

CHAPTER XIX.

Absolute government.—Condition of England from 1629 to 1637.—Contrasts of France and England.—Imprisoned Members.—Sir John Eliot.—His death in prison.—Wentworth.—Lord President of the North.—Lord Deputy of Ireland.—His principles of government.—Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix*.—His punishment.—Masques and Plays.—Character of the Drama.—Book of Sports.—*Thorough*, in Church and State.—Monopolies.—Proclamations against building in London.—Other arbitrary Proclamations.—First project of Ship-Money.—The writ of Ship-Money extended.—The Judges sanction the writs.—John Hampden.—Solemn trial of the validity of the writ of Ship-Money.—Hampden adjudged to pay.—Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick.—The despotism of Charles not effective of any public improvements.—His alleged patronage of the Fine Arts.—*Note*, on the portraits of Charles.

LORD CLARENDON, in a passage that has been more than once quoted to show how happy a people may be under an absolute government, says, that after the dissolution of Charles's third parliament, "there quickly followed so excellent a composure through the whole kingdom, that the like peace, and plenty, and universal tranquillity for ten years was never enjoyed by any nation." The great historian, with something like impartiality, then proceeds to detail the exactions and abuses of these ten years. The imposition of duties which the parliament refused to grant; vast sums extorted from "all persons of reasonable condition upon the law of knight-hood"—that is fines for refusing knight-hood; monopolies which had been abolished renewed; new projects of the same sort, "many scandalous, all very grievous," set on foot; the old forest-laws revived, under which great fines were imposed; the writ of ship-money framed, "for an everlasting supply on all occasions;" the jurisdictions of the council-table and the star-chamber enlarged to a vast extent, "and being the same persons in several rooms, grew both courts of law to determine right, and courts of revenue to bring money into the treasury;" proclamations enjoining what was not enjoined by law, and prohibiting that which was not prohibited, "so that any disrespect to any acts of state or to the persons of statesmen, was in no time more penal;" and lastly, the abuse of justice at its fountain-head in the enforcement of arbitrary acts of power by the corruption of the judges. This is the catalogue of grievances presented by the eulogist of king Charles;—a strange commentary upon his

representation of "the excellent composure through the whole kingdom" during these years of unmitigated despotism. There is, however, a far more unscrupulous defender of arbitrary power than Clarendon. It required something beyond common effrontery in Hume, after he had noticed the oppressive levies of money, the monopolies, the heavy fines and brutal punishments of the star-chamber, the iniquities of the courts of law, to write thus: "The grievances under which the English laboured, when considered in themselves without regard to the constitution, scarcely deserve the name; nor were they either burdensome on the people's properties, or any way shocking to the natural humanity of mankind."* Had this been true instead of being distinctly opposed to truth, it would have been perfectly impossible for any amount of prosperity amongst the people—which prosperity really depended upon their own industrious energies—to have made "the so excellent a composure" a real symptom that they had agreed to renounce "those foundations of right by which men valued their security" †—to accept slavery in the place of freedom. Wisely has it been said, "in the long run freedom ever brings, to those who know how to keep it, ease, comfort, and often wealth; but there are times in which it disturbs for a season the possession of these blessings; there are other times when despotism alone can confer the ephemeral enjoyment of them. The men who prize freedom only for such things as these, are not men who ever long preserved it." ‡ The men who lived in England in that fourth decade of the seventeenth century were not seduced from their allegiance to freedom by the vaunted "peace and plenty" of arbitrary power. Nor did their subsequent awful manifestation of their love of freedom suddenly arise out of their impatience of evil government. "They were native and to the manner born." They did not prize freedom solely because, having from very early times enjoyed a larger share of it than other nations, they found in its enjoyment a larger share than other nations of material blessings. They clung to freedom—to borrow the words of M. de Tocqueville—for "its native charms independent of its gifts—the pleasure of speaking, acting, and breathing without restraint, under no master but God and the Law."

