

**JACOB
ABBOTT**

CHARLES I

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Charles I / Makers of History:

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Charles I / Makers of History

PREFACE

The history of the life of every individual who has, for any reason, attracted extensively the attention of mankind, has been written in a great variety of ways by a multitude of authors, and persons sometimes wonder why we should have so many different accounts of the same thing. The reason is, that each one of these accounts is intended for a different set of readers, who read with ideas and purposes widely dissimilar from each other. Among the twenty millions of people in the United States, there are perhaps two millions, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, who wish to become acquainted, in general, with the leading events in the history of the Old World, and of ancient times, but who, coming upon the stage in this land and at this period, have ideas and conceptions so widely different from those of other nations and of other times, that a mere republication of existing accounts is not what they require. The story must be told expressly for them. The things that are to be explained, the points that are to be brought out, the comparative degree of prominence to be given to the various particulars, will all be different, on account of the difference in the situation, the ideas,

and the objects of these new readers, compared with those of the various other classes of readers which former authors have had in view. It is for this reason, and with this view, that the present series of historical narratives is presented to the public. The author, having had some opportunity to become acquainted with the position, the ideas, and the intellectual wants of those whom he addresses, presents the result of his labors to them, with the hope that it may be found successful in accomplishing its design.

Chapter I.

His Childhood and Youth

1600-1622

Born in Scotland.

King Charles the First was born in Scotland. It may perhaps surprise the reader that an English king should be born in Scotland. The explanation is this:

The circumstance explained.

They who have read the history of Mary Queen of Scots, will remember that it was the great end and aim of her life to unite the crowns of England and Scotland in her own family. Queen Elizabeth was then Queen of England. She lived and died unmarried. Queen Mary and a young man named Lord Darnley were the next heirs. It was uncertain which of the two had the strongest claim. To prevent a dispute, by uniting these claims, Mary made Darnley her husband. They had a son, who, after the death of his father and mother, was acknowledged to be the heir to the British throne, whenever Elizabeth's life should end. In the mean time he remained King of Scotland. His name was James. He married a princess of Denmark; and his child, who afterward

was King Charles the First of England, was born before he left his native realm.

Princess Anne.

Royal marriages.

King Charles's mother was, as has been already said, a princess of Denmark. Her name was Anne. The circumstances of her marriage to King James were quite extraordinary, and attracted great attention at the time. It is, in some sense, a matter of principle among kings and queens, that they must only marry persons of royal rank, like themselves; and as they have very little opportunity of visiting each other, residing as they do in such distant capitals, they generally choose their consorts by the reports which come to them of the person and character of the different candidates. The choice, too, is very much influenced by political considerations, and is always more or less embarrassed by negotiations with other courts, whose ministers make objections to this or that alliance, on account of its supposed interference with some of their own political schemes.

Getting married by proxy.

As it is very inconvenient, moreover, for a king to leave his dominions, the marriage ceremony is usually performed at the court where the bride resides, without the presence of the bridegroom, he sending an ambassador to act as his representative. This is called being married by proxy. The bride

then comes to her royal husband's dominions, accompanied by a great escort. He meets her usually on the frontiers; and there she sees him for the first time, after having been married to him some weeks by proxy. It is true, indeed, that she has generally seen his *picture*, that being usually sent to her before the marriage contract is made. This, however, is not a matter of much consequence, as the personal predilections of a princess have generally very little to do with the question of her marriage.

James thwarted.

James sues for Anne.

Now King James had concluded to propose for the oldest daughter of the King of Denmark and he entered into negotiations for this purpose. This plan, however, did not please the government of England, and Elizabeth, who was then the English queen, managed so to embarrass and interfere with the scheme, that the King of Denmark gave his daughter to another claimant. James was a man of very mild and quiet temperament, easily counteracted and thwarted in his plans; but this disappointment aroused his energies, and he sent a splendid embassy into Denmark to demand the king's second daughter, whose name was Anne. He prosecuted this suit so vigorously that the marriage articles were soon agreed to and signed. Anne embarked and set sail for Scotland. The king remained there, waiting for her arrival with great impatience. At length, instead of his bride, the news came that the fleet in which Anne had sailed had been dispersed and driven back by a storm, and that

Anne herself had landed on the coast of Norway.

Their marriage.

James in Copenhagen.

James immediately conceived the design of going himself in pursuit of her. But knowing very well that all his ministers and the officers of his government would make endless objections to his going out of the country on such an errand, he kept his plan a profound secret from them all. He ordered some ships to be got ready privately, and provided a suitable train of attendants, and then embarked without letting his people know where he was going. He sailed across the German Ocean to the town in Norway where his bride had landed. He found her there, and they were married. Her brother, who had just succeeded to the throne, having received intelligence of this, invited the young couple to come and spend the winter at his capital of Copenhagen; and as the season was far advanced, and the sea stormy, King James concluded to accept the invitation. They were received in Copenhagen with great pomp and parade, and the winter was spent in festivities and rejoicings. In the spring he brought his bride to Scotland. The whole world were astonished at the performance of such an exploit by a king, especially one of so mild, quiet, and grave a character as that which James had the credit of possessing.

Charles's feeble infancy.

Young Charles was very weak and feeble in his infancy. It was

feared that he would not live many hours. The rite of baptism was immediately performed, as it was, in those days, considered essential to the salvation of a child dying in infancy that it should be baptized before it died. Notwithstanding the fears that were at first felt, Charles lingered along for some days, and gradually began to acquire a little strength. His feebleness was a cause of great anxiety and concern to those around him; but the degree of interest felt in the little sufferer's fate was very much less than it would have been if he had been the oldest son. He had a brother, Prince Henry, who was older than he, and, consequently, heir to his father's crown. It was not probable, therefore, that Charles would ever be king; and the importance of every thing connected with his birth and his welfare was very much diminished on that account.

Death of Elizabeth.

Accession of James to the English crown.

It was only about two years after Charles's birth that Queen Elizabeth died, and King James succeeded to the English throne. A messenger came with all speed to Scotland to announce the fact. He rode night and day. He arrived at the king's palace in the night. He gained admission to the king's chamber, and, kneeling at his bedside, proclaimed him King of England. James immediately prepared to bid his Scotch subjects farewell, and to proceed to England to take possession of his new realm. Queen Anne was to follow him in a week or two, and the other children, Henry and Elizabeth; but Charles was too feeble to go.

Second sight.

Prediction fulfilled.

