

# On the Civil War in Somerset.

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BY EMANUEL GREEN.

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WHEN writing for a County Society with an endeavour to localize a subject which has also a national interest, it must be assumed that Members will have already acquired a knowledge of its general history, as affecting the nation, or will seek it where it may be found. The shortest possible introduction therefore just to connect the narrative is all that can be given here.

Charles I ascended the throne in 1625, but attempting to govern the nation in an arbitrary manner, was opposed by several parliaments, and at length from 1629 to 1640 proceeded to reign and govern uncontrolled. During this interval of eleven years, the taxes, imposed by his sole authority were most oppressive and distasteful, causing much discontent, and producing a general ill feeling throughout the kingdom. On the 3rd April, 1640, Parliament again assembled, but being refractory was dissolved in May. The king presently found it necessary, however disagreeable it might be, to call another, and consequently a new House met on the 3rd November, in the same year.

This Parliament was equally determined to continue the  
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opposition to the king and to assert its own prerogative. As a step to this end an act was passed by which it was not to be dissolved, except with its own consent, to which the king felt himself obliged to agree, thus creating a second permanent power, strongly opposed to his own, which eventually dethroned him and "reigned in his stead."

To trace the events connected with this struggle between the king and the parliament as far as they concern the County of Somerset, is the object of the present story. The members returned at this election (Nov. 1640) for Somersetshire were for the

## COUNTY.

John Paulet, Knt.

John Stowell, K.B.

## BATH.

William Basset, Esq.

Alexander Popham, Esq.

## WELLS.

Ralph Hopton, K.B.

Edward Rodney, Knt.

## TAUNTON.

William Portman, Bart.

George Searle, Esq.\*

## BRIDGWATER.

Peter (? Thos.) Wroth, Knt.

Edmund Windham, Esq.

## MINEHEAD.

Francis Popham, Knt.

Alexander Lutterell, Gent.

## ILCHESTER.

Sir Henry Berkley

Robert Hunt, Esq.

## MILBORNE PORT.

Edward Kirton, Esq.

John Digby, Esq.

Clearly with the object of removing a member likely to support the king, and thus hinder the intentions of the House, on the 21st January, 1641, Mr. Windham was deprived of his seat as being a monopoliser and projector, and a new writ was issued for Bridgwater.† At the new election Mr. Thomas Smith was returned in his place.

Mr. Windham was not allowed to rest, on the 30th October in the same year, he was "sent for" as a delin-

\* A Catalogue of the Knights, Burgesses, &c., 1640.

† Commons' Journal, Vol. 2.

quent, an order occasioned by his connection with the soap monopoly, a source of much trouble and discontent at the time. One of the members for Ilchester too, was objectionable; on 15th February, 1641, using as an excuse that "due notice had not been given to the electors" a new writ was issued and Sir Henry Berkley, who presently appears as a staunch royalist, was removed, Mr. Edward Phillips, replacing him. Mr. Hunt was re-elected.

Two great sources of grievance were now put forward, the first relating to church matters, caused by the haughty pride of a political clergy, who enjoyed a lucrative and easy monopoly; the prominent and judicial position assumed by the bishops and the innovations introduced, under the direction of Archbishop Laud of Canterbury, into the conduct of the Church Services and which we know in these days as ritualistic, and the further believed intention of the king with the connivance of the bishops and urged by the queen (a papist) to introduce popery as the national faith. Many events occurred relating to this question, which are both interesting and amusing, but they may fairly be dealt with as a separate history.

The second grievance was that of the civil government, and with it a stubborn difficulty, the management of the militia or trained bands. To this last and the events resulting therefrom as connected with our county, attention will be entirely directed. The Parliament believing that the king intended, could he get money, to embody this force and use it to strengthen his own power, assumed the right to nominate the lords lieutenant of counties, and of placing the militia under the orders of such nominees, and also appointing for officers, gentlemen of their own party or as they expressed it "those in whom they could confide."

This conduct of the House irritated the king and caused him to take a step which was never pardoned. Persuaded by the queen, he went personally to the Parliament to impeach five active members of high treason, but they were advised of his intention and took refuge in the city. Their chambers however were searched, their trunks broken open and ransacked for papers to criminate them.

Two, of these five, were Somerset men, though both represented places in Devonshire. John Pym, member for Tavistock, who died in 1643, having by his writings and actions made himself famous and respected; and William Strode, who elected both by Tamworth and Beeralston, chose the latter, probably as being in Devon, a county with which he was closely connected, he had been already for several years politically prominent and will be found continuing so on behalf of the parliament until his death in 1645, when he was honoured with a public funeral and the attendance of both Houses, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the body of Mr. Pym. He has been called by an opponent "one of the fiercest men of his party, and of his party only for his fierceness."\* Although presently engaged in raising forces in Somerset on behalf of the Parliament, he does not appear to have taken any military status, but after the first difficulties were overcome, to have acted the civilian as one of the committee in the county, or to have been occupied with parliamentary duties in London.

Some time after this attempted arrest he made a speech in reply to the articles of impeachment which were issued against him, "in which he cleared himself of the same," asking for a speedy trial to which he was willing to submit and "wishing and praying with all his heart that the

\* Clarendon's History of Rebellion.

