

**GARDINER
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OLIVER CROMWELL

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Oliver Cromwell:

Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	54
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	74

Samuel Rawson Gardiner

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PREFACE

The following work gives within a short compass a history of Oliver Cromwell from a biographical point of view. The text has been revised by the author, but otherwise is the same in a cheaper form as that which was published by Messrs. Goupil with illustrations in their Illustrated Series of Historical Volumes.

CHAPTER I.

KING AND PARLIAMENT

Oliver Cromwell, the future Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, was born at Huntingdon on April 25, 1599, receiving his baptismal name from his uncle, Sir Oliver Cromwell of Hinchbrooke, a mansion hard by the little town. It was at Huntingdon that the father of the infant, Robert Cromwell, had established himself, farming lands and perhaps also adding to his income by the profits of a brewhouse managed by his wife, Elizabeth – a descendant of a middle-class Norfolk family of Steward – originally Styward – which, whatever writers of authority may say, was not in any way connected with the Royal House of Scotland.

"I was," said Cromwell in one of his later speeches, "by birth a gentleman, living neither in any considerable height nor yet in obscurity. I have been called to several employments in the nation, and – not to be overtedious – I did endeavour to discharge the duty of an honest man in those services to God and His people's interest, and to the Commonwealth." The open secret of Cromwell's public life is set forth in these words: – his aim being: first, to be himself an honest man; secondly, to serve God and the people of God; and thirdly, to fulfil his duty to the Commonwealth. In this order, and in no other, did his obligations

to his fellow-creatures present themselves to his eyes. For the work before him it could not be otherwise than helpful that his position in life brought him into contact with all classes of society.

What powers and capacities this infant – or indeed any other infant – may have derived from this or the other ancestor, is a mystery too deep for human knowledge; but at least it may be noted that the descent of the Cromwells from Sir Richard Williams, the nephew of Thomas Cromwell, the despotic Minister of Henry VIII., brought into the family a Welsh strain which may have shown itself in the fervid idealism lighting up the stern practical sense of the warrior and statesman.

Of Oliver's father little is known; but his portrait testifies that he was a man of sober Puritanism, not much given to any form of spiritual enthusiasm – very unlike his elder brother, Sir Oliver, who had inherited not only the estate, but the splendid ways of his father, Sir Henry Cromwell – the Golden Knight – and who, after running through his property, was compelled to sell his land and to retire into a more obscure position. As the little Oliver grew up, he had before his eyes the types of the future Cavalier and Roundhead in his own family. So far as parental influence could decide the question, there could be no doubt on which side the young Oliver would take his stand. His education was carried on in the free school of the town, under Dr. Beard, the author of *The Theatre of God's Judgments Displayed*, in which a belief in the constant intervention of Providence in the punishment of

offenders was set forth by numerous examples of the calamities of the wicked. Though Oliver afterwards learned to modify the crudeness of this teaching, the doctrine that success or failure was an indication of Divine favour or disfavour never left him, and he was able, in the days of his greatness, to point unhesitatingly to the results of Naseby and Worcester as evidence that God Himself approved of the victorious cause.

In 1616 Cromwell matriculated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, where his portrait now adorns the walls of the College hall. After a sojourn of no more than a year, he left the University, probably – as his father died in that year – to care for his widowed mother and his five sisters, he himself being now the only surviving son. It is said that not long afterwards he settled in London to study law, and though there is no adequate authority for this statement, it derives support from the fact that he found a wife in London, marrying in 1620, at the early age of twenty-one, Elizabeth Bouchier, the daughter of a City merchant. The silence of contemporaries shows that, in an age when many women took an active part in politics, she confined herself to the sphere of domestic influence. The one letter of hers that is preserved displays not merely her affectionate disposition, but also her helpfulness in reminding her great husband of the necessity of performing those little acts of courtesy which men engaged in large affairs are sometimes prone to neglect. She was undoubtedly a model of female perfection after the Periclean standard.

Of Cromwell's early life for some years after his marriage we have little positive information. His public career was opened by his election in 1628 to sit for Huntingdon in the Parliament which insisted on the Petition of Right. Though his uncle had by this time left Hinchinbrooke, and could therefore have had no direct influence on the electors, it is quite likely that the choice of his fellow-townsmen was, to a great extent, influenced by their desire to show their attachment to a family with which they had long been in friendly relation.

Even so, however, it is in the highest degree improbable that Cromwell would have been selected by his neighbours, to whom every action of his life had been laid open, unless they had had reason to confide in his moral worth as well as in his aptitude for public business. Yet it is in this period of his life that, if Royalist pamphleteers are to be credited, Cromwell was wallowing in revolting profligacy, and the charge may seem to find some support from his own language in a subsequent letter to his cousin, Mrs. St. John: "You know," he wrote, "what my manner of life hath been. Oh! I lived in and loved darkness, and hated light. I was a chief – the chief of sinners. This is true, I hated godliness, yet God had mercy upon me." It has however never been wise to take the expressions of a converted penitent literally, and it is enough to suppose that Cromwell had been, at least whilst an undergraduate at Cambridge, a buoyant, unthinking youth, fond of outdoor exercise; though, on the other hand, whilst he never attained to proficiency as a scholar, he by no means

neglected the authorised studies of the place. Much as opinion has differed on every other point in his character, there was never any doubt as to his love of horses and to his desire to encourage men of learning. It may fairly be argued that his tastes in either direction must have been acquired in youth.

One piece of evidence has indeed been put forward against Cromwell. On the register of St. John's parish at Huntingdon are two entries – one dated 1621, and the other 1628 – stating that Cromwell submitted in those years to some form of Church censure. The formation of the letters, however, the absence of any date of month or day, and also the state of the parchment on which the entries occur, leave no reasonable doubt that they were the work of a forger. It does not follow that the forger had not a recollection that something of the kind had happened within local memory, and if we take it as possible that Cromwell was censured for 'his deeds,' whatever they may have been, in 1621, and that in 1628 he voluntarily acknowledged some offence – the wording of the forged entry gives some countenance to this deduction – may we not note a coincidence of date between the second entry and one in the diary of Sir Theodore Mayerne – the fashionable physician of the day – who notes that Oliver Cromwell, who visited him in September of that year, was *valde melancholicus*. Even if no heed whatever is to be paid to the St. John's register, Mayerne's statement enables us approximately to date that time of mental struggle which he passed through at some time in these years, and which was at last brought to

an end when the contemplation of his own unworthiness yielded to the assurance of his Saviour's love. "Whoever yet," he wrote long afterwards to his daughter Bridget, "tasted that the Lord is gracious, without some sense of self, vanity and badness?" It was a crisis in his life which, if he had been born in the Roman communion, would probably have sent him – as it sent Luther – into a monastery. Being what he was, a Puritan Englishman, it left him with strong resolution to do his work in this world strenuously, and to help others in things temporal, as he himself had been helped in things spiritual.

English Puritanism, like other widely spread influences, was complex in its nature, leading to different results in different men. Intellectually it was based on the Calvinistic theology, and many were led on by it to the fiercest intolerance of all systems of thought and practice which were unconformable thereto. Cromwell's nature was too large, and his character too strong, to allow him long to associate himself with the bigots of his age. His Puritanism – if not as universally sympathetic as a modern philosopher might wish – was moral rather than intellectual. No doubt it rendered him impatient of the outward forms in which the religious devotion of such contemporaries as George Herbert and Crashaw found appropriate sustenance, but at the same time it held him back from bowing down to the idol of the men of his own party – the requirement of accurate conformity to the Calvinistic standard of belief. It was sufficient for him, if he and his associates found inspiration in a sense of personal

dependence on God, issuing forth in good and beneficent deeds.

When, in 1628, Cromwell took his seat in the House of Commons he would be sure of a good reception as a cousin of Hampden. There is, however, nothing to surprise us in his silence during the eventful debates on the Petition of Right. He was no orator by nature, though he could express himself forcibly when he felt deeply, and at this time, and indeed during the whole of his life, he felt more deeply on religious than on political questions. The House, in its second session held in 1629, was occupied during the greater portion of its time with religious questions, and it was then that Cromwell made his first speech, if so short an utterance can be dignified by that name. "Dr. Beard," he informed the House, "told him that one Dr. Alablaster did at the Spital preach in a sermon tenets of Popery, and Beard being to repeat the same, the now Bishop of Winton, then Bishop of Lincoln, did send for Dr. Beard, and charged him as his diocesan, not to preach any doctrine contrary to that which Alablaster had delivered, and when Beard did, by the advice of Bishop Felton, preach against Dr. Alablaster's sermon and person, Dr. Neile, now Bishop of Winton, did reprehend him, the said Beard, for it."

The circumstances of the time give special biographical importance to the opening of this window into Cromwell's mind. The strife between the Puritan clergy and the Court prelates was waxing high. The latter, whilst anxious to enforce discipline, and the external usages which, though enjoined in the Prayer Book, had been neglected in many parts of the country, were at the

same time contending for a broader religious teaching than that presented by Calvin's logic; but knowing that they were in a comparatively small minority they, perhaps not unnaturally, fell back on the protection of the King, who was in ecclesiastical matters completely under the influence of Laud. The result of Charles's consultations with such Bishops as were at hand had been the issue of a Declaration which was prefixed to a new edition of the articles, and is to be found in Prayer Books at the present day. The King's remedy for disputes in the Church on predestination and such matters was to impose silence on both parties, and it was in view of this policy that Cromwell raked up an old story to show how at least twelve years before, his old schoolmaster, Dr. Beard, had been forbidden to preach any doctrine but that which the member for Huntingdon stigmatised as Popish, and this too by a prelate who was now seeking, in a less direct way, to impose silence on Puritan ministers. Other members of Parliament had striven to oppose the ecclesiasticism of the Court by the intolerant assertion that Calvinism alone was to be preached. Cromwell did nothing of the kind. He did not even say that those who upheld what he calls 'tenets of Popery' were to be silenced. He merely asked that those who objected to them might be free to deliver their testimony in public. There is the germ here of his future liberal policy as Lord Protector – the germ too of a wide difference of opinion from those with whom he was at this time acting in concert.¹

¹ My argument would obviously not stand if the remainder of the speech printed in

Little as we know of Cromwell's proceedings during the eleven years in which no Parliament sat, that little is significant. His interference in temporal affairs was invariably on the side of the poor. In 1630 a new charter was granted to Huntingdon, conferring the government of the town on a mayor and twelve aldermen appointed for life. To this Cromwell raised no objection, taking no special delight in representative institutions, but he protested against so much of the charter as, by allowing the new corporation to deal at its pleasure with the common property of the borough, left the holders of rights of pasture at their mercy; and, heated by a sense of injustice to his poorer neighbours, he spoke angrily on the matter to Barnard, the new mayor. Cromwell was summoned before the council, with the result that the Earl of Manchester, appointed to arbitrate, sustained his objections, whilst Cromwell, having gained his point, apologised for the roughness of his speech. It is not unlikely that it was in consequence of this difference with the new governors of the town that he shortly afterwards sold his property there, and removed to St. Ives, where he established himself as a grazing farmer. Nor was he less solicitous for the spiritual than for the temporal welfare of his neighbours. Many Puritans were at this time attempting to lessen the influence of the beneficed clergy, who were, in many places, opposed to them, by raising sums for the payment of lecturers, who would preach Puritan

Rushworth were held to be genuine. There is, however, good reason to know that it is not (*Hist. of Eng.*, 1603–1642, vii., 56, note).

sermons without being bound to read prayers before them. The earliest extant letter of Cromwell's was written in 1636 to a City merchant, asking him to continue his subscription to the maintenance of a certain Dr. Wells, 'a man of goodness and industry and ability to do good every way'. "You know, Mr. Story," he adds, "to withdraw the pay is to let fall the lecture, and who goeth to warfare at his own cost?"