In those early days there was a prevailing belief in Scotland, and, in fact, the opinion still lingers there, that certain persons among the old Highlanders had what they called the gift of the second sight – that is, the power of foreseeing futurity in some mysterious and incomprehensible way. An incident is related in the old histories connected with Charles's infancy, which is a good illustration of this. While King James was preparing to leave Scotland, to take possession of the English throne, an old Highland laird came to bid him farewell. He gave the king many parting counsels and good wishes, and then, overlooking the older brother, Prince Henry, he went directly to Charles, who was then about two years old, and bowed before him, and kissed his hand with the greatest appearance of regard and veneration. King James undertook to correct his supposed mistake, by telling him that that was his second son, and that the other boy was the heir to the crown. "No," said the old laird, "I am not mistaken. I know to whom I am speaking. This child, now in his nurse's arms, will be greater than his brother. This is the one who is to convey his father's name and titles to succeeding generations." This prediction was fulfilled; for the robust and healthy Henry died, and the feeble and sickly-looking Charles lived and grew, and succeeded, in due time, to his father's throne.

An explanation.

Now inasmuch as, at the time when this prediction was uttered, there seemed to be little human probability of its fulfillment, it attracted attention; its unexpected and startling character made every one notice and remember it; and the old laird was at once an object of interest and wonder. It is probable that this desire to excite the admiration of the auditors, mingled insensibly with a sort of poetic enthusiasm, which a rude age and mountainous scenery always inspire, was the origin of a great many such predictions as these; and then, in the end, those only which turned out to be true were remembered, while the rest were forgotten; and this was the way that the reality of such prophetic powers came to be generally believed in.

Charles's titles of nobility.

Feeble and uncertain of life as the infant Charles appeared to be, they conferred upon him, as is customary in the case of young princes, various titles of nobility. He was made a duke, a marquis, an earl, and a baron, before he had strength enough to lift up his head in his nurse's arms. His title as duke was Duke of Albany; and as this was the highest of his nominal honors, he was generally known under that designation while he remained in Scotland.

Charles's governess.

When his father left him, in order to go to England and take possession of his new throne, he appointed a governess to take charge of the health and education of the young duke. This

governess was Lady Cary. The reason why she was appointed was, not because of her possessing any peculiar qualifications for such a charge, but because her husband, Sir Robert Cary, had been the messenger employed by the English government to communicate to James the death of Elizabeth, and to announce to him his accession to the throne. The bearer of good news to a monarch must always be rewarded, and James recompensed Sir Robert for his service by appointing his wife to the post of governess of his infant son. The office undoubtedly had its honors and emoluments, with very little of responsibility or care.

Windsor Castle.

One of the chief residences of the English monarchs is Windsor Castle. It is situated above London, on the Thames, on the southern shore. It is on an eminence overlooking the river and the delightful valley through which the river here meanders. In the rear is a very extensive park or forest, which is penetrated in every direction by rides and walks almost innumerable. It has been for a long time the chief country residence of the British kings. It is very spacious, containing within its walls many courts and quadrangles, with various buildings surrounding them, some ancient and some modern. Here King James held his court after his arrival in England, and in about a year he sent for the little Charles to join him.

Journey to London.

A mother's love.

The child traveled very slowly, and by very easy stages, his nurses and attendants watching over him with great solicitude all the way. The journey was made in the month of October. His mother watched his arrival with great interest. Being so feeble and helpless, he was, of course, her favorite child. By an instinct which very strongly evinces the wisdom and goodness which implanted it, a mother always bestows a double portion of her love upon the frail, the helpless, and the suffering. Instead of being wearied out with protracted and incessant calls for watchfulness and care, she feels only a deeper sympathy and love, in proportion to the infirmities which call for them, and thus finds her highest happiness in what we might expect would be a weariness and a toil.

Rejoicings.

Charles's continued feebleness.

Little Charles was four years old when he reached Windsor Castle. They celebrated his arrival with great rejoicings, and a day or two afterward they invested him with the title of Duke of York, a still higher distinction than he had before attained. Soon after this, when he was perhaps five or six years of age, a gentleman was appointed to take the charge of his education. His health gradually improved, though he still continued helpless and feeble. It was a long time before he could walk, on account of some malformation of his limbs. He learned to talk, too, very late and very slowly. Besides the general feebleness of his constitution, which kept him back in all these things, there was

an impediment in his speech, which affected him very much in childhood, and which, in fact, never entirely disappeared.

His progress in learning.

As soon, however, as he commenced his studies under his new tutor, he made much greater progress than had been expected. It was soon observed that the feebleness which had attached to him pertained more to the body than to the mind. He advanced with considerable rapidity in his learning. His progress was, in fact, in some degree, promoted by his bodily infirmities, which kept him from playing with the other boys of the court, and led him to like to be still, and to retire from scenes of sport and pleasure which he could not share.

The same cause operated to make him not agreeable as a companion, and he was not a favorite among those around him. They called him *Baby Charley*. His temper seemed to be in some sense soured by the feeling of his inferiority, and by the jealousy he would naturally experience in finding himself, the son of a king, so outstripped in athletic sports by those whom he regarded as his inferiors in rank and station.

Charles improves in health.

Death of his brother.

The lapse of a few years, however, after this time, made a total change in Charles's position and prospects. His health improved, and his constitution began to be confirmed and established. When he was about twelve years of age, too, his

brother Henry died. This circumstance made an entire change in all his prospects of life. The eyes of the whole kingdom, and, in fact, of all Europe, were now upon him as the future sovereign of England. His sister Elizabeth, who was a few years older than himself, was, about this time, married to a German prince, with great pomp and ceremony, young Charles acting the part of brideman. In consequence of his new position as heir-apparent to the throne, he was advanced to new honors, and had new titles conferred upon him, until at last, when he was sixteen years of age, he was made Prince of Wales, and certain revenues were appropriated to support a court for him, that he might be surrounded with external circumstances and insignia of rank and power, corresponding with his prospective greatness.

Charles's love of athletic sports.

In the mean time his health and strength rapidly improved, and with the improvement came a taste for manly and athletic sports, and the attainment of excellence in them. He gradually acquired great skill in all the exploits and performances of the young men of those days, such as shooting, riding, vaulting, and tilting at tournaments. From being a weak, sickly, and almost helpless child, he became, at twenty, an active, athletic young man, full of life and spirit, and ready for any romantic enterprise. In fact, when he was twenty-three years old, he embarked in a romantic enterprise which attracted the attention of all the world. This enterprise will presently be described.

Buckingham.

Buckingham's style of living.

There was at this time, in the court of King James, a man who became very famous afterward as a favorite and follower of Charles. He is known in history under the name of the Duke of Buckingham. His name was originally George Villiers. He was a very handsome young man, and he seems to have attracted King James's attention at first on this account. James found him a convenient attendant, and made him, at last, his principal favorite. He raised him to a high rank, and conferred upon him, among other titles, that of Duke of Buckingham. The other persons about the court were very envious and jealous of his influence and power; but they were obliged to submit to it. He lived in great state and splendor, and for many years was looked up to by the whole kingdom as one of the greatest personages in the realm. We shall learn hereafter how he came to his end.

Royalty.

True character of royalty.

