

The Political Ideal of the English Commonwealth

HALF a century has passed since Carlyle declared that puritanism was the last of our English heroisms. It is only at a time when the mind of a people is strung to higher tension by civil and social difficulties, so great as to threaten destruction, that isolated spirits among its individuals search more intently into the promise which the present contains, and consolidate their faith in that promise into an ideal. Then, however, thought can outstrip mechanical processes and leap to an invention. The normal activity of social thought is quickened to a degree that frequently renders a clear judgment of the contents of the present equivalent to a prophetic forecast of the capacity of the future. If, in spite of this, progress moves slowly in sinuous courses, we have to bear in mind that every age, like every individual, while superior to its worst elements is inferior to its best. The aggregate of the practical forces which carry on the progressive movement is inferior to that right 'vision of the world' which implies a more profound insight into the accomplished present. The age, therefore, continues its own doubling, twining, and frequently retrograde motion, until finally, after a long interval, its serpentine movement in the 'upward trend of progress' brings it round into close proximity to a previous point of departure. At this hour we are close to the ideals of two centuries and a half ago.

All the different phases of the progressive movement of to-day are illustrated in the puritan revolution, from the most severely practical to the most nebulously ideal, from the party whose notion was to prohibit all reform and to rivet the political machinery together as it stood to those who, seeing that collapse of the old machinery was inevitable, sought, like the pioneers of the French revolution, to invent and establish a new ideal of government in a sense complete in all its working details. There was, moreover, an ideal present in the political atmosphere of the time, and alike those who favoured the king's cause and those who opposed him were affected by its inspiring influence. It is not my purpose to trace the practical history of this revolution, but in developing its literary aspects we shall find that even under the king's cause there lay a

philosophy, while the facts of history show us that the opposite ideal was only baffled and rendered impotent by the force and tendency of the practical aggregate. Massing together all the forces on the side of the Commonwealth, we find that they were bound together, however much they varied among themselves, by a sincere determination to found a free English commonwealth. Opposed to this republican ideal there was the converse ideal of the times, that associated with the monarchy which was just passing away. The former was the ideal of liberty, at once represented and perverted by Cromwell; the latter the ideal of strength, at once represented and perverted by Wentworth. In addition to these there was the *via media* of the constitutional party, whose practical view was simply to remedy abuses, limit prerogative, and render law supreme; and there was the further complication of the religious ideal of the ironsides and the saints, to whose blazing imaginations all law and statecraft were, as they were in great measure to Carlyle, 'mere leaden constitutionalities.' We have, therefore, (1) strength, represented (a) practically by the king's government, (b) theoretically by Hobbes and Filmer; (2) liberty, represented (a) practically by Eliot and the Hampden brotherhood, (b) theoretically by Sidney and Harrington. The religious ideal was represented on the one side by Laud and the High Commission, on the other by the New Model and the Westminster Assembly. Milton and Cromwell must still remain as individuals.

We begin, then, with the party of constitutional resistance to the king, which concentrates itself in the Petition of Right. The aims and ideas of men like Coke, Selden, and Eliot were clearly defined, and were simply directed to devising effectual restraints upon the crown, so that the government might go on as a limited monarchy upon the old basis of the constitutional liberties of the subject. They presented nothing high-flown or theoretical, and later on the action of the same party in the civil war indicates their unwillingness to proceed far. Falkland even abandoned the parliamentary side and joined the king's cause. That which they opposed, however, speedily developed itself into an active force which demanded stronger nerve than that of constitutional resistance. The action of the petition-of-right men proceeded entirely by raising definite issues of parliamentary rights and privileges; that of the king's men rose to sweeping general principles of the paramount rights of the crown. The former appealed to some old violated statute; the latter answered in the words of Justice Berkeley that *rex is lex*. The manner in which the conflict worked itself out to the dissolution of the monarchy belongs to civil and constitutional history, but we must here remark the difference of ground upon which the king's men took their stand. Their appeal was no longer to law or legal right. It had risen

beyond these to a justification founded on the intrinsic authority of kingship and the divine right of kings. Charles had inherited notions of absolute right from his father, and his advisers, who sedulously fostered these notions, even proclaimed from the bench their justification of the king's most illegal acts by an appeal to natural right. Here we reach a basis of theory, and are very near to the arguments of a philosophy. When the attorney-general Banks declared at Hampden's trial that absolute power lay in the persons of the kings of England, he added the philosophic maxim that 'all magistracy it is of nature, and obedience and subjection it is of nature,' thus leading us to the very porch of the '*De Cive*,' '*De Corpore Politico*,' and '*Leviathan*' of Hobbes.

The mischievous perversion which government had now become makes it ridiculous to speak of Charles I's monarchy as in any sense the embodiment of an ideal; but when we turn to Hobbes we discover that something like an ideal had sprung out of reverence for a strong monarchy as well as from visions of liberty under a free commonwealth. And if Hobbes's philosophy rises beyond the wretched tyranny of the second Stuart we shall find a still stronger antagonism between the perverted Commonwealth of Cromwell and the republican ideal of men like Harrington. The movement towards a republic was partly a reaction against the absolute government of Charles I. Hobbes, coming between the overthrow of this absolutism and its partial reinstatement in the person of Charles II upon the ruins of the puritan ideal, represents the reaction against that anarchy which Cromwell only succeeded in holding down with an armed heel. In this sense he belongs logically to the Restoration period, chronologically to the Commonwealth. But his work, beginning with the treatise '*De Cive*' in 1642, and virtually finished with the '*Leviathan*' in 1651, was a philosophical protest against the whole puritan movement, in psychology and religion as well as in politics, and as such a protest it must be understood.

His politics are of a piece with his philosophy. Basing his argument on the social contract theory, he drew a different conclusion from that of Rousseau. Men, he says, in their natural state are equal and free, but they are savages; 'man is to man a wolf.' They are inclined to peace from three motives—(1) the fear of death, (2) the desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and (3) the hope of obtaining these by industry. They accordingly combine to live peaceably among themselves and be protected among other men. Here begins the state, when society by compact appoints one man, or several, to rule. This governing body is the sovereign, and according to Hobbes the true sovereign is the monarch. By this social compact men have thus alienated their natural rights, which only led to a state of war, and have constituted

over themselves for their own benefit a power which the requirements of peace and prosperity render essential and henceforth absolute. Having formed this contract, men cannot lawfully make a new covenant among themselves without the sovereign's permission; a new covenant, even with God, is illegal except through him. Every subject, moreover, becomes henceforth part author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign, because either the minority must coincide with the majority, and so become responsible for the compact, or if any man protest he is left in the condition of war he was in before, and so may without injustice be destroyed. Hence the king can do no wrong, because all personal responsibility is removed from him by the social contract, and every particular man is author of all the sovereign does. All authority too is centred in him. There can be no such division of power as that supposed to exist between king, lords, and commons; else the state becomes a house divided against itself. *Vox populi* is there not merely *vox Dei*, but becomes the guarantee of the sovereign's divine right; while the sovereign, being *in facto* the embodiment of all the people, is the true and only representative of God's person. He is henceforth absolute. He cannot be censured without injustice. They that are subjects to a monarch cannot without his leave cast off monarchy. He is at once judge and lawgiver, dictator and pope, and must be obeyed in all his commands, though his commands were that his people should curse God and die.