In 1636 Cromwell removed to Ely, where he farmed the Cathedral tithes in succession to his maternal uncle, Sir Thomas Steward. Soon after he was settled in his new home, there were disturbances in the fen country which the Earl of Bedford and his associates were endeavouring to drain. On the plea that the work was already accomplished, the new proprietors ordered the expulsion of cattle from the pastures scattered amongst the waters. The owners, egged on by one at least of the neighbouring gentry, tumultuously resisted the attempt to exclude them from their rights of commonage. We are told, too, that 'it is commonly reported by the commoners in the said fens and the fens adjoining, that Mr. Cromwell, of Ely, hath undertaken – they paying him a groat for every cow they have upon the common – to hold the drainers in writ of law for five years, and that in the mean time they should enjoy every foot of their commons'. That Cromwell should have taken up the cause of the weak, and at the same time should have attempted to serve them by legal proceedings, whilst keeping aloof from their riotous action, is a fair indication of the character of the man. No wonder he grew

in popularity, or that in 1640 he was elected by the borough of Cambridge to both the Parliaments which met in that year.

In the Short Parliament Cromwell sat, so far as we know, as a silent member. Of his appearance in the Long Parliament we have the often-quoted description of his personal appearance from a young courtier. "I came into the House," wrote Sir Philip Warwick, "one morning well clad, and perceived a gentleman speaking whom I knew not, very ordinarily apparelled, for it was a plain cloth suit which seemed to be made by an ill country tailor; his linen was plain, and not very clean; and I remember a speck or two of blood upon his little band, which was not larger than his collar. His hat was without a hat-band. His stature was of a good size; his sword stuck close to his side; his countenance swollen and reddish, his voice sharp and untuneable, and his eloquence full of fervour, for the subject matter would not bear much of reason, it being on behalf of a servant of Mr Prynne's who had dispersed libels against the Queen for her dancing and such like innocent and courtly sports; and he aggravated the imprisonment of this man by the council-table unto that height that one would have believed the very Government itself had been in great danger by it. I sincerely profess it lessened much my reverence unto that great council, for he was very much hearkened unto; and yet I lived to see this very gentleman whom, by multiplied good escapes, and by real but usurped power, having had a better tailor, and more converse among good company, appear of great and majestic

deportment and comely presence." Curiously enough the so-called servant of Prynne – he was never actually in Prynne's service at all – was no other than John Lilburne, who was such a thorn in the flesh to Cromwell in later years. In undertaking the defence of the man who had been sentenced to scourge and imprisonment for disseminating books held to be libels by Charles and his ministers, Cromwell announced to his fellow-members his own political position. In life – and above all in political life – it is not possible to satisfy those who expect the actions of any man to be absolutely consistent. Later generations may be convinced not only that Charles was sincere in following a course which he believed to be the right one, but that this course commended itself to certain elements of human nature, and was, therefore, no mere emanation of his own personal character. It nevertheless remains that he was far from being strong enough for the place which he had inherited from his predecessors, and that in wearing the garments of the Elizabethan monarchy, he was all too unconscious of the work which the new generation required of him – all too ready to claim the rights of Elizabeth, without a particle of the skill in the art of government which she derived from her intimate familiarity with the people over which she had been called to rule.

Charles's unskilfulness was the more disastrous, as he came to the throne during a crisis when few men would have been able to maintain the prestige of the monarchy. On the one hand the special powers entrusted to the Tudor sovereigns were no longer

needed after the domestic and foreign dangers which occupied their reigns had been successfully met. On the other hand, a strife between religious parties had arisen which called for action on lines very different from those which had commended themselves to Elizabeth. In throwing off the authority of the Roman See, Elizabeth had the national spirit of England at her back, whilst in resisting the claims of the Presbyterian clergy, she had the support of the great majority of the laity. By the end of her reign she had succeeded in establishing that special form of ecclesiastical government which she favoured. Yet though the clergy had ceased to cry out for the supersession of episcopacy by the Presbyterian discipline, the bulk of the clergy and of the religious laity were Puritan to the core. So much had been effected by the long struggle against Rome and Spain and the resulting detestation of any form of belief which savoured of Rome and Spain. During the twenty-two years of the peace-loving James, religious thought ceased to be influenced by a sense of national danger. First one, and then another – a Bancroft, an Andrewes, or a Laud, men of the college or the cathedral – began to think their own thoughts, to welcome a wider interpretation of religious truths than that of Calvin's Institute, and, above all, to distrust the inward conviction as likely to be warped by passion or self-interest, and to dwell upon the value of the external influences of ritual and organisation. To do justice to both these schools of thought and practice at the time of Charles's accession would have taxed the strength of any man,

seeing how unprepared was the England of that day to admit the possibility of toleration. The pity of it was that Charles, with all his fine feelings and conscientious rectitude, was unfitted for the task. Abandoning himself heart and soul to the newly risen tide of religious thought, his imagination was too weak to enable him to realise the strength of Puritanism, so that he bent his energies, not to securing for his friends free scope for the exercise of what persuasion was in them, but for the repression of those whom he looked upon as the enemies of the Church and the Crown. With the assistance of Laud he did everything in his power to crush Puritanism, with the result of making Puritanism stronger than it had been before. Every man of independent mind who revolted against the petty interference exercised by Laud placed himself by sympathy, if not by perfect conviction, in the Puritan ranks.

Neither in Elizabeth's nor in Charles's reign was it possible to dissociate politics from religion. Parliament, dissatisfied with Charles's ineffectual guidance of the State, was still more dissatisfied with his attempt to use his authority over the Church to the profit of an unpopular party. The House of Commons representing mainly that section of the population in which Puritanism was the strongest – the country gentlemen in touch with the middle-class in the towns – was eager to pull down Laud's system in the Church, and to hinder the extension of Royal authority in the State. To do this it was necessary not only to diminish the power of the Crown, but to transfer much of it to Parliament, which, at least in the eyes of its members, was far

more capable of governing England wisely.

That Cromwell heartily accepted this view of the situation is evident from his being selected to move the second reading of the Bill for the revival of annual Parliaments, which, by a subsequent compromise, was ultimately converted into a Triennial Act ordaining that there should never again be an intermission of Parliament for more than three years. The fact that he was placed on no less than eighteen committees in the early part of the sittings of the Parliaments shows that he had acquired a position which he could never have reached merely through his cousinship with Hampden and St. John. That he concurred in the destruction of the special courts which had fortified the Crown in the Tudor period, and in the prosecution of Strafford, needs no evidence to prove. These were the acts of the House as a whole. It was the part he took on those ecclesiastical questions which divided the House into two antagonistic parties which is most significant of his position at this time.

However much members of the House of Commons might differ on the future government of the Church, they were still of one mind as to the necessity of changing the system under which it had been of late controlled. There may have been much to be said on behalf of an episcopacy exercising a moderating influence over the clergy, and guarding the rights of minorities against the oppressive instincts of a clerical majority. As a matter of fact this had not been the attitude of Charles's Bishops. Appointed by the Crown, and chosen out of one party only – and

that the party of the minority amongst the clergy and the religious laity – they had seized the opportunity of giving free scope to their own practices and of hampering in every possible way the practices of those opposed to them. It was no Puritan, but Jeremy Taylor, the staunch defender of monarchy and episcopacy, who hit the nail on the head. "The interest of the bishops," he wrote, "is conjunct with the prosperity of the King, besides the interest of their own security, by the obligation of secular advantages. For they who have their livelihood from the King, and are in expectance of their fortune from him, are more likely to pay a tribute of exacted duty than others whose fortunes are not in such immediate dependency on His Majesty. It is but the common expectation of gratitude that a patron paramount shall be more assisted by his beneficiaries in cases of necessity than by those who receive nothing from him but the common influences of government."

As usual, it was easier to mark the evil than to provide an adequate remedy. The party which numbered Hyde and Falkland in its ranks, and which afterwards developed into that of the Parliamentary Royalists, was alarmed lest a tyrannical episcopacy should be followed by a still more tyrannical Presbyterian discipline, and therefore strove to substitute for the existing system some scheme of modified episcopacy by which bishops should be in some way responsible to clerical councils. Cromwell was working hand in hand with men who strove to meet the difficulty in another way. The so-called Root-and-

Branch Bill, said to have been drawn up by St. John, was brought to the House of Commons by himself and Vane. By them it was passed on to Hazlerigg, who in his turn passed it on to Sir Edward Dering, by whom it was actually moved in the House. As it was finally shaped in Committee, this bill, whilst absolutely abolishing archbishops, bishops, deans and chapters, transferred their ecclesiastical jurisdiction to bodies of Commissioners to be named by Parliament itself. Cromwell evidently had no more desire than Falkland to establish the Church Courts of the Scottish Presbyterian system in England.