In briefly presenting the few striking incidents that vary the monotonous prospect over the dead level of ten years, we shall

* History, chap. liii.

† Clarendon.

‡ De Tocqueville, "Society in France," p. 308.

endeavour to exhibit them in connection with some of the general aspects of society.

There has been a battle between the crown and the parliament, and the crown keeps the field. There is not the slightest indication of any other collective resistance. The camp of the people is broken up, and there will be no irregular warfare. The timid amongst the puritans are in despair. The day of the dissolution, with them, "was the most gloomy, sad, and dismal day for England that happened in five hundred years last past."* A great branch had indeed been lopped off the tree of liberty; but there stood the old gnarled trunk, and "the splitting wind" could not bend it or disturb its roots. "Be a king," said Henrietta Maria to Charles, "like the king of France." There were some barriers to be removed, besides that of a parliament, before that wish could be accomplished. France and England were essentially unlike in the whole construction of the machine of government. Let us point out some of these differences, without entering upon minute comparisons.

The absolute monarchy of France was upheld by a most numerous aristocracy; standing apart from the people, and despising the people in their pride of birth; exempt from taxation; possessing many exclusive privileges; abhorring any industrious occupation; intermarrying with their own caste alone. The limited monarchy of England had strengthened its power by the destruction of the military organisation of the feudal chiefs; but the aristocracy, being absorbed amongst the people, became identified with the interests of the people; formed family alliances with the rich middle classes; were united with them in various administrative functions; above all, were equally taxed with the very humblest yeomen and burghers. The illegal imposts of Charles were not exclusively levied upon the tradesman. They touched the nobleman and the squire; and some of the heaviest "lighted most upon persons of quality and honour, who thought themselves above ordinary oppressions."† The union of classes in England for great public objects is not a thing of yesterday. It was never more complete than in the period which we are now regarding. Richard Chambers, the London merchant, who refused to pay the duties illegally levied upon a bale of silk, and was imprisoned and fined £2000 for his insolence in comparing the injustice to the practices of the government of Turkey; and John Hampden, the Buckinghamshire squire, who roused the heart of England to a quicker pulsation, in his contest

* D'Ewes, vol. i. p. 402.

† Clarendon.

with the whole power of the crown upon a question of twenty shillings levied upon his lands at Stoke Mandeville,—these were each fighting the same battle, with the most perfect accord, and with equal sympathy amongst all ranks. "If the English had, from the period of the Middle Ages, altogether lost, like the French, political freedom and all those local franchises which cannot long exist without it, it is highly probable that each of the different classes of which the English aristocracy is composed would have seceded from the rest, as was the case in France, and more or less all over the continent, and that all those classes would have separated themselves from the people. But freedom compelled them always to remain within reach of each other, so as to combine their strength in time of need."*

The "local franchises" dependent upon "general political freedom" constituted another powerful barrier against the disposition of an English king to govern like a king of France. The English had been trained, from the very earliest times, to manage their own affairs. The principle of local Association was the familiar condition of an Englishman's existence. Parochial vestries, trade guilds, municipal corporations, were the life of the whole social body. Though parliaments had been suspended by Charles, these remained in their original vigour, and perhaps in a more intense activity. This existence of administrative bodies throughout the kingdom rendered it impossible for any amount of absolute power to effect more than a very partial suppression of liberty of speech and action. The proceedings of the guilds and corporations were conducted with the strict order of the highest deliberative assemblies. The entire machinery of representative administration called them together and regulated their debates. There is no parliament at Westminster from 1629 to 1640; but there is a parliament in Guildhall. There, is the elective principle in full force. There, the Lower House discusses every matter of its franchises with perfect freedom. There, is an Upper House, to which the Lower House presents its Bills, and with their mutual concurrence they pass into Acts. Could this vital representation of two or three hundred thousand inhabitants of London be in daily use, and the higher representation of all England be ultimately put down by the will of the king? To be as a king of France, Charles must have swept away every local franchise, and have governed by one wide-embracing centralisation. That was simply impossible in England.

