

their exclusive right to originate money bills. During the reign of Henry VI. (1422-1461) the Commons substituted bills for petitions.

*The Sixteenth Century.*—From the commencement of the Wars of the Roses in 1455 till the close of the Tudor dynasty in 1603, the history of England is almost a blank as to matters constitutional. During those wars, the nobles who were not destroyed were so crippled as to be powerless to aid the Commons. No fewer than eighty princes of the blood are said to have perished. The Roman Church, the sole remaining power capable of coping with the Crown, was laid prostrate by Henry VIII. The new Anglican Church, of which he declared himself the head, had neither the inclination nor ability to thwart his will. His parliaments were obsequiousness itself. The introduction of printing, the discovery of America, religious discussions and persecutions, and a rapidly developing commerce diverted for a time the public mind from politics; but, during the long and brilliant reign of Elizabeth, nobles and commoners gradually recovered their political energy. At the hands of the great champion of Protestantism and the destroyer of the Spanish Armada, all were willing to endure what but few would then tolerate from another.

*The Seventeenth Century.*—In 1604 the Commons vindicated their right to determine the question of contested elections. In the same Parliament they maintained the privilege of Parliament in the case of Sir Thomas Shirley. In 1621 they impeached Sir Giles Mompeson and others, and thus revived a practice that had been in disuse since 1449. On the 18th December, 1621, the Commons recorded their celebrated Declaration of Rights, the chief of which is the right fully to discuss in Parliament all matters affecting the welfare of the

State. They were therein supported by members of the Upper House, and, notably among them, by Oxford, Southampton, Essex, Warwick, Say, and Spencer. Had it not been for the contemptible servility of the bishops and the judges, the reign of James I., the advocate of the divine right of the Stuart Kings, would have been still more fruitful in the reassertion of constitutional principles.

Of the history of the five Parliaments of Charles I. it is unnecessary and impossible to say more than that, in 1628, his third Parliament presented their Petition of Rights. That, having dissolved his fourth Parliament on the 5th of May, 1640, and resolved to govern without one, Charles summoned a general council of peers at York on the 24th September, 1640. The peers met, but the only advice they had to give to the king was to summon Parliament. That, in his fifth Parliament, known as the Long Parliament, Strafford and Laud were impeached; Ship-money, the Star Chamber, and the High Commission Court were abolished. The Commons then presented to the king their Remonstrance, consisting of two hundred and six articles, which incident is specially memorable for the fact that the discussion concerning it furnishes us with the first distinct proof of the existence of two parties in the Commons, respectively known, at a later date, as the Cavaliers and the Roundheads. Charles supposed this disunion to be his opportunity, but he was mistaken; the consequence is well known. The violation of the principles of the Constitution cost him his head.

The interregnum, commonly styled the Commonwealth, endured from the 30th January, 1649, till the 8th May, 1660. A more able man than Cromwell never held sway in this country, or more splendidly vindicated its honour abroad; but even his genius