

Chapter XV The Siege of Bridgwater

Ancient Borough of Bridgwater, by the Rev. A. H. Powell, 1907

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FEW men ever combined so many private virtues with public transgressions as King Charles I. He was a good husband and father, a man of intense kindliness, a loyal and devout Churchman, and a prince possessed of many high ideals. Yet he embroiled himself fatally with the nation and with the Parliament, and in his attempts to extricate himself from the difficulties which in many instances were those of his own creation, he erred most grievously in his judgments, in perception, and in act. It was his dealings with the nation, and the protest of a powerful section of the nation against his policy, which led to the siege of Bridgwater in 1645.

Charles inherited a legacy of ideas from his father which contained in themselves the seed of national discord. James I was a man of small natural capacity, but he compensated for this by fostering to every extent that lay in his power the notion that kings could do no wrong. In his time the theory was evolved that all power lay inherent in the sovereign ; that though he might choose to delegate certain of these powers to Parliament, or to some other agent, he could recall these concessions at will, and re-invest them in his own sacred person. His son Charles I, a far abler man, thus entered upon his reign handicapped by an inherited tradition which could only imply, in those times, disaster sure and swift. For before the seventeenth century had run half its span, political ideas of a most directly opposing nature were current, and were daily gathering strength. The Parliament, and the strongest men within it, were determined that the sovereign, whoever he might be, should rule in conformity, and only in conformity, with their wishes. Monetary supplies, without which the king could not govern, were to be granted only at their bidding. The king might have his full share of power, but not independently of them. They were to be reckoned with, to be consulted, and to some extent they thought that they should even be cajoled. Here, then, were two theories of government which were as directly in opposition as the poles ; both sides held to their position ; both assumed the non possumus attitude ; each was inflexible.

Charles found difficulties with his first Parliament ; they held the purse-strings too tight. So he dissolved it, and convoked another, which proved to be yet more intractable. This assembly also was dissolved, and he began to raise taxes on his own authority. But so great was the discontent that the King was obliged to call together his third Parliament, which he found, to his great dismay, to be less tractable and less easy to manage than either of its predecessors. It was evident that some compromise must be arrived at, and indeed such a one was soon called into being. The Petition of Right, which bound the King to abstain from raising money without the Parliament's consent, and which forbade the imprisonment of any subject without the law having first been appealed to, was drawn up, and was ratified by Charles. If he had adhered to this undertaking all might have gone well. But he did not. All the old troubles broke out again. At length the third Parliament was dismissed, and in an evil hour the King resolved to rule without one. For eleven years, from 1629 to 1640, Parliament never met. The unpopular ship money was raised ; the nation waited, sullen and disgusted, yet not willing lightly to plunge into civil war. Then, in a moment of supreme folly, Charles attempted to force the Anglican Liturgy upon the Scots, and the pent-up feelings of the nation at last gave way. In November, 1640, the famous Long Parliament had to be summoned, which sat for thirteen years, until Cromwell, who like Charles tried to rule England as a despot, without check or hindrance, contemptuously turned it out by force in 1653. Within two years of the assembling of this Parliament the Civil War began, when the King raised his standard at Nottingham on August 22nd, 1642.

But other forces beside these were also at work. The Puritan position in matters of religion had been deepening for years, notably in Bridgwater and in Taunton. Mr. Devenish at St. Mary's had diligently taught these doctrines, and his influence was great. It was about this time that some eight thousand clergymen were turned out of their benefices, and their places filled by such men as would obey the Parliamentary Committee of Religion.

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Thus the livings of the Church of England for a time were filled by those who disbelieved her doctrines and sneered at her ceremonial, yet were glad to accept her posts of honour. George Wotton, the rightful vicar, was ejected in 1644 or 1645, and evidence seems to point to his not having been in Bridgwater at the time of the siege. Probably John Norman, the intruded minister who conformed to the religious standard of the Covenant, was then in possession. Thus from the religious point of view Bridgwater, when the siege came, in all probability had within its walls more who sympathized with the Parliamentary position than who owned loyalty to the King. In theory it was a Royalist town, since Colonel Wyndham commanded the castle ; in practice it was a divided community. Four hundred years before, when the Briweres ruled in Bridgwater, the policy of the lords of the castle was the policy of the borough, but times had changed since then. All England was in a ferment ; so too was Bridgwater. There were many who hated the puerile and vacillating policy of the King ; there were many who hated the abominable tyranny of the Committee of Religion.* There was no man in the town who was strong enough to take the lead. Colonel Wyndham was a brave soldier, but he was no leader of men. Devenish had passed away; Wotton was either ejected or just about to be ejected from St. Mary's ; Norman was not yet fully installed. The town possessed every element of weakness ; it was at the mercy of any really strong man who was prepared, in 1645, to take the side either of Royalist or Parliament.