In the tone of one thus arguing for an absolute monarchy we seem to hear something of the world-weariness of one crying out in time of trouble, that breaks forth so painfully in Dante's '*De Monarchia*.' In Dante, as in Hobbes, we trace the ruin of principalities; we have the same longing for peace, born of the same weariness of strife and willing to purchase rest at the same cost. But the difference is great. When Dante looks back to the Roman empire and laments how 'that seamless robe suffered rending by the talons of ambition,' how, like a beast of many heads, she strives after contrary things, and how unanswerable reasons, and the very light of experience, and even the sweetness of divine persuasion can neither heal, nor convince, nor charm, he utters, it is true, merely a distressed cry for peace. But with Dante there is more than the cry of the pained creature for rest. Hobbes can hardly be said to have more than low utilitarian ends in view in his theory of absolute monarchy; Dante's temporal monarchy is a means to secure that peace which shall enable man to fulfil the chief end of his being. Man's chief end, according to Dante's philosophy, is not mere existence under any conditions, as it might be according to that of Hobbes. It is the development of his spirit. It is 'to set in action the whole capacity of that understanding which is capable of development, first in the way of speculation and then by its

extension in the way of action.' So regarded, according to that word, 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,' the proper work of humanity becomes almost divine, and peace is in Dante's vision, as it was in the hymn that sounded to the shepherds of Bethlehem, associated with glory to God in the highest.

The difference between the monarchy of Hobbes and that of Dante is, in a word, the difference between a theory and an ideal, between a philosopher's scheme and a poet's creation. Dante's logic is as close and keen as that of Hobbes; he has all the pedantic formalism of a schoolman; his treatise is externally more a monument of dialectic than of imagination. But at the same time it is suffused with the light that shines through the '*Divina Commedia*,' and is invested with something of the glory that illuminates the unbinding of Prometheus. Obedience to Dante's monarch becomes obedience to the power in whose service is perfect freedom. If his ideal leads to servitude, it is from the perverting influence of attendant circumstances, whereas servitude is in the very nature of Hobbes's political creed. Dante, with a poetic frenzy repeated in a later age by Victor Hugo, could embrace all men and nations in the union that was to realise his dream of a temporal monarchy. Living before the new heavens and the new earth were discovered, he could unite all men in one brotherhood for the fulfilment of their spiritual existence under a monarch who was at once the servant of all his people and the representative of God. Hobbes on the contrary was unable to rise beyond the divine right claimed by the heirs of the Tudors. But had Dante seen the full flush of the European springtime of which the Florentine magnificence was only a mild February morning of a day that closed in tears and frost, had he felt the quickening breath of the Renaissance and the strong sea breeze that blew across the Atlantic of Columbus, he might, instead of casting an idealising, regretful look backwards to Roman imperialism, have seen the dawn of new hopes and possibilities as they appeared to the author of the '*Utopia*,' and might have joined hands with him who had travelled to unknown shores with Hythlodæe.

In the revolution which was in progress during the reign of Charles I the driving-wheel of the political machinery was trashed, and in the collapse which ensued political speculators were thrown back beyond the mere question of mending to an examination of the very fundamentals of government. Finding that the moral forces which give solidity to a government were altogether loosened and set at variance, men sought for those first principles of which complex governments are but an embodied development, those simple natural laws which furnish government with its guarantee. This is what constitutes the simplicity of Hobbes's political philosophy. In no sense a political reformer, he only worked back to what he considered the fundamentals of human society. Hence

his work is simple and clear, because his political theory is one based on a few simple and clear ideas. But his philosophy contains no practical statesmanship and offers no remedy for evils. The same simplicity of foundation was sought by Filmer in his 'Patriarcha,' and the same conclusion reached. The 'Patriarcha' founds the king's right to absolute power on the patriarchal basis of society. Adam as father of the human race got supreme rights from God, and kings inherit those supreme rights from Adam. The book furnished occasion for Algernon Sidney's 'Discourse on Government.' Written as a refutation of the patriarchal theory of government, Sidney's work illustrates the tendency of other speculators of this time to argue from the most elementary first principles, and seek a solution from these. But Sidney's solution was the opposite to that arrived at by Hobbes and Filmer. That the sovereign exists for the people and not the people for the sovereign, that a general presumption that sovereigns will govern well is not a sufficient security for the nation—these and similar propositions which he insists upon vehemently and at length through a large folio have for us passed outside the range of political discussion. With America and France before us we are perhaps too much concerned with the pitfalls of republicanism: Sidney focuses his argument against the claims of monarchy. But when he wrote, dynastic ideas predominated. These had first to be overcome before the people could establish its own freedom, and it is these which the 'Discourse on Government' aims at controverting. The revolution of 1640 and the succeeding years had indeed overthrown the dynasty, but the dynastic ideas still prevailed. The revolution had brought 'that man of blood Charles Stuart' to his account; but it had also in his place established Spenser's blatant beast, upon whose head there were already proposals to fix the crown Charles had forfeited. At the same time Sidney is not merely negative. One at least of the principles which he maintains is not quite rudimentary nor too familiar, viz. the people's right of rebellion. Submission to the powers that be, simply because they are powers, finds no place with Sidney. All power must proceed from the people, and when governors have forfeited the sympathy on which alone their power must finally rest, the people have a right to withdraw the power they have bestowed. Even with regard to individual rulers Sidney maintains that it is not well they should be glorious or powerful or rich in their own person; else the seeds will be sown of a popular decay. This last republican idea has grown into a multitude of ramifications since the date of the English Commonwealth, most notably in the French Commune, but Sidney's assertion of it is a peculiar exemplification of that spirit of liberty—*περὶ πάντων τὴν ἐλευθερίαν*, as Selden had it for his motto—which had flashed through England like forked lightning through the storm-cloud.