Parliament may go on with courage and cheerfulness to settle all things aright both in Church and State, for the government thereof in perpetual peace and tranquillity.”\*

The House now took high offence at this breach of their privileges, and drew up a strongly worded “declaration” of their view of the king’s conduct, and Sir Ralph Hopton (member for Wells) objected to some expressions in it as not being sufficiently respectful to be used to a king and stated “that they seemed to ground an opinion of the king’s apostacy upon a less evidence than would serve to hang a fellow for stealing a horse.” For this speech he was committed to the tower for “laying an imputation upon the committee which had drawn up the declaration,” but after he was imprisoned it was thought advisable to modify the language used.†

The Parliament, as already noticed was now permanent, and it was soon foreseen that the king would oppose their growing power by force of arms, they consequently proceeded to raise an army for their own use, stating at first that it was only intended for Ireland; supporting this excuse, three hundred men were sent to Minehead, under Captains Pinchback, Manners, and Roberts,‡ to be passed over, but being detained there, a complaint was made to the House (18th May), and it was ordered that those “mere Irish and papists” there, should be forwarded to Ireland and that relief should be sent to the “distressed protestants.”

As the Commons denied the right of the king to tax without their consent, so they had not yet assumed the power of taxing without his, they consequently asked for voluntary subscriptions to support the new army, and the

\* Master Strode, his speech in Parliament, &c., 1642.

† Clarendon. ‡ Bristol Calendars.

events noticed as passing at Minehead, probably drew attention to the payments from Somerset, which were found to be behind, the under sheriff was called in and admonished for his delay, and replied "that the five hundred pounds received (? plate) should be paid in at once, and that for the contribution in money there was as yet only five pounds paid to the sheriff."

The House having cancelled the king's commissions of lieutenancy, on the 11th February, 1642, appointed the Marquis of Hertford, lord lieutenant of Somerset, but the marquis who was attached to the king refused, and on the 24th March, returned answer "that he should be very glad to obey the House and to serve the Commonwealth in what he may," but desired at that time to be excused, for this reason, "that he was not at the debate of the militia and therefore was ignorant of what passed on it, neither did he yet know whether the king had given his consent to it, without which he hoped the House would not impose it upon him." On this refusal the Earl of Bedford was offered, and accepted the appointment, and the next day the lords concurred, and Richard Harbyn, John Pine, Alexander Pym, and William Bull, were added to the list of deputy lieutenants. In other ways the Parliament was ready to assert its importance and authority, and caution was necessary for all who wished to remain unmolested. The conversation of individuals was reported if any words were used disparaging its proceedings; such was the case "concerning some words uttered in Somersetshire," and sent in a letter on the 29th March, from Mr. William Dey of Holeditch, near Chard, to Mr. Venn, a member; and at the same time part of a letter from Mr. Pine, was likewise read in the house concerning some message that was sent from Sir John Stowell and Mr. Coventry to Mr. Lutterell. As



Sir John Stowell and Mr. Coventry were for the king, this message was probably an endeavour to seduce Mr. Lutterell from his attachment to the Parliament. The conduct of various members was also closely watched, and on the king retiring to York to collect his supporters, it was ordered (28th March) that all who had not leave should attend the House, Sir Ralph Hopton, Mr. Thomas Smyth, Sir John Stowell, and Mr. Coventry, were found absenting themselves, and were summoned to attend; Lord Seymour, who presently appears in Somerset, being on his way with leave to his country house, was met by a messenger from the king, ordering him to attend at York, which the Commons hearing, sent a post after him to bring him back; he was overtaken at Northampton, and replied that he would return as soon as possible. On the 4th of April he appeared and asked their lordships pleasure, when he was ordered to attend as a peer of the realm, "in regard to the great business now in agitation in the Parliament."\*

On the 13th August, the gentleman usher sent in his bill for extra expenses, charging for fetching back the Lord Seymour, post £2 16s.; for riding for Marquis Hertford, Lord Trowbridge, and Lord Pawlett, £13 6s. 8d. Lord Capell was ordered to appear at the bar of the House as a delinquent, but claimed privilege of peerage and refused to come.

So far, the king is seen retired to York gathering his friends, and the Parliament raising forces to oppose him, and keeping a close watch on those members who shewed any tendency to espouse the royal cause. The nation meantime had become much agitated, and the state of affairs, position of parties, and events occurring in our

\* Lords' Journal.

county, will now specially and entirely engross attention.

Then, as now, petitions were sent to the Parliament, for, or against its proceedings. On the 10th December, 1641,\* a "remonstrance" from the knights, gentry, and freeholders of the county, was presented to the House of Peers by the Lord Marquis of Hertford.† This was met by a counter petition, presented to the House of Commons 25th February, 1642,\* by Sir Thomas Wroth, who apologised for being late with it on account of the "remotenesse of his county," stating that "it comes not attended with a numerous or multitudinous troop, but guarded with some thousands of hands to attest their approbation and assent." The petitioners express their sorrow at the great distractions and dangers "dayly multiplied," and especially for the late breach of the privileges of Parliament "by the devise as we conceive of a malignant party of popish lords and bishops," and they further express their ardent affection to the Parliament, in defence of which they are ready to shed their "purest blood."‡ An opposition to this was attempted by those who went for the king, it prayed that the Church Government may remain without alteration; that the trained bands be called out until the dispute about the militia be settled; that the money received by the Parliament may be accounted for; and that they would have confidence in his majesty, and endeavour "not to embroile the nation in the greatest of evils as are those of civill discention and ingagement," and for these ends offered willingly to "adventure themselves and fortunes." This petition was at once printed and circulated in the county by the opposite or parliamentary party, and attached

\* New Style used throughout. † State Tracts, Bodleian.

