

Execu- tion of the king. The Com- mon- wealth.

to death. He was beheaded on a scaffold outside the windows of Whitehall (1649).

The government set up was a government by the committees of a council of state nominally supporting themselves on the House of Commons, though the members who still retained their places were so few that the council of state was sufficiently numerous to form a majority in the House. During eleven years the nation passed through many vicissitudes in its forms of government. These forms take no place in the gradual development of English institutions, and have never been referred to as affording precedents to be followed. To the student of political science, however, they have a special interest of their own, as they show that when men had shaken themselves loose from the chain of habit and prejudice, and had set themselves to build up a political shelter under which to dwell, they were irresistibly attracted by that which was permanent in the old constitutional forms of which the special development had of late years been so disastrous. After Cromwell had suppressed resistance in Ireland (1649), had conquered Scotland (1650), and had overthrown the son of the late king, the future Charles II., at Worcester (1651), the value of government by an assembly was tested and found wanting. After Cromwell had expelled the remains of the Long Parliament (1653), and had set up another assembly of nominated members, that second experiment was found equally wanting. It was necessary to have recourse to one head of the executive government, controlling and directing its actions. Cromwell occupied this position as Lord Protector. He did all that it was in his power to do to prevent his authority from degenerating into tyranny. He summoned two parliaments, of only one House, and with the consent of the second parliament he erected a second House, so that he might have some means of checking the Lower House without constantly coming into personal collision with its authority. As far as form went, the constitution in 1658, so far as it differed from the Stuart constitution, differed for the better. But it suffered from one fatal defect. It was based on the rule of the sword. The only substitute for traditional authority is the clearly expressed expression of the national will, and it is impossible to doubt that if the national will had been expressed it would have swept away Cromwell and all his system. The majority of the upper and middle classes, which had united together against Laud, was now re-united against Cromwell. The Puritans themselves were but a minority, and of that minority considerable numbers disliked the free liberty accorded to the sects. Whilst the worship of the Church of England was proscribed, every illiterate or frenzied enthusiast was allowed to harangue at his pleasure. Those who cared little for religion felt insulted when they saw a Government with which they had no sympathy ruling by means of an army which they dreaded and detested. Cromwell did his best to avert a social revolution, and to direct the energies of his supporters into the channels of merely political change. But he could not prevent, and it cannot be said that he wished to prevent, the rise of men of ability from positions of social inferiority. The nation had striven against the arbitrary government of the king; but it was not prepared to shake off the predominance of that widely spreading aristocracy which, under the name of country gentlemen, had rooted itself too deeply to be easily passed by. Cromwell's rule was covered with military glory, and there can be no doubt that he honestly applied himself to solve domestic difficulties as well. But he reaped the reward of those who strive for something better than the generation in which they live is able to appreciate. His own faults and errors were remembered against him. He tried in vain to establish constitutional government and religious toleration. When he died (1658) there remained branded

The Pro- tectorate.

on the national mind two strong impressions which it took more than a century to obliterate—the dread of the domination of a standing army, and abhorrence of the very name of religious zeal.

The eighteen months which followed deepened the im- pression thus formed. The army had appeared a hard master when it lent its strength to a wise and sagacious rule. It was worse when it undertook to rule in its own name, to set up and pull down parliaments and Governments. The only choice left to the nation seemed to be one between military tyranny and military anarchy. Therefore it was that when Monk advanced from Scotland and declared for a free parliament, there was little doubt that the new parliament would recall the exiled king, and seek to build again on the old foundations.

The Restoration was effected by a coalition between the Cavaliers, or followers of Charles I., and the Presbyterians, who had originally opposed him. It was only after the nature of a great reaction that the latter should for a time be swamped by the former. When the Long Parliament of the Restoration met in 1661, the Act of Uniformity entirely excluded all idea of reform in the Puritan direction, and ordered the expulsion from their benefices of all clergymen who refused to express approval of the whole of the Book of Common Prayer (1662). A previous statute, the Corporation Act (1661), ordered that all members of corporations should renounce the Covenant and the doctrine that subjects might in any case rightfully use force against the king, and should receive the sacrament after the forms of the Church of England. The object for which Laud had striven, the compulsory imposition of uniformity, thus became part of the law of the land.