Sidney, however, is more remarkable as a man than as a writer. His principles were written in his life and sealed with his death. His only writing, the 'Discourse on Government,' was not published till 1698, fifteen years after its author's execution, but the deed that is done is frequently more potent than the word that is spoken, and in literary estimates critics are too apt to undervalue or overlook the operative influence of the acted life. That enthusiasm for republican ideas which finally brought him to the block made Sidney from the first a consistent adversary to Cromwell's protectorate. When Worcester had been fought and the shadow of the sword fell upon every corner of England, Sidney felt that he could do nothing. Approver and defender as he was of the execution of Charles, and capable of signing his name when envoy at a foreign court with the appended quotation—

*Manus hæc inimica tyrannis
Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem—*

he had only scorn for the principles that found vent in such pamphlets as 'Killing no Murder.' Retiring to Penshurst, he wrote the manuscript afterwards produced against him at his trial. Still hopeful, as we shall find Harrington was, and to a certain extent also Milton, that England was capable of better things than Cromwell had given her, he emerged from his retirement on the abdication of Cromwell's son and became a member of the council of state that was to settle the future government. He was appointed ambassador to Denmark to negotiate peace, and during his absence the Restoration was quietly accomplished. Too proud and uncompromising to profit from royal hands by an amnesty for principles which required no pardon, he refused even to own himself the subject of Charles II, and remained an exile for seventeen years. He returned only at his father's dying request, still a republican, and entered parliament to direct his invective against the ministerial party. The issue we know. His story leads us to one of the brightest and one of the most odious records of the revolution period, the martyr's crown that encircles the brow of Sidney and the martyr's blood that reddens the hand of Jeffreys.

To the same effect and practically in the same language as Sidney, Milton had already expressed himself in his first political pamphlet, 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.' Written some time before Sidney's work, and published immediately, it was the first free and unqualified defence of the action taken by the army in executing Charles. It is a landmark of the immense advance opinion had made since the conflict began with parliamentary debates upon monopolies and ship-money. The flames of the civil war had reduced everything to a state of semi-fluidity. Cromwell and his independents had come to the front breathing fire, and all

the old outlines had melted away. A strong republican party was now in power, but it was a party regulated by none of the restraints of constitutional forms and directed by no political wisdom. The king had fallen into the hands of men to whom his divine right was no more than sounding brass, and he himself appeared only as a 'tyrant, traitor, murderer, and enemy of his country.' The people at large would still have fondly distinguished between Charles and the king, and would have revered the office while they denounced the man. But the army was of a different temper, and with them the issue rested. The execution of the king, while it effectually laid open the road for the establishment of a commonwealth, produced only the most disastrous results to the cause of liberty. It gained nothing and it alienated much. But it had the effect of reducing the leaders of the Commonwealth party to their ultimatum. They had finally said in a deed more eloquent than words: 'This is what we mean.'

They had their champion ready in Milton. 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates' was not written in reply to any defence of kingship: it was a spontaneous vindication. Milton's motive, therefore, in writing and publishing it becomes more characteristically that which governed his life throughout—to avow his principles without fear of giving offence and to defend whatever he conceived to have been nobly done. Most of it was written during the king's trial, and it appeared a fortnight after the king's execution. It contains the basis of all Milton's political tracts, for the 'Eikonoklastes' and the two 'Defences' only enlarge the same principles with interlude cannonades of uproarious abuse. The one root idea from which they all spring is that stated in the thesis of the first pamphlet—'that it is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have the power to call to account a tyrant or wicked king, and to depose and put him to death, if the ordinary magistrates have neglected or denied to do it.' He also goes back to a first principle of society: 'No man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men were naturally born free.' He is at one with Hobbes in his axiom that society is founded on a compact, that 'men agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury and jointly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance to such agreement.' But in Milton's society kingship is a mere accident; with Hobbes it is the keystone of the arch. Like Sidney, Milton gives the king's power only a derivative value, and he too reserves for the people the right of rebellion. He maintains that the people of any country, if they see good, may depose their sovereign, whether the sovereign be just or wicked; and if he be unjust and tyrannical, if he be one 'who, regarding neither law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction,' this right becomes a duty. More than this, if the ordinary

magistrates have neglected to punish the wicked king it is lawful for any to do so who have the power. There is no reason to doubt that Milton would have signed the death-warrant of Charles I as readily as he defied the laws of licensed printing. Republican to the last, he sent forth, only a few months before the Restoration, a final determined protest against the now inevitable Stuart return in his 'Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.' Then he retired, beaten but unsubdued.

Idealist and republican as he was, Milton was still the man of Cromwell's Commonwealth. He was not removed from the puritan ranks like Sidney, and, as we shall see, like Harrington; and being one of a party, however far in other respects he rose above it, he made his defence of liberty in politics, like his defence of liberty in religion, a case of special pleading for those with whom he had allied himself. He seems to rise, indeed, to the inspiration of 'handling the greatest theme that ever was.'

I am to relate how a most potent king, who had trampled on the laws, given a shock to religion, and was reigning at his own pleasure, was at last vanquished in the field by the people who had served a long servitude under him, was then cast into prison, and finally, when he gave no ground at all for hoping better things of him, was condemned to death by the supreme council of the kingdom and beheaded by the axe before his own palace gates. I am to relate also by what right, especially according to *our* law, this was adjudged and done, and shall easily defend my valiant and upright countrymen who have deserved most conspicuously well of the united citizenship and nationalities of the world.

But there he droops. An independent who has pledged himself away to the party of the independents, he has not the clear eye of Harrington to distinguish between the actual and the possible. England with him has accomplished her work: the country has liberated itself. He does not recognise that the liberators furnished no guarantee that this liberty would not be interfered with, whether in matters religious, or political, or social. The form into which the constitution was settling was, in his own words, 'not such as might be wished, but such as the disaffection of bad citizens would allow to exist.' The Commonwealth was still labouring under the perplexity of factions and obliged to defend itself by arms; but Milton failed to see, as Algernon Sidney saw, that the pikes of the Commonwealth were to be beaten, not into ploughshares, but into fetters. Blind though he had now fallen in the public service, he nevertheless bated no jot of heart or hope, but looked confidently to Cromwell as the one stay of England, the impersonation of new-found liberty, the father of his country. His panegyric upon the leaders of the revolution is crowned with his panegyric on the Protector. Parliaments had met and accomplished nothing: Cromwell alone remained.

We all yield to your insuperable worth, no one having a word to say to the contrary, unless it be some one who seeks equal honours for himself with an unequal title, or grudges their bestowal on one of higher desert, or understands not that in human society there is nothing more pleasing to God, more agreeable to reason, nothing fairer and more useful to the state, than that the worthiest should bear rule.

He did not, it is true, hesitate to warn Cromwell, 'the patron and, as it were, the tutelary god of liberty,' against the fatal consequences that would ensue if he should afterwards invade that liberty which he had vindicated. But he seemed to recognise no such danger. He was as jealous of parliaments as Cromwell himself. And certainly he did not appreciate the extent to which his own words, directed against Charles and his ministers, were applicable to Cromwell and his sectarian supporters, about the glory and the duty of tyrannicide in the case of a sovereign who 'reigns only for himself and his own faction.'