This bill never passed beyond the Committee stage. It was soon overshadowed by the question whether Charles could be trusted or not. The discovery of the plots by which he had attempted to save Strafford's life, and the knowledge that he was now visiting Scotland with the intention of bringing up a Scottish army to his support against the Parliament at Westminster strengthened the hands of the party of Parliamentary supremacy, and left its leaders disinclined to pursue their ecclesiastical policy till they had settled the political question in their own favour. Important as Charles's own character – with its love of shifts and evasions – was in deciding the issue, it must not be forgotten that the crisis arose from a circumstance common to all revolutions. When a considerable change is made in the government of a nation, it is absolutely necessary, if orderly progress is to result from it, that the persons in authority shall be changed. The man or men by whom the condemned practices have been maintained

cannot be trusted to carry out the new scheme, because they must of necessity regard it as disastrous to the nation. The success of the Revolution of 1688–89 was mainly owing to the fact that James was replaced by William; in 1641 neither was Charles inclined to fly to the Continent, nor were the sentiments of either party in the House such as to suggest his replacement by another prince, even if such a prince were to be found. All that his most pronounced adversaries – amongst whom Cromwell was to be counted – could suggest was to leave him the show and pomp of royalty, whilst placing him under Parliamentary control and doing in his name everything that he least desired to do himself. It was a hopeless position to be driven into, and yet, the feeling of the time being what it was, it is hard to see that any remedy could be found.

Before Charles returned from Scotland, which he had visited in the vain expectation of bringing back with him an army which might give him the control over the English Parliament, an event occurred which brought to light the disastrous impolicy of his opponents in leaving upon the throne the man who was most hostile to their ideas. The Irish Roman Catholic gentry and nobility, having been driven into Royalism by fear of Puritan domination, had agreed with Charles to seize Dublin and to use it as a basis from which to send him military aid in his struggle against the Parliament of England. In October 1641, before they could make up their minds to act, an agrarian outbreak occurred in Ulster, where the native population rose against the

English and Scottish colonists who had usurped their lands. The rising took the form of outrage and massacre, calculated to arouse a spirit of vengeance in England, even if report had not outrun the truth – much more when the horrible tale was grossly exaggerated in its passage across the sea. Before long both classes of Roman Catholic Irishmen, the Celtic peasants of the North and the Anglo-Irish gentry of the South, were united in armed resistance to the English Government.

It was a foregone conclusion that an attempt to reconquer Ireland would be made from England. Incidentally the purpose of doing this brought to a point the struggle for the mastery at Westminster. If an army were despatched to Ireland it would, as soon as its immediate task had been accomplished, be available to strike a decisive blow on one side or the other. It therefore became all-important for each side to secure the appointment of officers who might be relied on – in one case to strike for the Crown, in the other case to strike for the Commons. Pym, who was leading his party in the House with consummate dexterity, seized the opportunity of asking, not merely that military appointments should be subject to Parliamentary control, but that the King should be asked to take only such councillors as Parliament could approve of. Cromwell was even more decided than Pym. The King having named five new bishops, in defiance of the majority of the Commons, it was Cromwell who moved for a conference with the Lords on the subject, and who, a few days later, asked for another conference, in which the Lords should

be asked to join in a vote giving to the Earl of Essex power to command the trained bands south of the Trent for the defence of the kingdom, a power which was not to determine at the King's pleasure, but to continue till Parliament should take further order.

Cromwell was evidently for strong measures. Yet there are signs that now, as at other times in his life, he underestimated the forces opposed to him. His allies in the Commons, Pym and Hampden at their head, were now bent on obtaining the assent of the House to the Grand Remonstrance, less as an appeal to the King than as a manifesto to the nation. The long and detailed catalogue of the King's misdeeds in the past raised no opposition. Hyde was as ready to accept it as Pym and Hampden. The main demands made in it were two: first, that the King would employ such councillors and ministers as the Parliament might have cause to confide in; and secondly, that care should be taken 'to reduce within bounds that exorbitant power which the prelates have assumed to themselves,' whilst maintaining 'the golden reins of discipline,' and demanding 'a general synod of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious divines to consider all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church'. So convinced was Cromwell that the Remonstrance would be generally acceptable to the House, that he expressed surprise when Falkland gave his opinion that it would give rise to some debate. It was perhaps because the Remonstrance had abandoned the position of the Root-and-Branch Bill and talked of limiting episcopacy, instead of abolishing it, that Cromwell

fancied that it would gain adherents from both sides. He forgot how far controversy had extended since the summer months in which the Root-and-Branch Bill had been discussed, and how men who believed that, if only Charles could be induced to make more prudent appointments, intellectual liberty was safer under bishops than under any system likely to approve itself to a synod of devout ministers, had now rallied to the King.

It was, by this time, more than ever, a question whether Charles could be trusted, and Cromwell and his allies had far stronger grounds in denying than their opponents had in affirming that he could. After all, the ecclesiastical quarrel could never be finally settled without mutual toleration, and neither party was ready even partially to accept such a solution as that. As for Cromwell himself, he regarded those decent forms which were significant of deeper realities even to many who had rebelled against the pedagogic harshness of Laud, as mere rags of popery and superstition to be swept away without compunction. With this conviction pressing on his mind, it is no wonder that, when the great debate was over late in the night, after the division had been taken which gave a majority of eleven to the supporters of the Remonstrance, he replied to Falkland's question whether there had been a debate with: "I will take your word for it another time. If the Remonstrance had been rejected, I would have sold all I had the next morning, and never have seen England any more; and I know there are many other honest men of the same resolution."

There was in Cromwell's mind a capacity for recognising the strength of adverse facts which had led him – there is some reason to believe²– to think of emigrating to America in 1636 when Charles's triumph appeared most assured, and which now led him to think of the same mode of escape to a purer atmosphere if Charles, supported by Parliament, should be once more in the ascendant. On neither of the two occasions did his half-formed resolution develop into a settled purpose, the first time because, for some unknown reason, he hardened his heart to hold out till better times arrived; the second time because the danger anticipated never actually occurred.

In the constitutional by-play which followed – the question of the Bishops' protest and the resistance to the attempt on the five members – Cromwell took no prominent part, though his motion for an address to the King, asking him to remove the Earl of Bristol from his counsels on the ground that he had formerly recommended Charles to bring up the Northern army to his support, shows in what direction his thoughts were moving. The dispute between Parliament and King had so deepened that each side deprecated the employment of force by the other, whilst each side felt itself justified in arming itself ostensibly for its own defence. It was no longer a question of conformity to the constitution in the shape in which the Tudors had handed it down to the Stuarts. That constitution, resting as it did on an implied

² See the argument for the probability of the traditional story, though the details usually given cannot be true, in Mr. Firth's *Oliver Cromwell*, 37.

harmony between King and people, had hopelessly broken down when Charles had for eleven years ruled without a Parliament. The only question was how it was to be reconstructed. Cromwell was not the man to indulge in constitutional speculations, but he saw distinctly that if religion – such as he conceived it – was to be protected, it must be by armed force. A King to whom religion in that form was detestable, and who was eager to stifle it by calling in troops from any foreign country which could be induced to come to his aid, was no longer to be trusted with power.

So far as we know, Cromwell did not intervene in the debates on the control of the militia. He was mainly concerned with seeing that the militia was in a state of efficiency for the defence of Parliament. As early as January 14, 1642, soon after the attempt on the five members had openly revealed Charles's hostility, it was on Cromwell's motion that a committee was named to put the kingdom in a posture of defence, and this motion he followed up by others, with the practical object of forwarding repression in Ireland or protection to the Houses at Westminster. Though he was far from being a wealthy man, he contributed £600 to the projected campaign in Ireland, and another £500 to the raising of forces in England. Mainly through his efforts, Cambridge was placed in a state to defend itself against attack. Without waiting for a Parliamentary vote, he sent down arms valued at £100. On July 15 he moved for an order 'to allow the townsmen of Cambridge to raise two companies of volunteers, and to appoint captains over them'. A month later

the House was informed that 'Mr. Cromwell, in Cambridgeshire, hath seized the magazine in the castle at Cambridge,' that is to say, the store of arms – the property of the County – ready to be served out to the militia when called upon for service or training, 'and hath hindered the carrying of the plate from that University; which, as was reported, was to the value of £20,000 or thereabouts'. Evidently there was one member of Parliament prompt of decision and determined in will, who had what so few – if any – of his colleagues had – the makings of a great soldier in him.

When at last Essex received the command to create a Parliamentary army, Cromwell accepted a commission to raise a troop of arquebusiers – the light horse of the day – in his own county. He can have had no difficulty in finding recruits, especially as his popularity in the fen-land had been, if possible, increased by his conduct in a committee held in the preceding summer, where he bitterly resented an attempt of the Earl of Manchester to enclose lands in defiance of the rights of the commoners. He was, however, resolved to pick the sixty men he needed. We can well understand that in choosing his subordinates he would be inspired by an instinctive desire to prize those qualities in his soldiers which were strongly developed in his own character, in which strenuous activity was upheld by unswerving conviction and perfervid spiritual emotion. He could choose the better because he had neighbours, friends and kinsmen from whom to select. The Quarter-master of his troop was John

Desborough, his brother-in-law, whilst another brother-in-law, Valentine Wauton, though not actually serving under Cromwell, rallied to his side, and became the captain of another troop in the Parliamentary army. To the end of his career Cromwell never forwarded the prospects of a kinsman or friend unless he was persuaded of his efficiency, though he never shrank from the promotion of kinsmen whom he believed himself able to trust in order to shake off the charge of nepotism from himself.

The sobriety of Cromwell's judgment was as fully vindicated by his choice of the cavalry arm for himself, as by the selection of his subordinates. If the result of the coming war was to be decided by superiority in cavalry, as would certainly be the case, the chances were all in favour of the Royalist gentry, whose very nickname of 'cavaliers' was a presage of victory, and who were not only themselves familiar with horsemanship from their youth up, but had at their disposal the grooms and the huntsmen who were attached to their service. "Your troops," he said some weeks later to his cousin Hampden, after the failure of the Parliamentary horse had become manifest, "are most of them old decayed serving men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; and their troops are gentlemen's sons and persons of quality. Do you think the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them?.. You must get men of spirit, and, take it not ill what I say – I know you will not – of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go,

or else you will be beaten still." The importance of a good cavalry was in those days relatively much greater than it is now. A body of infantry composed in about equal proportions of pikemen and musketeers, the latter armed with a heavy and unwieldy weapon, only to be fired at considerable intervals, and requiring the support of a rest to steady it, needed to be placed behind hedges to resist a cavalry charge. It was a recognised axiom of war that a foot regiment marching across open country required cavalry as a convoy to ward off destructive attacks by the enemy's horse. So unquestioned was the inferiority of infantry, that unless the horsemen who gathered round Charles's standard when it was displayed on the Castle Hill at Nottingham could be overpowered, the resistance of the Parliamentary army could hardly be prolonged for many months. That they were overpowered was the achievement of Cromwell, and of Cromwell alone.