Herein lay the novelty of the system of the Restoration. The system of Laud and the system of Cromwell had both been imposed by a minority which had possessed itself of the powers of government. The new uniformity was imposed by parliament, and parliament had the nation behind it. For the first time, therefore, all those who objected to the established religion sought, not to alter its forms to suit themselves, but to gain permission to worship in separate congregations. Ultimately, the Dissenters, as they began to be called, would obtain their object. As soon as it became clear to the mass of the nation that the dissenters were in a decided minority, there would be no reason to fear the utmost they could do even if the present liberty of worship and teaching were conceded to them. For the present, however, they were feared out of all proportion to their numbers. They counted amongst them the old soldiers of the Protectorate, and though that army had been dissolved, it always seemed possible that it might spring to arms once more. A bitter experience had taught men that a hundred of Oliver's Ironsides might easily chase a thousand Cavaliers; and as long as this danger was believed to exist, every effort would be made to keep dissent from spreading. Hence the Conventicle Act (1664) imposed penalties on those taking part in religious meetings in private houses, and the Five Mile Act (1665) forbade the expelled clergyman to come within five miles of a corporate borough, the very place where he was most likely to secure adherence, unless he would swear his adhesion to the doctrine of non-resistance.

The doctrine of non-resistance was evidently that by which, at this time, the loyal subject was distinguished from those whom he stigmatized as disloyal. Yet even the most loyal found that, if it was wrong to take up arms against the king, it might be right to oppose him in other ways. Even the Cavaliers did not wish to see Charles II. an absolute sovereign. They wished to reconstruct the system which had been violently interrupted by the events of the autumn of 1641, and to found govern-

The anarchy.

The Re- storation.

Prospect of tolera- tion.

Doctrine of non- resist- ance.

The first Dutch war.

The Commons aim at control over ex- penditure.

ment on the co-operation between king and parliament, without defining to themselves what was to be done if the king's conduct became insufferable. Openly, indeed, Charles II. did not force them to reconsider their position. He did not thrust members of the Commons into prison, or issue writs for ship-money. He laid no claim to taxation which had not been granted by parliament. But he was extravagant and self-indulgent, and he wanted more money than they were willing to supply. A war with the Dutch broke out, and there were strong suspicions that Charles applied money voted for the fleet to the maintenance of a vicious and luxurious court. Against the vice and luxury, indeed, little objection was likely to be brought. The over-haste of the Puritans to drill England into ways of morality and virtue had thrown at least the upper classes into a slough of revelry and baseness. But if the vice did not appear objectionable the expense did, and a new chapter in the financial history of the Government was opened when the Commons, having previously gained control over taxation, proceeded to vindicate their right to control expenditure.

As far, indeed, as taxation was concerned, the Long Parliament had not left its successor much to do. The abolition of feudal tenures and purveyance had long been demanded, and the conclusion of an arrangement which had been mooted in the reign of James I. is only notable as affording one instance out of many of the tendency of a single class to shift burdens off its own shoulders. The predominant landowners preferred the grant of an excise which would be taken out of all pockets to a land-tax which would exclusively be felt by those who were relieved by the abolition of the tenures. The question of expenditure was constantly telling on the relations between the king and the House of Commons. After the Puritan army had been disbanded, the king resolved to keep on foot a petty force of 5000 men, and he had much difficulty in providing for it out of a revenue which had not been intended for those who voted it to be used for such a purpose. Then came the Dutch war, bringing with it a suspicion that some at least of the money given for paying sailors and fitting out ships was employed by Charles on very different objects. The Commons accordingly, in 1665, succeeded in enforcing, on precedents derived from the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV., the right of appropriating the supplies granted to special objects; and with more difficulty they obtained, in 1666, the appointment of a commission empowered to investigate irregularities in the issue of moneys. Such measures were the complement of the control over taxation which they had previously gained, and as far as their power of supervision went, it constituted them and not the king the directors of the course of government. If this result was not immediately felt, it was because the king had a large certain revenue voted to him for life, so that, for the present at least, it was only his extraordinary expenses which could be brought under parliamentary control. Nor did even the renewal of parliamentary impeachment, which ended in the banishment of Lord Chancellor Clarendon (1667), bring on any direct collision with the king. If the Commons wished to be rid of him because he upheld the prerogative, the king was equally desirous to be rid of him because he looked coldly on the looseness of the royal morals.