Milton's 'Tenure of Kings and Magistrates' brings us to the practical politics of the Commonwealth. I have shown that an ideal was more or less present to all men's minds at this time, meaning by the ideal a deeper insight into the real. The various forms of this ideal constitute the different solutions men were prepared to advocate for the right settlement of affairs, or, as Cromwell put it to his parliaments, for the 'healing and settling' of the nation. The practical conclusion arrived at by those in power was the subversion of the old constitution and the establishment of a free commonwealth. Two months after the king's execution an edict was passed, bearing that

the people of England and of all the dominions and territories thereunto belonging are, and shall be, and are hereby constituted, made, established, and confirmed to be, a commonwealth and free state, and shall henceforth be governed as a commonwealth and free state by the representatives of the people in parliament and by such as they shall appoint officers and ministers for the good of the people, and that without any king or house of lords.

If we would see something of what England was capable of realising at this memorable epoch, we may turn to a book which has hitherto received far too little attention, James Harrington's '*Oceana*.' This book is remarkable not merely as a product of the Commonwealth thought, it is also remarkable among political ideals. It is a book of essentially the same character as the 'Republic,' the 'De Monarchia,' the 'Prince,' the 'Utopia,' and the 'New Atlantis.' It is an ideal formed at a time when England had violently cut herself adrift from her political traditions, and entered unfettered upon the inauguration of a new era. It belongs moreover to that time when the immediate realisation of an ideal was the practical determination of those who were masters of the

country, and it was promulgated whilst this other ideal, which bore no less ambitious a character than the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth, was in actual process of realising and destroying itself upon the ruins of what had gone before. The distinguishing feature of the book is its solid practical worth: it is mere ignorance or affectation which allows a critic to speak of it as a 'political romance.' It differs from other political ideals in being a model commonwealth presented complete in all its working details both of foundation and superstructure, and it is the work of a statesman who thoroughly understands both law and politics. Harrington turns to the past, not, as Dante does, with the sorrowful eyes of one contemplating a golden age now lost, but with the healthy instinct of one who sees in the experience of the past the most enduring hopes of the future. His model is not the work of one sickened by the perversion of government around him, who turns for solace to rear a fabric in dreamland. The shadow of despair does not even with its borders touch the 'Oceana.' So far from in any way resembling the fanciful Arcadias of an earlier age,¹ the work is practical from beginning to end. It is the expression of his established hopes for the England of his own days, inspired throughout by a fixed faith that now was the time for England to develop into a republic at once strong and free, solidified by a direct and true insight into the principles of government, and enriched by an historical experience that has drained the wisdom of the past.

Historically, therefore, the work is of prime interest; but it has a more vital interest still, and one that, so far as I am aware, no one has taken the trouble to allude to, viz. its anticipated solution of many of the problems of our own age. In education Harrington contrived a solution quite similar to that which we have only recently adopted. Abandoning the impossible dreams of Milton, he propounded an entirely practicable theory of national schools under government inspection, with state support, rates, and compulsory clause, all as clearly defined, if without so many words, as in the acts and codes now in force. Indeed, he is herein ahead of us, for he provides a thoroughly organised system of secondary education, which we are as yet only slowly approaching. In religion he has a profoundly tolerant and far-reaching provision of settlement—a national church directed and controlled by a council of religion and a convocation of divines, the council, however, to exercise no coercive power, but to guarantee liberty of conscience to all. 'No gathered congregation shall be molested or interrupted, but vigorously and vigilantly protected and defended in the enjoyment, practice, and possession' of their worship; and every congregation shall have right of appeal to the council, and if need be to

¹ Mr. Edmund Gosse is hopelessly at sea here (*From Shakespeare to Pope*, p. 26).

the senate or parliament. In politics he has a serene confidence in the silent instincts of popular wisdom, that might abash our modern caucusers, and a conception of England's expansive mission that might do honour to Professor Seeley. But most striking of all are his conclusions on the question of accumulations, particularly accumulations in landed property. For this question of landed accumulation is to him the foundation of the whole, and a commonwealth must look to have the seeds of permanency or decay according as it has accepted a just or an unfair settlement upon this point. Upon this he founds his commonwealth first of all, and the debate upon the Agrarian of 'Oceana' reads like a report from the house of commons.

Of all the political writers and thinkers of this age none had a juster eye for the new possibilities that were opened up for the England of the puritan revolution, and at the same time none saw more distinctly how far the actual Commonwealth fell short of what was then possible. Personally he is a less interesting figure than that sword of flame Sidney, but his ideas contained a far deeper wisdom than those of Sidney; he carried more intellectual ballast, while he had hardly less enthusiasm; and what he wrote is of vastly greater interest and worth. Yet he embodies the same ideal of the time, the same that inspired Cromwell's disastrous and baffled effort, the same that inspired the utterance as well as the action of the furious latter-day saints whose hot gospelling zeal turned the Commonwealth into a Christian Juggernaut, that inspired alike the dreary logic of Hobbes and the fiery eloquence of Milton. This last erred in defect of completeness. His moral idealism was too intemperate for his sagacity, and he made himself the champion of single deeds without appreciating their connected issues. All of them had their observation either perverted or rendered incomplete by the partial issues of the time. The immediate struggle was prejudicial neither to Harrington's lucidity of mind nor to his trustfulness, for he never allowed its warping influences to take effect. We may have warmer admiration for some who struck doughty blows in the heat of the battle and who, if they fell, fell with something of a starry splendour. But when we observe the unbiassed temper with which Harrington approached the intricate questions of the time, the perspicacity which he brought to disentangle them, and the breadth of wisdom with which he elaborated his solution, we may find atonement for that aloofness which is not always a fault.

For Harrington too is remarkable as a man. From his early years he evinced that habit of observant self-possession which gives authority to opinion. Even as a boy, as Toland, his admiring editor, tells us, he had a 'natural gravity which kept his teachers in awe.' Born into this stormy epoch, he marked out his own

