

hither from the enemy upon his parole: he left them near Evill [*i.e.* Yeovil], and saith, he thinks them to be above 300 in number.

Now my Lord, though I know it would be of sad consequence, if we assaulting them should be worsted, yet, my Lord, I hope your Highness will easily pardon me, being I shall freely adventure myself upon the good Providence of the Lord who I know will own us, and I am persuaded succeed us in the business.

And indeed my Lord, I cannot with any confidence stay here, nor look the country in the face, and let them alone. I doubt not but to give your Highness a speedy good account of this matter. I shall be this night in Shaftesbury, and then send to your Highness again. The judges I have set at liberty here, and they were like men that dreamt to see us so suddenly here. . . . I am, my Lord, your Highness most dutiful Servant,
W. BOTELER.

From Salisbury, upon my march towards Shaftesbury,
14 March, 9 a'clock in the morning.

If I hear any of our friends coming towards us, I shall delay falling upon them [the rebels], unless I see a very favorable opportunity.³⁵

The tone of this letter shows that restraint had been put upon Butler, and that his plans had been upset. When he wrote that letter, he was twenty-four hours too late. Penruddock's men had left Yeovil before he left Salisbury: they were far ahead in their westward flight. The critical point in Butler's march was at Devizes, his first halt on the march from Bristol: he was there on the night of Monday, the 12th, the night that the insurgents spent at Blandford.³⁶ He started from Devizes on the morning of Tuesday, the 13th, at 7 o'clock; at that moment the enemy was at Blandford or in its vicinity: they did not, in their flight towards Devonshire, leave Yeovil till early next morning.³⁶ If, instead of moving to the south-east, Salisbury way, Butler had struck off from Devizes in a south-westerly course, instead of writing a despairing letter from Salisbury, at '9 a'clock in the morning' of Wednesday, 14 March, he might have been charging the enemy in the neighbourhood of Yeovil.

Be this as it may, though greatly distanced by lapse of time from March 1655, we can consider with profit and precision the contest in Butler's mind between his obedience to his commander-in-chief, and his credit as a soldier. The materials for that consideration are sufficient, and the result is, that, take it anyhow, this incident proves the hollowness of the insurrection.

Public opinion spotted the fact that Major Butler, at the head of four troops of horsemen, did not, when he could, pursue the rebels; and it determined that Butler's inaction was intentional. As Penruddock and his followers, though entrenched in the streets

³⁵ Thurloe, iii. 243.

³⁶ *Ibid.* iii. 242, 248. *Several Proceedings &c.* 15-22 March 1655.

and houses of South Molton, went to pieces forthwith before the assault of Captain Crook's single troop of horse, given after a long and fatiguing march, even an unmalicious observer might have agreed with Public Opinion.

Turning from an outside to an inside, to a Whitehall view of this affair, Cromwell deliberately held back Butler against his will, and allowed the rebels to march over more than a hundred miles, through Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and into Devonshire, an area, according to Mr. Firth, filled with Cavaliers expectant of a rising. Cromwell must have known that the royalists could only bring to the front untrained, ill-armed countrymen, and that Butler had at his back real soldiers, certainly equal in number to the enemy, and immeasurably superior in well-disciplined, well-armed strength. Yet Cromwell in Whitehall left to Butler no discretion, though he was in the area of disturbance, and forced him into inaction, on the plea of fear lest he 'should be worsted.' Butler meanwhile 'could not look the country in the face.' Such a remarkable conflict between a trusted officer and his commander-in-chief, when in the presence of actual insurrection, again justifies the suspicion entertained by Public Opinion; it proves, with certainty, that, in Cromwell's opinion, the insurrection did not need extinction at all hazard. With Major Butler's letter to Cromwell before him, and in spite of the managery which Cromwell practised towards the conspirators at Dover, Mr. Firth maintains that the history of the insurrection 'supplies no evidence whatever of Cromwell's agency, or complicity.'

An explanation of a somewhat obscure incident, the insurrection of 1655, that perforce strayed off, if not wholly away, from the beaten path of history; ³⁷ and based on fragments of evidence pieced together from a variety of documents, must be open to inaccuracies; and for some corrections I am indebted to Mr. Firth.