The great motive power of the later politics of the reign was to be found beyond the channel. To the men of the days of Charles II. Lewis XIV. of France was what Philip II. of Spain had been to the men of the days of Elizabeth. Gradually, in foreign policy, the commercial emulation with the Dutch, which found vent in one war in the time of the Commonwealth, and in two wars in the time of Charles II., gave way to a dread, rising into hatred,

of the arrogant potentate who, at the head of the mightiest army in Europe, treated with contempt all rights which came into collision with his own wishes. Nor was Lewis XIV. merely to be feared as a military or political opponent. Even when he was on bad terms with the pope he was a warm upholder of the Papal Church, and Protestants began to ask whether their religion would long be safe if other states succumbed to his arms. Soon, too, suspicions arose that there were those in England who might be glad to use his assistance for the overthrow of Protestantism at home.

In fact, the danger was to the full as great as it was imagined to be. The king was as much a Roman Catholic as he was anything at all, and in his annoyance at the interference of the Commons with his expenditure he thought it a fine thing to lead an easy uncontrolled existence as the pensioner of the great king. In 1670 the secret treaty of Dover was signed. Charles was to receive from Louis £200,000 a year, and the aid of 6000 French troops, to enable him to declare himself a convert, and to obtain special advantages for his religion, whilst he was also to place the forces of England at Lewis's disposal for his purposes of aggression on the Continent.

Charles had no difficulty in stirring up the commercial jealousy of England so as to bring about a second Dutch war (1672). The next year, unwilling to face the dangers of his larger plan, he issued a Declaration of Indulgence (1673). By a single act of the prerogative the king suspended all penal laws against Roman Catholics and dissenters alike.

The cavalier parliament had been gradually drifting into opposition to the crown. But to the end it was true to its resolution to retain the political predominance of the English Church. It dreaded the Roman Catholics. It hated and despised the disseaters. Under any circumstances an indulgence would have been most distasteful to it. But the growing belief that the whole scheme was merely intended to serve the purposes of the Roman Catholics converted its dislike into deadly opposition. Yet it resolved to base its opposition upon constitutional grounds. The right claimed by the king to suspend the laws was questioned, and his claim to special authority in ecclesiastical matters was treated with contempt. The king gave way, and withdrew his declaration. But no solemn Act of Parliament declared it to be illegal, and in due course of time it would be heard of again.

The Commons followed up their blow by passing the Test Act, making the reception of the sacrament according to the forms of the Church of England, and the renunciation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, a necessary qualification for office. At once it appeared what a hold the members of the obnoxious church had had upon the administration of the state. The lord high admiral, the lord treasurer, and a secretary of state refused to take the test. The lord high admiral was the heir to the throne, the king's brother, the duke of York.

Charles, as usual, bent before the storm. In Danby he found a minister whose views answered precisely to the views of the existing House of Commons. Like the Commons, Danby wished to silence both Roman Catholics and dissenters. Like the Commons, too, he wished to embark on a foreign policy hostile to France. But he served a master who regarded Lewis less as a possible adversary than as a possible paymaster. Sometimes Danby was allowed to do as he liked, and the marriage of the duke of York's eldest daughter Mary to her cousin the prince of Orange was the most lasting result of his administration. More often he was obliged to follow where Charles led, and Charles was constantly ready to sell the neutrality of England for large sums of French gold. At

Second Dutch war and Declaration of Indulgence.

The Declaration of Indulgence with drawn.

The Test Act.

Danby's ministry.

last one of these negotiations was detected, and Danby, who was supposed to be the author instead of the unwilling instrument of the intrigue, was impeached. In order to save his minister, Charles dissolved parliament (1678).

Charles could not have chosen a more unlucky time for his own quiet. The strong feeling against the Roman Catholics had been quickened into a flame by a great imposture. The inventors of the so-called Popish plot charged the leading English Roman Catholics with a design to murder the king. Judges and juries alike were maddened with excitement, and listened greedily to the lies which poured forth from the lips of profligate informers. Innocent blood was shed in abundance.

The excitement had its root in the uneasy feeling caused by the knowledge that the heir to the throne was a Roman Catholic. Three parliaments were summoned and dissolved. In each parliament the main question, at issue between the Commons and the crown was the Exclusion Bill, by which the Commons sought to deprive the duke of York of his inheritance; and it was notorious that the leaders of the movement wished the crown to descend to the king's illegitimate son, the duke of Monmouth.