‡ A speech spoken by Sir Thomas Wroth, Knight, upon delivering a petition from Somerset, 1642.



to it "an answer" of some length dissecting and criticising it most severely. This mode of proceeding was probably successful, and prevented its completion, as after going up and down the county "to beg hands," it was subscribed by "some few," 200 only, and was never presented to the House. The "answer" commences by calling it a "vagrant petition which now travelleth the county begging testimonial hands to passe it to the Parliament," and asks if there is one amongst the subscribers who of his own understanding and judgement is able to examine and search out the drift and scope thereof except that it is commanded him by some few gentlemen, who are valued by the acre rather than their persons, and who would not have the same opinion and authority were they "meane men" and of poor estate, and further suggests whether by such public expressions of disaffection they may not invite into the county a "malignant" party "who of bad guests will soon become worse masters, domineering over your peace, liberties, and estates, and turning your Somersetshire into a campus martius, an aceldama, a field of blood and dead men's bones."\*

The tenor of this petition was reported to the House, and on the 13th June, by a message sent by Mr. Strode, a conference with the lords was asked concerning it, from which it may be judged how important its now success or prevention was considered, this is further confirmed by a letter read on the 14th, from Alexander Popham to his father, relating to the same subject, it says :—

HONOURED FATHER,

The next day after you went out of this country, this Petition inclosed, was sent to divers places for to procure Hands to it; it hath been read in several churches by the

\* The Somerset Petition, with an answer, &c., &c., 1642.

ministers of these towns. Sir Francis Dorrington sent it to Bath, and writ a letter to George Wilb (*i. e.* Wilby) and Dick Chapman for the advancement of it, all Sir Charles Barkley's Friends and Sir Ralph Hopton's, labour for the advancement of it. Some of Bath gave me notice of it whither I did repair, the Mayor and Aldermen called a Council and sent for me. The Petition was then read. They asked me my opinion, I told them there were great aspersions laid upon the Parliament in it and desired to know who sent it to them. They told me Sir Francis Dorrington, I thought it my duty to give you notice of this that some way may be thought on to nip this in the bud, for otherwise it will set us together by the ears. There are many earnestly for it, but as many violently against it. I will wait on you, God willing, on Monday next at Littlecott.

I humbly beg your blessing,

Your ever dutiful and obedient Son,

ALEXANDER POPHAM.

Hunster, (*i.e.* Houndstreet),

11th June, 1642.

The petition is thrown aside at Bath and yet no Hands to it.

The gentlemen that are to accompany the petition are

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Francis Pawlett   | Edward Berkley     |
| Ams. Pawlett      | Francis Doddington |
| Ferdinando Gorges | Francis Hawley     |
| Henry Berkley     | Samuel Georges     |
| Charles Berkley   | Robert Phillips*   |

After the reading of this letter Sir Francis Doddington and Sir Charles Berkley, being members, were ordered to attend in their places, a vote in which the lords at once concurred.

Those who attended the king at York, now contributed to his necessities by voluntary gifts according to their means, as others did for the Parliament, in money, plate or horse; his majesty determined to raise an army throughout

\*Lords' Journals, 1642

the kingdom, and for that purpose issued an authority, known as the "Commission of Array," in which he gave power to those named in it to act on his behalf. The gentlemen in the counties raised troops or companies, either their own tenants or any who would join them, paying all from their own private means, and to this end a subscription was opened at York, 22nd June. At this meeting the following Somersetshire lords agreed "to pay horses for three months, thirty days to the month, at two shillings and sixpence per diem, advancing a month's pay, the first payment to be made as soon as the king shall call for it, after the Commission of Array shall be issued." The Marquis Hertford agreed for sixty horse; Earl of Bath fifty; Earl of Bristol sixty; Lord Pawlett forty; Lord Seymour twenty; Lord Capell one hundred. In this number were not to be reckoned the horses of the subscribers or those who attended them.\*

The Commons had also issued (10th June) propositions for raising money in a similar manner, "for the good of the protestant religion, the laws, liberties, and the peace of the kingdom," promising 8 per cent interest for any sums so advanced, and "it is hardly credible what a vast proportion of plate was brought into their treasurers within ten days, there being hardly men enough to receive it, or room to lay it in, and the throng being so great that many could not be discharged of their offerings."† Mr. John Ashe subscribed for £600, a large sum in those days, besides which other members of his family were equally liberal. Instructions were at the same time issued from which the mode of collecting may be gathered. Every deputy lieutenant being a member of the House, was to present the

\* A Catalogue of Names &c., &c.

† Clarendon.