* De Tocqueville, p. 178.

But if there was one cause more than another why, at that period, a king of England could not govern like a king of France, it was the state of religious feeling amongst a rapidly increasing number of the most influential portion of the community. It was not the outwardly devout formalism, veiling indifference, which prevailed amongst Roman Catholic populations, who had rarely been stirred to serious thought upon the great doctrinal questions that had agitated Europe for more than a century. It was an active principle, that was constantly seeking to grapple with lukewarmness in the assertion of what it held to be true, as much as with the positive tenets which it pronounced to be false. The earlier professors of the doctrine and discipline called puritan had been discountenanced by Elizabeth. But they clung with unquestionable loyalty to her government, because the hatred of popery was as much the passion of the people as it was the policy of the crown. The puritans of the time of James suffered in their worldly interests and their rights of conscience. They were visited with penalties as nonconformists, and they were hunted as schismatics if they formed independent congregations. But they were as yet without the character of a political party. When Charles had been four years on the throne, the religious dissatisfaction with church-government became essentially political. The opinions which forty years before had been heard in remote pulpits, or had crept forth in secretly-printed tracts, were now loudly proclaimed in parliament, and boldly assailed the government of the church in the same votes and remonstrances that protested against the violations of civil liberty by the crown. By this union, which gave a new vitality to the struggle for constitutional freedom, was it rendered more and more impossible that a king of England, however transiently paramount, could govern like a king of France.

It is related that when Charles put off his robes on the day of the dissolution of parliament, he vowed that he would never again put them on. The purpled dignity of the king was to be henceforth displayed only beneath the canopy of the presence-chamber, where every face was to be dressed in smiles, and no bold men who talked of rights should dare to intrude. There was now one in that presence-chamber whose voice had been of the loudest amongst the Commons in opposing the misgovernment of Buckingham. The death of that favourite opened a career to sir Thomas Wentworth far more congenial to his nature than that of a patriot. He was essentially different in character from the minions who had

governed James, and one of whom had bowed Charles to his will. Highly descended, abundantly wealthy, intellectually great, proud and despotic, he saw that the time was come when England would be ruled either by a king or by a parliament, and not by a well-balanced union of the monarchical and the democratic power. He chose the part most congenial to his nature, and became the ablest servant of the crown, the most dangerous enemy of public liberty. Pym and Wentworth had long "kept together in their chivalry." Wentworth displayed to his friend a glimpse of the sunny prospect that was opening to him. "You are going to be undone," said Pym; "But remember that though you leave us now, I will never leave you while your head is on your shoulders."* There were other companions of Wentworth in the great battle against prerogative, who were not in a condition to utter any such prophetic threat. The members of the Commons who were committed to the Tower on the 5th of March were still imprisoned. The judges had declared in the autumn that they were entitled to be bailed; but that they must give securities for their good behaviour. They refused to accept their liberty upon such terms. Three were then indicted in the King's Bench; Eliot for words uttered in the House, and Hollis and Valentine for a tumult in forcibly detaining the Speaker in the chair. They pleaded that the jurisdiction of the Court did not extend to offences said to be committed in Parliament. The great constitutional question of privilege was thus raised. Steadily refusing to put in any other plea, judgment was given against them, to the effect that they should be imprisoned during the king's pleasure; that Eliot should be fined two thousand pounds; and the others fined in a smaller amount. After eighteen months the two who were considered the lighter offenders were released. Eliot, one of the noblest of a noble band, was sacrificed to the vengeance of the crown. He was committed to the Tower on the 5th of March, 1629. He died there, of a lingering disease brought on by confinement, on the 27th of November, 1632. In his dangerous illness his friends urged him to petition the king for his release. The county of Cornwall had in vain petitioned that their old member might be discharged. Eliot, in addressing Charles, simply stated his bodily ailment, and said—"I humbly beseech your majesty you will command your judges to set me at liberty, that for recovery of my health I may take some fresh air."