The principles by which the Commons were guided in these parliaments were very different from those which had prevailed in the first parliament of the Restoration. Those principles to which that party adhered which about this time became known as the Tory party had been formed under the influence of the terror caused by militant Puritanism. In the state the Tory inherited the ideas of Clarendon, and, without being at all ready to abandon the claims of parliaments, nevertheless somewhat inconsistently spoke of the king as ruling by a divine and indefeasible title, and wielding a power which it was both impious and unconstitutional to resist by force. In the church he inherited the ideas of Laud, and saw in the maintenance of the Act of Uniformity the safeguard of religion. But the hold of these opinions on the nation had been weakened with the cessation of the causes which had produced them. In 1680 twenty years had passed since the Puritan army had been disbanded. Many of Cromwell's soldiers had died, and most of them were growing old. The dissenters had shown no signs of engaging in plots or conspiracies. They were known to be only a comparatively small minority of the population, and though they had been cruelly persecuted, they had suffered without a thought of resistance. Dread of the dissenters, therefore, had become a mere chimera, which only those could entertain whose minds were influenced by prejudice. On the other hand, dread of the Roman Catholics was a living force. Unless the law were altered a Roman Catholic would be on the throne, wielding all the resources of the prerogative, and probably supported by all the resources of the king of France. Hence the leading principle of the Whigs, as the predominant party was now called, was in the state to seek for the highest national authority in parliament rather than in the king, and in the church to adopt the rational theology of Chillingworth and Hales, whilst looking to the dissenters as allies against the Roman Catholics, who were the enemies of both.

Events were to show that it was a wise provision which led the Whigs to seek to exclude the duke of York from the throne. But their plan suffered under two faults, the conjunction of which was ruinous to them for the time. In the first place, their choice of Monmouth as the heir was infelicitous. Not only was he under the stain of illegitimacy, but his succession excluded the future succession of Mary, whose husband, the prince of Orange, was the hope of Protestant Europe. In the second place, drastic remedies are never generally acceptable when the evil to be remedied is still in the future. When in the

Three short parliaments.

The Exclusion Bill.

Whig and Tories.

Tory reaction.

third of the short parliaments held at Oxford the Whigs rode armed into the city, the nation decided that the future danger of a Roman Catholic succession was incomparably less than the immediate danger of another civil war. Loyal addresses poured in to the king. For the four remaining years of his reign he ruled without summoning any parliament. Whigs were brought before prejudiced juries and partial judges. Their blood flowed on the scaffold. The charter of the city of London was confiscated. The reign of the Tories was unquestioned. Yet it was not quite what the reign of the Cavaliers had been in 1660. The violence of the Restoration had been directed primarily against Puritanism, and only against certain forms of government so far as they allowed Puritans to gain the upper hand. The violence of the Tories was directed against rebellion and disorder, and only against dissenters so far as they were believed to be fomenters of disorder. Religious hatred had less part in the action of the ruling party, and even from its worst actions a wise man might have predicted that the day of toleration was not so far off as it seemed.

The accession of James II. (1685) put the views of the opponents of the Exclusion Bill to the test. A new parliament was elected, almost entirely composed of decided Tories. A rebellion in Scotland, headed by the earl of Argyll, and a rebellion in England, headed by the duke of Monmouth, were easily suppressed. But the inherent difficulties of the king's position were not thereby overcome. It would have been hard, in days in which religious questions occupied so large a space in the field of politics, for a Roman Catholic sovereign to rule successfully over a Protestant nation. James set himself to make it, in his case, impossible. It may be that he did not consciously present to himself any object other than fair treatment for his co-religionists. On the one hand, however, he alienated even reasonable opponents by offering no guarantees that equality so gained would not be converted into superiority by the aid of his own military force and of the assistance of the French king; whilst on the other hand he relied, even more strongly than his father had done, on the technical legality which exalted the prerogative in defiance of the spirit of the law. He began by making use of the necessity of resisting Monmouth to increase his army, under the pretext of the danger of a repetition of the late rebellion; and in the regiments thus levied he appointed many Roman Catholic officers who had refused to comply with the Test Act. Rather than submit to the gentlest remonstrance, he prorogued parliament, and proceeded to obtain from the Court of King's Bench a judgment in favour of his right to dispense with all penalties due by law, in the same way that his grandfather had appealed to the judges in the matter of the post-nati. But not only was the question put by James II. of far wider import than the question put by James I., but he deprived the court to which he applied of all moral authority by previously turning out of office the judges who were likely to disagree with him, and by appointing new ones who were likely to agree with him. A Court of High Commission of doubtful legality was subsequently erected (1686) to deprive or suspend clergymen who made themselves obnoxious to the court, whilst James appointed Roman Catholics to the headship of certain colleges at Oxford. The legal support given him by judges of his own selection was fortified by the military support of an army collected at Hounslow Heath; and a Roman Catholic, the earl of Tyrconnel, was sent as lord-deputy to Ireland (1687) to organize a Roman Catholic army on which the king might fall back if his English forces proved insufficient for his purpose.