"Propositions" to his brother deputy lieutenants and receive their subscriptions, and in those counties where no deputy lieutenants were nominated, justices of the peace were to act, if approved by the Parliament, and these, or any two other deputy lieutenants who had "subscribed willingly," had authority to call together such persons as they thought proper, tender them the propositions and receive their subscriptions ; and further, to nominate such other persons as they thought fit to repair to the several houses in their respective districts ; all contributions to be paid into the hands of "receivers," to be forwarded to the treasurer in London, who was to return an "acquittance" to the several subscribers. Collectors were to receive a commission on all money sent up by them.\*

Orders were also made for setting the kingdom in a "posture of defence." Amongst the forts and castles named as necessary to be cared for, is Bridgewater ; it was ordered there should be a guard of a hundred men, such as should be "well appointed and skilful in the use of their weapons." That officers who were papists, or on complaint made, should be found dangerous persons and not fit to undergo the trust imposed upon them, should be cashiered and lose their places. That all papists within the county should not have greater store of ammunition than their neighbouring protestants, "that thereby the just fear of each county may be removed to the true signification of Parliament's reall justice and everlasting expression of the subjects joy."

It was now openly announced that the army was raised in "defence of both Houses of Parliament, the true religion, the laws, liberty, and peace of the kingdom," and

\* Instructions for Deputy Lieutenants which are Members &c., &c., 17th June, 1642.

Mr. Popham, on the 19th July, was sent into Somersetshire with instructions for calling out the militia and advancing the propositions for subscriptions.\* A "declaration" was at the same time issued that all who obeyed the king should be "brought to condign punishment for so great an offence," and in connection with this an "order" was made (22nd July) summoning Sir John Stoell, Sir John Pawlett, Mr. Smyth, Sir Nicholas Slaning, Sir Edward Rodney, Sir John Strangeways, Sir Gerard Napier, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Rolfe, Sir John Coventry, Mr. Strangeways, Sergt. Hide, and Mr. Edward Phillips, to attend the House, a summons which they probably left unnoticed as they will be hereafter found acting for the king. His Majesty about this time issued the "Commission of Array," and "into the west to restrain those parts he sent the Marquis of Hertford," as his interest and reputation was greater there than any other man's, and with him went the Lord Seymour, his brother, Lord Paulet, Hopton, Stowell, Coventry, Berkley, Windham, and some other gentlemen "of the prime quality" and interest in those parts "who were likely to give as good examples in their persons, and to be followed by as many men as any such number of gentlemen in England could be."†

The marquis, leaving the king at Beverly, arrived in Bath on the 25th July, 1642, where it happened that the assizes were being held, so that he met the principal gentlemen of the county, and as they were generally, "except Popham and Horner," well affected towards the king, he consulted with them as to the best way to proceed in the execution of the commission. After considering the desirability of commencing in Bristol, which notion was

\* Commons' Journals, vol. 2.

† Clarendon.



rejected, "as it was not clear that his lordship's reception in that city would be such as he expected" Wells was decided on as being "a pleasant city in the heart and near the centre of the county," and there the marquis went, "presuming" that in little time by the influence of the gentlemen present with him, and his own reputation, "which was very great," that the people would all join him.\*

But the Parliament party were equally active and more influential with the general population, and they had taken care to announce that the marquis was come to put the dreaded Commission of Array in execution by which all would be reduced to be no better than slaves to the Lords, and that the only way to rid themselves of this tyranny was to adhere to the Parliament; consequently, although the principal and older gentry were with the king, very many others "who had gotten wealth as traders," were with the Parliament, so that when the marquis came to Wells he found himself in the midst of an armed enemy covering the whole county, and his own strength, a troop of horse raised by Mr. John Digby, a son of the Earl of Bristol, and another by Sir Francis Hawley, both of which troops were designed to attend the king in the north, and a troop of horse and dragoons raised and armed by Sir Ralph Hopton, at his own charge, and about one hundred foot "gathered up" by Lieutenant Colonel Lunsford towards a regiment also destined for the king, this with Lord Paulet and about twenty-eight of the principal gentry with their servants made up the marquis's force.†

The judge sitting at the assize in Bath received an "order" from His Majesty to forward the Commission of Array, but he declined to notice it, as well as an "order"

\* Clarendon.

† Clarendon.



from the Parliament to declare it illegal, thus "sayling betwixt wind and water very politiquely;" but the marquis being gone for Wells, "having received but little encouragement in Bath," the constables of some twenty-one hundreds petitioned the judge concerning the Commission, which, with some reluctance, "being soundly put to it, he concluded to be illegal," and complying with a request in the petition, he ordered the votes of Parliament relating to the Array to be read in open court. On Friday, the marquis sent from Wells to the sheriff, to cease his attendance upon the judge and come to him, to aid with his council and assistance. The sheriff replied that he had received commands from the Parliament to suppress his lordship's proceedings, and this command he was resolved to obey, sending him at the same time the constables' petition with the judge's answer.\*

Whilst the marquis was at Wells, Lord Paulet, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, (of Wraxall) and Mr. Ths. Smith, (of Ashton) went to Bristol to get leave to bring troops into that city, but the mayor, (John Lock), refused to permit it, declaring the city to be neutral,† and at this time also notice was sent Lord Hertford that Sir Francis Popham, Sir Edward Baynton, Sir Edward Hungerford, and Mr. John Ashe, intended by force of arms to oppose him, and had for that purpose called out the trained bands of the district. For this purpose the deputy lieutenants of the county and committee acting for the Parliament appointed a meeting for the 1st of August, at Shepton Mallet, to take measures for the preservation of peace in the county, and to issue warrants to the several hundreds, requiring them not to obey the Marquis Hertford and his Commission of

\* True news from Somersetshire, 1642.

