

another conference with us. And upon this we had great satisfaction." * What the morrow brought forth is one of the strangest events in English history.

It was late at night when the conference on the 19th of April, at Cromwell's house, the Cockpit at Whitehall, was come to an end. It was understood that the discussion was to be renewed on Wednesday, the 20th. The Lord General is ready to receive the members of Parliament, he and his officers. Some few members are come; but the leaders have not made their appearance. Reports arrived that the Parliament was sitting; then, that Vane, and Algernon Sidney, and Henry Martyn, were urging the immediate passing of the Bill for their dissolution and a new Representation. Colonel Ingoldsby now came in haste, and said that there was not a moment to lose. The obnoxious Bill was about to become Law. Cromwell instantly went forth, followed by Lambert and several other officers. A detachment of soldiers was ordered to march to the House of Commons. The Lord General placed his men in the lobby, and then entered the House alone. "The Parliament sitting as usual, and being in debate upon the Bill with the amendments, which it was thought would have been passed that day, the Lord General Cromwell came into the house, clad in plain black clothes and gray worsted stockings, and sat down as he used to do, in an ordinary place." The scene which ensued has been described by Algernon Sidney, by Whitelocke, and by Ludlow. Sidney and Whitelocke were present. Ludlow was in Ireland; but he was in a position to obtain information, and he has put his details together in a very coherent narrative, little coloured by the wrath which he ever afterwards felt towards the formidable man "in plain black clothes and gray worsted stockings." "He sat down and heard the debate for some time. Then calling to Major-General Harrison, who was on the other side of the House, to come to him, he told him, that he judged the Parliament ripe for a dissolution, and this to be the time of doing it. The Major-General answered, as he since told me; 'Sir, the work is very great and dangerous, therefore I desire you seriously to consider of it before you engage in it.' 'You say well,' replied the General, and thereupon sat still for about a quarter of an hour; and then the question for passing the Bill being to be put, he said again to Major-General Harrison, 'This is the time—I must do it;' and suddenly standing up, made a speech, wherein he loaded the Parliament with the vilest

* Cromwell's Speech to the "Little Parliament," Carlyle, vol. ii. p. 317.

reproaches, charging them not to have a heart to do anything for the public good, to have espoused the corrupt interests of Presbytery, and the lawyers, who were the supporters of tyranny and oppression, accusing them of an intention to perpetuate themselves in power, had they not been forced to the passing of this act, which he affirmed they designed never to observe, and therefore told them, that the Lord had done with them, and had chosen other instruments for the carrying on his work that were more worthy. This he spoke with so much passion and discomposure of mind, as if he had been distracted. Sir Peter Wentworth stood up to answer him, and said, That this was the first time that ever he had heard such unbecoming language given to the Parliament, and that it was the more horrid in that it came from their servant, and their servant whom they had so highly trusted and obliged: but as he was going on, the General stepped into the midst of the House, where continuing his distracted language, he said, 'Come, come, I will put an end to your prating;' then walking up and down the House like a madman, and kicking the ground with his feet, he cried out, 'You are no Parliament, I say you are no Parliament; I will put an end to your sitting; call them in, call them in.' Whereupon the serjeant attending the Parliament opened the doors, and Lieutenant-Colonel Worsley with two files of musketeers entered the House; which Sir Henry Vane observing from his place, said aloud, 'This is not honest; yea, it is against morality and common honesty.' Then Cromwell fell a railing at him, crying out with a loud voice, 'O Sir Henry Vane, Sir Henry Vane; the Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane.' Then looking upon one of the members, he said, 'There sits a drunkard;' and giving much reviling language to others, he commanded the mace to be taken away, saying, 'What shall we do with this bauble? here, take it away.' Having brought all into this disorder, Major-General Harrison went to the Speaker as he sat in the chair, and told him, that seeing things were reduced to this pass, it would not be convenient for him to remain there. The Speaker answered, that he would not come down unless he were forced. 'Sir,' said Harrison, 'I will lend you my hand;' and thereupon putting his hand within his, the Speaker came down. Then Cromwell applied himself to the members of the House, who were in number between eighty and a hundred, and said to them, 'It's you that have forced me to this, for I have sought the Lord night and day, that he would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work.'

Hereupon Alderman Allen, a member of parliament, told him, that it was not yet gone so far, but all things might be restored again; and that if the soldiers were commanded out of the House, and the mace returned, the public affairs might go on in their former course; but Cromwell having now passed the Rubicon, not only rejected his advice, but charged him with an account of some hundred thousand pounds, for which he threatened to question him, he having been long treasurer for the Army, and in a rage committed him to the custody of one of the musketeers. Alderman Allen told him, that it was well known that it had not been his fault that his account was not made up long since; that he had often tendered it to the House, and that he asked no favour from any man in that matter. Cromwell having acted this treacherous and impious part, ordered the guard to see the House cleared of all the members, and then seized upon the records that were there, and at Mr. Scobell's house. After which he went to the clerk, and snatching the Act of Dissolution, which was ready to pass, out of his hand, he put it under his cloak, and having commanded the doors to be locked up, went away to Whitehall.*

The Council of State, in spite of the remonstrance of Bradshaw, its President, was dismissed the same afternoon by the same strong hand. In a newspaper of the following day, *Mercurius Politicus*, appeared this semi-official paragraph: "The Lord General delivered yesterday in Parliament divers reasons wherefore a present period should be put to the sitting of this Parliament, and it was accordingly done, the Speaker and the members all departing; the ground of which proceedings will, it is probable, be shortly made public." The French minister in London, writing to his government on the 3d of May, describes this humiliating end of the famous Long Parliament. "The people," he writes, "universally rejoice, and the higher ranks (la noblesse) equally so, in the *generous* action of General Cromwell, and the fall of the Parliament, which is reviled by every mouth. There is written on the House of Parliament—

* "This house is now to be let, unfurnished." †

The forcible expulsion of that Parliament which had become supreme through a similar unconstitutional violence, that of Colonel Pride's Purge, appears to have produced very little public excitement. Cromwell exclaimed, "We do not hear even a dog bark at

* "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 455.

