opposed the bill for the regulation of trials in cases of high treason. On March 23, 1693, the great seal having mean­while been in commission, Somers was appointed lord- keeper, with a pension of £2000 a year from the day on which he should quit his office, and at the same time was made a privy councillor. He had previously been knighted. Somers now became the most prominent member of the Junto, the small council which comprised the chief members of the Whig party. When William left in May 1695 to take command of the army in the Netherlands, Somers was made one of the seven lords-justices to whom the adminis­tration of the kingdom during his absence was entrusted ; and he was instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation between William and the princess Anne.

The question of improving the currency now became pressing, and Somers was the author of the bold sugges­tion that a proclamation should be issued simultaneously all over the kingdom, announcing that henceforth all clipped and hammered coins were to be reckoned only by weight. But all possessors of such coins might, by delivering them up on a certain day, receive a note entitling them to draw from the treasury at a future time the difference between the actual and nominal values. The difficulties of the plan, however, rendered its adop­tion impossible. In April 1697 Somers was made lord chancellor, and was created a peer by the title of Baron Somers of Evesham. When the discussion arose on the question of disbanding the army, he summed up the case against disbanding, in answer to Trenchard, in a remark­able pamphlet called “ The Balancing Letter.” In August 1698 he went to Tunbridge Wells for his health. While there he received the king’s letter announcing the first Partition Treaty, and at once replied with a memorandum representing the necessity in the state of feeling in England of avoiding further war. When the king, on the occasion of the Disbanding Bill, expressed his determination to leave the country, Somers boldly remonstrated, while he clearly expressed in a speech in the Lords the danger of the course that was being taken. Hitherto Somers’s character had kept him free from attack at the hands of political opponents; but his connexion in 1699 with the notorious Kidd, who, being sent out to put down the pirates in the Indian Ocean, turned pirate himself, and to the defraying of whose expedition Somers had given £1000, afforded an opportunity ; the vote of censure, however, proposed upon him in the House of Commons for giving Kidd a commission under the great seal was rejected by 199 to 131. The attack was renewed shortly on the ground of his having accepted grants of crown property to the amount of £1600 a year, but was again defeated. On the subject of the Irish forfeitures a third attack was made in 1700, a motion being brought for­ward to request the king to remove Somers from his counsels and presence for ever ; but this again was rejected by a large majority. In consequence, however, of the incessant agitation, William now requested Somers to resign ; this he refused to do, but gave up the seals to William’s messenger. In 1701 he was impeached by the Commons on account of the part he had taken in the negotiations relating to the Partition Treaty in 1698, and defended himself most ably before the House, answering the charges *seriatim.* The impeachment was voted and sent up to the Lords, but was there dismissed. On the death of the king Somers retired almost entirely into private life. He was, however, active in 1702 in oppos­ing the Occasional Conformity Bill, and in 1706 was one of the managers of the union with Scotland. In the same year he carried a bill regulating and improving the proceedings of the law courts. He was made president of the council in 1708 upon the return of the Whigs to

power, and retained the office until their downfall in 1710. From this time his powers of mind rapidly declined, and after being almost imbecile for six years he died of apoplexy on April 26, 1716. Somers was never married, but left two sisters, of whom the eldest, Mary, married Charles Cocks, whose grandson, Sir Charles Cocks, Bart., became the second Lord Somers in 1784.

For a contemporary character of Somers Addison’s paper in the *Freeholder* for May 14, 1716, should he referred to ; and there is in Macaulay’s *History* (vol. iv. p. 53) an eloquent and worthy tribute to his stainless character and comprehensive learning. A catalogue of his publications will be found in Walpole’s *Royal and Noble Authors.* (O. A.)

SOMERSET, a maritime county in the south-west of England, bounded E. by Wiltshire, S.E. by Dorset, S.W. and W. by Devonshire, N.W. by the Bristol Channel, and N. by Gloucestershire. The total area of land and water is 1,049,815 acres or 1640 square miles.

The shape of the county is determined by the nearly rectangular bend taken by the coast not far from Bridg­water. It falls into three natural divisions, which answer remarkably to the three waves of West-Saxon conquest and to the parliamentary divisions as they stood till the latest changes. The range of Mendip, breaking off from the high ground in the east of the county, completely shuts off the northern part, between Mendip and Bristol, itself hilly. Mendip itself, running slightly north-west­ward towards the Channel, has for its summit a tableland sloping much more gently to the north than to the south. Its most striking though not its highest points are towards the Channel, where it ends in the promontory of Brean Down, while the Steep Holm stands as an outpost between the hills of Somerset and those of Glamorgan. The sides of Mendip are broken by many passes or *combes,* the most marked of which are Ebbor rocks near Wells and the greater pass of Cheddar cliffs, whose varied outlines, in the many turns of the pass, are probably the most noteworthy of their kind in England. Between Mendip and the region of loftier hills in the south lies a great alluvial plain, known generally as Sedgemoor, but with different names in different parts. This plain, intersected by ditches known as *rhines,* and in some parts rich in peat, is broken by isolated hills and lower ridges, of which the most con­spicuous are Brent Knoll near Burnham, the Isle of Avalon, rising with Glastonbury Tor as its highest point, and the long low ridge of Polden ending to the west in a steep bluff. In the south is Blackdown on the border of Devonshire, the higher range of Quantock (highest point 1262 feet) stretching to the sea, and to the west again the mountainous region of Brendon and Exmoor, commonly believed by tourists to be part of Devonshire. Here are hills of much greater height and bolder outline, the highest point being that of Dunkery (1709 feet) above Porlock. The two principal rivers are the Lower Avon and the Parret. The Avon, after forming for a short distance the boundary with Wilts, crosses the north-eastern corner of the county, encircling Bath, and forms the boundary with Gloucestershire till it reaches the sea 6 miles beyond Bristol. It is navigable for barges as far as Bath. The Parret from South Perrott in Dorset, on the borders of Somerset, crosses the centre of the county north-westwards by Bridgwater, receiving the Ivel or Yeo and Cary on the right, and the Isle and Tone on the left. Among other streams are the Axe, which rises at Wookey Hole in the Mendips and flows north-westward along their base to the Bristol Channel near Blackrock ; the Brue, which rises to the east of Bruton, near the borders of Wiltshire, and enters the Bristol Channel near the mouth of the Parret ; and the Exe (with its tributary the Barle), which rises in Exmoor forest and passes south­ward into Devon.