

a sound of warning to the King within his palace walls.

The excitement attending the trial, which took place on the 29th of June, was likewise intense:—

The great Westminster Hall was crowded from one end to the other with eager listeners, and dense multitudes filled the neighboring streets.

Step by step the ten-hours' trial dragged its slow length along. Witness after witness was called up, to be closely and perseveringly interrogated. The signatures were proved with no great difficulty, but the presentation of the petition to the King was a different matter. Failure after failure drew peals of derisive triumph from the great crowd of listeners.

"Ha! there goes trim Mr. Pepys, to undergo categorical persecution," observed Sir Vaughan. "'Tis too cautious a bird to be easily taken tripping.'" Then a while later—"What's that? Sunderland! An unhappy thought. They would have failed but for that. I fear he will work mischief. Yet I marvel that the brazen renegade dares to show his face amongst us."

It must have been an effort. The Prime Minister made his appearance in a sedan-chair—a very lady-like concern even then in the eyes of men. His pallid face and hesitating accents bore witness to his consciousness of the bitter scorn of that vast multitude, amongst whom the principal peers of the land stood sternly foremost in prominent rows. But his evidence proved the case for the prosecution. And then began the defence—the most deeply interesting portion of the trial.

For hours it lasted. One after another the ablest and clearest-headed lawyers of the day arose and argued on behalf of the bishops. They defended first the petition and its presentation, answering and more than answering all accusations of malicious and seditious intentions towards the King.

But the mere matter and style of the petition itself were soon left in the background. The whole weight of argument was brought to bear upon the illegal doctrine of the King's Dispensing Power. One speaker after another calmly, firmly, and deliberately struck deep to the very foundation of the structure, which during the past three years James had elaborately built up. The King had no Dispensing Power! This was the gist of the matter, which, for three long hours, kept the whole of the great crowded hall in voiceless rapt attention.

A faint and feeble answer was attempted by the prosecuting side amidst vehement hissing. The evidence was then summed up by the Chief Justice. The jurymen retired to consider their verdict. And the trial having lasted throughout the whole

day, the great multitude began now, at seven o'clock in the evening, slowly to disperse. They might not hope to hear the end of the matter until the morning.

In the morning the crowd was renewed, and the issue proved that the King had at last gone too far, and had fast undermined his own power while attempting to add to it:—

Nine o'clock came, but it was not till an hour later that the seven Bishops were conducted into Westminster Hall. A dense throng of expectant faces filled the building; but the crowd within was nothing to the crowd without.

The twelve jurymen made their appearance in the box. The great question, "Guilty or not Guilty?" was asked by Astry. One moment of agonizing suspense followed. Then the foreman of the jury spoke out the answer, loud and clear,—
"Not Guilty!"

The words had scarcely passed his lips, before a hearty cheer arose from the benches and galleries around. Another instant, and a wild, wild ringing shout of triumph burst, as if uttered by a single voice, from the dense mass of listeners within the hall. Outside, it was caught up and repeated in a mighty rolling echo of hurrahs, which swept in a ceaseless rush of thundering acclamations down the Thames, and through the length and breadth of the city.

A lull in the city and nation followed the trial of the seven prelates. The victory was not yet fully gained, but the outworks had been carried. Men waited now awhile, with characteristic English patience. Had the King learnt a lesson? Would he take warning from the past? Was there hope in future he would recede from his lawless and unconstitutional career? If not now, all hope of such a change was vain. Never again could the voice of the nation ring forth in more plain and trumpet-like accents of reproof or warning, than on the day of the great trial and acquittal.

And slowly, slowly, the eyes of the people became opened to the fact that all hope was vain. Recklessly still the King rushed on to his ruin. In blind and dogged obstinacy, he still persisted in his struggle for despotic power. Again the cloud over the nation grew dark and threatening. All dreams of restraining James were over. Gradually the gaze of almost all Protestant Englishmen became riveted on William of Orange. Whispers of coming succor went abroad. But all through the anxious summer months there was little ground for certain expectations of a change—of a rescue from ever-increasing thralldom.