work at as early a period as his entrance into the university. Setting aside academic routine, he devoted himself under the tutorship of Chillingworth to a preparation for foreign travel, and on his father's death he quitted England to study continental government and politics—a step which indicates the same motive that led Falkland to institute the conviviums at Tew, viz. that he might come to 'a rational determination.' In Holland, now flourishing after its liberation from the Spaniards, he had occasion to study military discipline as well as government. He had high favour shown him by the prince of Orange, visited the court of the queen of Bohemia, and entered the service of the prince elector. Regarding those political studies which formed his main occupation he used to say that before he left England he knew no more of monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, or other forms of government 'than so many words in the dictionary.' Before returning home he also visited Denmark, Flanders, Germany in various parts, and France, but his most fruitful field of study was Italy. He there acquired that minute and extensive acquaintance with the medieval republics and with the existing Italian governments which is so conspicuous in every page of his writing. Italy also furnished him with a valuable political library, with one writer who never fails to elicit his admiration, Machiavelli, 'the prince of politicians,' 'the only politician,' 'the greatest artist in the modern world,' and with a working example of one commonwealth that was then for him 'better than all others in the world,' the commonwealth of Venice. On his return to England he first entered the service of Charles as one of the privy chamber extraordinary (the struggle was just then coming to a head), and accompanied him in his first expedition against the Scots; but, loth to suffer the twist of partisan action, he retired into private life to bring the fruit of his travels to maturity. In 1646, when the first conflict had been decided and Charles was now a prisoner, he emerged 'out of curiosity,' and was thereon appointed to wait upon the king's person as 'one known to the king and engaged to no faction.' From this time, with one short interval of separation, due to his refusal to take an oath against assisting the king's escape, he attended Charles until his last moments on the scaffold. He was 'very acceptable to the king,' who found him 'an ingenious man,' and conversed with him by preference to others of the suite about books and foreign countries and government. After the king's execution he again withdrew to his study, this time to mould his expectations and ideas about this new-born England into his 'Model Commonwealth.' He had been studying civil government both from books and from practical observation ever since his student days at Oxford, and now he had reached his determination.

The work, on being completed, experienced difficulty in publica-

tion. Its views were distasteful to both parties. The royalists thought him unfaithful to the king; the Cromwellians were enraged. Like Paul at Athens he had shown them what they ignorantly adored, and his ideal of a commonwealth was so severe a comment upon theirs that Cromwell had the book seized in the printing. A very pretty story is related by Toland about his touching and quaint appeal to Lady Claypole, Cromwell's favourite daughter, for the liberation of 'his child,' as he fondly termed it, and of her interest and intercession on its behalf. The manuscript was restored and the book published with a dedication to Cromwell himself and the motto, *Quid rides? Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*. Cromwell is said to have laughed that 'the gentleman would like to trepan him out of his power, but what he had got by the sword he would not quit for a little paper shot.' Yet there is little in the work directly obnoxious to Cromwell; the great offence lies in the difference between Harrington's statesmanship and the Protector's. Whatever direct offence there is springs from Harrington's hope and trust that Cromwell might prove England's saviour. It was not essential that he should have acted as Harrington pointed out, but if he had possessed the philosophic and political insight and the constructive genius revealed in Harrington's work he might, with those administrative talents which he possessed in such a high degree, have accomplished for England something very different from that sword-and-bible despotism. Harrington's work, in fact, is not merely a model of a free commonwealth; it is an impassioned *argumentum ad hominem* to Cromwell himself, who had such an opportunity as scarcely ever man had, an opportunity equal to that of Lycurgus for Sparta, or Washington for America, of either reforming what was amiss in the old government or establishing one altogether new.

The 'Oceana' is a model of an equal commonwealth, made by one who has something of the instinct of an artist. It is divided into four parts. The first consists of preliminaries, in which he investigates the fundamentals of government and arranges his materials. In the second a council of legislators is assembled to found the commonwealth—something like the assemblies that gathered round Mirabeau and George Washington, and actually representing the council of state which aided Cromwell in drawing up the instrument of government in 1653. In the third part the work is performed. The fourth is a corollary of reflections.

In his nomenclature and method of discussion there is an antiquated pedantry, which gives the work a clumsy appearance, but the pedantic husk is worth peeling off to reach the kernel. He begins the preliminaries by distinguishing the two kinds of power, material and intellectual. On a proper adjustment of the former depend the justice and equality of a state; on the latter depends

its continual and ever renewed freshness. But both must be enlisted if a commonwealth is to preserve its health. In these two he strikes the dominant chord of his 'equal commonwealth.' That is one which is (1) 'equal in its foundation,' i.e. one based on an equable distribution of the power accruing from the possession of material wealth, and (2) 'equal in its superstructure,' i.e. maintaining a similar balance in the distribution of power proceeding from intellectual authority. With regard to the former, Harrington believed that he had made a discovery, viz. that *EMPIRE FOLLOWS THE BALANCE OF PROPERTY*, whether that be in lands, commodities, or money. Property of the last two kinds is so much 'on the wing' that Harrington limits his criticism chiefly to the question of property in land.

So long as the agrarian balance is unequal, disturbance is sure to arise. Proceeding on this first principle to examine the causes of the distempers in his own day, he concludes (and in his conclusion he was developing what to some extent had already been sighted by Bacon) that these troubles were 'attributable neither wholly to wilfulness nor faction, neither to the misgovernment of the prince nor to the stubbornness of the people, but to a change in the balance of property, which ever since Henry VII's time was falling into the scale of the commons from that of the king and of the lords.' The passage² in which he thus traces the dissolution of the Stuart monarchy is one whose lucidity and grasp give him title to stand in the van of our philosophic historians, and one that makes us regret that he did not write a complete history of the period. But his ambition took a different flight. His aim was not merely to write a diagnosis but to prescribe a cure, 'to provide a method of preventing such distempers.' Accordingly, after showing how the policy of the Tudors had made the balance incline to the commons; that when the commons had once raised its head nothing more was wanted than that the people, knowing their own strength, should be made to feel it; that when a prince came 'as stiff in dispute as the nerve of monarchy was slack' dissolution was inevitable; that it was this dissolution of the government which caused the war, and not *vice versa*—he introduces Cromwell in the person of that 'most virtuous captain and incomparable patriot Olphaus Megaletor,' who henceforward figures as Lord Archon and master genius of the new commonwealth. Chancing upon the following of Machiavel, 'Thrice happy is that people which happens to have a man able to give them such a government at once as may secure them of their liberties,' he concluded to try the occasion, and with a council of fifty to aid him in his labours, representing the commonwealths of Israel ('concerning which no man wrote common sense before Harrington'), of Athens and Lace-

² Pp. 67-70 of Toland's edition.

daemon, of Carthage, Rome, the Achaian league, of Venice, Switzerland, and Holland, he proceeded to establish the commonwealth upon the principles laid down by the author in his preliminaries. In the thirty 'orders' of which the constitution consists he traverses the whole field of civil polity, and introduces his 'Model Commonwealth' in a complete form.

He has one leading object throughout, that it is to be a commonwealth equal and free—equal, *i.e.*, both in its foundation and its superstructure; and free, *i.e.* one whose government shall consist in the empire of laws, not of men. As a foundation, then, he begins with an adjustment of dominion in property. Bacon had said, 'Let states that aim at greatness take care how their nobility and gentlemen multiply too fast, for that makes the common subject grow to be a peasant and base swain, driven out of heart and in effect but a gentleman's labourer.' Harrington's provision against the evil is one which modern reform has rendered tolerably familiar, that of cutting down large property holdings by legal enactment. Not that he is a foe to aristocracy, for upon this point he is resolute and peremptory—that no country can be rightly healthy without an aristocracy.³ But he will have the balance of property in the hands of the many, not of the few. 'Keep the plough in hand of the owner and not of mere hirelings.' Then you will have *terra potens armis atque ubere gleba*. He briefly provides that no one shall own land to the extent of a greater annual value than 2,000*l*. Estates exceeding this shall be divided at the first generation and surpluses forfeited: he is an uncompromising foe of entail.