If the reader imagines, from the accounts which have been given thus far in this chapter of the pomp and parade of royalty, of the castles and the ceremonies, the titles of nobility, and the various insignia of rank and power, which we have alluded to so often, that the mode of life which royalty led in those days was lofty, dignified, and truly great, he will be very greatly deceived. All these things were merely for show – things put on

for public display, to gratify pride and impress the people, who never looked behind the scenes, with high ideas of the grandeur of those who, as they were taught, ruled over them by a divine right. It would be hard to find, in any class of society except those reputed infamous, more low, gross, and vulgar modes of life than have been exhibited generally in the royal palaces of Europe for the last five hundred years. King James the First has, among English sovereigns, rather a high character for sobriety and gravity of deportment, and purity of morals; but the glimpses we get of the real, every-day routine of his domestic life, are such as to show that the pomp and parade of royalty is mere glittering tinsel, after all.

The king and Buckingham.
Indecent correspondence.

The historians of the day tell such stories as these. The king was at one time very dejected and melancholy, when Buckingham contrived this plan to amuse him. In the first place, however, we ought to say, in order to illustrate the terms on which he and Buckingham lived together, that the king always called Buckingham *Steeny*, which was a contraction of Stephen. St. Stephen was always represented in the Catholic pictures of the saints, as a very handsome man, and Buckingham being handsome too, James called him Steeny by way of a compliment. Steeny called the king *his dad*, and used to sign himself, in his letters, "your slave and dog Steeny." There are extant some letters which passed between the king and his favorite, written, on the

part of the king, in a style of grossness and indecency such that the chroniclers of those days said that they were not fit to be printed. They would not "blot their pages" with them, they said. King Charles's letters were more properly expressed.

Buckingham's pig.

To return, then, to our story. The king was very much dejected and melancholy. Steeny, in order to divert him, had a pig dressed up in the clothes of an infant child. Buckingham's mother, who was a countess, personated the nurse, dressed also carefully for the occasion. Another person put on a bishop's robes, satin gown, lawn sleeves, and the other pontifical ornaments. They also provided a baptismal font, a prayer-book, and other things necessary for a religious ceremony, and then invited the king to come in to attend a baptism. The king came, and the pretended bishop began to read the service, the assistants looking gravely on, until the squealing of the pig brought all gravity to an end. The king was *not* pleased; but the historian thinks the reason was, not any objection which he had to such a profanation, but to his not happening to be in a mood for it at that time.

James's petulance.

The story of Gib.

There was a negotiation going on for a long time for a marriage between one of the king's sons, first Henry, and afterward Charles, and a princess of Spain. At one time the king lost some of the papers, and was storming about the palace in a

great rage because he could not find them. At last he chanced to meet a certain Scotchman, a servant of his, named Gib, and, like a vexed and impatient child, who lays the charge of a lost plaything upon any body who happens to be at hand to receive it, he put the responsibility of the loss of the papers upon Gib. "I remember," said he, "I gave them to you to take care of. What have you done with them?" The faithful servant fell upon his knees, and protested that he had not received them. The king was only made the more angry by this contradiction, and kicked the Scotchman as he kneeled upon the floor. The man rose and left the apartment, saying, "I have always been faithful to your majesty, and have not deserved such treatment as this. I can not remain in your service under such a degradation. I shall never see you again." He left the palace, and went away.

The king's frankness.

A short time after this, the person to whose custody the king had really committed the papers came in, and, on learning that they were wanted, produced them. The king was ashamed of his conduct. He sent for his Scotch servant again, and was not easy until he was found and brought into his presence. The king kneeled before him and asked his forgiveness, and said he should not rise until he was forgiven. Gib was disposed to evade the request, and urged the king to rise; but James would not do so until Gib said he forgave him, in so many words. The whole case shows how little of dignity and noble bearing there really was in the manners and conduct of the king in his daily life, though we

are almost ready to overlook the ridiculous childishness and folly of his fault, on account of the truly noble frankness and honesty with which he acknowledged it.

Glitter of royalty.

The appearance.

The reality.

Thus, though every thing in which royalty appeared before the public was conducted with great pomp and parade, this external magnificence was then, and always has been, an outside show, without any thing corresponding to it within. The great mass of the people of England saw only the outside. They gazed with admiration at the spectacle of magnificence and splendor which royalty always presented to their eyes, whenever they beheld it from the distant and humble points of view which their position afforded them. Prince Charles, on the other hand, was behind the curtain. His childhood and youth were exposed fully to all the real influences of these scenes. The people of England submitted to be governed by such men, not because they thought them qualified to govern, or that the circumstances under which their characters were formed were such as were calculated to form, in a proper manner, the minds of the rulers of a Christian people. They did not know what those circumstances were. In their conceptions they had grand ideas of royal character and life, and imagined the splendid palaces which some saw, but more only heard of, at Westminster, were filled with true greatness and glory. They were really filled with vulgarity, vice, and shame.

James was to them King James the First, monarch of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, and Charles was Charles, Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and heir-apparent to the throne. Whereas, within the palace, to all who saw them and knew them there, and really, so far as their true moral position was concerned, the father was "Old Dad," and the son, what his father always called him till he was twenty-four years old, "Baby Charley."

Chapter II.

The Expedition into Spain

1623

The Palatinate.

In order that the reader may understand fully the nature of the romantic enterprise in which, as we have already said, Prince Charles embarked when he was a little over twenty years of age, we must premise that Frederic, the German prince who married Charles's sister Elizabeth some years before, was the ruler of a country in Germany called the Palatinate. It was on the banks of the Rhine. Frederic's title, as ruler of this country, was Elector Palatine. There are a great many independent states in Germany, whose sovereigns have various titles, and are possessed of various prerogatives and powers.

Wars between the Protestants and Catholics.

Now it happened that, at this time, very fierce civil wars were raging between the Catholics and the Protestants in Germany. Frederic got drawn into these wars on the Protestant side. His motive was not any desire to promote the progress of what he considered the true faith, but only a wish to extend his

own dominions, and add to his own power, for he had been promised a kingdom, in addition to his Palatinate, if he would assist the people of the kingdom to gain the victory over their Catholic foes. He embarked in this enterprise without consulting with James, his father-in-law, knowing that he would probably disapprove of such dangerous ambition. James was, in fact, very sorry afterward to hear of Frederic's having engaged in such a contest.

Frederic dispossessed of his dominions.

Flees to Holland.

The result was quite as disastrous as James feared. Frederic not only failed of getting his new kingdom, but he provoked the rage of the Catholic powers against whom he had undertaken to contend, and they poured a great army into his own original territory, and made an easy conquest of it. Frederic fled to Holland, and remained there a fugitive and an exile, hoping to obtain help in some way from James, in his efforts to recover his lost dominions.

Elizabeth.

The people of England felt a great interest in Frederic's unhappy fate, and were very desirous that James should raise an army and give him some efficient assistance. One reason for this was that they were Protestants, and they were always ready to embark, on the Protestant side, in the Continental quarrels. Another reason was their interest in Elizabeth, the wife

of Frederic, who had so recently left England a blooming bride, and whom they still considered as in some sense pertaining to the royal family of England, and as having a right to look to all her father's subjects for protection.