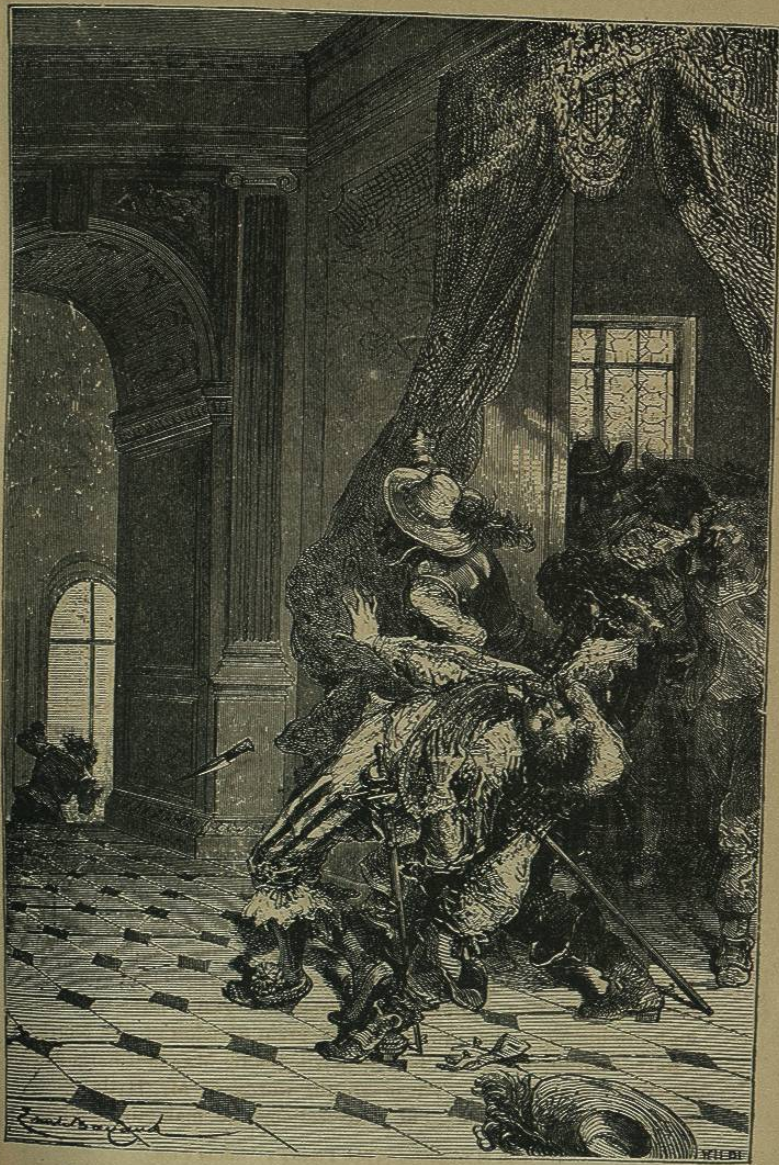
* Welwood's Memorials.

The answer was that the petition was "not humble enough." * Eliot, like Raleigh, employed his prison hours in literary occupation. His treatise, "The Monarchie of Man," which remains unpublished, has been analysed by his best biographer; † and it presents in this form many passages which show that his ardour for constitutional liberty was built upon the noblest philosophy, and that while dealing with questions that were then called "The Politicks," in a free and unsubdued spirit, he sets forth the highest views of man's duty and happiness in his exposition of the Monarchy of Mind. Such was the martyr in that contest for the liberty of speech by the representatives of the people. He perished; but judgment against him was solemnly reversed, after the Restoration, as an illegal judgment and against the freedom and privileges of Parliament.

