soon "the lady" carried her point; Buckingham was restored to favour; Clarendon was sacrified. Charges of the most serious nature were got up against him. The imputation of having sold Dunkirk for his private advantage was confidently maintained. It became known that whilst the Dutch were in the Thames, and the Treasury was without a guinea, he had resisted the advice of the Council that Parliament should be called together, upon the plea that it had been prorogued to a more distant day; but had recommended that money should be levied to pay the troops in the places where they were quartered, and that the sums so raised from individuals should be deducted out of their future taxes. That he had some schemes for forced contributions as a temporary expedient was admitted by himself. Other accusations, all of a very vague nature, were poured into the king's ear; who, no doubt, was not indisposed to get rid of one who was a severe monitor, and, though pliant in some things, was not an unscrupulous tool. Charles, through the duke of York, asked Clarendon to resign. He indignantly refused, saying, that his resignation would amount to a confession of guilt. After a conference of two hours the great minister saw that his disgrace was resolved upon—disgrace which "had been certainly designed in my lady Castlemaine's chamber." Her aviary looked into Whitehall garden; and when he went from the king, she rushed from her bed at twelve o'clock at noon—"and thither her women brought her her night-gown; and she stood blessing herself at the old man's going away; and several of the gallants of Whitehall,—of which there were many staying to see the Chancellor's return—did talk to her in her bird-cage."* The king sent for the seals. Evelyn went to see Clarendon, and says, "I found him in his bed-chamber very sad. . . . He had enemies at Court, especially the buffoons and ladies of pleasure, because he thwarted some of them, and stood in their way." The Parliament had assembled. On the 15th of October, the two Houses voted an address of thanks to the throne for the removal of the Chancellor, and the king in his reply pledged himself never to employ lord Clarendon again in any capacity. This was not enough. Seventeen charges were prepared against him by a Committee of the Commons; and on the 12th of November, the House impeached him of high-treason at the bar of the Peers. There were animated debates in that House, in which Clarendon had

* Pepys, August 27.

many supporters. The two Houses got angry. The court became alarmed. Clarendon was advised to leave the kingdom clandestinely, but he refused. Then the king sent him an express command to retire to the Continent. He obeyed; addressing a letter, vindicating himself, to the House of Peers. An Act was passed on the 29th of December, banishing him for life, unless he should return by the following 1st of February.

The close of the political career of Clarendon, under circumstances of punishment and disgrace so disproportioned to his public or private demerits, has left no stain upon his memory. Whatever were his faults as a statesman, he stands upon a far higher elevation than the men who accomplished his ruin. As to the king, his parasites and his mistresses, who were in raptures to be freed from his observation and censure, their dislike was Clarendon's high praise. In the encouragement which Charles indirectly gave to attacks upon the minister who had saved him from many of the worst consequences of the rashness of the royalists, and had laboured in the service of his father and himself for twenty-seven years, either in war, or in exile, or in triumph, with a zeal and ability which no other possessed, we see only the heartless ingratitude of the king, and his utterly selfish notions of the duties of a sovereign. Clarendon had become disagreeable to him, through the very qualities which made the government endurable to high-minded and sober men. Nor was it from any desire to carry out more tolerant principles of ecclesiastical rule, nor from any conviction that his Chancellor's notions of civil policy were antiquated and in many respects unsuited to the times, that the king sought other advisers. The men who succeeded the great minister made one attempt to remove some of the oppressions under which the Non-conformists laboured. They failed; and their failure was followed by a more indiscriminate persecution. They made one bold endeavour at a course of foreign policy which might have again placed England at the head of a union of Protestant free states. For a very brief period the influence of France was shaken off; and then England's king was the pensioner of Louis. Clarendon went into exile. He was some time before he was permitted to find a resting place; but he found it at last at Montpelier. He was probably never sincerely reconciled to the loss of power and grandeur; but he believed that he was reconciled; and in dedicating himself to a renewal of that literary employment which has given him the best title to the respectful remembrance of

mankind, he found that consolation which industry never failed to bestow upon a robust understanding, that was also open to religious impressions. He says of himself:—"It pleased God, in a short time, after some recollections, and upon his entire confidence in Him, to restore him to that serenity of mind and resignation of himself to the disposal and good pleasure of God, that they who conversed most with him could not discover the least murmur or impatience in him, or any unevenness in his conversations."