It was something that Cromwell had gathered round him his sixty God-fearing men. It was more, that he did not confide, as a mere fanatic would have done, in their untried zeal. His recruits were subjected to an iron discipline. The hot fire of enthusiasm for the cause in which they had been enlisted burnt strongly within them. They had drawn their swords not for constitutional safeguards, but in the service of God Himself, and God Himself, they devoutly trusted, would shelter His servants in the day of battle against the impious men who were less their enemies than His. It was no reason – so they learnt from their captain

– that they should remit any single precaution recommended by the most worldly of military experts. Cromwell almost certainly never told his soldiers – in so many words – to trust in God and keep their powder dry. Yet, apocryphal as is the anecdote, it well represents the spirit in which Cromwell's commands were issued. The very vividness of his apprehension of the supernatural enabled him to pass rapidly without any sense of incongruity from religious exhortations to the practical satisfaction of the demands of the material world.

When on October 23, 1642, the first battle of the war was fought at Edgehill, Cromwell's troop was one of the few not swept away by Rupert's headlong charge, probably because coming late upon the field he did not join the main army till the Royalist horse had ceased to trouble it. At all events, he took his share in the indispensable service rendered by the little force of cavalry remaining at Essex's disposal, when in the opposing ranks there was no cavalry at all. It was the co-operation of this force which, by assailing in flank and rear the King's foot regiments, whilst the infantry broke them up in front, enabled the Parliamentary army to claim at least a doubtful victory in the place of the rout which would have befallen it if Rupert, on his late return, had found his master's foot in a condition to carry on the struggle. Whatever else Cromwell learnt from his first experience of actual warfare, he had learnt from Rupert's failure after early success never to forget that headlong valour alone will accomplish little, and that a good cavalry officer requires to know when to draw

rein, as well as when to charge, and to subordinate the conduct of the attack in which he is personally engaged to the needs of the army as a whole.

Many months were to pass away before Cromwell was to measure swords with Rupert. He remained under Essex almost to the end of the year, and was present at Turnham Green, when Essex saw Charles, after taking up a position at Brentford in the hope of forcing a passage to London, march off to Reading and Oxford without attempting to strike a blow. Towards the end of 1642, or in the early part of 1643, Cromwell had work found for him which was eventually to breathe a new spirit into the Parliamentary army. Enormous as was the advantage which the devotion of London conferred upon Parliament, London by no means exercised that supreme influence which was exercised by Paris in the times of the French Revolution. Both parties, therefore, put forth their efforts in organising local forces, but of all the local organisations which were brought into existence, the only one entirely successful was the Eastern Association, comprising Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge and Herts, and that mainly because Cromwell was at hand to keep it up to the mark. There was to be a general fund at the service of the association, whilst the forces raised in the several shires of which it was composed were to be at the disposal of a common committee.

In England generally the first half of 1643 was a time of desultory fighting, alternating with efforts to make peace without

the conditions which might have brought peace within sight. It was not to be expected either that Parliament would accept Charles on his own terms, or that Charles would bow down to any terms which Parliament was likely to offer. Cromwell, at least, took no part in these futile negotiations, and did all that in him lay to clear the counties of the Eastern Association from Royalists, and to put them in a state of defence against Royalist incursions. At some time later than January 23, and before the end of February, he was promoted to a colonelcy. In March he was fortifying Cambridge, and urgently pleading for contributions to enable him to complete the work. Again we find him sending to arrest a Royalist sheriff who attempted to collect soldiers at St. Alban's, and then hurrying to Lowestoft to crush a Royalist movement in the town. After this no more is heard of Royalism holding up its head in any corner of the association, and to the end of the war no Royalist in arms set foot within it. By the end of May it was joined by Huntingdonshire, the county of Cromwell's birth.

Cromwell's superabundant energy was employed in other ways than in contending against armed men. Laud's enforcement of at least external signs of respect to objects consecrated to religious usage had provoked a reaction which influenced Puritanism on its least noble side. A certain Dowsing has left a diary, showing how he visited the Suffolk churches, pulling down crosses, destroying pictures and tearing up brasses inscribed with *Orate pro animâ*, the usual expression of mediæval piety towards

the dead. At Cambridge, Cromwell himself, finding opposition amongst those in authority in the University, sent up three of the Heads of Houses in custody to Westminster, and on a cold night in March shut up the Vice-Chancellor and other dignitaries in the public schools till midnight without food or firing, because they refused to pay taxes imposed by Parliament.

Nor was it only with open enemies that Cromwell and those who sympathised with him had to deal. Of all forms of war civil strife is the most hideous, and it is no wonder that the hands of many who had entered upon it with the expectation that a few months or even weeks would suffice to crush the King were now slackened. Was it not better, they asked, to come to terms with Charles than to continue a struggle which promised to drag out for years? Negotiations opened at Oxford in the spring failed, indeed, to lead to peace, because neither party had the spirit of compromise, but they were accompanied or followed by the defection from the Parliamentary ranks of men who, at the outset, had stood up manfully against the King, such as Sir Hugh Cholmley, who hoisted the royal colours over Scarborough Castle, which had been entrusted to him by the Houses; and the Hothams, father and son, who, whilst nominally continuing to serve the Parliament, were watching for an opportunity of profitable desertion. Such tendencies were encouraged by the vigour with which the King's armies were handled, and the successes they gained in the early summer. On May 16 the Parliamentary General, the Earl of Stamford, was defeated at

Stratton, with the result that Sir Ralph Hopton was able to overrun the Western counties at the head of the Royalist troops, and though defeated on Lansdown by Sir William Waller, was succoured by a Royalist army which, on July 13, crushed Waller's army on Roundway Down; whilst on July 26 Bristol was taken by Rupert, and the whole of the Southern counties thrown open to the assaults of the King's partisans. Farther east, though Essex succeeded in capturing Reading, his army melted away before disease and mismanagement. On June 18 Hampden was mortally wounded at Chalgrove Field. Lord Fairfax and his son, Sir Thomas Fairfax, were with difficulty holding their own in the West Riding of Yorkshire against a Royalist force under the command of the Earl of Newcastle. By the middle of the year, the Parliamentary armies were threatened with ruin on almost every side.

The one conspicuous exception to these tales of disaster was found in the news from the Eastern Association, where Cromwell's vigour upheld the fight. Yet Cromwell had no slight difficulties against which to contend. When, by the end of April, he had cleared the shires of the association from hostile forces, he made his way into Lincolnshire, and called on the neighbouring military commanders of his own party to join him in an attack on the Royalist garrison at Newark, from which parties issued forth to overawe and despoil the Parliamentarians of the neighbourhood. Those upon whom he called – Sir John Gell at Nottingham, the Lincolnshire gentry, and Stamford's son,

Lord Grey of Groby, in Leicestershire, were in command of local forces, and placed the interests of their own localities above the common good. Stamford's mansion at Broadgates, hard by Leicester, was exposed to attack from the Royalist garrison at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and consequently Lord Grey hung back from joining in an enterprise which would leave Leicester at the mercy of the enemy, and his example was followed in other quarters. "Believe it," wrote Cromwell wrathfully, "it were better, in my poor opinion, Leicester were not, than that there should not be found an immediate taking of the field by our forces to accomplish the common ends." To subordinate local interests to the 'common ends' was as much the condition of Cromwell's success as the discipline under which he had brought the fiery troops under his command.

The result of that discipline was soon to appear. On May 13 he fell in near Grantham with a cavalry force from Newark far outnumbering his own. Taking a lesson from Rupert, who had taught him at Edgehill that the horse, and not the pistol, was the true weapon of the mounted horseman, he dashed upon the enemy, who weakly halted to receive the charge, and was thoroughly beaten in consequence. Cromwell, as usual, piously attributed his success to the Divine intervention. "With this handful," he wrote "it pleased God to cast the scale."

The success of Cromwell's horse was all the more reason why financial support should be accorded to its commander. Voluntary contributions were still the backbone of the resources

of Parliament, though a system of forced payments was being gradually established. "Lay not," wrote Cromwell to the Mayor of Colchester, "too much on the back of a poor gentleman who desires, without much noise, to lay down his life and bleed the last drop to serve the cause and God. I ask not money for myself, I desire to deny myself, but others will not be satisfied."

Cromwell once more called on the local commanders to gather their forces, not for an attack on Newark, but for a march into Yorkshire to the relief of the Fairfaxes. Early in June some 6,000 men were gathered at Nottingham. Once more the effort came to nothing. The commanders excused themselves from moving, on the plea that the Fairfaxes did not need their help. One of their number, the younger Hotham, was detected in an intrigue with the enemy. Mainly by Cromwell's energy he was seized, and ultimately, together with his father, was sent to London, where they were both executed as traitors. In Yorkshire the tide was running against the Fairfaxes. On June 30 they were defeated at Adwalton Moor. The whole of the West Riding was lost, and the commanders forced to take refuge in Hull. Newcastle, with his victorious army, would soon be heard of in Lincolnshire, where Lord Willoughby of Parham had lately seized Gainsborough for Parliament. Among the troops ordered to maintain this advanced position was Cromwell's regiment, and on July 28 that regiment defeated a strong body of Royalist horse near Gainsborough. Later in the day news was brought that a force of the enemy was approaching from the North. Cromwell, whose cavalry was

supported by a body of foot, went out to meet it, only to find himself face to face with Newcastle's whole army. Though the Parliamentary infantry took flight at once, the horse retired by sections, showing a bold front, and regaining the town with the loss of only two men. This cavalry, which combined the dash of Grantham with the discipline of Gainsborough, spelt victory for the Parliamentary side.

Yet, at the moment, the prospect was gloomy enough. On July 30 Gainsborough surrendered, and unless Cromwell's forces could be augmented, there was little to intervene between Newcastle's army and London. "It's no longer disputing," wrote Cromwell to the Committee at Cambridge, "but out instantly all you can. Almost all our foot have quitted Stamford; there is nothing to interrupt an enemy but our horse that is considerable. You must act lively. Do it without distraction. Neglect no means."