On the introduction of this land bill the right hon. Philautus de Garbo, a young nobleman with 10,000*l*. a year and four junior brothers, assails it with the vehemence and argument now so familiar—that it is uncalled for, is dangerous to the state, will not effect its purpose, is destructive to families, destructive to industry; that it will never be passed. The answer to these arguments is a curious forecast of the economy of our own land agitators. The agrarian is necessary to ensure the equality and fixation of the state. It is not well for any government that a few landlords should overbalance a populous country: there is then a tendency to degenerate into oligarchy. Nor is it a convincing argument to say that it implies a certain amount of danger, for there is greater danger from the absence of a just agrarian than from a reform which, though severe at the time, provides an antidote against this poison. As to its ruination of families, how many families are there whose yearly revenue exceeds 2,000*l*.? So few that their interest cannot be balanced with that of the whole nation. No: if monarchy has

³ He animadverts on Machiavel's idea that a gentry is galling; that is, only when the gentry overbalances.

made bold with so many for the sake of a few, the commonwealth ventures to make bold with a few for the sake of so many. More than this, the agrarian will be for the benefit of families.

Truly, when I consider that our countrymen are none of the worst in nature, I marvel how it comes to pass that we should use our children as we do our puppies—take one in the lap and feed it with every good bit, and drown four. . . . And this is that interest of a family for which we are to think ill of a commonwealth that will not endure it! But quiet ourselves! The land through which the river Nile wanders in one stream is barren; but where it parts into seven it multiplies its fertile shores by distributing, yet keeping and improving, such a propriety and nutrition as is a prudent agrarian to a well-ordered commonwealth. Whatever large estates suck from the people is better digested by small estates into the blood of the commonwealth.

Neither is it true that this reform will destroy industry: a political body is not rendered fitter for industry by having one leg gouty. There is no tendency to the improvement of merchandise in the existence of a class that have no need for trading, whilst others are unable to follow it. The agrarian will rather encourage industry through its provision for the dissemination of wealth. The superior limit fixed does not strike at industry, but only at covetousness; for where there is some measure in riches a man may hope to become rich, but where there is none the way is only opened up to avarice. His closing words upon the practical difficulties of passing the bill convey a warning that might have been stirred by the recent risings in Ireland and Skye. It would be safe not to make too much of those difficulties at such a time, for if the people see intemperate postponement of the reform of an evil to which their eyes are once drawn they will take reform into their own hands. 'Wherefore, if you will not fix this, the rest is blood; for without blood you can bring it to no other.'

From the general tenor of his debate, as well as from desultory remarks elsewhere, it is apparent that under the 'balance' which this agrarian was to provide Harrington included limitations on private fortune in capital as well as land. His references to capital are subsidiary, because England was for him characteristically a 'commonwealth of husbandmen.' But in reference to Holland and Genoa he makes the balance of treasure hold the same function as the balance of land in England. He holds rigidly to his balance, whether it be between men and classes or between the state and the individual. Though his ideas run on socialistic lines, he stops short of socialism. He stops short, for instance, of land nationalisation, though coming very near it, for fear the private balance should be lost. Individual accumulations of capital, beyond a certain point, are opposed, for the twofold reason that they destroy the balance of the commonwealth and injure the health of the social body. Livy

is quoted with great approval: 'Of late riches have introduced avarice, and voluptuous pleasures abounding have, through lust and luxury, begot a desire of blasting and destroying all good orders.' To the same effect Aristotle: 'Immoderate wealth, where one man or the few have greater possessions than the equality or frame of the commonwealth will bear, is an occasion of sedition,' whence ostracism. Of a harmony is his droll provision that no daughter shall have a dowry of more than 1,500*l*. He does not care to see the daughters of England exposed to the designs of cut-purse husbands. And what evils may not follow from this wretched custom of marrying for money when even the nobility are willing to forget their blue blood and see 'the tallow of a chandler converted into that beauty which is required in a bride'?

'Equal in its basis and equal in its superstructure.' The former is supplied in the agrarian, and the commonwealth being thus founded, he proceeds to frame such a superstructure as will render this basis exempt from the contingency of a perverting misgovernment. The second of his fundamentals is rotation of office and the ballot. The ballot is necessary to insure that purity of suffrage which is 'the health, if not the life,' of popular government. 'Election is most free where it is made in such a manner that it can neither oblige nor disoblige.' Rotation of office is necessary to prevent the growth of a vitiating overbalance of individual authority. 'Prolongation of magistracy, trashing the wheel of rotation, destroys the life or natural motion of a commonwealth.' These two, which are to the superstructure what the agrarian is to the foundation, are the means of securing liberty and equality in that. The superstructure itself consists of three orders, the senate, the popular assembly, and the magistracy, the government proceeding by equal rotation and elected through the suffrage of all the people, given by ballot.

On the question of election he is a curious mixture of an aristocrat and a democrat. It would be impossible to have a more implicit confidence in the virtue of popular assemblies properly managed: it would be equally impossible to be more profoundly convinced of the necessity of an aristocratic body. On the one hand we hear him affirm with pride that for popular government 'he has more to say than Leviathan has said or will say for monarchy;' on the other he asserts as roundly that 'an army is as well without generals as a people without a gentry.' A nobility is

necessary to the natural mixture of a well-ordered commonwealth. How else can you have a commonwealth that is not altogether mechanic? Your mechanics, till they have feathered their nests like the fowls of the air, are so busied in their private concernment that they have neither the leisure to study the public [i.e. public business] nor are safely to be trusted with it. But if a man's share be such as gives him leisure by

his private advantage to reflect on that of the public, what other name is there for this sort of *mén à leur aise* but a nobility, especially when their families come to be such as are noted for their services done to the commonwealth, and so take into their ancient riches ancient virtue ?

In another place—

It is a vain imagination to suppose that politics can be mastered without study, or that the people have leisure to study ; and for divines and lawyers, let their incurable running on their own narrow bias serve for instruction. I will stand no more by the judgment of lawyers and divines in this work than by that of so many tradesmen. There remains only the nobility and gentry.

Into their hand accordingly is relegated the chief business of government in the senate or upper house.