† Barret's History of Bristol.

Array, but rather the ordinances of Parliament and such further orders as they (the committee) should give them from time to time, but some of the "wicked incendiaries" of the town, viz.: Richard Board, Hercules Whiting, Nicholas Downton, James Strode, John Walker, and John Coothe, "the Parson," got up a petition to the marquis, insinuating to the people that the coming of the Committee was to fire their houses and to make their streets run with blood; and in the morning about eight o'clock, Sir Ralph Hopton, Mr. Thomas Smith, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges, "father-in-law to Master Thomas Smith," and a hundred horse "at least" came from Wells to publish the Commission of Array, and attempted to read the said petition in the market place, but "Master" William Strode, one of the deputy lieutenants, being within a mile of the town and hearing of the tumult, came with his son and servants, in all but four armed horse, and two unarmed, and demanded the reason of it, "whereupon" Sir Ralph Hopton, "Master" Smith, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges came to him and required him to alight and hear the petition read. "Master" Strode replied, that "he came not to hear petitions but to suppress insurrections, and required the said three gentlemen to leave the town." Upon this Sir Ralph Hopton laid hold of "Master" Strode and his horse, and with the assistance of "Master" Smith arrested him of suspicion of treason, and whilst they were endeavouring to pull him from his horse Sir Ferdinando Gorges struck at him with a halberd and divers "Cavaliers" drew their swords and held their points towards his body, and one of "Master" Strode's servants presented a pistol at Sir Ralph Hopton, and would have killed him had not he been prevented by one, Mr. White, who snatched the pistol from him. Master Strode being thus arrested and forced to

alight, Sir Ralph Hopton read the petition and asked for the supporters of it to come forward, but there only appeared Nicholas Downton, which Mr. Strode was asked to notice, but he replied that Downton was one of the incendiaries of the town, as they were of the county and of the Parliament, and again required them to leave the town, and further, bid the people obey the King as he was guided and counselled by the Parliament, and not as he was guided and counselled by evil counsellors from whom came the Commission of Array, both illegal and destructive to the kingdom. Mr. Strode was given in charge to the constable, that he might be taken to the Marquis Hertford, at Wells, but word was now brought Sir Ralph Hopton that the country people were coming in upon him, at which "he seeming to be amazed," took horse and rode to "the Swan at the other end of the town" to meet others of his party expected there, but as none were yet come, he sent a messenger for Captain John Digby to bring his troop from Sherborne, and rode on in haste a mile out of the town, and with him "one Thomas Strode, a new captain of Sir Edward Rodney's," endeavouring as they went, and with tolerable success, to raise the country, using violence to the yeomanry or any who refused ; many joined him, probably from fear and the habit of obeying anybody who came to them in authority, and were at once formed into troops and companies. After Sir Ralph Hopton's departure the constable was compelled by the people to release Master Strode or lose his own life, and Shepton Mallet being thus cleared of the Royalists, and Master Strode having met "at the town's end" some of his brother deputy lieutenants, they proceeded to their business, but before noon without warrant or request the country people had assembled both horse and foot to the number of 2000, though most un-

armed, and the scouts frequently brought word that others coming were met by the Royalists, beaten and wounded, and their ammunition and provision taken from them. The committee drew this force "into the field" and issued "instruction" for their guidance.

The high sheriff being weak and sickly, Mr. Henry Sanford, his eldest son, came and commanded as "*posse comitatus*," all that were present and the whole county to assist in the service of the Parliament, "which with great acclamation all protested to obey." Two messengers, Messrs. William Long, and Lawrence Bull, "honest men of the county," were now sent to Sir Ralph Hopton, at his halting place, to ask "for what purpose he was thus come armed into the county, if it were for peace, then, that they should return home to their houses, if not, that then they would take it as an insurrection and endeavour to repress it." And when the messengers were supposed to have reached him, all the country people were moved forwards; but Hopton perceiving this, disbanded his force and rode away, some going towards Wells and some to their own homes. Messrs. Bull and Long, coming up with their message, found Sir Ralph Hopton and Mr. Ths. Smith to be the commanders, to whom they delivered it, who replied that they could not answer it until they had spoken with the marquis, and desired them to go to Wells with their party for that purpose, which they did, when Sir Ralph Hopton brought them a reply in writing, that "My Lord Marquis being informed of a great assembly to meet at Shepton, in arms this day, not knowing any cause of such meeting, sent me and some other justices of the peace in order to the peace of this county, to know the cause of such meeting and to prevent the disturbance of the peace." The marquis also gave them a letter, requesting an answer, stat-

ing "I understand there is a great assembly of armed men now at Shepton, which I conceive is unlawful, and desire to know by what authority they are met, for that as yet it seems to me a great violation of the peace of this county, and the kingdome, to appeare so armed." Which message being delivered to the committee, they replied, "After we understood that my Lord Marquis of Hertford came into this county with companies of armed men to put in execution the Commission of Array, which is illegal, and settling himself at Wells, both horse and foot, we, to preserve the peace of the county, came this day to Shepton Mallet."