Cromwell knew that more than his own name was required to rally the force needed at this desperate conjuncture. At his instance Parliament appointed the new Earl of Manchester – who, as Lord Kimbolton, had been the one member of the House of Lords marked out by the King for impeachment together with the five members of the House of Commons – as Commander of the Eastern Association, and ordered an army of 10,000 men to be raised within its limits. Whilst in the South, Essex raised the siege of Gloucester, and was successful enough at Newbury to make good his retreat to London, Manchester's new army, in which Cromwell commanded the horse, defeated a party of

Royalists at Winceby, compelled Newcastle to raise the siege of Hull, and retook Lincoln, which had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Lincolnshire was now added to the Eastern Association, the one part of England on which the eyes of the Parliamentary chiefs could rest with complete satisfaction.

Sooner or later Cromwell would have to face other questions than those of military efficiency. When Pym and his supporters drew up the Grand Remonstrance, they did not contemplate the introduction of any principle of religious liberty. The Church was to be exclusively Puritan, on some plan to be settled by Parliament upon the advice of an Assembly of Divines. That Assembly met on July 1, 1643, and if it had been left to itself, would probably have recommended the adoption of some non-episcopalian system of Church-government; whilst Parliament, faithful to the traditions of English governments, would have taken care that the clergy should be placed under some form of lay government emanating from Parliament itself. In the summer of 1643 it was impossible to separate questions of ecclesiastical organisation from those arising out of the political necessities of the hour. It was known that Charles was angling for the support of Ireland and Scotland, and if Parliament was not to be overborne, it was necessary to meet him on the same ground. In Ireland Charles was fairly successful. On September 15 his Lord Lieutenant obtained from the Confederate Catholics, who were in arms against his Government, a cessation of hostilities, which would enable him to divert a portion of his own troops

to the defence of the King's cause in England; ultimately, as he hoped, to be followed by an army levied amongst the Irish Catholics. Charles's attempt to win Scotland to his side was less successful. The predominant party at Edinburgh was that led by the Marquis of Argyle, who had climbed to power with the help of the Presbyterian organisation of the Church, and who justly calculated that, if Charles gained his ends in England, the weight of his victorious sword would be thrown into the balance of the party led by the Duke of Hamilton. That party however, embracing as it did the bulk of the Scottish nobility, would not only have made short work of Argyle's political dictatorship, but would have taken good care that the Presbyterian clergy should, in some way or other, be reduced to dependence on the laity. When, therefore, English Parliamentary Commissioners arrived in Edinburgh to treat for military assistance, they were confronted by a demand that they should accept a document known as the Solemn League and Covenant, binding England to accept the full Scottish Presbyterian system with its Church Courts, claiming as by Divine right to settle all ecclesiastical matters without the interference of the lay government. It is true that this demand was somewhat veiled in the engagement to reform religion in the Church of England, 'according to the example of the best reformed Churches,' so as to bring the Churches in both nations to the nearest conjunction and uniformity. The leading English Commissioner, however, the younger Sir Henry Vane, was one of the few Englishmen who

at this time championed a system of religious liberty, and he now succeeded in keeping a door open by proposing the addition of a few words, declaring that religion was to be reformed in England according to the Word of God, as well as by the example of the best reformed Churches. In this form the Covenant was brought back to Westminster, and in this form it was sworn to by the members of Parliament, and required to be sworn to by all Englishmen above the age of eighteen. Few indeed amongst the members of Parliament willingly placed their necks under the yoke. It was the price paid for Scottish armed assistance, simply because that assistance could be had on no other terms. The alliance with the Scots was the last work of Pym, who died before the Scottish army, the aid of which he had so dearly purchased, crossed the Borders into England.

There were two ways of opposing the Scottish system of Divine-right Presbyterianism, the old one of the Tudor and Stuart Kings, placing the Church under lay control; and the new one, proclaiming the right of individuals to religious liberty, which was advocated by Vane, and was in the course of the next few months advocated by a handful of Independent ministers in the Assembly of divines, and by writers like Roger Williams and Henry Robinson in the press. Like all new doctrines, it made its way slowly, and for long appeared to the great majority of Englishmen to be redolent of anarchy. The freedom from restraint which every revolution brings, together with the habit of looking to the Bible as verbally inspired, had led to the growth of

sects upholding doctrines, some of which gave rational offence to men of cultivated intelligence and encouraged them to look for a remedy to the repressive action of the State. On the other hand, a small number of men, most of them attached to the Independent or Baptist bodies, fully accepted the principle of religious liberty, at least within the bounds of Puritanism. For the present the question was merely Parliamentary; but it might easily be brought within the sphere of military influence, and it was not without significance that, though Essex and Waller, who had comparatively failed as generals, were on the side of Presbyterian repression, Cromwell, who had shown himself to be the most successful soldier in England, declared himself on the side of liberty. In the sectarian sense indeed, Cromwell never attached himself to the Independent or to any other religious body. In firm adherence to the great doctrine of toleration, which spread abroad from the Independents or from the Baptists, who were but Independents with a special doctrine added to their tenets, Cromwell was the foremost Independent of the day.

Not that Cromwell indeed reached his conclusions as did Roger Williams, by the light of pure reason. The rites prescribed in the Prayer Book were to him a mockery of God. On January 10, 1644, he ordered a clergyman, who persisted in using the old service in Ely Cathedral, to leave off his fooling and come down from his place. But he had no liking for the Covenant, and avoided committing himself to it till the beginning of February, 1644, when he swore to it on his appointment as Lieutenant-

General in Manchester's army, doubtless laying special stress in his own mind on the loop-hole offered by Vane's amendment. The cause of religious liberty appealed to him on practical grounds. How was he to fight the enemy, unless he could choose his officers for their military efficiency, and not for their Presbyterian opinions? The Major-General of Manchester's army – Crawford, a Scot of the narrowest Presbyterian type – had objected to the promotion of an officer named Packer, who was an Anabaptist. "Admit he be," wrote Cromwell in reply, "shall that render him incapable to serve the public?.. Sir, the State in choosing men to serve it takes no notice of their opinions. If they be willing faithfully to serve it – that satisfies. Take heed of being sharp, or too easily sharpened by others, against those to whom you can object little but that they square not with you in every opinion concerning matters of religion."

It might be that religious liberty would in the long run suffer more than it would gain from military support, just as the principles of Andrewes and Laud suffered more than they gained by the support of Charles. Already the regiments under Cromwell's command swarmed with enthusiasts who spent their leisure in preaching and arguing on the most abstruse points of divinity, agreeing in nothing except that argument was to be met by argument alone. Their iron discipline and their devotion to the cause permitted a freedom which would have been a mere dissolvent of armies enlisted after a more worldly system. As Cromwell stepped more pronouncedly to the front, his advocacy

of religious liberty would become well-nigh irresistible.

On January 19, 1644, the Scottish army, under the Earl of Leven, crossed the Tweed. Newcastle was pushed back into York, where he was besieged by the combined forces of Leven and the Fairfaxes. On May 6 Lincoln, which had been regained by the Royalists, was retaken by Manchester, who together with Cromwell pushed on to join in the siege of York. Rupert, however, having been sent northward by Charles, succeeded in raising the siege; and on July 2 a battle was fought on Marston Moor, in which the Royalist army, successful at first, was utterly crushed by Cromwell's skill. Having routed Rupert's horse, he drew bridle and hurried back to the assistance of the Scottish infantry, which was holding its own against overwhelming numbers of the enemy. The King's regiments of foot were routed or destroyed by his impetuous charge. Cromwell had redeemed the day after the three generals, Leven, Manchester and the elder Fairfax, had fled from that which they deemed to be a complete disaster. Before long the whole of the North of England, save a few outlying fortresses, was lost to the King.

In the South, matters were going badly for Parliament. Waller's army, checked at Cropredy Bridge, melted away by desertion; whilst Essex, attempting an inroad into Cornwall, was followed by the King. Essex himself and his cavalry succeeded in making their escape, but on September 2 the whole of his infantry surrendered to Charles at Lostwithiel. Unless Manchester came to the rescue, it would be impossible

to avert disaster. Manchester, however, was hard to move. Between him and his Lieutenant-General there was no longer that good understanding which was essential to successful action. Manchester, longing for peace on the basis of a Presbyterian settlement of the Church, could not be brought to understand that, whether such an ending to the war were desirable or not, it could never be obtained from Charles. Cromwell, on the other hand, aimed at religious toleration for the sects, and that security which, as his practical nature taught him, was only attainable by the destruction of the military defences in which Charles trusted. That those defences were the ramparts of the city of destruction, he never doubted for an instant. Writing in his most serious mood immediately after the victory of Marston Moor, to the father of a youth who had there met his death-wound, his own losses rose before his mind. Of his four sons, two had already passed away: – Robert, leaving behind him a memory of unusual piety, had died in his schoolboy days; whilst Oliver, who had charged and fled at Edgehill had lately succumbed to small-pox in the garrison at Newport Pagnell. Yet it was not only to the example of his own sorrow that Cromwell mainly looked as a balm for a father's bereavement. "Sir," he wrote, "you know my own trials this way, but the Lord supported me with this that the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant for and live for. There is your precious child full of glory, never to know sin or sorrow any more. Before his death he was so full of comfort that to Frank Russell and myself he could not express it, 'it was so great above his pain'.

This he said to us – indeed it was admirable. A little after, he said one thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him what that was? He told me it was that 'God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of his enemies'." Between a Cromwell eager to destroy the enemies of God and a Manchester eager to make peace with those enemies no good understanding was possible, especially as in the eyes of Manchester the prolongation of the war meant the strengthening of that sectarian fanaticism to which Cromwell looked as the evidence of a vigorous spiritual life.

In Manchester the desire for peace showed itself in sheer reluctance to make war. Cromwell fumed in vain against the Scots and their resolution to force their Presbyterianism upon England. "In the way they now carry themselves," he told Manchester, "pressing for their discipline, I could as soon draw my sword against them as against any in the King's army." "He would have," he added at another time, "none in his army who were not of the Independent judgment, in order that if terms were offered for a peace such as might not stand with the ends that honest men should aim at, this army might prevent such a mischief." This attack on the Scots led to an attack on the English nobility, amongst whom the sects found scant favour. He hoped, he said in words long afterwards remembered against him, to 'live to see never a nobleman in England'. He is even reported to have assured Manchester that it would never be well till he was known as plain Mr. Montague. Manchester persisted in doing nothing till a distinct order was given him to march to the defence of

London, now laid open by Essex's mishap.