James's plan.

Donna Maria.

But King James himself had no inclination to go to war in such a quarrel. He was inactive in mind, and childish, and he had little taste for warlike enterprises. He undertook, however, to accomplish the object in another way. The King of Spain, being one of the most powerful of the Catholic sovereigns, had great influence in all their councils. He had also a beautiful daughter, Donna Maria, called, as Spanish princesses are styled, the Infanta. Now James conceived the design of proposing that his son Charles should marry Donna Maria, and that, in the treaty of marriage, there should be a stipulation providing that the Palatinate should be restored to Frederic.

Negotiations with Spain.

Obstacles and delays.

These negotiations were commenced, and they went on two or three years without making any sensible progress. Donna Maria was a Catholic, and Charles a Protestant. Now a Catholic could not marry a Protestant without a special dispensation from the pope. To get this dispensation required new negotiations and delays. In the midst of it all, the King of Spain, Donna

Maria's father, died, and his son, her brother, named Philip, succeeded him. Then the negotiations had all to be commenced anew. It was supposed that the King of Spain did not wish to have the affair concluded, but liked to have it in discussion, as it tended to keep the King of England more or less under his control. So they continued to send embassies back and forth, with drafts of treaties, articles, conditions, and stipulations without number. There were endless discussions about securing to Donna Maria the full enjoyment of the Catholic religion in England, and express agreements were proposed and debated in respect to her having a chapel, and priests, and the right to celebrate mass, and to enjoy, in fact, all the other privileges which she had been accustomed to exercise in her own native land. James did not object. He agreed to every thing; but still, some how or other, the arrangement could not be closed. There was always some pretext for delay.

Buckingham's proposal.

Nature of the adventure.

At last Buckingham proposed to Charles that they two should set off for Spain in person, and see if they could not settle the affair. Buckingham's motive was partly a sort of reckless daring, which made him love any sort of adventure, and partly a desire to circumvent and thwart a rival of his, the Earl of Bristol, who had charge of the negotiations. It may seem to the reader that a simple journey from London to Madrid, of a young man, for the purpose of visiting a lady whom he was wishing to espouse,

was no such extraordinary undertaking as to attract the attention of a spirited young man to it from love of adventure. The truth is, however, that, with the ideas that then prevailed in respect to royal etiquette, there was something very unusual in this plan. The prince and Buckingham knew very well that the consent of the statesmen and high officers of the realm could never be obtained, and that their only alternative was, accordingly, to go off secretly and in disguise.

Buckingham's dissimulation.

It seemed, however, to be rather necessary to get the king's consent. But Buckingham did not anticipate much difficulty in this, as he was accustomed to manage James almost like a child. He had not, however, been on very good terms with Charles, having been accustomed to treat him in the haughty and imperious manner which James would usually yield to, but which Charles was more inclined to resist and resent. When Buckingham, at length, conceived of this scheme of going into Spain, he changed his deportment toward Charles, and endeavored, by artful dissimulation, to gain his kind regard. He soon succeeded, and then he proposed his plan.

He represented to Charles that the sole cause of the delays in settling the question of his marriage was because it was left so entirely in the hands of ambassadors, negotiators, and statesmen, who involved every thing in endless mazes. "Take the affair into your own hands," said he, "like a man. Set off with me, and go at once into Spain. Astonish them with your sudden and unexpected

presence. The Infanta will be delighted at such a proof of your ardor, courage, and devotion, and will do all in her power to cooperate with you in bringing the affair at once to a close. Besides, the whole world will admire the originality and boldness of the achievement."

Charles persuaded.

James's perplexity.

Charles was easily persuaded. The next thing was to get the king's consent. Charles and Buckingham went to his palace one day, and watching their opportunity when he was pretty merry with wine, Charles said that he had a favor to ask, and wished his father to promise to grant it before he knew what it was. James, after some hesitation, half in jest and half in earnest, agreed to it. They made him promise that he would not tell any one what it was, and then explained their plan. The king was thunderstruck; his amazement sobered him at once. He retracted his promise. He never could consent to any such scheme.

He reluctantly yields.

Buckingham here interposed with his aid. He told the king it was perfectly safe for the prince to go, and that this measure was the only plan which could bring the marriage treaty to a close. Besides, he said, if he and the prince were there, they could act far more effectually than any ambassadors in securing the restoration of the Palatinate to Frederic. James could not withstand these entreaties and arguments, and he finally gave a

reluctant consent to the plan.

James's fears.

Royal captives.

He repented, however, as soon as the consent was given, and when Charles and Buckingham came next to see him, he said it must be given up. One great source of his anxiety was a fear that his son might be taken and kept a prisoner, either in France or Spain, and detained a long time in captivity. Such a captive was always, in those days, a very tempting prize to a rival power. Personages of very high rank may be held in imprisonment, while all the time those who detain them may pretend not to confine them at all, the guards and sentinels being only marks of regal state, and indications of the desire of the power into whose hands they have fallen to treat them in a manner comporting with their rank. Then there were always, in those days, questions and disputes pending between the rival courts of England, France, and Spain, out of which it was easy to get a pretext for detaining any strolling prince who might cross the frontier, as security for the fulfillment of some stipulation, or for doing some act of justice claimed. James, knowing well how much faith and honor were to be expected of kings and courts, was afraid to trust his son in French or Spanish dominions. He said he certainly could not consent to his going, without first sending to *France*, at least, for a safe-conduct – that is, a paper from the government, pledging the honor of the king not to molest or interrupt him in his journey through his dominions.

Buckingham's violence.

Angry disputes.

Buckingham, instead of attempting to reassure the king by fresh arguments and persuasions, broke out into a passion, accused him of violating his promise not to reveal their plan to any one, as he knew, he said, that this new opposition had been put into his head by some of his counselors to whom he had made known the design. The king denied this, and was terrified, agitated, and distressed by Buckingham's violence. He wept like a child. His opposition at length gave way a second time, and he said they might go. They named two attendants whom they wanted to go with them. One was an officer of the king's household, named Collington, who was then in the anteroom. They asked the king to call him in, to see if he would go. When Collington came in, the king accosted him with, "Here's Steeny and Baby Charley that want to go to Spain and fetch the Infanta. What think you of it?" Collington did not think well of it at all. There followed a new relapse on the part of the king from his consent, a new storm of anger from Buckingham, more sullen obstinacy on the part of Charles, with profane criminations and recriminations one against another. The whole scene was what, if it had occurred any where else than in a palace, would have been called a brawl.

James's distress.

It ended, as brawls usually do, in the triumph of the most

unreasonable and violent. James threw himself upon a bed which was in the room, weeping bitterly, and saying that they would go, and he should lose his Baby Charley. Considering that Charles was now the monarch's only child remaining at home, and that, as heir to the crown, his life was of great consequence to the realm, it is not surprising that his father was distressed at the idea of his exposing himself to danger on such an expedition; but one not accustomed to what is behind the scenes in royal life would expect a little more dignity and propriety in the mode of expressing paternal solicitude from a king.

