

A POLITICAL BALLAD OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY THE EDITOR.

The luck of the auction-room recently placed in the hands of the present writer an extremely fine copy of Browne Willis's "History and Antiquities of the Town, Hundred, and Deanery of Buckingham," 1755. The copy is an "association copy," and will be described with its contents on another occasion; amongst the miscellaneous items of interest bound up with it is a ballad, printed in 1679 on paper which measures 14 by 10 inches. Gough states¹ that there are three copies in the Bodleian, one of them belonged to Browne Willis, who has written at the foot of it, "The Ballard was made Ao 1679 by Charles Blount, Esqr., who wrote several Bad Books." Gough adds that "being thwarted in an attempt to marry his deceased wife's sister, he shot himself and died *felo de se*, 1693."²

The Borough returned two members to Parliament, they were elected by the Bailiff or Mayor and twelve Aldermen only. In 1678 there had been a "double return;" by the first election the members were Edward, Lord Latimer and Sir Richard Temple, Bart. Lord Latimer was the son of Sir Thomas Osborne, successively created Earl of Danby, Marquis of Carmarthen, and Duke of Leeds, of whom more will be said presently; he married Elizabeth, daughter of Simon Bennett, of Beachampton, as is mentioned on the monument to the last-named in Beachampton Church; Lord Latimer died in 1689.

¹ "Bibliotheca Buckinghamiensis," p. 25.

² This is the same Charles Blount as is mentioned in the D.N.B. He is there said to be the son of Sir Henry Blount, and the author of free-thinking books, political papers, and tracts. His date (1654—1693) makes it possible for him to be the writer of the ballad.

Sir Richard Temple was the first builder of Stowe House, and father of that Sir Richard Temple who closed a distinguished career in 1749 as Viscount Cobham.

By the second election in 1678 the members returned were Lord Latimer again and Sir Peter Tyrrell, or Terrill, Bart. Sir Peter was the second son of Sir Thomas Tyrrell by his first wife, who was widow of Richard Grenville; Sir Thomas, who was M.P. for Aylesbury, 1659-1660, was a judge, and himself the son of Sir Edward Tyrrell, of Thornton. Sir Thomas died at Castlethorpe, where there is an elaborate monument to his memory in the church. Sir Peter was made a baronet in 1665, and married the granddaughter of no less a person than Sir Walter Raleigh.³

In 1679 there was another Parliament, to which Lord Latimer was again returned, but this time Sir Richard Temple regained his seat and Sir Peter Tyrrell was displaced. This was the occasion of the ballad, which, to put it mildly, is conceived in an anti-Temple spirit, and filled with the "No Popery" allusion which might be expected at a time when Oates's "Plot" was much in men's mouths. The ballad alludes to that strange man, Lord Latimer's father, who was said by Macaulay to have been "interested and dishonest, but by no means destitute of abilities or of judgment." Under the influence of George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, Thomas Osborne became joint treasurer of the Navy in 1668, and Lord High Treasurer of England in 1673; in this position he "endeavoured to keep the House of Commons in subjection by a liberal administration of bribes." He was "greedy of wealth and honours, corrupt himself, and a corrupter of others."⁴ In such a position he necessarily made many enemies, who suggested that he was in league with Oates; they "charged him directly with encouraging the alleged conspiracy," and Osborne (who had been created Earl of Danby, by which title he is generally

³ Lipscomb, vol. IV., p. 90.

⁴ Dict. Nat. Biog., where see an elaborate Life by Sir Sidney Lee.

known) resigned on Lady-day, 1679. Though not actually impeached he spent the next five years in the Tower, and "many pamphlets issued in 1679 and 1680 asserted that Oates had revealed the Popish Plot to Danby." As a matter of fact Danby's Protestantism appears to have been about the most sincere thing about him, and he was able to assist William III. and Mary considerably, eventually dying, in 1711, as Duke of Leeds.

With this brief survey of the political characters involved we will now proceed to the ballad, which for personal venom and grossness of expression is well up to the seventeenth century standard. Those who deplore the introduction of personal attacks in modern elections may observe how faint are the highest flights to-day in comparison with these bitter lines, though to speak truly their rancour is more directed against the chief elector, in the person of his worship the Bailiff, than against the elected.

THE SALE OF ESAU'S BIRTH-RIGHT;
OR
THE NEW BUCKINGHAM BALLAD,

To the tune of the *London Gentlewoman*, or
Little Peggey Ramsey.

A wondrous Tale I will relate,
The like was never told you,
Of English men that England hate,
The Town of Bucks has sold you.