Manchester's reluctance to engage in military operations was probably strengthened by the knowledge that Vane, who, since Pym's death in the winter of 1643, was the most prominent personage amongst the war party at Westminster, had come down to York, at the time of the siege, to urge the generals, though in vain, to consent to the deposition of the King, and he could not but suspect that the arrival of Charles Louis, Elector Palatine, the eldest surviving son of Charles's sister Elizabeth, on August 30, had something to do with a design for placing him on his uncle's throne. The design, if it really existed, came to nothing, probably because it was hopeless to carry it out in the teeth of the generals. It was only with the utmost difficulty that Manchester's hesitation was overcome, and that he was induced to face Charles's army at Newbury. The battle fought there on October 27 was a drawn one. That it did not end in a Parliamentary victory was mainly owing to Manchester's indecision. When, a few days later, the King reappeared on the scene, he was allowed to relieve Donnington Castle, in the immediate neighbourhood of Newbury, no attempt whatever being made to hinder his operations. In the controversy which followed, Manchester went to the root of the matter when he said, "If we beat the King ninety and nine times, yet he is King still, and so will his posterity be after him; but if the King beat us once we shall all be hanged, and our posterity made slaves". "My Lord," answered Cromwell, "if this be so why did we take

up arms at first? This is against fighting ever hereafter. If so, let us make peace, be it never so base." Each of the two men had fixed upon one side of the problem which England was called upon to solve. Manchester was appalled by the political difficulty. There stood the Kingship accepted by generation after generation, fenced about with safeguards of law and custom, and likely to be accepted in one form or another by generations to come. A single decisive victory gained by Charles would not only expose those who had dared to make war on him to the hideous penalties of the law of treason – but would enable him to measure the terms of submission by his own resolves. If Manchester had had the power of looking into futurity, he would have argued that no military success – not even the abolition of monarchy, and the execution of the monarch – would avail to postpone the restoration of Charles's heir for more than a little while.

Cromwell's reply did not even pretend to meet the difficulty. It was not in him to forecast the prospects of kingship in England, or to vex his mind with the consequences of a problematical Royalist victory. It was enough for him to grasp the actual situation. It is true that, at this time, he had not got beyond the position from which the whole of the Parliamentary party had started at the beginning of the war – the position that the war must be ended by a compact between King and Parliament. To Cromwell, therefore, whose heart was set upon the liberation of those who in his eyes were the people of God, and the overthrow of ceremonial observances, the immediate duty of the moment

was to secure that, when the time of negotiation arrived, the right side should be in possession of sufficient military force to enable it to dictate the terms of peace. It was his part not to consider what the King might do if he proved victorious, but to take good care that he was signally defeated. Strange to say, the folly of the Presbyterian party – strong in the two Houses, and in the support of the Scottish army – was playing into Cromwell's hands. On November 20, ten days after Cromwell's altercations with Manchester, Parliament sent to Oxford terms of peace so harsh as to place their acceptance outside the bounds of possibility. The royal power was to be reduced to a cipher, whilst such a form of religion as might be agreed upon by the Houses in accordance with the Covenant was to be imposed on all Englishmen, without toleration either for the sects favoured by Cromwell, or for the Church of Andrewes and Laud which found one of its warmest and most conscientious supporters in Charles. Every man in the three kingdoms, including the King himself, was to be bound to swear to the observance of the Covenant. Such a demand naturally met with stern resistance. "There are three things," replied Charles, "I will not part with – the Church, my crown, and my friends; and you will have much ado to get them from me." It needed no action on the part of Cromwell to secure the failure of such a negotiation, and, so far as we are aware, no word passed his lips in public on the subject.

On November 25 Cromwell appeared in Parliament to urge on the one thing immediately necessary, the forging of an

instrument by which the King might be ruined in the field. The existing military system by which separate armies, to a great extent composed of local forces, and therefore unable to subordinate local to national objects, had been placed under commanders selected for their political or social eminence, had completely broken down. So well was this recognised that, two days before Cromwell's arrival at Westminster, a committee had been appointed without opposition to 'consider of a frame or model of the whole militia'. It was perhaps to assist the committee to come to a right conclusion that, upon his arrival at Westminster, Cromwell indignantly assailed Manchester as guilty of all the errors which had led to the deplorable result at Newbury. Manchester was not slow in throwing all the blame on Cromwell, and it seemed as if the gravest political questions were to be thrust aside by a personal altercation. So angry were the Scottish members of the Committee of both kingdoms, a body which had recently been appointed to direct the movements of the armies, that they won over the Presbyterian leaders, Essex and Holles, to look favourably on a scheme for bringing an accusation against Cromwell as an incendiary who was doing his best to divide the King from his people, and one of the kingdoms from the other. At a meeting held at Essex House the Scottish Earl of Loudoun asked the English lawyers present whether an incendiary who was punishable by the law of Scotland was also punishable by the law of England. The English lawyers threw cold water on the scheme, Whitelocke asking to see the evidence

on which the charge was founded, whilst Maynard declared that 'Lieutenant-General Cromwell is a person of great favour and interest with the House of Commons, and with some of the Peers likewise, and therefore there must be proofs, and the most clear and evident against him, to prevail with the Parliament to adjudge him to be an incendiary'. Neither Whitelocke nor Maynard was eager to bell the cat.

Cromwell replied by a renewed attack on Manchester's inefficient generalship. Yet it was not in accordance with the character of the man who had stopped the headlong rush of his squadrons at Marston Moor to allow a great public cause to be wrecked by personal recriminations. On December 9 Zouch Tate, himself a strong Presbyterian, reported from a committee which had been appointed to consider the questions at issue between the two generals, 'that the chief causes of our division are pride and covetousness'. It is immaterial whether Tate had or had not come to a previous understanding with Cromwell to damp down the fires of controversy which threatened to rend the Parliamentary party into warring factions. What was of real importance is that Cromwell followed with an admission that, unless the war was brought to a speedy conclusion, the kingdom would become weary of Parliament. "For what," he added, "do the enemy say? Nay, what do many say that were friends at the beginning of the Parliament? Even this, that the members of both Houses have got great places and commands and a sword into their hands, and, what by interest of Parliament, and what

by power in the army, will perpetually continue themselves in grandeur, and not permit the war speedily to end, lest their own power should determine with it. This I speak here to our faces is but what others do utter behind our backs." Then, after calling for the more vigorous prosecution of the war, and advising that all charges against individual commanders should be dropped, he proceeded to express a hope that no member of either House would scruple to abandon his private interests for the public good. Later in the day, Tate gave point to Cromwell's suggestion by moving that so long as the war lasted, no member of either House should hold any command, military or civil, conferred on him by Parliament. The idea struck root. It satisfied those who misdoubted Essex and Manchester, as well as those who misdoubted Cromwell. That Cromwell was in earnest in proposing to exclude himself is evident. The majority in both Houses was Presbyterian, and if the so-called Self-Denying Ordinance brought in to give effect to Tate's proposal by refusing to members of either House the right of holding commands in the army or offices in the State had been passed in the form in which it was drawn up, nothing short of a repeal of that ordinance could have enabled him to command even a single troop.

That a door was left open was entirely the fault of the House of Lords in rejecting this ordinance on January 13, 1645. By this time both parties in the Commons were of one mind in pushing on an ordinance for a new model of the army, from which it would be easy to exclude peers, whether the Self-Denying

Ordinance were passed or no. On January 21 the Commons named Fairfax as General and Skippon as Major-General of the new army. The post of Lieutenant-General, which carried with it the command of the Horse, was significantly left open. No legislation now barred the way to Cromwell's appointment, but the House thought it desirable to make their action in the matter dependent on the line finally taken by the Lords. On February 15 the Lords passed the New Model Ordinance. A few days later, the negotiation with the King which is known as the Treaty of Uxbridge, came to an end, and Parliament was now committed to the design of meeting Charles in the field with an army commanded by professional soldiers, and withdrawn from local and political influences. In such an army nothing more would be heard of the dangers of success which had loomed so large before the eye of Manchester. Apparently to save the Parliamentary officers from the indignity of tendering the resignation of their commissions, a new Self-Denying Ordinance was passed on April 3, by which members of either House were discharged from their military or civil posts within forty days afterwards. There was nothing to prevent the reappointment of Cromwell on the one hand, or of Essex or Manchester on the other, if the two Houses should combine in doing so.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW MODEL ARMY AND THE PRESBYTERIANS

The New Model Army had been accepted by both Houses and by both parties in either House, because in no other way could the difficulties of the situation be met. The failure of the negotiations at Uxbridge had convinced the Presbyterians – at least for the moment – that Charles would give no help towards the settlement of the nation on any basis that their narrow minds could recognise as acceptable, and if the war was to be continued, what prospect was there of success under the old conditions? Nevertheless, the creation of the New Model was, in the main, Cromwell's work. Men are led by their passions more than by their reason, and if Cromwell had continued his invectives against Manchester, he would have roused an opposition which would have left little chance of the realisation of the hopes which he cherished most deeply in his heart. All through the discussion he had shown not only a readiness to sacrifice his own personal interests, but a determination to avoid even criticism of the actions of his opponents in all matters of less importance, provided that he had his way in the one thing most important of all. Without a word of censure he had left the Presbyterians not only to negotiate with Charles, but to pass votes for the establishment of

intolerant Presbyterianism in England. The skill with which he avoided friction by keeping himself in the background, whilst he allowed others to work for him, doubtless contributed much to his success. It revealed the highest qualities of statesmanship on the hypothesis that he was acting with a single eye to the public good. It revealed the lowest arts of the trickster, on the hypothesis that he was scheming for his own ultimate advantage. As human nature is constituted, there would be many who would convince themselves that the lower interpretation of his conduct was the true one.

At all events, the New Model Army was being brought into shape in the spring of 1645. It was composed partly of men pressed into the service, partly of soldiers who had served in former armies. That the Puritan, and even the Independent element, was well represented amongst the cavalry of which Cromwell's troops formed the nucleus, there can be little doubt; and even amongst the infantry, the fact that it could only be recruited from those parts of England which at that time acknowledged the authority of the Houses, and that in those counties Puritanism was especially rife, would naturally introduce into the ranks a considerable number of Puritans, whether Independent or not. The army, however, was certainly not formed on the principles which had guided Cromwell in the selection of his first troopers, and indeed it was impossible to select 30,000 men on the exclusive plan which had been found possible in the enlistment of a single troop or a single regiment.