When the seals were taken away from Clarendon they were given to sir Orlando Bridgman. The conduct of affairs fell into new hands. Southampton, the most respectable of Charles's first advisers was dead. Monk was worn out. Buckingham first came into power with Arlington as secretary of state, and sir William Coventry. But soon the ministry comprised the five persons known as "The Cabal"—a name which signified what we now call The Cabinet; but which name was supposed incorrectly to have been formed out of the initial letters of the names of the members,—Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, Lauderdale. The word Cabal had been used long before, to indicate a secret council. Of the new advisers of Charles, Buckingham was the most influential at Court, and he made great efforts to be at the same time the most popular. When Buckingham was taken to the Tower, Clarendon was depressed by the acclamation of the people, who shouted round the prisoner. As Clarendon had supported the Church, Buckingham was the champion of the sectaries. Baxter says, "As the Chancellor had made himself the head of the prelatical party, who were all for setting up themselves by force, and suffering none that were against them, so Buckingham would now be the head of all those parties that were for liberty of conscience." The candid Non-conformist adds, "For the man was of no religion, but notoriously and professedly lustful;" but he qualifies his censure with this somewhat high praise,—"and yet of greater wit and parts, and sounder principles as to the interests of humanity and the common good, than most lords in the court." * The duke lived in York House, the temporary palace which his father had built, of which nothing now remains but the Water Gate. Here he dwelt during the four or five years of the Cabal administration, affording, as he always continued to afford, abundant materials for the immortal character of Zimri:—

* "Life," Part iii. p. 21.

"A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts and nothing long;
But, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon:
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking." *

Ashley, afterwards earl of Shaftesbury—the Antony Ashley Cooper of the Protectorate, who clung to the Rump Parliament till he saw that Monk had sealed its fate, and then made his peace with Charles with surprising readiness—the ablest, and in some respects the most incomprehensible of the statesmen of his time, has had the double immortality of the satire of Butler as well as of Dryden. In Thanet House, in Aldersgate-street, Ashley was at hand to influence the politics of the city. When the mob were roasting rumps in the streets, and were about to handle him roughly as he passed in his carriage, he turned their anger into mirth by his jokes. When the king frowned upon him, he went straight from office to opposition, and made the court disfavour as serviceable to his ambition as the court's honours and rewards;—

"For by the witchcraft of rebellion
Transform'd to a feeble state-cameleon
By giving aim from side to side
He never fail'd to save his tide;
But got the start of every state,
And at a change ne'er came too late." †

In a few years more Shaftesbury had earned the praise, or dispraise, of Dryden,

"A daring pilot in extremity,
Pleas'd with the danger when the waves run high."

The history of the Cabal ministry, which extends over a period of six years, is not the history of a Cabinet united by a common principle of agreement upon great questions of domestic and foreign policy. Nor is it the history of a Sovereign asserting his own opinions, and watching over the administration of affairs, under the advice of a Council, and through the agency of the great officers of State. The monarchs of England, from the Norman times, had been, for the most part, men of remarkable energy of character; and in default of their capacity for warlike action and public business, some representative of adequate qualifications wielded the executive power. The great kings of the Plantagenet

* Dryden, "Absalom and Achitophel." † "Hudibras," Part iii.

race were essentially their own ministers. Henry VII., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, were remarkable for their laborious attention to the duties of their great office. Charles I., whether aiming to be despotic, or struggling for his crown and his life, was zealous, active, and self-confident. Charles II. was absolutely indifferent to any higher objects than personal gratification; and to this circumstance we must refer some of the extraordinary anomalies of the government after the fall of Clarendon. Abraham Cowley heard Tom Killigrew say to the king, "There is a good, honest, able man that I could name, that if your majesty would employ, and command to see all things well executed, all things would soon be mended; and this is one Charles Stuart, who now spends his time in employing his lips about the Court, and hath no other employment; but if you would give him this employment, he were the fittest man in the world to perform it." * Killigrew's estimate of the character of his royal master was altogether false. He was neither honest nor able, with reference to any aptitude for the condition of life to which he was called. He did not desire, he said, to sit like a Turkish sultan, and sentence men to the bowstring; but he could not endure that a set of fellows should inquire into his conduct. Always professing his love of Parliaments, he was always impatient of their interference. There is something irresistibly comic in the way in which he tried to manage the House of Lords, in 1669, by being present at their debates. He first sat decently upon the throne, thinking to prevent unpleasant reflections by this restraint upon the freedom of speech. But what he commenced out of policy, under the advice of the crafty Lauderdale, he continued for mere amusement. "The king," writes Burnet, "who was often weary of time, and did not know how to get round the day, liked the going to the House as a pleasant diversion: so he went constantly. And he quickly left the throne, and stood by the fire, which drew a crowd about him, that broke all the decency of that House; for, before that time every lord sat regularly in his place; but the king's coming broke the order of their sitting as became senators. The king's coming thither had a much worse effect; for he became a common solicitor, not only in public affairs, but even in matters of justice. He would in a very little time have gone the round of the House, and spoke to every one that he thought worth speaking to. And he was apt to do that upon the solicitation of any of the ladies in favour, or of any that had credit with