To serve in Parliament they chose
Two men I fear to name them;
For if I did, you would suppose
I told a Lye to shame them.

That Beef and Ale should yet prevail
You need no longer wonder;
For men of wit must still submit
To Fools of greater number.

The D——, the Pope, and Tyranny,
 Need never fear a Down-fall,
 For Tiege⁵ and Wakeman⁶ both would be
 Elected for a Town-hall.

These loyal men of Buckingham
 (True only to their Purses)
 Would sell the Crown t' enrich the Town
 And laugh at all your curses.

When they have sinn'd and damn'd their souls,
 Or to the Devil gave them,
 Their friend the Pope in him they hope,
 Well knowing he can save them.

If Sc——s' would take off Oates's head,
 He need not fear succeeding;
 But send him down unto this Town,
 He soon might see him bleeding.

Of thirteen men there are but Six
 Who do not merit Hemp well,
 The other seven play their Tricks
 For L——⁸ and T——.

The Father is a Reprobate,
 And yet the Son's elected;
 The Gawdy youth comes down in State,
 And must not be rejected.

⁵ Could this refer to Dr. Israel Tonge, rector of St. Michael, Wood Street, and associated with Oates in the hatching of the Plot? He was said to be "an honest, half-crazy man."

⁶ Presumably this is Sir George Wakeman, the Queen's physician, accused by Oates of attempting to poison the King. Wakeman was indicted for high treason at the Old Bailey on 18 July, 1679, the case being tried by Lord Chief Justice Scroggs; he was acquitted. Only the virulence of party-feeling could make both Tonge and Wakeman to be held up as wicked Papists.

⁷ Sir William Scroggs, Lord Chief Justice, had the distinction, according to the Enc. Brit., of being "the worst of the judges who disgraced the English bench when it had sunk to the lowest degradation."

⁸ These blanks obviously require the names of Latimer and Temple; the "father" in the next Stanza is Lord Danby.

Our prating Knight doth owe his Call
 To Timber, and his Lady,
 Though one goes longer with Town-hall
 Then t'other with her baby.

These men do to their choosing trudge
 With all the speed that can be,
 And make the son the father's Judge,
 To save great Tom of D——⁹

The Bailiff¹⁰ is so mad a Spark
 (Though lives by tanning Leather)
 That for a load of Temple's Bark
 He'd sacrifice his Father.

His Horns do shine, his Wife kept fine,
 All men would blame him had he
 Not made him stand, whose helping hand
 Must make him be a Daddy—

He huffs and rants, and calls to Hall,
 But will not give men warning;
 When drunk o're night, he takes delight
 To play the Rogue i' th' morning.

Next comes the Barber, who will do
 Whatever you desire him;
 He for a groat, will cut your Throat,
 A Lowsie, perjur'd hireling.

God damn and rot his Arm, he cries,
 And swears like any Lover,
 For to be true, to three in two,
 Poor Judas younger Brother.

Of late he huff'd and drank with Lords,
 But since a sad Disaster
 Hath summon'd him to Wash and Trim,
 A Rev'rend Owl his Master.

⁹ This alludes to the threatened impeachment of Danby by Parliament.

¹⁰ George Dancer was Bailiff (or Mayor) in 1679. The notes printed in the original at the end of the ballad show that six voted on either side, so that presumably Dancer gave a casting vote for Latimer and Temple.

Another he hath kiss'd a hand,
Which puts him in a Rapture;
So have I known a Miss o' th' Town
Adore the Fopp that clapt her.

Since kissing hands can so prevail,
There's no man need want Riches;
If they'l be kind, and come behind,
They're welcome to our Breeches.

Thus Buckingham hath led the way
To Popery and sorrow;
Those seven Knaves who make us slaves,
Would sell their God to-morrow.

A list of those who voted for their King and
Country, Protestant Religion, and Sir P—— T——¹¹

Mr. ROGERS, Draper.	Mr. EVERSAY, Draper.
Mr. BROWN, Gent.	Mr. ROBINSON, Laceman.
Mr. MASON, Apothecary.	Mr. WALTER ARNOT, Ironmonger.

Honest men and True, be not weary of Well-doing.

Mr. WILLIAM HARTLY was absent at the Election,
nor was there any need of his company.

Those who Voted for the L—— L——, for the E. of
D——, for Popery, and for their Town-hall.

GEORGE DANCER, Tanner	HENRY HAYWARD, Knight and Bayliff. of the Post, and Shaver
THOMAS SHEEN, Farmer.	to her Excellency
PELHAM SANDWELL, Maulster.	Madge Owlet. STEVENS, Maulster.
	GEORGE CARTER, Baker.