Charles and Buckingham depart.

Charles and Buckingham's boisterous conduct.

Charles and Buckingham set off secretly from London; their two attendants were to join them in different places – the last at Dover, where they were to embark. They laid aside all marks of distinction in dress, such as persons of high rank used to wear in those days, and took the garb of the common people. They put on wigs, also, the hair of which was long, so as to shade the face and alter the expression of their countenances. These external disguises, however, were all that they could command. They could not assume the modest and quiet air and manner of persons in the ordinary walks of life, but made such displays, and were so liberal in the use of their money, and carried such an air and manner in all that they did and said, that all who had any intercourse with them perceived that they were in disguise. They were supposed to be wild blades, out on some frolic or other, but

still they were allowed to pass along without any molestation.

Arrested at Dover.

They were, however, stopped at Dover, where in some way they attracted the attention of the mayor of the town. Dover is on the Channel, opposite to Calais, at the narrowest point. It was, of course, especially in those days, the point where the principal intercourse between the two nations centered. The magistrates of the two towns were obliged, consequently, to be on the alert, to prevent the escape of fugitives and criminals, as well as to guard against the efforts of smugglers, or the entrance of spies or other secret enemies. The Mayor of Dover arrested our heroes. They told him that their names were Tom Smith and Jack Smith; these, in fact, were the names with which they had traveled through England thus far. They said that they were traveling for amusement. The mayor did not believe them. He thought they were going across to the French coast to fight a duel. This was often done in those days. They then told him that they were indeed persons of rank in disguise, and that they were going to inspect the English fleet. He finally allowed them to embark.

Arrival at Paris.

Princess Henrietta.

On landing at Calais, they traveled post to Paris, strictly preserving their incognito, but assuming such an air and bearing as to create the impression that they were not what they pretended. When they reached Paris, Buckingham could not

resist the temptation of showing Charles a little of life, and he contrived to get admitted to a party at court, where Charles saw, among other ladies who attracted his attention, the Princess Henrietta. He was much struck with her beauty and grace, but he little thought that it was this princess, and not the Infanta whom he was going in pursuit of, who was really to become his wife, and the future Queen of England.

Bourdeaux.

The young travelers thought it not prudent to remain long in Paris, and they accordingly left that city, and pressed forward as rapidly as possible toward the Spanish frontier. They managed, however, to conduct always in such a way as to attract attention. Although they were probably sincerely desirous of not having their true rank and character known, still they could not resist the temptation to assume such an air and bearing as to make people wonder who they were, and thus increase the spirit and adventure of their journey. At Bourdeaux they received invitations from some grandees to be present at some great gala, but they declined, saying that they were only poor gentlemen traveling to inform their minds, and were not fit to appear in such gay assemblies.

Entrance into Madrid.

At last they approached Madrid. They had, besides Collington, another attendant who spoke the Spanish language, and served them as an interpreter. They separated from these two the day before they entered Madrid, so as to attract the

less attention. Their attendants were to be left behind for a day, and afterward were to follow them into the city. The British ambassador at Madrid at this time was the Earl of Bristol. He had had charge of all the negotiations in respect to the marriage, and to the restoration of the Palatinate, and believed that he had brought them almost to a successful termination. He lived in a palace in Madrid, and, as is customary with the ambassadors of great powers at the courts of great powers, in a style of the highest pomp and splendor.

Bristol's amazement.

Buckingham took the prince directly to Bristol's house. Bristol was utterly confounded at seeing them. Nothing could be worse, he said, in respect to the completion of the treaty, than the prince's presence in Madrid. The introduction of so new and extraordinary an element into the affair would undo all that had been done, and lead the King of Spain to begin anew, and go over all the ground again. In speaking of this occurrence to another, he said that just as he was on the point of coming to a satisfactory conclusion of his long negotiations and toils, a demon in the shape of Prince Charles came suddenly upon the stage to thwart and defeat them all.

Charles's reception.

Grand procession.

The Spanish court was famous in those days – in fact, it has always been famous – for its punctilious attention to etiquette

and parade; and as soon as the prince's arrival was known to the king, he immediately began to make preparations to welcome him with all possible pomp and ceremony. A great procession was made through the Prado, which is a street in Madrid famous for promenades, processions, and public displays of all kinds. In moving through the city on this occasion, the king and Prince Charles walked together, the monarch thus treating the prince as his equal. There was a great canopy of state borne over their heads as they moved along. This canopy was supported by a large number of persons of the highest rank. The streets, and the windows and balconies of the houses on each side, were thronged with spectators, dressed in the gay and splendid court dresses of those times. When they reached the end of the route, and were about to enter the gate of the palace, there was a delay to decide which should enter first, the king and the prince each insisting on giving the precedence to the other. At last it was settled by their both going in together.

Spanish etiquette.

The Infanta kept secluded.

Athletic amusements.

If the prince thus, on the one hand, derived some benefit in the gratification of his pride by the Spanish etiquette and parade, he suffered some inconvenience and disappointment from it, on the other hand, by its excluding him from all intercourse or acquaintance with the Infanta. It was not proper for the young man to see or to speak to the young lady, in such a case as

this, until the arrangements had been more fully matured. The formalities of the engagement must have proceeded beyond the point which they had yet reached, before the bridegroom could be admitted to a personal interview with the bride. It is true, he could see her in public, where she was in a crowd, with other ladies of the court, and where he could have no communication with her; but this was all. They arranged it, however, to give Charles as many opportunities of this kind as possible. There were shows, in which the prince could see the Infanta among the spectators; and they arranged tiltings and ridings at the ring, and other athletic sports, such as Charles excelled in, and let him perform his exploits in her presence. His rivals in these contests did not have the incivility to conquer him, and his performances excited expressions, at least, of universal admiration.

Charles steals an interview.

But the prince and Buckingham did not very willingly submit to the stiffness and formality of the Spanish court. As soon as they came to feel a little at home, they began to act with great freedom. At one time the prince learned that the Infanta was going, early in the morning, to take a walk in some private pleasure grounds, at a country house in the neighborhood of Madrid, and he conceived the design of gaining an interview with her there by stealth. He accordingly repaired to the place, got admitted in some way within the precincts of the palace, and contrived to clamber over a high wall which separated him from the grounds in which the Infanta was walking, and so let himself

down into her presence. The accounts do not state whether she herself was pleased or alarmed, but the officer who had her in charge, an old nobleman, was very much alarmed, and begged the prince to retire, as he himself would be subject to a very severe punishment if it were known that he had allowed such an interview. Finally they opened the door, and the prince went out. Many people were pleased with this and similar adventures of the prince and of Buckingham, but the leading persons about the court were displeased with them. Their precise and formal notions of propriety were very much shocked by such freedoms.

Irregularities.

Delays and difficulties.