Thus fortified, James issued a declaration of indulgence

First years of the reign of James.

James's declaration of indulgence.

Attempt to summon a packed parliament.

Trial of the seven bishops.

Birth of an heir to the throne.

Invitation of the Prince of Orange.

Accession of William and Mary. Results of the Revolution.

(1687) granting full religious liberty to all his subjects. The belief that the grant of liberty to all religions was only intended to serve as a cloak for the ascendancy of one was so strong that the measure roused the opposition of all those who objected to see the king's will substituted for the law, even if they wished to see the Protestant dissenters tolerated. In spite of this opposition, the king thought it possible to obtain a parliamentary sanction for his declaration. The parliament to which he intended to appeal was, however, to be as different a body from the parliament which met in the first year of his reign as the bench of judges which had approved of the dispensing power had been different from the bench which existed at his accession. A large number of the borough members were in those days returned by the corporations, and the corporations were accordingly changed. But so thoroughly was the spirit of the country roused, that many even of the new corporations were set against James's declaration, and he had therefore to abandon for a time the hope of seeing it accepted even by a packed House of Commons. All, however, that he could do to give it force he did. He ordered the clergy to read it in all pulpits (1688). Seven bishops who presented a petition asking him to relieve the clergy from the burthen of proclaiming what they believed to be illegal were brought to trial for publishing a seditious libel. Their acquittal by a jury was the first serious blow to the system adopted by the king.

Another event which seemed likely to consolidate his power was in reality the signal of his ruin. The queen bore him a son. There was thus no longer a strong probability that the king would be succeeded at no great distance of time by a Protestant heir. Popular incredulity expressed itself in the assertion that, as James had attempted to gain his ends by means of a packed bench of judges and a packed House of Commons, he had now capped the series of falsifications by the production of a supposititious heir. The leaders of both parties combined to invite the prince of Orange to come to the rescue of the religion and laws of England. He landed on November 5 at Brixham. Before he could reach London every class of English society had declared in his favour. James was deserted even by his army. He fled to France, and a convention parliament, summoned without the royal writ, declared that his flight was equivalent to abdication, and offered the crown in joint sovereignty to William and Mary (1689).

The Revolution, as it was called, was more than a mere change of sovereigns. It finally transferred the ultimate decision in the state from the king to parliament. What parliament had been in the 15th century with the House of Lords predominating, that parliament was to be again in the end of the 17th century with the House of Commons predominating. That House of Commons was far from resting on a wide basis of popular suffrage. The county voters were the freeholders; but in the towns, with some important exceptions, the electors were the richer inhabitants who formed the corporations of the boroughs, or a body of select householders more or less under the control of some neighbouring landowner. A House so chosen was an aristocratic body, but it was aristocratic in a far wider sense than the House of Lords was aristocratic. The trading and legal classes found their representation there by the side of the great owners of land. The House drew its strength from its position as a true representative of the effective strength of the nation in its social and economical organization.

Such was the body which firmly grasped the control over every branch of the administration. Limiting in the Bill of Rights the powers assumed by the crown, the Commons declared that the king could not keep a standing army in time of peace without consent of parliament: and they

made that consent effectual, as far as legislation could go, by passing a Mutiny Act year by year for twelve months only, so as to prevent the crown from exercising military discipline without their authority. Behind these legal contrivances stood the fact that the army was organized in the same way as the nation was organized, being officered by gentlemen who had no desire to overthrow a constitution through which the class from which they sprung controlled the government. Strengthened by the cessation of any fear of military violence, the Commons placed the crown in financial dependence on themselves by granting a large part of the revenue only for a limited term of years, and by putting strictly in force their right of appropriating that revenue to special branches of expenditure.