What chiefly – so far as the rank and file were concerned – distinguished the New Model from preceding armies was that it was regularly paid. Hitherto the soldiers had been dependent on intermittent Parliamentary grants, or still more intermittent efforts of local committees. All this was now to be changed. A regular taxation was assessed on the counties for the support of the new army, and the constant pay thus secured was likely to put an end to the desertions on a large scale which had afflicted former commanders, thus rendering it possible to bring the new force under rigorous discipline, a discipline which punished even more severely offences against morality than those directed against military efficiency.

The higher the state of discipline the more important is the selection of officers; and here at least Cromwell's views had full scope. On the mere ground that it was desirable to place command in the hands of those who were most strenuous in the prosecution of the war, the preference was certain to be given to men who were least hampered by a desire to make terms with an unbeaten King – in other words, to Independents rather than to Presbyterians. In another way Cromwell's ideas were carried out. "I had rather," he had once said, "have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a gentleman and nothing else. I honour a gentleman that is so indeed." There was no distinction of social rank amongst the officers of the New Model. Amongst them were men of old families such as Fairfax and Montague, side

by side with Hewson, the cobbler, and Pride, the drayman. If ever the army should be drawn within the circle of politics, much would follow from the adoption of a system of promotion which grounded itself on military efficiency alone.

For the present the services of the new army were required solely in the field. On April 2 °Cromwell, who was permitted to retain his commission forty days after the ordinance had passed, and whose allotted term had not yet expired, was sent with his cavalry to sweep round the King's head-quarters at Oxford in order to break up his arrangements for sending out the artillery needed by Rupert if he was again to take the field. Cromwell's movement was completely successful. He not only scattered a Royalist force at Islip, and captured Blechington House by sheer bluff, but he swept up all the draught horses on which Charles had counted for the removal of the guns, and thus incapacitated the enemy from immediate action. Rupert had to wait patiently for some time before he could leave his quarters.

It is seldom that men realise at first the necessary consequences of an important change, and, on this occasion, the Committee of Both Kingdoms and the Parliament itself were slow to discover that, if the new army was to achieve victory, its movements must be guided, not by politicians at Westminster, but by the general in the field. The first act of the Committee was to send Fairfax with eleven thousand men to the relief of Taunton, where Blake, who not long before had defended Lyme against all the efforts of the Royalists to take

it, was now holding out to the last with scanty protection from the fortifications he had improvised. The Committee's orders, necessary perhaps at first, were persisted in even after it was known that Charles had been joined at Oxford by the field army which had hitherto protected the besiegers of Taunton in the West, and that, whilst a much smaller force than eleven thousand men would be now sufficient to raise the siege, every soldier that could be spared was needed farther east. The next blunder of the Committee was even worse. Charles had marched to the North with all the force he could gather, in the hope of undoing the consequences of Marston Moor. If there was one lesson which the Committee ought to have learnt from the campaign of the preceding year it was that it is useless to besiege towns whilst the enemy's army remains unbeaten in the field. Yet when every military consideration spoke with no uncertain voice for the policy of following up Charles's army without remission till it had been defeated, the sage Committeemen at Westminster ordered Fairfax to besiege Oxford. Charles, at liberty to direct his movements where he would, had been deflected from his course, and on May 31 had stormed Leicester. The news shook the Committee's resolution to keep the direction of the army in its own feeble hands. On June 2 it directed Fairfax to break up the siege of Oxford. On the 4th a petition from the London Common Council asked that, though the forty days during which Cromwell kept his appointment under the Self-Denying Ordinance had now elapsed, he might be placed at the

head of a new army to be raised in the Eastern Association. Another petition from Fairfax's officers asked that he might be placed in the vacant lieutenant-generalship. The Commons agreed, but, for the present at least, the Lords withheld their consent. At a later time, when events had rendered refusal impossible, the Lords gave their consent to an appointment for which Cromwell was certainly not disqualified by anything in the Self-Denying Ordinance in the form in which they had allowed it to pass; considering that that Ordinance merely demanded the surrender of his commission, without imposing any bar to his reappointment.

When on June 14 the army under Fairfax found itself in presence of the King at Naseby, Cromwell was once more in command of the horse. As usual in those days the infantry was in the centre. On the two wings were the cavalry, that on the right under Cromwell in person, that on the left under Ireton. Ireton was driven back by Rupert, who, having learned nothing since his headlong charge at Edgehill, dashed in pursuit without a moment's thought for the fortunes of the remainder of the King's army. Cromwell, after driving off the horse opposed to him, drew rein, as he had done at Marston Moor, to watch the sway of the battle he had left behind him. Seeing his duty clear, he left three regiments to continue the pursuit, and with the remainder fell upon the Royalist infantry, and with the help of Fairfax's own foot destroyed or captured the whole body. Rupert returned too late to do anything but join Charles in his flight. Five thousand

prisoners had been taken, of whom no less than five hundred were officers, while Charles's whole train of artillery remained in the hands of the victors. That Cromwell had contributed more than any other man to this crushing victory was beyond dispute.

Cromwell, as was his usual habit, ascribed this success to Divine aid. "I can say this of Naseby," he wrote, "that when I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor ignorant men to seek to order our battle, the General having commanded me to order all the horse, I could not – riding alone about my business – but smile out to God praises in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to naught things that are, of which I had great assurance – and God did it." No doubt, as has been said, Cromwell omitted to mention that the Parliamentary army had numbers on its side – not much less than 14,000, opposed to 7,500. But it was not the numerical superiority of the Parliamentarians which won the day. It did not enable Ireton to withstand Rupert, and the infantry in the centre was already giving way when Cromwell returned to assist it. It was the discipline rather than the numbers of Cromwell's horse aided by the superb generalship of their commander that gained the day. Cromwell, when he wrote of his soldiers as 'poor ignorant men,' was doubtless glancing back in thought at his own early criticism of the fugitives at Edgehill. The yeomen and peasants whom he had gathered round him owed much to discipline and leadership; but they owed much also to the belief embedded in their hearts that they were fighting in the

cause of God.

After the victory at Naseby the issue of the struggle was practically decided. There was another fight at Langport, where Fairfax defeated a force with which Goring attempted to guard the western counties; but after this the war resolved itself into a succession of sieges which could end but in one way as Charles had no longer a field army to bring to the relief of Royalist garrisons. For some months Cromwell, sometimes in combination with Fairfax, sometimes in temporary command of a separate force, was untiring in the energy which he threw into his work. Charles was full of combinations which never resulted in practical advantage to his cause. At one time his hopes were set upon Montrose, who, after his brilliant victories, expected to bring an army of Highlanders to aid of the royal cause. At another time he looked with equal hopefulness to Glamorgan, who was to conduct an Irish army to England. Montrose's scheme was wrecked at Philiphaugh, and Glamorgan's concessions to the Irish Catholics were divulged and had to be disavowed. On March 31, 1646 Sir Jacob Astley bringing 3,000 men, the last Royalist force in existence, to the relief of Charles at Oxford, was forced to surrender at Stow-on-the-Wold. "You have done your work," said the veteran to his captors, "and may go play, unless you will fall out among yourselves." Though Oxford and Newark were still untaken, the end of the war was now a mere question of days.

"Honest men," wrote Cromwell to Speaker Lenthall soon after

the victory of Naseby "served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty – I beseech you in the name of God, not to discourage them – I wish this action may beget thankfulness and humility in all that are concerned in it. He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of his conscience, and you for the liberty he fights for." "All this," he continued three months later, in the same strain, after the storm of Bristol, "is none other than the work of God; he must be a very atheist that doth not acknowledge it. It may be thought that some praises are due to those gallant men of whose valour so much mention is made: – Their humble suit to you and all that have an interest in this blessing is that, in the remembrance of God's praises, they may be forgotten. It's their joy that they are instruments of God's glory and their country's good. It's their honour that God vouchsafes to use them... Sir, they that have been employed in this service know that faith and prayer obtained this city for you: I do not say ours only, but of the people of God with you and all England over, who have wrestled with God for a blessing in this very thing. Our desires are that God may be glorified by the same spirit of faith by which we ask all our sufficiency and have received it. It is meet that He have all the praise. Presbyterians, Independents, all had here the same spirit of faith and prayer, the same presence and answer; they agree here, know no names of difference; pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere! All that believe have the real unity which is most glorious because inward and spiritual in the Body and

to the Head. As for being united in forms, commonly called uniformity, every Christian will, for peace sake, study and do as far as conscience will permit. And from brethren, in things of the mind, we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason. In other things, God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands for the terror of evil-doers and the praises of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that, he knows not the Gospel; if any would wring that out of your hands, or steal it from you, under what pretence soever, I hope they shall do it without effect."

No words can better depict the state of Cromwell's mind at this time. Of the religion to which the King and his followers clung there is no question in his thoughts. He would be unwilling to listen to the suggestion that it was to be counted as religion in any worthy sense. Parliament, mutilated as it was, is the authority ordained by God to keep order in the land. For that very reason Parliament was bound to allow full liberty to God's children, whatever might be their differences on matters of discipline or practice. Within the limits of Puritanism, no intolerance might be admitted. A common spiritual emotion – not external discipline or intellectual agreement – was the test of brotherhood. So resolved was the House of Commons to discountenance this view of the case, that in ordering the publication of Cromwell's two despatches, it mutilated both of them by the omission of the passages advocating liberty of conscience.