This upper house, however, is an elective, not an hereditary chamber. The aristocracy in whom his faith is thus reposed is not one whose title is constituted by claims founded merely on hereditary right or the greatness of estates ; it is a class in the possession of no privileges beyond those of education and leisure for the public, furnished by ease and competent riches. The only right recognised shall be natural right, 'the possession of excellent parts ;' and their intrinsic worth, according as that comes to hold weight in the judgment or suffrage of the people, shall be their only way to honour or preferment. He would thus not abolish the house of lords, but only its hereditary privileges, and at the same time he would take care that the legislative chambers should not be open to all and sundry. This house is to consist of 300 members, of whom one-third retire every year. It alone is to possess powers of debate, but its decrees receive ratification from the popular assembly.

The lower house, of 1,050 members, is merely to vote on bills sent down to it. Harrington seems to believe that the members will have enough of opportunity for discussion outside the walls of parliament. 'The tribes are to take oath neither to cause nor introduce debate into any popular assembly of this government. The commonwealths of Greece were all ruined or shaken by the intemperance of their *comitia*. If good heed be not taken on this point, a commonwealth will have bad legs.' In Sparta, till Lysander, the people had no power of debate : therefore it was steady. So Venice. 'Nor will any commonwealth *where the people in its political capacity is talkative* ever see half the days of one of these.' Debate in a popular assembly becomes 'no better than a game of football.' He has implicit faith in the great body of silent wisdom in the people, but he believes also that those who embody this popular wisdom have no liking for debate. 'You will never find they have assumed debate for itself, but for something else,' some wrong, and then it is not in art or nature to debar them. It is his

very faith in silent popular wisdom which makes him such a foe to 'your glib tongues, your demagogues and grandees,' because he knows that a free and healthy state will easily rebound from any partial exercise of the dictatorial power, but finding itself in the region of deleterious gas it is bewildered how to proceed.

Senate proposing, people resolving, magistracy executing : these together form the superstructure. In addition to these he provides his scheme of education, already alluded to, national endowed schools in every parish, and attendance thereat compulsory from five to fifteen years, when a youth must take up a trade or study further. Technical education also forms part of his scheme, and military drill is compulsory. There is the council of religion, to prevent sectarianism or bigotry from springing up into a social evil, and to rule the church. 'My lords, if you know not how to rule your clergy, you will most certainly, like a man that cannot rule his wife, have neither peace at home nor honour abroad.' There is the board of trade, a sort of board of practical political economists, whose duty it shall be to have a right understanding of those trades that feed the veins of the commonwealth and of those that exhaust the same, and to acquaint the senate that encouragement or remedy may be applied. There are provincial assemblies for the local government of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. There is a dictatorship in reserve for cases of emergency—a dangerous provision, but one without which no commonwealth can be safe. He has also a national land scheme for the devotion of surplus revenue to the purchase of lands for the state, which in time yield a return for the abolition of taxes. He has, further, a scheme of colonisation, which indicates that he saw in the England of the future the possible mistress of the world. He is for no such relation of colonies to mother country as that which George III tried to force upon America; nor yet is he for a mere agglomeration of the different parts of the empire, which in that case 'is hung together like bobbins without a hand to weave with them.' It is a scheme of imperial federation similar to that which is proposed at present; and it is in an extension of imperial federation of this kind that he conceives England's noblest mission to consist. In words that recall Milton's he asks, 'What can you think but if the world should see the Roman eagle again she would renew her age and her flight?' And he continues, 'If you add to the propagation of civil liberty the propagation of the liberty of conscience, this empire, this patronage of the world is the kingdom of Christ.' But if, on the other hand,

you, having attained your own liberty, shall bear the sword of your common magistracy in vain, sit still and fold your arms, or, which is worse, let out the blood of your people to tyrants, you not only turn the grace of God into wantonness, but his justice into wormwood. . . . A

commonwealth of this make is a minister of God upon earth. For which cause the orders last rehearsed are buds of empire such as, with the blessing of God, may spread the arms of your commonwealth like a holy asylum to the distressed world, and give the earth her Sabbath of years or rest from her labours under the shadow of your wings. . . . If our religion be anything else but a vain boast, scratching and defacing human reason, which, being the image of God, makes it a kind of murder, here is that empire whence justice shall flow down like a river and judgment like a mighty stream.

In all of this last eloquence we observe his appeal to the actual founders of the Commonwealth, whose high ambition was to make of it a kingdom of Christ, but whose religion was only too accurately described as a scratching and defacing of reason. There is the same severe comment on the actual state of affairs in his description of what ensues in Oceana. 'Now began the native spleen of Oceana to be much purged, and men not to affect sullenness and pedantism. The elder remembered that they had been youths. Wit and gallantry were so far from being thought crimes in themselves that care was taken to preserve their innocence,'—exactly the converse of what was happening in England. In speaking of national theatres he says, 'These things are sure enough to be censured, but only by such as do not know the nature of a commonwealth; for to tell men they are free, and yet to curb the genius of a people in a lawful recreation to which they are naturally inclined, is to tell a tale of a tub.' He does not signalise the puritan censors, but we observe the side stroke in his animadversion upon the French clergy, who forbade dancing. There is the same indirect cut at Cromwell himself in the reference at the close to Timoleon, such a hater of tyrants that he slew his own brother Timophanes. Telecleides exhorted Timoleon that if he restored the Sicilians to liberty it would be acknowledged that he had destroyed a tyrant; if otherwise he must expect to hear that he had only murdered a king.

Oliver Cromwell did not destroy the tyrant: he only murdered the king. It is not my purpose to enter into a detailed criticism of the manner in which Cromwell and those who worked with him failed in the realisation of their ideal. It is an historical fact that an ideal was the high-born aim not only of these, but of an immense section of the better-minded Englishmen of the time. It is a fact also that an ideal such as that of Harrington could, in a far truer and nobler sense, claim to be the kingdom of Christ than that of Cromwell and the saints. We see further that those who held the keys and the sword succeeded not in accomplishing the liberation of a free-minded people, but in establishing a cruel and narrow despotism—all the crueller when we consider that it was more a tyranny over souls than over bodies, and that the nation was called upon to

render its devotion not to the long-desired commonwealth of free citizens, but only to a sort of Calvinistic Juggernaut. The causes of this failure were not mere mistakes of policy or assaults of faction. Faction was an effect rather than a cause, and the true source of failure must be sought in the very nature of the forces which co-operated to settle the Commonwealth, whether these forces be the religious and political principles of those who worked along with Cromwell, or the character and capacities of the Protector himself. Both by his natural disposition and by his training, by his sympathies, prejudices, and associations, by his temper and his abilities, Cromwell was unfitted to accomplish the liberation which he attempted and which, with what light he had, he unswervingly kept in view. Indeed, he himself felt his own inadequacy to the task before him, as may be seen from his demission of authority into the hands of the little parliament, from his reluctance to undertake the protectorate, from his begging leave to be relieved of his charge, 'begging it again and again;' and when finally he was prevailed upon to accept it with limitation by council and by parliament, it was only heavily and doggedly that he did so, as one that enters upon a forlorn hope, and then he would 'sooner be willing to be rolled into his grave and buried with infamy' than budge one jot.