Such a revolution might have ended in the substitution of the despotism of a class for the despotism of a man, favour of Many causes combined to prevent this result. The land-owners, who formed the majority of the House, were not elected directly, as was the case with nobility of the French States General, by their own class, but by electors who, though generally loyal to them, would have broken off from them if they had attempted to make themselves masters of their fellow-citizens. No less important was the almost absolute independence of the judges, begun at the beginning of the reign, by the grant of office to them during good behaviour instead of during the king's pleasure, and finally secured by the clause in the Act of Settlement in 1701, which protected them against dismissal except on the joint address of both Houses of Parliament. Such an improvement, however, finds its full counterpart in another great step already taken. The more representative a Government becomes, the more necessary it is for the well-being of the nation that the expression of individual thought should be free in every direction. If it is not so the Government is inclined to proscribe unpopular opinion, and to forget that new opinions by which the greatest benefits are likely to be conferred are certain at first to be unpopular as soon as they come into collision with the opinions of the majority. In the Middle Ages the benefits of the liberation of thought from state control had been secured by the antagonism between church and state. The Tudor sovereigns had rightfully asserted the principle that in a well-ordered nation only one supreme power can be allowed to exist; but in so doing they had enslaved religion. It was fortunate that, just at the moment when parliamentary control was established over the state, circumstances should have arisen which made the majority ready to restore to the individual conscience that supremacy over religion which the mediæval ecclesiastics had claimed for the corporation of the universal church. Dissenters had, in the main, stood shoulder to shoulder with churchmen in rejecting the suspicious benefits of James, and both gratitude and policy forbade the thought of replacing them under the heavy yoke which had been imposed on them at the Restoration. The exact mode in which relief should be afforded was still an open question. The idea prevalent with the more liberal minds amongst the clergy was that of comprehension,—that is to say, of so modifying the prayers and ceremonies of the church as to enable the dissenters cheerfully to enter in. The scheme was one which had approved itself to minds of the highest order,—to More, to Bacon, to Hales, and to Jeremy Taylor. It is one which, as long as beliefs are not very divergent, keeps up a sense of brotherhood over-ruling the diversity of opinion. It broke down, as it always will break down in practice, whenever the difference of belief is so strongly felt as to seek earnestly to embody itself in diversity of outward practice. The greater part of the clergy of the church felt that to surrender their accustomed formularies

Causes in favour of liberty.

Independence of the judges.

Liberty of writing and speaking.

was to surrender somewhat of the belief which those formularies signified, while the dissenting clergy were equally reluctant to adopt the common prayer book even in a modified form. Hence the Toleration Act, which guaranteed the right of separate assemblies for worship outside the pale of the church, though it embodied the principles of Cromwell and Milton, and not those of Chillingworth and Hales, was carried without difficulty, whilst the proposed scheme of comprehension never had a chance of success (1689).

The choice was one which posterity can heartily approve. However wide the limits of toleration be drawn, there will always be those who will be left outside. By religious liberty those inside gain as much as those who are without. From the moment of the passing of the Toleration Act, no Protestant in England performed any act of worship except by his own free and deliberate choice. The literary spokesman of the new system was Locke. His *Letters concerning Toleration* laid down the principle which had been maintained by Cromwell, with a wider application than was possible in days when the state was in the hands of a mere minority only able to maintain itself in power by constant and suspicious vigilance.

The Test Act retained. One measure remained to place the dissenters in the position of full membership of the state. The Test Act excluded them from office. But the memory of the high-handed proceedings of Puritan rulers was still too recent to allow Englishmen to run the risk of a reimposition of their yoke, and this feeling, fanciful as it was, was sufficient to keep the Test Act in force for years to come.

Liberty of the press. The complement of the Toleration Act was the abolition of the censorship of the press (1695). The ideas of the author of the *Areopagitica* had at last prevailed. The attempt to fix certain opinions on the nation which were pleasing to those in power was abandoned by king and parliament alike. The nation, or at least so much of it as cared to read books or pamphlets on political subjects, was acknowledged to be the supreme judge, which must therefore be allowed to listen to what councillors it pleased.

This new position of the nation made itself felt in various ways. It was William's merit that, fond as he was of power, he recognized the fact that he could not rule except so far as he carried the good-will of the nation with him. No doubt he was helped to an intelligent perception of the new situation by the fact that, as a foreigner, he cared far more for carrying on war successfully against France than for influencing the domestic legislation of a country which was not his own, and by the knowledge that the conduct of the struggle which lasted till he was able to treat with France on equal terms at Ryswick (1697) was fairly trusted to his hands. Nevertheless these years of war called for the united action of a national government, and in seeking to gain this support for himself, he hit upon an expedient which opened a new era in constitutional politics.