* Pepys, December 2, 1666.

them." With such a sovereign, as utterly indifferent to the properties of his public station as to the decencies of his private life, we can scarcely expect that there should have been any consistent principle of administration. The terrible experience of thirty years imposed upon Charles some caution in the manifestation of his secret desire to be as absolute as his brother Louis of France. The great Bourbon was encumbered with no Parliament; he had not to humble himself to beg for supplies of insolent Commons; he was not troubled with any set of fellows to inquire into his conduct and ask for accounts of expenditure; he had the gabelle and other imposts which fell upon the prostrate poor, without exciting the animosity of the dangerous rich; he was indeed a king, whose shoe-latchet nobles were proud to unloose, and whose transcendant genius and virtue prelates rejoiced to compare with the divine attributes. Such a blissful destiny as that of the Bourbon could not befall the Stuart by ordinary means. Charles would become as great as Louis, as far as his notion of greatness went, by becoming the tributary of Louis. He would sell his country's honour,—he would renounce the religion he had sworn to uphold,—for an adequate price. But this bargain should be a secret one. It should be secret, even from a majority of his own ministers. Upon this point hinges the disgraceful history of the Cabal.

But though Charles and two of his ministers, Arlington and Clifford, were ready to go any length to make the policy of Whitehall utterly subservient to the policy of the Louvre, and to bring the creed of Lambeth into very near if not exact conformity with the creed of the Vatican—though Buckingham and Shaftesbury had some complicity in these iniquitous purposes—yet there was a power in the State which had become too formidable for king and ministers utterly to despise. The Parliament, servile and corrupt in many compliances, was yet a power that might be roused into sudden indignation by any outrageous exercise of prerogative, and, above all, by any daring attack upon the Protestant tendencies of the nation. The shiftings of politicians, of whom Shaftesbury was the type, from courtiers one day to demagogues the next, were the natural result of the want, during the first ten years of the Restoration, of any great principle of action which would raise politicians on either side above the mere influences of personal ambition. The Monarchy was an accomplished fact: to fight again for a Commonwealth was no longer possible. The Church was re-estab-

lished, in triumphant intolerance: Presbyterians and Independents had no standing place for a new struggle. The Crown and the Parliament were both open to corruption; and their venality tainted, though not in an equal degree, the advocates of non-resistance and the enemies of that debasing principle. Placemen and patriots each held out the "itching palm" to France. There was no manifest struggle of opinion against power, till the design to bring back England to the communion of Rome became evident. The resistance to this attempt roused the nation out of its apparent apathy. The intolerant passion of the multitude—blind, cruel, frantic in its fears—was quickly absorbed into the general determination that England should be Protestant, which identified itself with civil liberty. Religious liberty grew slowly out of the contest, when the reign of the great enemies of all freedom was terminated by their own folly and bigotry.

The story of the next twenty years, which brings us to the great era of our modern history, would be incomprehensible, if we did not constantly bear in mind, that public opinion had become a real element in national progress. The Crown was constantly dreaming of the revival of despotism, to be accomplished by force and by corruption. Yet the Crown, almost without a struggle, was bereft of the power of imprisoning without trial, by the passing of the Habeas Corpus Act; and it lost its control over the freedom of the Press by the expiration of the Licensing system. The Church thought it possible to destroy non-conformity by fines and fetters. In its earlier Liturgy it prayed to be delivered from "false doctrine and heresy;" it now prayed for deliverance from "false doctrine, heresy, and schism." Yet when it had ejected the Puritans from the Churches, and had shut up the Conventicles, it laid the foundation of schisms which, in a few years, made dissent a principle which churchmen could not hope to crush and statesmen could not dare to despise. How can we account for the striking anomaly, that with a profligate Court, a corrupt Administration, a venal House of Commons, a tyrannous Church, the nation during the reign of Charles II. was manifestly progressing in the essentials of freedom, unless we keep in view that from the beginning of the century there had been an incessant struggle of the national mind against every form of despotic power? The desire for liberty, civil and spiritual, had become almost an instinct. The great leaders in this battle had passed away. The men who by fits aspired to be tribunes of the people were treacherous or inconstant.