It is strange that while every fresh move plunged him deeper and deeper in the bog of political difficulties, and while every change he made was not only preparing the way for the collapse of his administration, but was bringing England step by step back to the old constitutional forms and gradually nearer to the Restoration, every change proceeded originally from the rudest destruction or violation of those old forms, was realised through tyrannous interference with parliamentary privilege, and was associated throughout with derisive contempt for constitutional deliberation. In the negative aspects of his work he and the new model accomplished a genuine good for England: they demolished the despotic government of Charles, and they prevented an equally despotic government by the presbyterians. But when it came to 'healing and settling' he never was, and from his mode of operation never could be, successful. With a high genius for administration he possessed no gift of statesmanship; he had no sympathy with parliamentary difficulties, no patience with them, no tolerance of conflicting bodies of opinion seeking the truth together. Debates were to him mere 'sittings and proceedings,' 'mere delay of settlement,' and 'talking of this thing or the other,' or, as Carlyle puts it, 'mere hide-bound pedantry careful only of the sheepskin formulas.' He expected unquestioning ratification of the proposals of himself and council, and when the parliament declined to be mere tools, 'Get you gone!' was his sole remedy, as it had been that of Charles before him.

Then, like Charles, he was thrown back upon administration by right of force. It would be idle to discuss at length his parliamentary fiascos when we consider what his parliaments represented. Charles at worst only refused to be bound by the will of the country as represented in parliament; Cromwell's first object was to prevent parliament from representing the will of the country. Urgent in his outcry for a settlement of the nation, he took sure means of preventing the nation from settling itself, or even of speaking its mind in a free parliament. Later on he laid a further interdict upon liberty of speech by securely gagging the press. He threw upon parliament the responsibility of 'healing and settling,' but he reserved to himself the right of saying who should enter parliament and who should not, and thereby excluded from the deliberative assembly nearly all the best and certainly all the most liberal of the constructive political ability which was open to be consulted. He reserved the right of selection, and having selected neither the best nor the wisest, but only such as represented a decimal fraction of the nation, he thereupon rated his political remnant for coming to no wise conclusion and dismissed them in fits of anger. His convention was only a sectarian representative, and his parliaments were only rumps. According to his theory none but 'the people of God' had a just claim to appear in the new representative, and his rights of election were all for a close minority. 'We had as good deliver up our cause into the hands of any as of those who have deserted us or are as neuters.' And he not only excludes catholics and malignants and objects to 'the bringing in of neuters,' but proceeds on lines that lead to more hopeless alienation and to further exclusiveness. It is the note of the jealous sectary, and his 'people of God' rapidly become only the extremest puritans. As he passed on through one failure after another he learnt something of political wisdom and gathered breadth of view when it was too late, but his speech to the convention is merely that of a heated sectarian enthusiast. It bears more resemblance to a salvation-army harangue than to the political address of a sane statesman at the head of affairs. 'I never looked to see such a day as this, when Jesus Christ should be so owned as he is this day in this work. 'Be faithful with the saints.' 'Truly it's better to pray for you than counsel you.' It is an ecclesiastical synod or a kirk session he is addressing, not the parliament of a great nation. 'Have a care of the whole flock,' *i.e.* of the saints and sectaries, for we know with what kind of care the Anglicans and Catholics were guarded. 'Encourage the ministry,' *i.e.* of the preaching sects. 'God's people,' *i.e.* the sectarians and fanatics, 'are called to supreme authority.' 'Would all were the Lord's people, the Lord's prophets!' 'Own your call! you are at the edge of the promises and the prophecies!' 'If I were to choose any servant, the meanest officer for the army

or the Commonwealth, I would choose a godly man that hath principles. . . . And I would all our magistrates were so chosen.' They were finally chosen after the fashion implied in this principle, and the choice only put a premium upon cant and hypocrisy, even though apes of the Dead Sea covered with owl-droppings think so.

With sufficient force to support him any man may govern an empire; even Claudius could govern Rome. But force alone cannot legislate, and Cromwell's Commonwealth after all was one as void of legislation as its blank space in the statute books. In administration his autocratic spirit found full scope, and the settlement of affairs after a fashion passed under his hands with the swift precision and determined triumph of his battalions at Naseby and Worcester. But his attitude both in legislating and in administering was the same as that of the absolute monarch whom he beheaded. He had learnt the power of the sword, and upon that he rested. If we compare his method of procedure with that laid down by Harrington, we observe how little he realised the possibilities of the time. Both in administration and in legislation he was all for a class. Harrington declares—

If the commonwealthsman excludes any party he is not truly such. There is no reason that a commonwealth should favour any party remaining in fixed opposition to it: but if it fixes them in that opposition it is its own fault, not theirs. . . . If you will be trampling they fight for liberty, though for monarchy; you for tyranny, though under the name of a commonwealth.

Revert, again, to Cromwell's appeal to the saints, and then hear Harrington.

Those of all the rest are most dangerous who, holding that the saints must govern, go about to reduce the Commonwealth to a party. . . . The world is full of examples of men pretending as saints to civil power and never failing to dishonour that profession.

Cromwell's basis, again, was not the people, but the army. Harrington's reply to the major-generals is his animadversion upon Hobbes: 'The right of the militia or the sword, be the government what it will or let it change how it can, is inseparable from overbalance of dominion' (i.e. with Harrington material power) 'and avails to no other end than destruction.' Harrington says that the secret in setting up a new state lies in retaining the image of the old. Cromwell began by violently destroying the old, and through dismal failure slowly working back to it. But by the time he had worked back to the possibility of starting anew the Commonwealth had already, by the operation of the very forces which gave it existence, worked out its own destruction. It had been a commonwealth in nothing but the name, and thus, as Toland says, 'the

people of England came to hate a commonwealth without loving liberty less.' When we reflect how capable England showed herself, and consider the forces she had ready to hand at that time, when we observe what Cromwell succeeded in doing and what he failed to do, when we compare for a moment the meagre parochialism of his administration with what Napoleon I did for Europe, we incline to believe that it would have been better for England if Cromwell had never meddled with her politics at all. What he succeeded in doing led straight up to the Restoration and the Clarendon code; and what he failed to do reduced England to the necessity of fighting over again the battle for constitutional liberty through the Revolution of 1688. Still the spirit of liberty was stirred in England as it had never been before, to such a degree that men under its stimulating influence could realise in their own minds not merely a vague prospect of a possible civic liberty and civic health, but the very details of a great practical ideal which we now, after two centuries and a half, are still working out in the particular items as well as on the broader lines forecast by those pioneers of political idealism.

JOHN G. DOW.