The rise of Wentworth to power was rapid. Created a viscount, he was first placed in the great office of Lord President of the North. The authority of this functionary was almost absolute. In the reign of Henry VIII., a commission had been granted to the Council of York, for preserving the peace in the counties of York, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland during the insurrections caused by the dissolution of the monasteries. The Council had gradually fallen into disuse as a court of law, after the occasion had passed away for its jurisdiction. But under James, a new commission was issued, by which authority the commissioners were not to determine causes by juries and according to the laws of the land, but according to secret instructions. The judges of the Common Pleas had the honesty in James's time to resist this encroachment upon the liberty of the subject, by issuing prohibitions to the President and Council. But when Wentworth became President he declared he would lay any one by the heels who dared to sue out prohibitions in the Courts of Westminster. During his presidency, the inhabitants of this great portion of the kingdom—not indeed so populous as the South or so wealthy, but occupied by an energetic race, whose descendants, numbered by hundreds of thousands, are now amongst the foremost in grand industries and high intelligence—the people of this great division of the North, "were disfranchised of all their privileges by Magna Charta and the Petition of Right." These are the words of Mr. Hyde, afterwards lord Clarendon. The "discretion," he maintained, given

* Harleian MS., quoted in Mr. Forster's "Life of Eliot."

† *Ibid.* Appendix, pp. 125 to 177.



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under the various commissions of Charles, "hath been the quicksand which hath swallowed up their property, their liberty." When lord Wentworth removed from this theatre of arbitrary power to be Lord-Deputy of Ireland, he still held the appointment of President of the North. His particular doings in the vice-regal office may be more conveniently mentioned at a later point of his career. It may be sufficient to say that the Lord Deputy Wentworth and Archbishop Laud had a perfect concord as to the principles upon which both England and Ireland were to be governed; as may be perceived from the following passage of a letter from Wentworth to Laud: "I know no reason, then, but you may as well rule the common lawyers in England, as I, poor beagle, do here; and yet that I do, and will do, in all that concerns my master's service, upon the peril of my head. I am confident that the king, being pleased to set himself in the business, is able by his wisdom and ministers, to carry any just and honourable action *thorough* all imaginable opposition." *Thorough* became the watchword of these two politicians. With *thorough* every thing was to be accomplished—"You may govern as you please."*

During the Lord Deputy's long residence in Dublin, he had a very indefatigable correspondent in one Reverend Mr. Garrard, a sort of Court Newsman to the great minister, and an occasional reporter of many curious matters of general interest, beyond the scope of mere fashionable chroniclers. By way of finding a few texts upon which to enlarge a little, we may as well turn to this reverend gossip's authority, as to more serious records. We begin with an extract of no small significance. "Mr. Prynne's cause in the Star-chamber held the Lords three days, and the day of censure they rose not till three in the afternoon. He is fined five thousand pounds; adjudged perpetual imprisonment; to lose his ears, the one in the Palace-yard, the other in Cheapside; and his books to be burnt by the hands of the hangman."† It is extremely difficult to conceive in our days how the publication in 1633 of "*Histrio-Mastix, the Player's Scourge*," by "William Prynne, an Utter-barrister of Lincolns' Inn," should have involved the loss of his two ears and five thousand pounds. Learned and ardent men in those times had another mode of maintaining their opinions than by the power of "articles" and "leaders." We take up this book of 1006 closely-printed quarto pages, and our wonder is who would ever read its arguments against "Stage Plays, the very pomps of

* Stafford's Letters, vol. i. p. 173.

† *Ibid.*, p. 207.

