

The last group, numerous but at this time unimportant, was composed of the Royalists or Cavaliers—courtiers, clergymen of the old church deprived of their livings, country squires, nobles and soldiers in exile, a great mass of country people who had to a large extent remained untouched by sectarianism or by the struggle for constitutional rights; all these, deprived of power, looked on helplessly at the 'royal martyr' moving to his doom.

Few men in England, and none in Scotland, expected or desired that the leaders of army and parliament would bring the king to the block. Until the last moment thousands refused to believe that Charles would really die upon the scaffold; there was to be the pageantry of an execution, but nothing more.<sup>1</sup> 'Only some fifty or sixty governing Englishmen, with Oliver Cromwell in the midst of them, were prepared for every responsibility, and stood inexorably to their task.'<sup>2</sup> Milton was at one with Cromwell and the other forward spirits in this business. From his careful study of events he had come to the conclusion that Charles was a faithless tyrant, responsible for whole massacres committed on his faithful subjects, guilty of a deluge of innocent blood (9. 3ff.), a malefactor deserving of punishment as a common pest and destroyer of mankind (20. 3). Neither Milton nor Cromwell had any superstitious reverence for the divinity that was supposed to hedge a king. 'What hath a native king to plead,' he cries, 'bound by so many covenants, benefits and honours to the welfare of his people, why he through the contempt of all Laws and Parlements, the onely tie of our obedience to him, for his owne wills sake, and a boasted prae-

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *Hist. of Own Time* 1. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Masson, *Life of Milton* 3. 718.