But the spirit of the nation was not dead. It made itself heard in Parliament, with a voice that grew louder and louder, till the torrent was once again dammed up. A few more years of tyranny without disguise——and then the end.

The first movements of the Cabal ministry were towards a high and liberal policy—toleration for non-conformists, and an alliance with free Protestant States. A greater liberty to dissenters from the Church followed the fall of Clarendon. We see transient and accidental motives for this passing toleration, rather than the assertion of a fixed principle. The bishops had supported Clarendon, and the king and his new ministers and favorites were therefore out of humour with the bishops. The fire of London had rendered it impossible to carry on the spiritual instruction of the people by the established Clergy; and therefore assemblies to hear the sermons of Presbyterians and Independents were not visited with the penalties of the Conventicle Act. It was, says Baxter, "at the first a thing too gross to forbid an undone people all public worshipping of God, with too great rigour; and if they had been so forbidden, poverty had left them so little to lose as would have made them desperately go on."* Sir Orlando Bridgman, now Lord Keeper, desired a conference with Baxter, "about a comprehension and toleration," in January, 1668. The Lord Chief Baron Hale, and Bishop Wilkins, were agreed with the Lord Keeper in promoting this salutary work. The king, says Burnet, "seemed now to go into moderation and comprehension with so much heartiness, that both Bridgman and Wilkins believed he was in earnest in it; though there was nothing that the popish councils were more fixed in, than to oppose all motions of that kind. But the king saw it was necessary to recover the affections of his people." The opportunity of recovering the affections of the great Puritan body, scattered, depressed, but still influential, was thrown away. There were propositions on the part of the non-conformists; and amendments were suggested and accepted. Baxter says that fourteen hundred non-conformable ministers would have yielded to these "hard terms;" but that when the Parliament met, the active prelates and prelatists prevailed to prevent any bill of comprehension or indulgence to be brought in; "and the Lord Keeper that had called us, and set us on work, himself turned that way, and talked after as if he understood us not." In the king's speech, February 10, 1668, he recommended

* "Life," Part iii. p. 22.

that they would seriously think of some course to beget a better union and composure in the minds of his Protestant subjects in matters of religion. On the 8th of April, a motion in the House of Commons that his majesty should send for such persons as he should think fit, to make proposals to him in order to the uniting of his Protestant subjects, was negatived by 176 votes against 70.

At the opening of the Session of Parliament in 1668, the king announced that he had made a league defensive with the States-General of the United Provinces, to which Sweden had become a party. This was the Triple Alliance. The nation saw with reasonable apprehension the development of the vast schemes of ambition of Louis XIV. He was at war with Spain; but the great empire upon which the sun never set was fast falling to pieces—not perishing like a grand old house, overthrown by a hurricane's fury, but smouldering away with the dry-rot in every timber. France, on the contrary, was rising into the position of the greatest power in Europe. Her able but vain-glorious king already looked upon the Spanish Netherlands as his certain prey. The United Provinces were hateful to him as the seat of religious and civil liberty. The crisis was come when England, by a return to the policy of Cromwell, might have taken her place again at the head of the free Protestant states of Europe. Was there any real intention in the king or in his ministry to raise up England as a barrier against the designs of France? Or was the mission of Temple to the Hague, by which a defensive alliance was concluded with De Witt in five days, a mere blind to conceal the dark and dangerous schemes for a secret alliance with France? When Charles announced to Parliament this league with the United Provinces and Sweden, it was thought to be "the only good public thing that hath been done since the king came into England."* It was a marvel of diplomacy. De Witt and Temple met as two honest men, without any finesse; and they quickly concluded a treaty which they believed to be for the honour and safety of both their countries. "Their candour, their freedom, and the most confidential disclosures, were the result of true policy."† This treaty, says Burnet, "was certainly the masterpiece of king Charles's life; and if he had stuck to it, it would have been both the strength and glory of his reign. This disposed the people to forgive all that was past, and to renew their confidence in him, which was shaken by the whole conduct of the Dutch war."

* Pepys. † Burke, "Regicide Peace."

At the very time when the ambassador of England was negotiating the treaty which promised to be "the strength and glory of his reign," the king was making proposals to Louis for a clandestine treaty, by which England was to be "leased out" to France,

"Like to a tenement or pelting farm."