'Sir John' instead of Sir Joseph Wagstaff has been acknowledged with penitence. Morris, one of the conspirators from abroad, was Mr. Trelawny, and not, as I supposed, Daniel O'Neil. A surmise, entrusted to a note, that a Mr. Roles, *alias* Upton, was one of Cromwell's royalists, receives elaborate refutation. Mr. Firth, however, in his refutation, falls into a mistake which unintentionally magnifies the error. He assumes that I assumed

³⁷ Guizot, I find to my satisfaction, states, discerning much of Cromwell's complicity in the insurrection of 1655, that he knew of the plan, the method, the hopes, and the whereabouts of the actors; that *soit hasard, soit dessein, Cromwell ne fit rien d'efficace pour la prévenir*; that he arrested many royalists, *mais non pas ceux qui préparaient effectivement la prochaine exécution du complot*. Guizot also notices that Cromwell *fit quelquefois, des séditions et des conspirations, un usage menteur; et notamment en 1655, il tira de leur apparition faible et fugitive, plus de force pour son pouvoir qu'elles n'avaient eu de danger.* (*Histoire de la République* &c. ii. 128, 133.)

that Roles was an agent employed by Cromwell to tempt Charles into the insurrection. That never was my opinion; and so, if a conquered one may bargain with his conqueror, I readily accept Mr. Firth's account of Roles-Upton, if he will accept the slight correction he receives on my part.

It was the inhabitants of Salisbury, as Mr. Firth points out, and not a Mr. Forsington, who thought that soldiers should be quartered thereabouts, as 'some have not been ashamed to show themselves in young Tarquin's colours.' The information is the same whoever was the conveyer: so the fact remains, though Forsington be out of it. A guess was hazarded in the *Quarterly* article that Cromwell agreed in November 1654 to propitiate the army officers by the appointment of the major-generals. He assigns that date to the spring of 1655, and on this occasion his highness may have spoken accurately. Mr. Firth acknowledges that Cromwell instituted the major-generals because, as he stated, the army officers 'thought it was necessary;' an inconvenient admission of Cromwell's that Carlyle thought fit to shelve. It is of little consequence when Cromwell bribed his subordinates by the handing over to them the lives and property of his subjects.

In conclusion, a few words may be permitted on the position assumed by Mr. Firth as Cromwell's defender. Having 'raised him to heroic excellence' by supplying 'virtue,' the one thing wanting, Mr. Firth regards with disfavour those who question the propriety of Cromwell's elevation. An 'examination into the secret history of' an 'occurrence,' such as the insurrection of 1655, and into 'the details of abortive plots, and the personal history of obscure conspirators,' does not, if I interpret Mr. Firth aright, supply 'an effectual test of Cromwell's real self.'

Surely there is no escape from details either in life or literature? Unless graced with those details, eyes, nose, mouth, where would be the face? Letters to an obscure fellow-conspirator, the exposure of a lie, are details which compose or detect a fraud. These 'details' may be of 'little attractiveness;' but they must be taken into account. Nor does Mr. Firth recognise that when that 'occurrence' was Cromwell's 'late Insurrection and Rebellion,' he made it an event of much moment: it influenced his policy throughout the chief portion of his reign. The insurrection, if it formed one of a series of invented plots, is a proof of ingrained dishonesty: if it was an exceptional act of deceit, even taken by itself, that event is a test of character: 'the mind is the man.'

Mr. Firth is not alone in the idea that Cromwell is to be judged wholesale and not by detail. Carlyle curses in advance the 'Dead Sea apes' and men of 'vulpine intellect' who may dispute his verdict, that 'this Oliver was not a man of falsehoods, but a man

of Truth;’ and Mr. Frederic Harrison cannot abide a Dryasdust who disturbs ‘the central ideas’ that are the property of the polite historian.