the devil which we renounce in baptism," drawn from "the concurring authorities of sundry texts of Scripture, of the whole primitive Church, of 55 Synods and Councils, of 71 Fathers and Christian writers, of above 150 foreign and domestic Protestant and Popish authors, of 40 heathen philosophers," &c. &c. To burn the books by the hangman, under the nose of the author, "which had almost suffocated him," and thus to keep enthusiasts from losing their senses in the perusal, was indeed a public mercy in the government. Unquestionably no member of the Star-chamber ever read the book; but it said that Laud and others read the Index, and finding therein a very strong phrase against "Women-Actors," so "impudent as to act, to speak publicly on a stage (perchance in man's apparel, and cut hair, here proved sinful and abominable) in the presence of sundry men and women," they determined that this was a libel upon the queen.* This marvellous book had been seven years in preparation. Her majesty had enacted a part in a pastoral at Somerset House, and the day after appeared this ponderous volume. Laud and others, according to Whitelocke, "had been angered by some of Prynne's books against Arminianism," and the king allowed them to revenge themselves upon what he was told was a libel upon his lively consort. It is clear that the affair had, in a great degree, become a personal quarrel between the archbishop and the learned barrister; for in Laud's Diary we have an entry that Mr. Prynne sent him "a very libellous letter about his censure in the Star-chamber for his *Histrio-Mastix*." This memorandum is dated June 11, 1634. On the previous 7th of May, Prynne had lost one ear in Palace-yard, and on the 10th another ear in Cheap-side. That he wrote bitterly enough we may well believe. Laud showed the letter to the king, who gave it to Mr. Antony Noy, who had changed his party. When Noy showed it to Mr. Prynne, the mutilated barrister was not so bewildered by his sufferings as not to have presence of mind to tear the letter in pieces, and throw it out of the window, as the archbishop records, under date of June 17, 1634.† This was not the last of Prynne's misfortunes, as we shall have to relate. Nor had he been the first who had provoked the vengeance of those who were rushing upon a mad career of church-government. On the 26th of November, 1530, Laud records that "part of his sentence was executed upon Leighton." Dr. Alexander Leighton, a Scotch divine, had written a book—

* Whitelocke.

† Diary of Laud, "A History of the Troubles, &c. of William Laud," 1695, p. 56.

"Zion's plea against Prelacy." He owned the writing of the book when brought into the Star-chamber. It will perhaps be thought that even the "part of his sentence" was not altogether consistent with the mercy of Christianity. Leighton was whipped; put in the pillory; had one of his ears cut off; had one side of his nose slit; and was branded on one cheek. But the whole process was repeated with the necessary variations of ear, nose, and cheek a week afterwards.* Within five weeks the archbishop was consecrating the church of St. Catherine Cree, with processions, and bowings, and other ceremonies "as prescribed in the Roman pontificale." It was the matador throwing down the red rag to enrage the bull. And yet England was not apparently moved from its "so excellent a composure."

From the time of the offensive attack of William Prynne upon stage-plays, in whose condemnation he included "academical interludes," there was a more than usual performance of masques at Whitehall, and of popular dramas. The four Inns of Court, also, "to manifest the difference of their opinion from Mr. Prynne's new learning, and to confute his *Histrio-Mastix* against interludes," † got up a masque written by Shirley, which cost them £20,000. In his "Epistle Dedicatory," Prynne says that there were above "forty thousand play-books printed within these two years;" that "they are more vendible than the choicest sermons;" "the multitude of our London play-haunters being so augmented now, all the ancient devils' chapels (for so the Fathers style all play-houses) being five in number, are not sufficient to contain their troops, whence we see a sixth new added." He especially notes of "the inns-of-court men," that "one of the first things they learn as soon as they are admitted, is to see stage-plays and take smoke at a play-house," and to this cause he ascribes that "they prove altogether lawless instead of lawyers, and to forget that little learning, grace, and virtue which they had before." It must indeed be admitted that, notwithstanding the learning of Johnson, the grace and vivacity of Beaumont and Fletcher, the dignity of Massinger, and the infinite variety of the pictures of real life which these and a host of inferior dramatists present, there is a taint more or less amongst them all, which has prevented many of these most remarkable productions of any age or country coming down with a sweet savour to posterity. It is not merely that we find in them loose and profane expressions, as we sometimes find in Shakspeare, but

* Dr. Leighton was imprisoned till released by the Parliament in 640. † Whitelocke.

