all this with a frail state of body!—We confess that, all these circumstances considered, we are lost in wonder as to the result, and disposed to give William III. by far the foremost place of all the sovereigns that have ever worn the English crown.”