

"Since the deed was done, Milton's desire was that it should not have been done in vain, but that it should be held to signify, what it was for him, the central truth of the great struggle; that the Chief Magistrate of a nation, whatever he be called, has no power to dispense with laws which are the birthright of the people; that he is bound to govern in accordance with them, is himself under them, and is answerable for the breach of them. Milton sought to give so momentous an act its true interpretation, as a violent expression of the principle towards which the question of the limit of authority was tending, the principle that forty years later was to be finally established at the Revolution."<sup>1</sup>

The *Eikon Basiliké* (Royal Image), or *The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitude and Sufferings*, published immediately after the King's death, and erroneously supposed to have been Charles's own work during his last years, had created a great sensation amongst the people.<sup>2</sup> To the Cavaliers it was an object of idolatrous reverence; and so much had monarchical England been shocked by the Whitehall Tragedy, that fears were entertained of a Royalist reaction. Milton, who had already, by the order of the Council, written *Observations on the*

1649 *Peace concluded by Ormond with the Irish*, replied in his *Eikonoclastes* (Image Breaker), in which he enumerates the King's shortcomings, and with merciless logic refutes his apologists.

But a still more important duty lay before him. Charles II., now an exile, and anxious to vindicate his father's memory, had intrusted the task to Claude de Saumaise, or, as he was called in Latin, Salmasius, the most renowned European scholar of the time. Milton's *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (Defence for the English), which he undertook by the express command of the Council of State, was a most triumphant reply to *Salmasii Defensio Regia pro Carolo I.* (Salmasius' Royal Defence for Charles I.), the production of the Leyden Professor; but it is impossible

<sup>1</sup> MORLEY.

<sup>2</sup> The book was really the production of Dr. John Gauden, though Charles is believed to have revised it. After the Restoration Gauden was appointed Bishop of Exeter, and subsequently Bishop of Worcester.