that, wholly different from the general character of his works, there is such an interweaving of licentiousness with the entire dramatic structure of many of the pieces that were once the most popular, that, as has been especially said of Fletcher, "very few of them can be so altered as to become tolerable at present on the stage."* And yet Beaumont and Fletcher's plays were those most frequently acted before the king and his court. The most serious part of the community had evidently turned with disgust from all dramatic exhibitions; and though Charles was personally careful that all profane expressions should be removed from new plays, we may believe that if the play-books indiscriminately found admission to decent families, there were many besides the stricter Puritans who would think that Prynne was a sacrifice to the cause of public morals. There was a more marked distinction than had before existed, growing up to separate society into two great classes of the pious and the profane. This general division was as imperfect a test of real religion and sound morality as any such sweeping separations can be at any period. There were many amongst those who were first pointed at as Puritans, and afterwards as Round-heads, who had not that bigoted dislike of innocent amusements, that tasteless indifference to elegant literature and the arts, which were unjustly attributed to their religious earnestness. In the same way there was undoubtedly an equal proportion of those who tolerated what others held to be immoral, who were themselves of pure lives, and sincere in their devotional observances, though they did not call the Lord's day the Sabbath, and thought the re-publication of king James' Book of Sports was a wise measure to prevent the hard-worked peasantry being molested in their reasonable recreations. There was no act of the government which more distinctly than this publication indicated a temper which set at nought the opinions of a class too powerful, because too zealous, to be crushed. Ministers might be deprived for refusing to read this Book of Sports in their churches; the citizen who kept his apprentices at home after evening service, instead of leading them to the archery and leaping of Finsbury fields, might be disliked by the young men of his ward; the yeoman who was never seen on the village-green to sanction the commands of his king, might be suspected as a non-conformist. But the great party that was growing daily into a visible power only acquired solidity from this external pressure. Garrard tells his patron how the Book of Sports

* Hallam, "Literature of Europe," vol. iii. p. 289.

was received in some churches in London: "One Dr. Dawson read it, and presently after read the ten commandments; then said, 'Dearly beloved, you have heard now the commandments of God and man, obey which you please.'"* The very first Statute of the reign of Charles expressed the growing feeling upon this subject, when it forbade all people to go out of their own parishes for any sports or pastimes whatsoever "on the Lord's day;" and enacted that in their own parishes there should be no bear-baitings or bull-baitings, common plays, or other unlawful exercises. The Book of Sports defined certain amusements as lawful. The puritans regarded them as unlawful. It was a judicial blindness in the rulers to intermeddle in so delicate a question.

The more important parts of the despatches of Laud and Wentworth are in cypher; but there are occasional expressions in the published correspondence which sufficiently show for what object they were both striving. Laud, immediately after his translation to Canterbury, apologises for his want of power to accomplish what they both desired. "As for the Church, it is so bound up in the forms of the Common Law, that it is not possible for me, or for any man, to do that good which he would or is bound to do. * * * And for the State, indeed, my lord, I am for *Thorough*, but I see that both thick and thin stays Somebody, where I conceive it should not." The common law was indeed some shield of the nation against the attempt which lord Falkland, who saw the errors of the Church, but was honestly averse to its destruction, thus described: "Some have evidently laboured to bring in an English though not a Roman popery; I mean not only the outside dress of it, but equally absolute,—a blind dependence of the people upon the clergy and of the clergy upon themselves."† This was the *Thorough* which Laud contemplated. The "Somebody" who opposed the *Thorough* for the State was no doubt the king. Charles had the sense to see that he could not do much more than he was doing, unless he had an army to compel an obedience far beyond what the star-chamber could enforce. But he did contrive to dash through "thick and thin," to the accomplishment of many illegal acts, without drawing the sword. The partnership in *Thorough* between the Church and the State was so complete, that it is sometimes difficult to separate the theological from the political princi-

* *Strafford Letters*, vol. i. p. 166.

† Speech, Feb. 9, 1641, in *Nelson's Historical Collections*. It is quoted in Dr. Arnold's "Lectures on Modern History."

ple of action; and precisely in the same manner the resistance to the united movement of power became a compound of civil and religious enthusiasm. Whether the partners in power were outwardly acting in their conjoined or several capacities, the result was pretty much the same.