Besides, it was soon found that the characters of these high-born visitors, especially that of Buckingham, were corrupt, and their lives very irregular. Buckingham was accustomed to treat King James in a very bold, familiar, and imperious manner, and he fell insensibly into the same habits of intercourse with those about him in Spain. The little reserve and caution which he manifested at first soon wore off, and he began to be very generally disliked. In the mean time the negotiation was, as Bristol had expected, very much put back by the prince's arrival. The King of Spain formed new plans, and thought of new conditions to impose. The Catholics, too, thought that Charles's coming thus into a Catholic country, indicated some leaning, on his part, toward the Catholic faith. The pope actually wrote him a long letter, the object of which was to draw him off from

the ranks of Protestantism. Charles wrote a civil, but rather an evasive reply.

Letters.

The magic picture.

In the mean time, King James wrote childish letters from time to time to his two dear boys, as he called them, and he sent them a great many presents of jewelry and splendid dresses, some for them to wear themselves, and some for the prince to offer as gifts to the Infanta. Among these, he describes, in one of his letters, a little mirror, set in a case which was to be worn hung at the girdle. He wrote to Charles that when he gave this mirror to the Infanta, he must tell her that it was a picture which he had had imbued with magical virtue by means of incantations and charms, so that whenever she looked into it, she would see a portrait of the most beautiful princess in England, France, or Spain.

The pope's dispensation.

The treaty signed.

At last the great obstacle in the way of the conclusion of the treaty of marriage, which consisted in the delays and difficulties in getting the pope's dispensation, was removed. The dispensation came. But then the King of Spain wanted some new guarantees in respect to the privileges of Catholics in England, under pretense of securing more perfectly the rights of the Infanta and of her attendants when they should have arrived in that country. The truth was, he probably wished to avail himself

of the occasion to gain some foothold for the Catholic faith in England, which country had become almost entirely Protestant. At length, however, all obstacles seemed to be removed, and the treaty was signed. The news of it was received with great joy in England, as it seemed to secure a permanent alliance between the two powerful countries of England and Spain. Great celebrations took place in London, to do honor to the occasion. A chapel was built for the Infanta, to be ready for her on her arrival; and a fleet was fitted out to convey her and her attendants to her new home.

Buckingham is hated.

He breaks off the match.

In the mean time, however, although the king had signed the treaty, there was a strong party formed against the marriage in Spain. Buckingham was hated and despised. Charles, they saw, was almost entirely under his influence. They said they would rather see the Infanta in her grave than in the hands of such men. Buckingham became irritated by the hostility he had awakened, and he determined to break off the match entirely. He wrote home to James that he did not believe the Spanish court had any intention of carrying the arrangement really into effect; that they were procrastinating the affair on every possible pretext, and that he was really afraid that, if the prince were to attempt to leave the country, they would interpose and detain him as a prisoner. King James was very much alarmed. He wrote in the greatest trepidation, urging "the lads" to come away immediately, leaving a proxy behind them, if necessary, for the solemnization of the

marriage. This was what Buckingham wanted, and he and the prince began to make preparations for their departure.

Festivities at the Escorial.

Taking leave.

The King of Spain, far from interposing any obstacles in the way, only treated them with greater and higher marks of respect as the time of their separation from his court drew nigh. He arranged great and pompous ceremonies to honor their departure. He accompanied them, with all the grandees of the court, as far as to the Escorial, which is a famous royal palace not far from Madrid, built and furnished in the most sumptuous style of magnificence and splendor. Here they had parting feasts and celebrations. Here the prince took his leave of the Infanta, Bristol serving as interpreter, to translate his parting speeches into Spanish, so that she could understand them. From the Escorial the prince and Buckingham, with a great many English noblemen who had followed them to Madrid, and a great train of attendants, traveled toward the seacoast, where a fleet of vessels were ready to receive them.

Return to London.

The Spanish match broken off.

They embarked at a port called St. Andrew. They came very near being lost in a storm of mist and rain which came upon them while going out to the ships, which were at a distance from the shore, in small boats provided to convey them. Having escaped

this danger, they arrived safely at Portsmouth, the great landing point of the British navy on the southern shores of England, and thence proceeded to London. They sent back orders that the proxy should not be used, and the match was finally abandoned, each party accusing the other of duplicity and bad faith. King James was however, very glad to get his son safe back again, and the people made as many bonfires and illuminations to celebrate the breaking up of this Catholic match, as they had done before to do honor to its supposed completion. As all hope of recovering the Palatinate by negotiation was now past, the king began to prepare for the attempt to conquer it by force of arms.

Chapter III.

Accession To the Throne

1625

James prepares for war.

King James made slow progress in his military preparations. He could not raise the funds without the action of Parliament, and the houses were not in very good humor. The expenses of the prince's visit to Spain had been enormous, and other charges, arising out of the pomp and splendor with which the arrangements of the court were maintained, gave them a strong feeling of discontent. They had other grievances of which they were disposed to complain, and they began to look upon this war, notwithstanding its Protestant character, as one in which the king was only striving to recover his son-in-law's dominions, and, consequently, as one which pertained more to his personal interests than to the public welfare of the realm.

He falls ill.

Suspicious.

Death of James.

While things were in this state the king fell sick. The mother

of the Duke of Buckingham undertook to prescribe for him. It was understood that Buckingham himself, who had, in the course of the Spanish enterprise, and since his return, acquired an entire ascendancy over Charles, was not unwilling that his old master should leave the stage, and the younger one reign in his stead; and that his mother shared in this feeling. At any rate, her prescriptions made the king much worse. He had the sacrament administered to him in his sick chamber, and said that he derived great comfort from it. One morning, very early, he sent for the prince to come and see him. Charles rose, dressed himself, and came. His father had something to say to him, and tried to speak. He could not. His strength was too far gone. He fell back upon his pillow, and died.

Accession of Charles.

Charles was, of course, now king. The theory in the English monarchy is, that the king never dies. So soon as the person in whom the royal sovereignty resides ceases to breathe, the principle of supremacy vests immediately in his successor, by a law of transmission entirely independent of the will of man. The son becomes king by a divine right. His being proclaimed and crowned, as he usually is, at some convenient time early in his reign, are not ceremonies which *make* him king. They only acknowledge him to be so. He does not, in any sense, derive his powers and prerogatives from these acts. He only receives from his people, by means of them, a recognition of his right to the high office to which he has already been inducted by the fiat of

Heaven.

Different ideas of the nature and end of government.

It will be observed, thus, that the ideas which prevailed in respect to the nature and province of government, were very different in England at that time, from those which are entertained in America at the present day. With us, the administration of government is merely a *business*, transacted for the benefit of the people by their agents – men who are put in power for this purpose, and who, like other agents, are responsible to their principals for the manner in which they fulfill their trusts. But government in England was, in the days of the Stuarts – and it is so to a great extent at the present day – a *right* which one family possessed, and which entitled that family to certain immunities, powers, and prerogatives, which they held entirely independent of any desire, on the part of the people, that they should exercise them, or even their *consent* that they should do so. The right to govern the realm of Great Britain was a sort of estate which descended to Charles from his ancestors, and with the possession and enjoyment of which the community had no right to interfere.