Carlyle’s cry of ‘hands off’ might have been justified had he reason to anticipate discourteous treatment towards his idol. Such treatment nowadays is barely possible. Even a false god meets with soft handling. No one would even think of approaching the tone adopted by that illustrious ‘image breaker,’ who, to destroy the eikon of Charles I, pretended to show ‘how like to Nero Charles was,’ who raked up against him filthy stories, and revived the disgusting lie that ‘Charles killed his father and king by poison.’²⁸ The object of this inquiry is not to peer ‘with ‘skew eyes into the deeds of heroes,’ or ‘to prove Cromwell a scoundrel,’ far less to justify a boast, as Mr. Firth puts it so pleasantly, that the inquirer ‘is the first to read the “Thurloe Papers” aright.’ Our inquiry was not commenced to prove a foregone conclusion about Carlyle or Cromwell. That Carlyle’s text of the speeches is a slovenly copy of second-rate copies, published with a swagger both irritating and absurd, was ascertained by accident and with pain.²⁹ By accident the trail was struck that disclosed Cromwell’s hand in the insurrection of 1655: the first indication that way was Thurloe’s indorsement, ‘Nicholas Armourer,’ on the letter written in Dover Castle. Our sole aim is to show that the judgment formed of Cromwell by his subjects, even by ‘Carrion Heath,’ is sounder than the specious fancies of that well-equipped and practised sophist, who, among other efforts to attain his ends, nicknamed and depreciated all the diarists and chroniclers of their own Protectorate. The elucidation of Cromwell’s conduct by the written and spoken words of himself, his associates, and servants is the method on which this investigation has been conducted.

For this reason I venture, if not to appeal to the ‘Gamaliel’ of English historians, to place myself at his feet. Dr. Gardiner is of the Berean temperament, that searches ‘with all readiness’ the ‘scriptures’ of history, the records composed by the eyewitnesses of the years ago. And he holds that ‘minute investigation into the details of Cromwell’s life may modify our opinion of the morality of certain portions of his career, and may be not without influence upon our judgment of it as a whole.’ After such an admission, surely Dr. Gardiner may be asked ‘whether those things were so’ with Cromwell, as they seemed to the Venetian ambassador? and also if Oliver Cromwell might not justly receive a title akin to that which graced his namesake and precursor, Thomas Cromwell, the minister of Henry VIII, the suppressor of the monasteries? A strange similarity certainly does exist

²⁸ Masson’s *Milton*, iv. 260.

²⁹ ‘Carlyle as Editor of *Cromwell’s Speeches*,’ *National Review*, Jan. 1887.

both in character and circumstance between Thomas and Oliver Cromwell.

Thomas Cromwell 'made himself great and his family great' by terrorism, by his host of spies, emissaries, and informers. These were the methods by which he wrought the disestablishment and ruin of the religious houses. Not satisfied, however, with the results of mere espial, it is 'traditioned' that, to prove the destruction of the conventual establishments to be 'no feigned necessity,' that his accusations were 'things of fact, of evident demonstration,' he became their tempter. He sent 'gallants with fair faces, flattering tongues, youth, wit, wantonness,' to practise on the nuns; and 'if any of them succeeded in winning the affections of a girl, he sought Cromwell's favour by basely accusing her of incontinence.'

Whether they failed or succeeded, these repulsive emissaries were equally useful to Thomas Cromwell. He ignored the rebuffs they received: whether true or false, he accepted the stories of men who had sold themselves to the devil and to him. He had no scruples: he swept alike the innocent and the nocent into his net. For conduct such as this, Thomas Cromwell was distinguished as the *Diabolus Monachorum*. After years, however, produced different ideas of right and wrong. Misplaced adoration is a weakness, possible alike to positivists and protestants. 'The Father of Lies is of no party.' On this occasion it was the protestant who bowed the knee. In return for the destruction he wrought upon the monasteries, they adopted Thomas Cromwell as their 'Pattern Man:' they converted the *Diabolus* into a Saint.⁴⁰

REGINALD F. D. PALGRAVE.

LETTERS OF THE REV. WILLIAM AYERST, 1706-1721 (*continued*).

Communicated by C. E. DOBLE.

14. *W. Ayerst to Dr. A. Charlett.*

'Berlin, April y^e 2^d, 1707.

'Reverend & Hon^d S^r—Your obliging Letter of March y^e 10th came to my hands last Night for y^e quick return of w^{ch} in answer to mine I know not how to express my Obligation as well as for y^e kind offers You are pleas'd there to make me of Assisting me in y^e obtaining my Master's Degree. I have just now spoke to my Lord about it who promises to write this very Night to y^e D. of Ormond & M^r Arundel. As for y^e rest I must beg Your kind Care and Assistance. I hope there may be Mony enough for y^e Charges in y^e College Boursers hands, I having receiv'd nothing of my Scholarship since Michelmas 1704. If there be any thing else requir'd of me to do I beg y^r kind Directions. I suppose my Examination

* J. R. Green, *History*, iii. 164. Hook's *Lives of the Archbishops*, i. N.S. 115. Fuller's *Church History*, book vi. 318.