These proceedings were at once reported to the Parliament in a letter from the committee, dated Shepton Mallet, 1st August, 1642, and signed by

John Horner  
Alexander Popham  
John Pym  
Rd. Harbyn

Hugh Rogers  
William Strode  
Richard Coley  
John Ashe \*

and in consequence by votes of the House, Sir Ralph Hop-ton, Mr. Ths. Smith, and Capt. John Digby, were deprived of their seats, and with Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Sir Francis Doddington, Richard Board, Hercules Whiting, Nicholas Downton, James Strode, John Walker, and John Cooth, "the Parson" of Shepton Mallet, were ordered to be sent for as delinquents, and the high sheriff and all others were to use their best endeavours to bring them to the Parliament. Sir John Stowell and Sir John Paulet were also deprived of their seats, and a new writ issued for electing two knights for the county. The Lords also ordered that Marquis Hertford, Lord Paulett, and Lord Trowbridge, be apprehended for "using force to the terror of the people."†

\* A Letter from the Committee in Somersetshire, &c., &c., 1642.

† Lords' Journal, Vol. V.



Besides these resolutions, Sir Henry Vane, jun., was ordered to write a letter of thanks to the committee, and to "prepare and speed away" such forces as should be necessary for the safety of the county. Of those named to be "sent for" from Shepton, Mr. James Strode, clothier, and the "Parson" appear to have been arrested, and on the 3rd September, they petitioned the House desiring to be bailed, Mr. James Strode thus obtained his release, the other seems to have remained unnoticed. On the first appearance of the Royalists at Wells and Shepton Mallet, posts were sent to Sir John Horner, "Master" Popham, and others, especially Mr. John Ashe, certifying that the Cavaliers were coming to destroy them, which caused a great stir and combustion in the country, "whereupon every man armed and made ready for their coming."†

On the "great vast" Mendip Hills, above Chewton, was appointed as the place of meeting to oppose these men "who had gone into Shepton and broken into honest men's houses and plundered them, and made their owners with their wives hide themselves for feare," and accordingly people flocked from every house, stuffed with so many doubts and fears, that they thought if they did not "now play the man," they would be "utterly undone for ever," and there presently assembled all that quarter of the shire.

On hearing of these events, Sir John Horner called together his neighbours and tenants, armed them or caused them to be armed, and marched away to Mr. Popham, and thus united, brought to Chewton a regiment, called the Bath Regiment, numbering a thousand men completely armed. Sir Edward Hungerford lent arms to two hundred volunteers, and from his quarter came also two or three

† A relation of all the passages and Proceedings in Somersetshire, &c.



hundred horsemen, some of them well armed, the rest only a sword or pistol ; and all "Master" Smith's tenants, some forty yeoman well armed, and the inhabitants of Sir Ralph Hopton's district (Evercreech) "even to his very gates." (Master Smith and Sir Ralph Hopton were Royalists, and at this time with the marquis in Wells.) There were also there "Master" Cole, "Master" Harbyn, "Master" Hipsley, and John Ashe ; Mr. Rogers, Mr. Francis, Mr. Pine, and Mr. Strode could not come being prevented by the Royalists.

The number thus congregated was estimated at forty thousand men and women, fifteen thousand being from Somerset and the others from Wilts and Dorset, Gloucester and Bristol, the men from the last being "of very good quality, all on horseback with swords, pistols, and carbines,"\* many of the others bringing "pitchforks, dung-picks, and such like weapons," not knowing who they were to fight against, but "supposing they were Papists." Two waggon loads of powder, bullet and match, and four small field pieces, (six pounders) were sent from Bristol, although the mayor and sheriff, "through the influence of Lord Paulet and Master Smith, hindered, or pretended to hinder it with all their skill." This force being put in order, but with "much adoe" for want of expert commanders, marched on Friday, 5th August, to the top of the hill above Wells, where they lay that night, having been without food all the day ; Mr. Alexander Popham and his valiant brothers, Sir John Horner and his youngest son, and many other young gentlemen, "tenderly bred" laid in their arms on furze bushes in the open field, and the old knight often said "his furze bed was the best that ever he lay upon." The next morning provisions of all sorts

\* A true relation of the passages between the Cavaliers, &c., at Wells in Somersetshire.

were sent in from the country round and there was sufficient and to spare both for breakfast and dinner, many having to carry their store home again, all offers of payment being refused. The camp being thus victualled the people could hardly be prevented from at once assaulting the town, "to destroy the Cavaliers" and take those "delinquent" gentlemen with the marquis to the Parliament.

So far, both parties are seen prepared and opposed to each other, and truly the Marquis Hertford instead of finding friendly support as expected, found himself in the midst of an armed enemy. And now occurs the first bloodshedding in Somerset. The increasing assemblages around Wells caused the Lord Hertford some anxieties, he ordered the keys of the magazine to be given up to Sir Francis Doddington, he disarmed the "well affected" to the Parliament and all strangers, and warrants were issued under his hand jointly with the Lord Paulet and Lord Trowbridge for "bringing in armed men," and patrols were sent out to guard the city from surprise. On Thursday, the 4th August, one of these patrols numbering, Royalist's account says about sixty, other party says one hundred and twenty to one hundred and forty, horse under Sir John Stowell, Sir John Paulet, and Colonel Lunsford, guarding the western side, and "ranging" about to bring in horses, met a party estimated to be five hundred strong, coming from Bridgwater and parts adjacent Glastonbury, under Colonel Pine and Mr. Strode, with Mr. Rogers and Mr. Francis; seeing they were outnumbered, Colonel Lunsford placed himself in ambush in a pit by the road side with twenty troopers armed with carbines, whilst the remainder advanced a little towards the Parliamentarians who had now approached to within musket shot, and sent them a message by Mr. Saunders, of Petherton, demanding their