Hereditary succession illustrated by an argument.

This seems, at first view, very absurd to us, but it is not particularly absurd. Charles's lawyers would say to any plain proprietor of a piece of land, who might call in question his right to govern the country, The king holds his crown by precisely the

same tenure that you hold your farm. Why should you be the exclusive possessor of that land, while so many poor beggars are starving? Because it has descended to you from your ancestors, and nothing has descended to them. And it is precisely so that the right to manage the fleets and armies, and to administer the laws of the realm, has descended, under the name of *sovereignty*, to him, and no such political power has descended to you.

True, the farmer would reply; but in matters of government we are to consider what will promote the general good. The great object to be attained is the welfare and happiness of the community. Now, if this general welfare comes into competition with the supposed rights of individuals, arising from such a principle as hereditary succession, the latter ought certainly to yield.

Property and prerogatives.

But why, might the lawyer reply, should rights founded on hereditary succession yield any more readily in the case of *government* than in the case of *property*? The distribution of property influences the general welfare quite as much as the management of power. Suppose it were proved that the general welfare of your parish would be promoted by the division of your land among the destitute there. You have nothing to oppose to such a proposition but your hereditary right. And the king has that to oppose to any plan of a division of his prerogatives and powers among the people who would like to share them.

Hereditary succession an absolute right.

Whatever may be thought of this reasoning on this side of the Atlantic, and at the present day, it was considered very satisfactory in England two or three centuries ago. The true and proper jurisdiction of an English monarch, as it had existed from ancient times, was considered as an *absolute right*, vesting in each successive inheritor of the crown, and which the community could not justly interfere with or disturb for any reasons less imperious than such as would authorize an interference with the right of succession to private property. Indeed, it is probable that, with most men at that time, an inherited right to *govern* was regarded as the most sacred of the two.

Three things hereditary in England.

The fact seems to be, that the right of a son to come into the place of his father, whether in respect to property, power, or social rank, is not a natural, inherent, and indefeasible right, but a *privilege* which society accords, as a matter of convenience and expediency. In England, expediency is, on the whole, considered to require that all three of these things, viz., property, rank, and power, in certain cases, should descend from father to son. In this country, on the other hand, we confine the hereditament to property, abrogating it in the case of rank and power. In neither case is there probably any absolute natural right, but a conventional right is allowed to take its place in one, or another, or all of these particulars, according to the opinion of

the community in respect to what its true interests and the general welfare, on the whole, require.

The Stuarts.

The kings themselves of this Stuart race – which race includes Mary Queen of Scots, the mother of the line, and James I., Charles I., Charles II., and James II. – entertained very high ideas of these hereditary rights of theirs to govern the realm of England. They felt a determination to maintain these rights and powers at all hazards. Charles ascended the throne with these feelings, and the chief point of interest in the history of his reign is the contest in which he engaged with the English people in his attempts to maintain them.

Parliament.

The Legislature in the United States.

The body with which the king came most immediately into conflict in this long struggle for ascendancy, was the Parliament. And here American readers are very liable to fall into a mistake by considering the houses of Parliament as analogous to the houses of legislation in the various governments of this country. In our governments the chief magistrate has only to execute definite and written laws and ordinances, passed by the Legislature, and which the Legislature may pass with or without his consent; and when enacted, he must be governed by them. Thus the president or the governor is, in a certain sense, the agent and officer of the legislative power of the state, to carry

into effect its decisions, and this *legislative* power has really the control.

The nature of Parliament.

By the ancient Constitution of England, however, the Parliament was merely a body of counselors, as it were, summoned by the king to give him their advice, to frame for him such laws as he wished to have framed, and to aid him in raising funds by taxing the people. The king might call this council or not, as he pleased. There was no necessity for calling it unless he needed more funds than he could raise by his own resources. When called, they felt that they had come, in a great measure, to aid the king in doing his will. When they framed a law, they sent it to him, and if he was satisfied with it, he *made it law*. It was the king who really enacted it. If he did not approve the law, he wrote upon the parchment which contained it, "The king will think of it," and that was the end. The king would call upon them to assess a tax and collect the money, and would talk to them about his plans, and his government, and the aid which he desired from them to enable him to accomplish what he had himself undertaken. In fact, the king was the government, and the houses of Parliament his instruments to aid him in giving effect to his decrees.

The nobles.

The House of Commons.

Its humble position.

The nobles, that is, the heads of the great families, and also the bishops, who were the heads of the various dioceses of the Church formed one branch of this great council. This was called the House of Lords. Certain representatives of the counties and of the towns formed another branch, called the House of Commons. These delegates came to the council, not from any right which the counties and towns were supposed to possess to a share in the government, but simply because they were summoned by the king to come and give him their aid. They were to serve without pay, as a matter of duty which they owed to the sovereign. Those that came from counties were called knights, and those from the towns burgesses. These last were held in very little estimation. The towns, in those days, were considered as mere collections of shopkeepers and tradesmen, who were looked down upon with much disdain by the haughty nobles. When the king called his Parliament together, and went in to address them, he entered the chamber of the House of Peers, and the commons were called in, to stand where they could, with their heads uncovered, to hear what he had to say. They were, in a thousand other ways, treated as an inferior class; but still their counsels might, in some cases, be of service, and so they were summoned to attend, though they were to meet always, and deliberate, in a separate chamber.

The king's power over Parliament.

As the king could call the Parliament together at any time and place he pleased, so he could suspend or terminate their sittings at

any time. He could intermit the action of a Parliament for a time, sending the members to their homes until he should summon them again. This was called a *prorogation*. Or he could dissolve the body entirely at any time, and then require new elections for a new Parliament whenever he wished to avail himself of the wisdom or aid of such a body again.

His responsibility.

Thus every thing went on the supposition that the real responsibility for the government was with the king. He was the monarch, and the real sovereignty vested in him. He called his nobles, and a delegation from the mass of the people, together, whenever he wanted their help, and not otherwise. He was responsible, not to them nor to the people at large, but to God only, for the acts of his administration. The duty of Parliament was limited to that of aiding him in carrying out his plans of government, and the people had nothing to do but to be obedient, submissive, and loyal. These were, at any rate, the ideas of the kings, and all the forms of the English Constitution and the ancient phraseology in which the transactions are expressed, correspond with them.

An illustration.

We can not give a better proof and illustration of what has been said than by transcribing the substance of one of King James's messages to his Parliament, delivered about the close of his life, and, of course, at the period of which we are writing. It

was as follows:

James's message to Parliament.

Its high tone.