Beginning of cabinet government. The supremacy of the House of Commons would have been an evil of no common magnitude, if it had made government impossible. Yet this was precisely what it threatened to do. Sometimes the dominant party in the House pressed with unscrupulous rancour upon its opponents. Sometimes the majority shifted from side to side as the House was influenced by passing gusts of passion or sympathy, so that, as it was said at the time, no man could foretell one day what the House would be pleased to do on the next. Against the first of these dangers William was to a great extent able to guard, by the exercise of his right of dissolution, so as to appeal to the constituencies, which did not always share in the passions of their representatives. But the second danger could not be met in this way. The only cure for waywardness

is responsibility, and not only was this precisely what the Commons had not learned to feel, but it was that which it was impossible to make them feel directly. A body composed of several hundred members cannot carry on government with the requisite steadiness of action and clearness of insight. Such work can only fitly be intrusted to a few, and whenever difficult circumstances arise, it is necessary that the action of those few be kept in harmony by the predominance of one. The scheme on which William hit, by the advice of the earl of Sunderland, was that which has since been known as Cabinet government. He selected as his ministers the leading members of the two Houses who had the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons. In this way, the majority felt an interest in supporting the men who embodied their own opinions, and fell in turn under the influence of those who held them with greater prudence or ability than fell to the lot of the average members of the House. All that William doubtless intended was to acquire a ready instrument to enable him to carry on the war with success. In reality he had re-founded, on a new basis, the government of England. His own personal qualities were such that he was able to dominate over any set of ministers; but the time would come when there would be a sovereign of inferior powers. Then the body of ministers would step into his place. The old rude arrangements of the Middle Ages had provided by frequent depositions that an inefficient sovereign should cease to rule, and those arrangements had been imitated in the case of Charles I. and James II. Still the claim to rule had, at least from the time of Henry III., been derived from hereditary descent, and the interruption, however frequently it might occur, had been regarded as something abnormal, only to be applied where there was an absolute necessity to prevent the wielder of executive authority from setting at defiance the determined purpose of the nation. After the Revolution, not only had the king's title been so changed as to make him more directly than ever dependent on the nation, but he now called into existence a body which derived its own strength from its conformity with the wishes of the representatives of the nation.

For the moment it seemed to be but a temporary expedient. When the war came to an end the Whig party which had sustained William in his struggle with France split up. The dominant feeling of the House of Commons was no longer the desire to support the crown against a foreign enemy, but to make government as cheap as possible, leaving future dangers to the chances of the future. William had not so understood the new invention of a united ministry as binding him to take into his service a united ministry of men whom he regarded as fools and knaves. He allowed the Commons to reduce the army to a skeleton, to question his actions, and to treat him as if he were a cipher. But it was only by slow degrees that he was brought to acknowledge the necessity of choosing his members from amongst the men who had done these things.

The time came when he needed again the support of the nation. The death of Charles II., the heirless king of the huge Spanish monarchy, had long been expected. Since the peace of Ryswick, William and Lewis XIV. had come to terms by two successive partition treaties for a division of those vast territories in such a way that the whole of them should not fall into the hands of a near relation either of the king of France or of the emperor, the head of the house of Austria. When the death actually took place in 1700, William seemed to have no authority in England whatever; and Lewis was therefore encouraged to break his engagements, and to accept the whole of the Spanish inheritance for his grandson, who became Philip

Unrulingness of the Commons.

The Spanish succession.

V. of Spain. William saw clearly that such predominance of France in Europe would lead to the development of pretensions unbearable to other states. But the House of Commons did not see it, even when the Dutch garrisons were driven by French troops out of the posts in the Spanish Netherlands which they had occupied for many years (1701).

The Act of Settlement. William had prudently done all that he could to conciliate the Tory majority. In the preceding year (1700) he had given office to a Tory ministry, and he now (1701) gave his assent to the Act of Settlement, which secured the succession of the crown to the house of Hanover to the exclusion of all Roman Catholic claimants, though it imposed several fresh restrictions on the prerogative. William was indeed wise in keeping his feelings under control. The country sympathized with him more than the Commons did, and when the House imprisoned the gentlemen deputed by the freeholders of Kent to present a petition asking that its loyal addresses might be turned into bills of supply, it simply advertised its weakness to the whole country.

Formation of the Grand Alliance. The reception of this Kentish petition was but a foretaste of the discrepancy between the Commons and the nation, which was to prove the marked feature of the middle of the century now opening. For the present the House was ready to give way. It requested the king to enter into alliance with the Dutch. William went yet further in the direction in which he was urged. He formed an alliance with the emperor as well as with the States General to prevent the union of the crowns of France and Spain, and to compel France to evacuate the Netherlands. An unexpected event came to give him all the strength he needed. James II. died, and Lewis acknowledged his son as the rightful king of England. Englishmen of both parties were stung to indignation by the insult. William dissolved parliament, and the new House of Commons, Tory as it was by a small majority, was eager to support the king. It voted men and money according to his wishes. England was to be the soul of the Grand Alliance against France. But before a blow was struck William was thrown from his horse. He died on March 8, 1702. "The man," as Burke said of him, "was dead, but the Grand Alliance survived in which King William lived and reigned."