During this anomalous period, when proclamations had the force of statutes, the general statements of historians give us little notion of the heartburnings which were produced by these displays of authority. When Clarendon tells us of "projects of all kinds, many ridiculous, many scandalous, all very grievous," the "reproach of which came to the king, the profit to other men," he points at the barefaced introduction of monopolies, in defiance or evasion of positive laws. Let us take one or two of these grievances, to see how they were borne. The whole trade of soap-boiling throughout the kingdom was to be extinguished or limited, that a Company of Soapmakers might be the sole manufacturers. These gentlemen, who were to produce better soap, and no doubt cheaper than all the rest of the world, had given the king £10,000 for the patent, and agreed to pay him £8 per ton upon all the soap produced. Clarendon admits that the government obtained £200,000 by this and similar devices, but he says that "scarce £1500 came to the king's use;" from which we infer that the king's officers pocketed the balance. Garrard tells us how the new soap was received in London. "There is much ado about the soap business. * * * * I hear a proclamation shall come forth to stop all mouths that speak against it." Commissioners of rank, with the lord-mayor and aldermen, were to report upon the soap. "They have had two general washing days at Guildhall; most of them have given their verdict for the new soap to be the better, yet continual complaints rise up that it burns linen, scalds the laundress's fingers, wastes infinitely in keeping, being full of lime and tallow." The king is indignant at the opposition; commands the lord-mayor to be reprimanded for his "pusillanimity in this business, being afraid of a troop of women that clamourously petitioned him against the new soap." * Truly, the government is in a dignified attitude. One of the Lord Deputy's own schemes for keeping Ireland in dependence was to make the people "to take their salt from the king." He sets forth "the easiness of making his majesty sole merchant" of salt—an article of "so absolute necessity as it cannot possibly stay upon his hand, but must be had whether they will or no, and may

* Strafford's Letters, vol. p. 176.

at all times be raised in price." To show the easiness and profit he says, "Witness the Gabelle of salt in France." Witness, indeed. Those who have read of the extremity of suffering to which the unhappy peasantry of France were reduced by the Gabelle may form some notion of the condition to which these islands were fast drifting under the rule of *Thorough*. There was scarcely an industrious occupation, from the sale of coals to the collection of rags, that was not made the subject of a monopoly.

But many other ingenious devices were resorted to for the supply of the wants of the crown beyond its large hereditary revenues. There had been proclamations by James and Charles against the increase of buildings in London. The chaplain of the Venetian ambassador, in 1617, thought that the proclamation of James was for the intent of extorting fines, rather than with the hope of preventing the extension of the capital when there was abundant space for its enlargement. * There could be no doubt of the intention of Charles, when in 1633 a Commission was harassing every owner of a new house from St. Martin's in the Fields to Blackwall, by levying enormous fines, or commanding the houses to be pulled down. Garrard is very minute in his relation of these proceedings. Refusal to the arbitrary command was dangerous. "Writs are gone forth from the Star-chamber to the sheriff to pull down the houses of Mr. Moor, and to levy £2000 fine for not having pulled them down by Easter." These were forty-two houses near St. Martin's Church; and they were "pulled down to the ground." The interference with the supply of house room was not more arbitrary than the interference with the supply of food. "The taverns," writes Garrard, "begin to victual again; some have got leave. 'Tis said that the vintners within the city will give £6000 to the king to dress meat, as they did before." † Proclamations were issued minutely regulating the price of all provisions. There were examples enough of such folly in former times which are held to be necessarily unenlightened; but in the days when the intellect of England was in the fullest activity, the rating of all eatables appears the merest freak of individual idiocy. "The proclamations," says Garrard, "have done little good. They will not bring them [the provisions] in; so that housekeeping in London is grown

* See article in "Quarterly Review," October, 1857, on Mr. Rawdon Brown's "Diaries and Dispatches of the Venetian Embassy" unpublished.

† Strafford Letters, vol. i. p. 262.