"My Lords spiritual and temporal, and you the Commons: In my last Parliament I made long discourses, especially to them of the Lower House. I did open the true thought of my heart. But I may say with our Savior, 'I have piped to you and ye have not danced; I have mourned to you and you have not lamented;' so all my sayings turned to me again without any success. And now, to tell the reasons of your calling and of this meeting, apply it to yourselves, and spend not the time in long speeches. Consider that the Parliament is a thing composed of a head and a body; the monarch and the two estates. It was, first, a monarchy; then, after, a Parliament. There are no Parliaments but in monarchical governments; for in Venice, the Netherlands, and other free governments there are none. The head is to call the body together; and for the clergy the bishops are chief, for shires their knights, for towns and cities their burgesses and citizens. These are to treat of difficult matters, and counsel their king with their best advice to make laws¹ for the commonweal and the Lower House is also to petition the king and acquaint him with their grievances, and not to meddle with the king's prerogative. They are to offer supply for his necessity, and he to distribute, in recompense thereof, justice and mercy.

¹ Meaning advice to him how he shall make laws, as is evident from what is said below.

As in all Parliaments it is the *king's* office to make good laws, whose fundamental cause is the people's ill manners, so at this time.

"For a supply to my necessities, I have reigned eighteen years, in which I have had peace, and I have received far less supply than hath been given to any king since the Conquest. The last queen had, one year with another, above a hundred thousand pounds per annum in subsidies; and in all my time I have had but four subsidies and six fifteens². It is ten years since I had a subsidy, in all which time I have been sparing to trouble you. I have turned myself as nearly to save expenses as I may. I have abated much in my household expenses, in my navies, and the charge of my munition."

After speaking about the affairs of the Palatinate, and calling upon the Parliament to furnish him with money to recover it for his son-in-law, he adds:

"Consider the trade for the making thereof better, and show me the reason why my mint, these eight or nine years, hath not gone. I confess I have been liberal in my grants; but if I be informed, I will amend all hurtful grievances. But whoever shall hasten after grievances, and desire to make himself popular he hath the spirit of Satan. I was, in my first Parliament, a novice; and in my last, there was a kind of beasts, called *undertakers*, a dozen of whom undertook to govern the last Parliament, and they led me. I shall thank *you* for your good office, and desire that the world may say

² Species of taxes granted by Parliament.

well of our agreement."

This kind of harangue from the king to his Parliament seems not to have been considered at the time, at all extraordinary; though, if such a message were to be sent, at the present day, to a body of legislators, whether by a king or a president, it would certainly produce a sensation.

Privileges of the House of Commons.

The king's prerogatives.

Charles's contest with Parliament.

Still, notwithstanding what we have said, the Parliament did contrive gradually to attain to the possession of some privileges and powers of its own. The English people have a great deal of independence and spirit, though Americans traveling there, with ideas carried from this country, are generally surprised at finding so little instead of so much. The knights and burgesses of the House of Commons, though they submitted patiently to the forms of degradation which the lords and kings imposed upon them, gradually got possession of certain powers which they claimed as their own, and which they showed a strong disposition to defend. They claimed the exclusive right to lay taxes of every kind. This had been the usage so long, that they had the same right to it that the king had to his crown. They had a right too, to petition the king for a redress of any grievances which they supposed the people were suffering under his reign. These, and certain other powers and immunities which they had possessed, were called their *privileges*. The king's rights

were, on the other hand, called his *prerogatives*. The Parliament were always endeavoring to extend, define, and establish their privileges. The king was equally bent on maintaining his ancient prerogatives. King Charles's reign derives its chief interest from the long and insane contest which he waged with his Parliament on this question. The contest commenced at the king's accession to the throne, and lasted a quarter of a century: it ended with his losing all his prerogatives and his head.

Present condition of the Commons.

Its vast influence.

This circumstance, that the main interest in King Charles's reign is derived from his contest with his Parliament, has made it necessary to explain somewhat fully, as we have done, the nature of that body. We have described it as it was in the days of the Stuarts; but, in order not to leave any wrong impression on the mind of the reader in regard to its present condition, we must add, that though all its external forms remain the same, the powers and functions of the body have greatly changed. The despised and contemned knights and burgesses, that were not worthy to have seats provided for them when the king was delivering them his speech, now rule the world; or, at least, come nearer to the possession of that dominion than any other power has ever done, in ancient or modern times. They decide who shall administer the government, and in what way. They make the laws, settle questions of trade and commerce, decide really on peace and war, and, in a word, hold the whole control, while

the nominal sovereign takes rides in the royal parks, or holds drawing-rooms in the palaces, in empty and powerless parade. There is no question that the British House of Commons has exerted a far wider influence on the destinies of the human race than any other governmental power that has ever existed. It has gone steadily on for five, and perhaps for ten centuries, in the same direction and toward the same ends; and whatever revolutions may threaten other elements of European power, the British House of Commons, in some form or other, is as sure as any thing human can be of existence and power for five or ten centuries to come.

Old forms still retained.

Will probably be changed.

And yet it is one of the most remarkable of the strange phenomena of social life, that this body, standing at the head, as it really does, of all human power, submits patiently still to all the marks and tokens of inferiority and degradation which accompanied its origin. It comes together when the sovereign sends writs, *ordering* the several constituencies to choose their representatives, and the representatives to assemble. It comes humbly into the House of Peers to listen to the instructions of the sovereign at the opening of the session, the members in a standing position, and with heads uncovered.³ It debates these

³ Even in the case of a committee of conference between the two houses, the lords have seats in the committee-room and wear their hats. The members from the commons must stand, and be uncovered during the deliberations!

suggestions with forms and in a phraseology which imply that it is only considering what *counsel* to give the king. It enacts nothing – it only recommends; and it holds its existence solely at the discretion of the great imaginary power which called it into being. These forms may, very probably, soon be changed for others more true to the facts; and the principle of election may be changed, so as to make the body represent more fully the general population of the empire; but the body itself will doubtless continue its action for a very long period to come.

Effects of a demise of the crown.

All offices expire.

According to the view of the subject which we have presented, it would of course follow, as the real sovereignty was mainly in the king's hands, that at the death of one monarch and the accession of another, the functions of all officers holding their places under the authority of the former would cease. This was actually the case. And it shows how entirely the Parliament was considered as the instrument and creation of the king, that on the death of a king, the Parliament immediately expired. The new monarch must make a new Parliament, if he wished one, to help him carry out his own plans. In the same manner almost all other offices expired. As it would be extremely inconvenient or impossible to appoint anew all the officers of such a realm on a sudden emergency, it is usual for the king to issue a decree renewing the appointments of the existing incumbents of these offices. Thus King Charles, two days after his father's death,

made it his first act to renew the appointments of the members of his father's privy council, of the foreign ambassadors, and of the judges of the courts, in order that the affairs of the empire might go on without interruption. He also issued summonses for calling a Parliament, and then made arrangements for the solemnization of his father's funeral.

Westminster.

The Strand.

Temple Bar.

The scene of these transactions was what was, in those days, called Westminster. Minster means cathedral. A cathedral church had been built, and an abbey founded, at a short distance west from London, near the mouth of the Thames. The church was called the West *minster*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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