

"Divers good laws," to use the parliamentary term, were made for preventing the increase and danger of popery. In 1643 the Puritans, in their struggle with Charles, made a declaration against certain Catholic doctrines. Under Charles II., in 1673, the Test Act was passed with the avowed object of debarring Catholics from all offices, both civil and military. By the terms of the Act of 1673, all officeholders were obliged to take the Oath of Supremacy, to subscribe the Declaration against transubstantiation, and to publicly receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. Of course no Catholic could comply with these provisions, and as a consequence Catholics were effectually kept out of office.

But these disabilities were not considered sufficient, and so in 1677, in the thirtieth year of the reign of Charles II., the following act was passed to prevent Catholics from becoming members of Parliament :

"An Act for the more effectual preserving the King's Person and Government, by disabling papists from sitting in either house of Parliament."

"Forasmuch as divers good laws have been made for preventing the Increase and Danger of Popery in this Kingdom, which have not had the desired effects, by reason of the free access which popish recusants have had to His Majesty's court, and by reason of the liberty which of late some of the recusants have had and taken to sit and vote in Parliament.

"Wherefore, and for the safety of his majesty's royal person and Government be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled and by the Authority of the same, that, from and after the first day of December, which shall be in the Year of Our Lord God One thousand six hundred and seventy eight, no Person that now is or hereafter shall be a Peer of this Realm or Member of the House of Peers shall vote, or make his proxy in the House of Peers or sit there during any Debate in the said House of Peers ; nor any Person that now is, or hereafter shall be a Member of the House of Commons shall vote in the House of Commons or sit there during any debate in the said House of Commons after their Speaker is chosen ; until such Peer or Member shall, from time to time respectively and in manner following, first take the several oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and make, subscribe, and audibly repeat this Declaration following :