Good Lord, deliver us from.

Those who voted for Sir R. T., his Timber, Chimney-
money and Court, were the same with L.L.'s not
worth—

 *The Charter of this Town was given them by
Queen Mary for their good services in the propagation
of Popery; therefore (to give the Devil his due) they are
but true to the old Cause.*

¹¹ The blanks are filled (in seventeenth century writing) with
the names of Philip Tyrrell; this is a slip for "Peter," as there
was no baronet of this creation named Philip.

In the tenth verse is an allusion to the promise of timber for building a new Town Hall; there is a certain amount of confirmation for this contained in a single sheet printed on both sides with the title: "A mild but Searching Expostulatory Letter from the Poor and Plaindealing Farmers of the Neighbouring Villages to the Men of Buckingham," a copy of this is in our Society's library. This is a strong attack upon Temple, who is called "Sir Timber Temple;" the following extracts bear on the subject of the ballad:

"Is he not now notorious to the English world by the name of Sir Timber? and if you ask him who gave him that name, must he not answer, That either yourselves, or Legion, who was his Godfather For did he not once make you a bribing Present of Timber to rebuild your Town-house which vanisht all away by the Magick Art of the same Devil that brought it? was he so great a knave to cheat you once, and not you greater Fools to be cheated twice. . . ."

"You are a pack of villains, for whom the Gallows hath long groan'd; and that fatal Tree at your Town's end must be for ever barren till you become its fruit; your Rottenness has made you ripe for Hanging. We shall confess you have made a Choice to some purpose when you have hew'd out a substantial pair of gallows out of your own Timber, and you and your Brethren shall be pleased to take a swing or two under its shade."

At the end comes a "Postscript," which deals closely with our ballad:

"Mr. Bailiff, we have sent you enclosed the New BUCKINGHAM BALLAD which you may do well to cause to be read in your Town Hall. Sir Timber Temple presents his humble service to your Lady (she knows the meaning of it), and so would we to Nitty Barber, your Brother, but that we owe him none, and have little enough to pay where it is due."

There is something which purports to explain all this in the MSS. History of Buckingham compiled by the Rev. Thos. Silvester, curate of Buckingham, 1829, now contained in our Society's library (269/11). In Book A, page 90, is the following story:—"It appears that the Corporation, before they became the servants of the Temple family, were not perfectly immaculate or insensible of kind acts and public presents, and at the dissolution of the convention which brought in King Charles they promised Sir Richard Temple and

Sir Wm. Smith to elect them their representatives in the next Parliament. But the Duke of Buckingham (George Villiers) prevailed upon Sir Richard to use his influence and bring in as his coadjutor his secretary, Mr. Matthew Clifford. This induced Sir William to ask Mr. John Dormer, of Lee, to join him against them, but finding their interest too weak they tried by several acts to draw off the electors from Sir Richard's interest; among other means they stated that the town was much in want of a Town-hall and suffered great inconvenience in not having such a public building, and they each offered to give £300 towards erecting one. On this offer being made the Bailiff and Burgesses expressed a wish to Sir Richard that he and his colleague should do the same. Finding they should lose their interest in the Borough without complying, and having only six promises and Mr. Dormer five, no means were to be lost to gain the other two. Therefore Sir Richard's friends, though much against his inclination, were induced to comply, and took the work out of their opponents' hands, and to show that they were in earnest immediately bought £40 worth of timber and brought it to the spot, and promised that Sir Richard should be at half the expense of the building. This as may be supposed secured his return, and Sir William taking umbridge Sir Ralph Verney was elected in his stead, and the building was afterwards compleated at the expense of these two representatives."¹²

There is something obscure in this story as Sir Richard Temple and Sir Ralph Verney were elected in 1680, and both the ballad and the "Mild but Searching Letter" must have referred to the 1679 election, because Temple and Latimer were returned at that

¹² This story is quoted by the Rev. H. Roundell ("Some Account of Buckingham; a lecture read 27 January, 1857"), specifically from the Silvester MSS. It is also alluded to by Mr. J. T. Harrison, who evidently did not altogether believe it,

time, and because Dancer was certainly Bailiff in that year. One is inclined to think that there must have been something at the bottom of it all, and that probably Temple made a promise of timber in the 1678 election, but had not fulfilled it by the time the 1679 election was "fought;" for the sake of his word, even at the cost of corruption, perhaps he had carried it out by the time the 1680 return to Parliament took place. Silvester's mention of timber of a specific value suggests that he had some evidence on which to base his story.