At the present day we are inclined to blame Cromwell, not for going too far in the direction of toleration, but for not

going far enough. In the middle of the seventeenth century the very idea of toleration in any shape was peculiar to a chosen few. That the majority of the Puritan clergy were bitterly opposed to it affords no matter for surprise. As men of some education and learning, and with a professional confidence in the certainty of their own opinions, they looked with contempt not merely on views different from their own, but also on the persons who, often without the slightest mental culture, ventured to produce out of the Bible schemes of doctrine sometimes immoral, and very often – at least in the opinions of the Presbyterian divines – blasphemous and profane. Even where this was not the case, there remained the danger of seeing the Church of England – which was held to have been purified by the abolition of episcopacy and the banishment of the ceremonies favoured by the bishops – degenerate into a chaos in which a thousand sects battled for their respective creeds, instead of meekly accepting the gospel dealt out to them by their well-instructed pastors. Richard Baxter was a favourable specimen of the Presbyterian clergy. Conciliatory in temper, he was yet an ardent controversialist, and, for a few months after the battle of Naseby, he accepted the position of chaplain to Whalley's regiment, with the avowed intention of persuading the sectaries to abandon their evil ways. He soon discovered that the greater part of the infantry of the New Model Army was by no means sectarian or even Puritan in its opinions. "The greatest part of the common soldiers," he wrote, "especially of the foot, were

ignorant men of little religion, abundance of them such as had been taken prisoners or turned out of garrisons under the King, and had been soldiers in his army; and these would do anything to please their officers." In other words, the sectarian officers could command the services of the army as a whole, backed as they would be by the most energetic of the private soldiers. Nor was Baxter longer in discovering that the military preachers were ready to question received doctrine in politics as well as in religion. "I perceived," he declared, "they took the King for a tyrant and an enemy, and really intended to master him, and they thought if they might fight against him they might kill or conquer him, and if they might conquer they were never more to trust him further than he was in their power; and that they thought it folly to irritate him either by wars or contradictions in Parliament, if so be they must needs take him for their King, and trust him with their lives when they had thus displeased him." These audacious reasoners went further still. "What," they asked, "were the Lords of England but William the Conqueror's colonels, or the Barons but his majors, or the Knights but his captains?" "They plainly showed me," complained Baxter, "that they thought God's providence would cast the trust of religion and the Kingdom upon them as conquerors; they made nothing of all the most wise and godly in the armies and garrisons that were not of their way. *Per fas aut nefas*, by law or without it, they were resolved to take down not only Bishops and liturgy and ceremonies, but all that did withstand their way. They ...

most honoured the Separatists, Anabaptists and Antinomians; but Cromwell and his council took on them to join themselves to no party, but to be for the liberty of all."

"To be for the liberty of all" was recognised as being Cromwell's position. There is every reason to suppose that he had at this time little sympathy with the aspirations of those who would have made the army the lever wherewith to obtain political results otherwise unobtainable. In his Bristol despatch he had pointedly adhered to the doctrine that the sword had been placed by God in the hands of Parliament, and for the present he was inclined to look to Parliament alone for the boon he asked of it. What makes Cromwell's biography so interesting is his perpetual effort to walk in the paths of legality – an effort always frustrated by the necessities of the situation.

It is difficult for us, nursed as we are under a regime of religious liberty, to understand how hateful Cromwell's proposal was in the eyes of the vast majority of his contemporaries. Not only did it shock those who looked down with scorn on the vagaries of the tub-preacher, but it aroused fears lest religious sectarianism should, by splitting up the nation into hostile parties, lead the way to political weakness. To every nation it is needful that there be some bond of common emotion which shall enable it to present an undivided front against its enemies, and such a bond was more than ever needful at a time when loyalty to the throne had been suspended. It was Cromwell's merit to have seen that this bond would be strengthened, not weakened, by the

permission of divergencies in teaching and practice, so long as there was agreement on the main grounds of spiritual Puritanism. If on the one hand he was behind Roger Williams in theoretical conception, he was in advance of him in his attempt to fit in his doctrines with the practical needs of his time.

Some assistance Cromwell had from men with whom, on other grounds, he had little sympathy. The Westminster Assembly of divines, which had been sitting since 1643, had done its best to impose the Presbyterian system on England, but in the House of Commons there was a small group of Erastian lawyers, with the learned Selden at their head, which was strong enough to carry Parliament with it in resistance to the imposition upon England of a Scottish Presbyterianism – that is to say, of an ecclesiastical system in which matters of religion were to be disposed of in the Church Courts without any appeal to the lay element in the State; though, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that in those very Church Courts the lay element found its place. The Erastians, however, preferred to uphold the supreme authority of the laity represented in Parliament – as the lawyers of the preceding century had upheld the authority of the laity represented in the King – probably because they knew that the lay members of the Presbyterian assemblies were pretty sure to fall under the influence of the clergy. Selden indeed was no admirer of the enthusiasms of the sects; but his cool, dispassionate way of treating their claims would, in the end, make for liberty even more certainly than the burning zeal of a

Williams or a Cromwell.

With the surrender of Astley at Stow-on-the-Wold a new situation was created. The time had arrived to which Cromwell had looked forward after the second battle of Newbury, the time when Charles – no longer having any hope of dictating terms to his enemies – would probably be ready to accept some compromise which might give to Cromwell and the Independent party that religious freedom which the Presbyterians at Westminster found it so hard to concede. It did not need a title of Cromwell's sagacity to convince him that a settlement would have a far greater chance of proving durable if it were honestly accepted by the King than if it were not. Yet it did not augur well for a settlement that Charles, knowing that if he remained at Oxford a few weeks would see him a prisoner in the hands of the army, rode off towards Newark, which was at that time besieged by the Scots, and on May 5, 1646, gave himself up to the Scottish commander at Southwell. The Scots having extracted from him an order to the Governor of Newark to surrender the place, marched off, with him in their train, to Newcastle, where they would be the better able to maintain their position against any attack by the army of the English Parliament. If Charles expected to make the Scots his tools, he was soon undeceived. He was treated virtually as a prisoner under honourable restraint, and given to understand that he was expected to establish Presbyterianism in England.

A few days before Charles left Oxford, Cromwell had come

up to Westminster to take part in the discussions on a settlement which were certain to follow on the close of the war. He saw his views better supported in the House of Commons than they had been when he was last within its walls. A series of elections had taken place to fill the seats vacated by the expulsion of Royalists, and the majority of the recruiters – as the new members were called – were determined Independents, that is to say, favourers of religious liberty within the bounds of Puritanism. Amongst them were Ireton, who had commanded the left wing at Naseby, and who was soon to become Cromwell's son-in-law; Fleetwood, now a colonel in the New Model Army, Blake, the defender of Taunton, hereafter to be the great admiral of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, together with other notables of the army. Yet the Presbyterians still kept a majority in the House. They had already, on March 14, secured the passing of an ordinance establishing Presbyterianism in England, though it was to differ from the Scottish system in that the Church was placed, in the last resort, under the supreme authority of Parliament. An English Presbyterian could not, even when we needed Scottish help, conform himself entirely to the Scottish model. It is true that the ordinance was only very partially carried out, but there can be little doubt that it would have been more generally obeyed if the negotiations, which the Parliamentary majority in accordance with the Scots were conducting with the King at Newcastle, had been attended with success.

That Cromwell watched these negotiations with the keenest

interest may be taken for granted; but he does not seem to have had any opportunity, as a simple member of the House, for doing more. We can indeed only conjecture, though with tolerable certitude, that he was well pleased with the widening of the breach between the Presbyterians and the King, caused by the determination of Charles to make no stipulation which would lead to the abolition of episcopacy. Nor can he have been otherwise than well pleased when, on January 30, 1647, the Scottish soldiers, having received part of the sum due to them for their services in England with promise of the remainder, marched for Scotland, having first delivered Charles over to commissioners appointed by the English Parliament, who conducted him to Holmby House in Northamptonshire, which had been assigned to him by Parliament as a residence.

At last the time had arrived when a peaceful settlement of the distracted country appeared to have come in sight and, for the time at least, the Presbyterians seemed to have the strongest cards in their hands. They had a majority in Parliament, and it was for them, therefore, to formulate the principles on which the future institutions of the country were to be built. That the country was with them in wishing, on the one hand, for an arrangement in which the King could reappear as a constitutional factor in the Government, and, on the other hand, for a total or partial disbandment of the army and a consequent relief from taxation, can hardly be denied. The great weakness, and, as it proved, the insuperable weakness of the Presbyterians lay in the incapacity

of their leaders to understand the characters of the men with whom they had to deal. Right as they were in their opinion that the nation would readily accept a constitutional monarchy, it was impossible to persuade them, as was really the case, that Charles would never willingly submit to be bound by the limitations of constitutional monarchy, and still less to allow, longer than he could possibly help, the Church to be modelled after any kind of Presbyterian system. That he had the strongest possible conviction on religious grounds that episcopacy was of Divine ordinance is beyond doubt, and on this point his tenacious, though irresolute, mind was strengthened by an assurance that in fighting in the cause of the bishops he was really fighting in the cause of God. Yet the controversy had a political as well as a religious side. In Scotland Presbyterianism meant the predominance of the clergy. In England it would mean the predominance of the country nobility and gentry, who, either in their private capacity or collectively in Parliament, presented to benefices, and in Parliament kept the final control over the Church in their own hands. Episcopacy, on the other hand, meant that the control over the Church was in the hands of men appointed by the King.

The folly of the Presbyterians appeared, not in their maintenance of their own views, but in their fancying that if they could only persuade Charles to agree to give them their way temporarily, they would have done sufficient to gain their cause. Early in 1647 they proposed that Presbyterianism should

be established in England for three years, and that the militia should remain in the power of Parliament for ten. They could not see that at the end of the periods fixed Charles would have the immense advantage of finding himself face to face with a system which had ceased to have any legal sanction. Common prudence suggested that whatever settlement was arrived at it should, at least, have in favour of its continuance the presumption of permanency accorded to every established institution which is expected to remain in possession of the field till definite steps are taken for its abolition.

It is possible indeed that the Presbyterians calculated on the unpopularity of episcopacy and of all that episcopacy was likely to bring with it. It is true that not even an approximate estimate can be given of the numerical strength of ecclesiastical parties. No religious census was taken, and there is every reason to believe that, if it had been taken, it would have failed to convey any accurate information. There is little doubt that very considerable numbers, probably much more than a bare majority of the population, either did not care for ecclesiastical disputes at all, or at least did not care for them sufficiently to offer armed resistance to any form of Church-Government or Church-teaching likely to be established either by Parliament or by King. Yet all the evidence we possess shows the entire absence of any popular desire amongst the laity outside the families of the Royalist gentry and their immediate dependants to bring back either episcopacy or the Prayer Book. Riots there

occasionally were, but these were riots because amusements had been stopped, and especially because the jollity of Christmas was forbidden; not because the service in church was conducted in one way or another. It is sometimes forgotten that the Puritan or semi-Puritan clergy had a strong hold upon the Church down to the days of Laud, and that the Calvinistic teaching which had been in favour even with the bishops towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth had been widely spread down to the same time, so that the episcopalians could not count on that resistance to organic change which would certainly have sprung up if the Laudian enforcement of discipline had continued for seventy years instead of seven.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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