Accession of Anne. Upon the accession of Anne, war was at once commenced. The Grand Alliance became, as William would have wished, a league to wrest the whole of the Spanish dominions from Philip, in favour of the Austrian archduke Charles. It found a chief of supreme military and diplomatic genius in the duke of Marlborough. His victory at Blenheim (1704) drove the French out of Germany. His victory of Ramillies (1706) drove them out of the Netherlands. In Spain, Gibraltar was captured by Rooke (1704) and Barcelona by Peterborough (1705). Prince Eugene relieved Turin from a French siege, and followed up the blow by driving the besiegers out of Italy.

Occasional conformity. At home Marlborough, caring nothing for politics, at first gave his support to the Tories, whose church policy was regarded with favour by the queen. Their efforts were directed towards the restriction of the Toleration Act within narrow limits. Many dissenters had evaded the Test Act by partaking of the communion in a church, though they subsequently attended their own chapels. An Occasional Conformity Bill, imposing penalties on those who adopted this practice, twice passed the Commons (1702, 1703), but was rejected by the House of Lords, in which the Whig element predominated. The church was served in a nobler manner in 1704 by the abandonment of first-fruits and tenths by the queen for the purpose of raising the pittance of the poorer clergy. In 1707 a piece

of legislation of the highest value was carried to a successful end. The Act of Union, passed in the parliaments of England and Scotland, joined the legislature of the two with kingdoms and the nations themselves in an indissoluble bond.

The ministry in office at the time of the passing of the Act of Union had suffered important changes since the commencement of the reign. The Tories had never been as earnest in the prosecution of the war as the Whigs; and Marlborough, who cared above all things for the prosecution of the war, gradually replaced Tories by Whigs in the ministry. His intention was doubtless to conciliate both parties by admitting them both to a share of power; but the Whigs were determined to have all or none, and in 1708 a purely Whig ministry was formed to support the war as the first purely Whig ministry had supported it in the reign of William. The years of its power were the years of the victories of Oudenarde (1708) and of Malplaquet (1709), bringing with them the entire ruin of the military power of Lewis.

Growing unpopularity of the Whigs. Such successes, if they were not embraced in the spirit of moderation, boded no good to the Whigs. It was known that even before the last battle Lewis had been ready to give up his grandson, and that his offers had been rejected because he would not consent to join the allies in turning him out of Spain. A belief spread in England that Marlborough wished the endless prolongation of the war for his own selfish ends. Spain was far away, and, if the Netherlands were safe, enough had been done for the interests of England. The Whigs were charged with refusing to make peace when an honourable and satisfactory peace was not beyond their reach.

As soon as the demand for a vigorous prosecution of the war relaxed, the Whigs could but rely on their domestic policy, in which they were strongest in the eyes of posterity but weakest in the eyes of contemporaries. It was known that they looked for the principle on which the queen's throne rested to the national act of the Revolution rather than to the birth of the sovereign as the daughter of James II., whilst popular feeling preferred, however inconsistently, to attach itself to some fragment of hereditary right. What was of greater consequence was that it was known that they were the friends of the dissenters, and that their leaders, if they could have had their way, would not only have maintained the Toleration Act, but would also have repealed the Test Act. In 1709 a sermon preached by Dr Sacheverel denounced toleration and the right of resistance in tones worthy of the first days of the Restoration. Foolish as the sermon was, it was but the reflection of folly which was widely spread amongst the rude and less educated classes. The Whig leaders unwisely took up the challenge and impeached Sacheverel. The Lords condemned the man, but they condemned him to an easy sentence. His trial was the signal for riot. Dissenting chapels were sacked to the cry of High Church and Sacheverel. The queen, who had personal reasons for disliking the Whigs, dismissed them from office (1710), and a Tory House of Commons was elected amidst the excitement to support the Tory ministry of Harley and St John.

After some hesitation the new ministry made peace with France, and the treaty of Utrecht, stipulating for the permanent separation of the crowns of France and Spain, and, assigning Milan, Naples, and the Spanish Netherlands to the Austrian claimant, accomplished all that could reasonably be desired, though the abandonment to the vengeance of the Spanish Government of our Catalan allies, and the base desertion of our Continental confederates on the very field of action, brought dishonour on the good name of England. The Commons gladly welcomed the cessation of the war. The approval of the

Tory ministry.

Peace of Utrecht.