

was one thing for which he and his soldiers had fought and bled, it was for the sake of religious liberty, a liberty which was real enough as far as it went, even if it was much less comprehensive than that which has been accepted in later times. No security was offered for religious liberty under the new-old Parliament. There was nothing to prevent it from abolishing all that existed at any moment it pleased.

As often happens, moral repugnance came to the help of logical reasoning. Not a few of the members of Parliament were conducting themselves in such a way as to forfeit the respect of all honest men. Against foreign foes, indeed, the commonwealth had been successful. The navy, reorganized by Vane, had cleared the seas of Royalist privateers. Commercial jealousy against the Dutch had mingled with the tide of political ill-feeling. In 1651 the Navigation Act was aimed at the Dutch carrying trade, which had flourished simply because the Dutch vessels were better built, and long experience had enabled them to transport goods from one country to another more cheaply than the merchants of other nations. Henceforth English vessels alone were to be allowed to import goods into England, excepting in the case of vessels belonging to the country in which the goods were produced.

War was the result. In January, 1652, the seizure of Dutch ships began. The two sturdy antagonists were well matched. There were no decisive victories; but, on the whole, the English had the upper hand.

Such a war was expensive. Royalists were forced to compound for their estates, forfeited by their adoption of the king's cause. Even if this measure had been fairly carried out, the attempt to make one part of the nation pay for the expenses of the whole was more likely to create dissension than to heal it. But it was not fairly carried out. Members of Parliament took bribes to let this man and that man off more easily than those who were less able to pay. The effects of unlimited power were daily becoming more manifest.

To be the son or a nephew of one of the holders of authority was a sure passport to the public service. Forms of justice were disregarded, and the nation turned with vexation upon its so-called liberators, whose yoke was as heavy to bear as that which had been shaken off.

Of this dissatisfaction Cromwell made himself the mouth-piece. His remedy for the evil, which both sides dreaded, was not the perpetuation of a Parliament which did not represent the nation, but the establishment of constitutional securities which would limit the powers of a freely elected Parliament. He and his officers proposed that a committee, formed of members of Parliament and officers, should be nominated to deliberate on the requisite securities.

On April 19 he was assured, or believed himself to be assured, by one of the leading members that nothing would be done in a hurry. On the morning of the 20th he was told that Parliament was hurriedly passing its own bill, in defiance of his objections. Going at once to the House, he waited till the decisive question was put to vote. Then he rose. The Parliament, he said, had done well in their pains and care for the public good. But it had been stained with "injustice, delays of justice, self-interest." Then, when a member interrupted him, he blazed up into anger. "Come, come! we have had enough of this. I will put an end to this. It is not fit you should sit here any longer." Calling in his soldiers, he bade them clear the House, following the members with words of obloquy as they were driven out. "What shall we do with this bauble?" he said, taking up the mace. "Take it away." Then, as if feeling the burden of the work which he was doing pressing upon him, he sought to excuse himself, as he had sought to excuse himself after the slaughter of Drogheda. "It is you," he said, "that have forced me to do this. I have sought the Lord night and day that he would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work."