intentions, who on being answered that they were going to join the army on Mendip, desired every man to return to his own home, this request was refused, and further answered that if they could not have their way by fair means they would by foul; both sides now prepared for an encounter, and the western men advancing on their supposed weak enemy at length came within reach of the ambush, who firing suddenly amongst them, they knew not from where, caused them to throw down their arms and fly. Two were killed, and next day two were found dead in some corn close by, fourteen more were wounded, and Captain Preston was taken prisoner, together with fifteen horse, thirty muskets, and other ammunition of no great value. Captain Preston was examined next day, 5th August, as to his intentions, by William Basset and Anthony Stocker, two justices of the peace, and simply replied that he was on his way with the others in his company to join the army on Mendip. This wounding and killing very much daunted some of the "honest country-

#### ADDENDUM.

*Page 64, line 25, after "met" and before "a party," &c., insert "near Marshall's Elm on Polden Hill" (Ludlow's Memoirs, p. 25.)*

NOTE.—This was not only the first blood shed in Somerset, but was also the first shed in England in this war, and consequently the spot above named has a special and peculiar historical interest.—E.G.

were sent in from the country round and there was sufficient and to spare both for breakfast and dinner, many having to carry their store home again, all offers of payment being refused. The camp being thus victualled the people could hardly be prevented from at once assaulting the town, "to destroy the Cavaliers" and take those "delinquent" gentlemen with the marquis to the Parliament.

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A patrol of, one account says "all," the Royalist horse, also went out by Shepton towards Mendip, and on approaching Chewton the people were "stroken with a great affrightment," and the cry was raised "the Cavaliers are coming," and a "confused noise" was heard in the camp; the Mendip army having but few horsemen, probably did not like the idea of being thus attacked, but having "made

\* Special Passages, 15th Aug.

a bravado," the Cavaliers returned to Shepton, where they spent sometime in refreshing themselves at the inns and taverns, and some, marching round the town found out the "honest and religious" mens' houses, (*i.e.*, those of the Parliament party) which they broke into and plundered, and then having done their "pranckes," first billeting one hundred troopers there they returned to Wells,\* informed the marquis of the great number they had seen and asked for leave to encounter them, which he "out of his goodness" refused. Lord Paulet at this time attracted notice, but without gaining friends, by announcing in a speech, "in the height of fury," with many "imprecations, oaths, and execrations," that he considered ten pounds a year sufficient for any yeoman, intimating that when his party had the power on their side they should be compelled to live on that sum. As this intention was considered to include all below the rank of gentlemen, it so inflamed the people that they attempted to seize him as he was speaking, and were prevented only by the interference of Mr. Alexander Popham Sir John Horner and his son, Mr. Pine, and others who had command over the regiments there; but it was argued that he who would propose ten before he had possession would give only five when he was possessed, therefore the people resolved to dispose themselves better, and "with the hazard of their lives and fortunes, secure their lives and fortunes."†

Lord Hertford made another attempt to read the Commission of Array, having now gathered about five hundred excellent horse and about three hundred foot very well armed, "which did strike terror and amazement to many in the country," and would probably have forced the trained bands into subjection to his authority had not he

\* A perfect relation of all passages in Somerset, by John Ashe.

† A momento for Yeomen, Merchants, Citizens, &c., &c.



been again opposed by "Master" Strode and others, who with only one hundred and fifty men meeting him near Wells, were "not fearful to encounter with him," being stout and resolute and resolved to spend their lives in the cause. Much parley and debate ensued with many threatening speeches from both sides, a truce being agreed on meanwhile, nevertheless a sudden and treacherous assault was made on "Master" Strode's regiment and many were hurt and twelve reported as slain, but the marquis and his followers not being able "to stand it out," retreated into Wells pursued by many of the country people, and were at once set down as "merciless men, they care not what they do."\* The prisoners taken in this encounter were demanded and refused, so some guns were planted against the city which it was threatened to batter down unless they were delivered, "as the people have resolved rather to lose their lives than be slaves."† Wells, now in great distress from the exactions of the Royalists within, was beset on all sides without; on the hill coming from Bristol were Sir Francis Popham and Sir Edward Hungerford with six thousand men and two pieces of ordnance, which were mounted against the Bishop's Palace. Between Glastonbury there were Sir Edward Baynton and Sir John Horner with eight thousand men. On the hill between Shepton Mallet were "Master" Strode, "Master" Pine, and "Master" Cole, with three thousand more, and two pieces which they had mounted to command any part of the town, and there presently came a party of one hundred and twenty horse from Taunton Deane, who had assembled at the sound of trumpet, under Captain Pym and Lieutenant Howard, (Hayward?) the "sight of which gave the foot

\* More later and truer newes from Somersetshire, &c., &c.

