

water. Jacob himself had grown discouraged and found his way to America. But the success of the new settlements, and the tidings that (notwithstanding the severe laws that had been established) there was greater liberty than in any other part of the world, were producing an effect upon the English mind; and as Vane, and Cromwell, and Marten, and St. John, and Algernon Sydney, and other leaders among the Independents in England, were foremost for liberty of conscience, and Hampden had shown an inclination to Independency in his later days, before the war had progressed two years, the Independents had become powerful. Some of the foremost clergymen in England were ministers in their churches, and Milton, the poet, threw all his energies into the struggle on their side. We have seen, in a previous chapter, that the Presbyterians, who had command of the army, were soon supplanted by the success of the Independents in the field, and by that master-stroke of policy, "the self-denying ordinance," for which they were indebted to Vane, causing the transfer of the army to Fairfax and Cromwell, who remodelled it after their own fashion.

The expulsion of the Presbyterians from the Long Parliament has been censured in strong terms in many of the works published since that period, and Vane himself retired from public life for a short while because his party thus interfered with the privileges of parliament; but it should be borne in mind that the Presbyterians had entered into a secret treaty with Charles, by which the Independents were to be sacrificed and religious liberty overthrown, which led to a "purge" of the house. It was simply a question of self-preservation, and the Independents acted with decision.

A charge has also been made against them, that they were the parties by whom the king was tried and brought to the scaffold, and a great deal has been written to prove or disprove this charge. It is certain that Marten was the first person to suggest the death of the king for his crimes; Ireton urged it on; Cromwell acquiesced in it after it was agreed to; Bradshaw presided over the judges, nearly all of whom were Independents; and after the trial, Milton defended the act with all his great ability. On the other hand, Vane would take no part in it; Algernon Sydney, who proposed to place on the throne a branch of the Stuart family expelled from Bohemia by the Roman Catholics, refused to be one of the king's judges; and the whole body of Congregational ministers, except two, one of whom was the fiery Peters, who had gone to America at the same time as Vane, and who paid the penalty of his approval on the gallows after the Restoration. Some of the judges were Anabaptists, and some of them became Presbyterians or Episcopalians in after times, when Congregationalism was not so powerful. But whatever they were, the act was a bold one; an act at which the whole world stood aghast, and the Independents who were in power took the responsibility, leaving it to future generations to applaud or condemn. The Royalists of the time were accustomed to say that the Presbyterians held the king by the hair while the Independents cut off his head. England's great statesman, Charles James Fox, says that it was the trial and execution of the king that more than any thing else raised the English nation in the eyes of the Protestants of Europe.

During the time of the Republic, Cromwell was lord-general of the army, and the nation was governed principally by the Independents. A brighter galaxy of statesmen, history affirms, were never gathered together than at that time. Cromwell was lord-general of the army, and was also a member of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, which then consisted of but one