† M. de Bordeaux to M. Servien, in Guizot, Appendix xxiii.

their going." The republican leaders were indignant; but they were powerless. This great change had been effected without a single drop of blood being shed. It was followed by no severities against those who were known to be most hostile to the one man who was regarded in many things as the real ruler of England. Many knew and avowed, as he himself knew, "that a settlement with somewhat of monarchical power in it would be very effectual." Speaker Lenthall, who was handed down from his chair, on the 20th of April, had expressed his opinion that "something of monarchy" was wanting for the government of this nation.* Many rejoiced at this approach to an authority more direct, less vacillating and less contentious, than the supreme government by a Parliament. Even the republicans, who had a natural dread of Cromwell's ambition, acquiesced in the instant change which had been produced by his commanding will. Mrs. Hutchinson writes of her husband, who for nearly a year had been absent from his place in the House: "He was going up to attend the business of his country alone, when news met him upon the road, near London, that Cromwell had broken the Parliament. Notwithstanding, he went on, and found divers of the members there, resolved to submit to the providence of God; and to wait till He should clear their integrity, and to disprove these people who had taxed them of ambition; by sitting still, when they had friends enough in the Army, City, and country, to have disputed the matter, and probably vanquished these accusers. They thought that if they should vex the land by war among themselves, the late subdued enemies, royalists and presbyterians, would have an opportunity to prevail on their dissensions, to the ruin of both. If these should govern well, and righteously, and moderately, they should enjoy the benefit of their good government; and not envy them the honourable toil." † The republican Colonel and Independent submitted, as the majority submitted, to an usurpation which seemed not wholly unlikely to increase "good government." Suspected as Cromwell was of aspiring to monarchical power, there was nothing in his character to make the people dread that he would rule cruelly and tyrannously instead of "righteously and moderately." The government went on without the slightest interruption. "The Lord-General and his Council of Officers" issued two declarations, in which it was promised that a certain number of persons should be summoned from all parts of the kingdom—God-fearing men, and

* See *ante*, p. 15.

† "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 205.

of approved integrity,—who should have the direction of affairs. Meanwhile, a Council of State, consisting of thirteen, was appointed,—nine military men and four civilians, with Cromwell as their president. The country remained in perfect tranquillity. The four Commissioners to whom the government of Ireland had been entrusted since the death of Ireton in November, 1651, “continued to act in their places and stations as before,” Ludlow, one of them, recording their hope that all would be for the best. Blake called together the puritan captains of his fleet to consider their change of masters. He was urged by some to take part against Cromwell. “No,” was his reply, “it is not for us to mind affairs of state, but to keep foreigners from fooling us.” Amidst this general submission to what was regarded as a probable blessing, or an inevitable evil, there was sent out, on the 6th of June, a summons to serve as a Member of Parliament, addressed to each of one hundred and thirty-nine persons. These had been selected, some after consultations of ministers with their congregations, others by their known public qualifications, and all by the approval of Cromwell and his Council. Very different was this from a Representation; but it was such an Assembly as had been proposed by Cromwell and his officers at the conferences which preceded the dissolution of April 20th. “That the government of the nation being in such condition as we saw, and things being under so much ill-sense abroad, and likely to end in confusion, we desired they would devolve the trust over to some well-affected men, such as had an interest in the nation, and were known to be of good affection to the Commonwealth. Which, we told them, was no new thing when this land was under the like hurlyburlies. And we had been labouring to get precedents to convince them of it; and it was confessed by them it was no new thing.*” The following is the Summons by which the members of “the Little Parliament” were called together:—

“Forasmuch as, upon the dissolution of the late Parliament, it became necessary, that the peace, safety, and good government of this Commonwealth should be provided for: And in order thereunto, divers persons, fearing God, and of approved fidelity and honesty, are, by myself with the advice of my council of officers, nominated; to whom the great charge and trust of so weighty affairs is to be committed: And having good assurance of your love to, and courage for, God and the interest of His cause, and ‘that’

* Cromwell’s Speech, July 4. Carlyle, vol. ii. p. 346.

of the good people of this Commonwealth: I, Oliver Cromwell, Captain General and Commander in Chief of all the Armies and Forces raised and to be raised within this Commonwealth, do hereby summon and require you, — — —, being one of the persons nominated, — personally to be and appear at the Council-Chamber, commonly known or called by the name of the Council-Chamber at Whitehall, within the city of Westminster, upon the fourth day of July next ensuing the date hereof; Then and there to take upon you the said trust; unto which you are hereby called, and appointed to serve as a member for the county of —. And hereof you are not to fail.

“Given under my hand and seal the 6th day of June, 1653,
“OLIVER CROMWELL.”

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