† A true and sad relation from Somersetshire, by Joseph Prowd.

a little more life," they having still comparatively but few horse to match the well-equipped cavalry of their enemy. These new comers were put by Sir Edward Hungerford, "after a courteous welcome" to guard the north-east end of the town, "which goes up to the Downs to meet the Shepton and Wells road."\*

The army being thus placed, Sir Francis Popham ordered some shots to be fired against the Bishop's Palace, which "was strong and moated round about," and which the Royalists had made their head quarters, and the committee sent five propositions to the marquis, stating that if they were not agreed to they would "fall on the town." The marquis seeing himself thus threatened, and being forsaken by the few of the trained bands who had joined him, sent a message to Chewton, on Friday, 5th August, by Messrs. Anthony Stocker, William Basset, and Richard Brown, who, being justices, were sent for as specially suited for this duty, asking if the peace of the county may not yet be preserved. In reply a full answer was promised next morning, as Mr. Strode and others of the committee had not then come, and in the meantime a truce was agreed on. The next morning the committee produced their answer and sent it to Wells by "Master" Giles Hungerford, William Eyre, George Bampffield, and "Master" Prickman, attended by a trumpeter.

1st.—They asked that the marquis should withdraw from the county.

2nd.—That his force should be disbanded, disarmed, and cashiered.

3rd.—That any gentlemen of the House of Commons, incendiaries, or others with him should be sent up to the Parliament to answer for their delinquencies.

\* Joyfull news from Wells, in Somersetshire.

4th.—That the arms &c., seized from several houses should be restored, and satisfaction made for any damage.

5th.—That all prisoners should be released, adding, that unless these be at once “yielded unto” we much doubt whether it will be in our power to keep our soldiers from assaulting the town.”

These messages were signed on the part of the Royalists by

|              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| Hertford     | John Paulet      |
| Paulet       | Fras. Doddington |
| Seymour      | Chas. Berkley    |
| J. Coventry  | Fras. Hawley     |
| John Stowell | Will Walrond     |
| F. Gorges    | Thos. Smith      |
| Hy. Berkley  | Edwd. Kirton     |
| R. Hopton    | Edwd. Windham    |

For the Parliament by

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Edwd. Hungerford | Robt. Harbyn |
| John Horner      | John Hipsley |
| Alexander Popham | John Ashe    |
| Richd. Cole      |              |

The marquis on receiving these propositions, at once made ready for leaving Wells, but to keep the people “in expectation” that he may get away if possible unnoticed, an answer was returned by three gentlemen, Master Stocker, Master Seymour, and Master Button.

To the first he replied that if they wished to petition the King, he would not proceed with the Array if they would forbear to execute the ordinance of the militia, and that he would disband his volunteers if they would do the same.

2nd.—That as to the soldiers, they were the King’s, but if it was desired to have them removed he would “yield unto it.”

3rd.—That he knew of no incendiaries or authors of combustion with him, and did not expect such scandalous terms to be used in a treaty of pacification.

4th.—He knew of no arms or goods taken, but if it should be so, restitution should be made, provided the same was done to him.

5th.—He had delivered, before receiving the propositions, all prisoners then with him.\*

Thus gaining an hour or two by this message he, during the interval, made a sally as if to go towards Glastonbury, which drew the Parliament foot to that quarter, but suddenly changing his front he marched for Sherborne, the cannon being too "high on the hill" to hurt him, but exchanging shots with the Taunton Deane horsemen. On his departure the mayor and citizens of Wells sent messengers to Chewton announcing the fact, and to petition that the soldiers may not come down, nor attempt anything against them, but the Mendip men "who had spent the night in prayer and singing psalms" entered the city with such great expressions of joy as is hardly imaginable," gloried in having vanquished "the Papists," tore down the painted glass in the cathedral, and "visited" and sacked the Bishop's Palace, but did "no harm" but to his organs, wine, and pictures, one of which last, supposed to represent the Virgin Mary, was put on a spear and carried about in contempt and derision.†

The gaols were found filled with people of the "meaner sort," and the city much "rifled and racked;" the poor had been "spoiled and pinched," and such havoc made that it was estimated that £10,000 (equal to £50,000 of our money) would not make satisfaction. Towards this last

\* A second letter sent from John Ashe, Esq., &c.

† God in the Mount.

both parties, as is usual in such cases, probably contributed in equal proportions.

These proceedings being known to the Parliament, to further encourage their partisans, on the 8th August they issued a declaration "for raising all power and force of this kingdom, &c., to oppose the Marquis Hertford, Sir Ralph Hopton, John Digby, Esq., and other their accomplices "who for their own unlawful purpose have gotten together great forces in the county of Somerset, with intent to subvert the liberty of the subject and alter the religion and ancient government, and to introduce popery and idolatry, and an arbitrary form of government," and promising that all who assist in opposing them shall "be justified, defended, and secured" by authority of Parliament.\*

Wells thus passed into the hands of new masters, and as usual the tone of the people changed to please them. Sir Ralph Hopton being gone, his own tenants and servants came against him and cried him down for his conduct in these proceedings, more than they had previously extolled him at the "late election." My Lord Paulet was "hated of all men," and Mr. Smith was pitied as being seduced by the other great ones, "and it is believed if he could fairly retreat he would be no longer of that faction."

\* A Declaration of the Lords and Commons, &c., &c.

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