

and historical precedents. We must also remember that in these days of revolution Milton did considerable work towards a history of England. But if there was the studious side to his life, bearing witness to a strength of mind that would not be upset by the storms in the real England at his door, he was also a child of his time, an intensely interested observer of every move in politics and religious controversy. He sat there in his study at High Holborn, but he looked not towards Lincolns-Inn Fields, but towards Westminster, where the House of Commons was hastening to the condemnation of Charles Stuart.

The historical situation at the beginning of the year 1649 can best be depicted by explaining the attitude of various parties in England and Scotland towards King Charles. He was at this time a prisoner in the hands of the English army, whose leaders were Fairfax, Ireton, and Cromwell. As far back as March or April, 1648, the army officers had decided in their famous prayer-meeting at Windsor Castle that the only way in which to promote liberty and to secure peace for England was 'to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed and mischief he had done to his utmost against the Lord's Cause and People in these poor Nations.'¹ Fairfax weakened at the last, as we have seen, but Cromwell, Ireton, and the bulk of the officers and men never receded from their stern prayer-meeting resolve. While other parties treated with the king, they issued manifesto after manifesto, the burden of each and all being a demand for justice on the king. In November the democratic ideals of the regiments found expression in the Grand Army Remonstrance, in which all attempts

¹ See Carlyle, *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell* 1. 296 ff.