The strong man soon appeared. Oliver Cromwell, then forty-six years of age, had steadily forced his way upwards. He had sat in Parliament ; he had trained soldiers. As a captain of Parliamentary horse he fought at Edgehill. At a military engagement near Gainsborough he had distinguished himself. Only the year before, in 1644, he joined Fairfax's troops before York, and the terrific charge of his cavalry at Marston Moor decided the issue of the day. Now, as against the Presbyterian and Moderate party, he was the leader of the Independents, or thoroughgoing faction. He thought fit, after the second battle of

Newbury, to impeach Manchester's conduct, and by the decision of the Self-denying Ordinance, while the Presbyterian and aristocratic generals were set aside, Cromwell was retained in command. Under Fairfax, his junior by some thirteen years, he led the new model army to a splendid victory at Naseby, and then first decisively turned the fortunes of the war from the Royalist to the Parliamentary side. Henceforth he was the representative of the army in its contest with the Presbyterian Parliament, who wished to disband it. Cromwell promptly marched to London and bluntly coerced the members, for by this time he had found out that it was by a military despotism that England was for a time to be ruled. So, while Fairfax was Captain-General of the Parliamentary forces, and nominal head of the army, Cromwell was in reality the directing genius and force, though in actual rank only Lieutenant-General. He early recognized the need of strenuous discipline amongst his troops, and he gained it. There was no drunkenness, no licence, no pilfering amongst his Ironsides. He looked out for men who had convictions, who felt that they were fighting for a worthy cause, who fought for conscience sake. His rule was the rule of an iron hand, yet only so to put down breaches of discipline. It must be frankly said that he made his troops respected as well as feared ; honoured as well as dreaded. He gave them a moral stimulus which was terrible in its power; he restrained them with a curb which was inexorable in its rule. This was the man, and these were the men, who came into Somerset in July, 1645.

On July 10th General Fairfax, with Cromwell, severely defeated the forces of Lord Goring, the Royalist General, at Langport, capturing some horse, prisoners, ordnance, and colours, and pursuing the Royalists to within two miles of the East Gate of Bridgwater. The following extract is taken from an account of the Bridgwater siege, compiled by Joshua Sprigge, M.A., in his *Anglia Rediviva*,* published in 1647. It may perhaps more faithfully show what happened — being written at the time — than the most elaborate later research can reveal. It was obviously written from the

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Parliamentarian point of view.

The next day, (July 10th) the whole Army, horse and foot, with the Train, were drawn up in Westonmoor, otherwise called Pensy pound, two miles from Bridgwater. The Countrymen thereabouts, that had been vexed with the Cavaliers, hearing of the defeat given unto them, and fearing to taste of their former cruelties, rose in great numbers, and with their colours, clubs and arms, appeared upon Knol-hill ; which being made known to the General, he with the Lieutenant-Gen. and other Officers marched up to them, who seemingly received him with joy, and in token thereof gave a volley of shot: whence after some conference with them, and their Leader, who made a Neutral Speech, the General returned, and the Army that night went to quarter, the head-quarter that night being appointed at Chedsay, within two miles of Bridgwater.

Friday, July 11. Colonel Welden's Brigade was commanded on the North side of the Town towards Devonshire, and the rest of the Army on this side towards Chedsay ; the guards being set, the General with the Lieutenant-Gen., went to view the Town, which they found to be very strong, standing in a valley, yet glorying in the equality of its level with the ground about it, there being not a clod that could afford any advantage against that place ; The Fortifications very regular and strong, the Ditch * about it very deep, and about thirty foot wide, which for a great part about the town, was every Tyde filled up to the brim with water, the compasse of ground within the line and works not great, very well manned, having in it about 1800 Souldiers to defend it; within the town was a castle of indifferent strength, (there was planted on the severall Batteries about 40 peece of Ordnance ;) well stored with ammunition and victuals, being a magazine for all the petty garrisons thereabouts.

Saturday, July 12. The Army continued in quarters, and new places for guards were appointed.

Lord's day, July 13. The Army rested at Chedsay ; and Colonel Okey having, from that day the battel was at Langport, besieged Burrough-garrison with his Dragoons, had the same surrendred unto him upon quarter, wherein were 140 prisoners, the Officers being promised fair usage.

Monday, July 14. A Council of war was called, great debate whether to storm the

town,** or not : Some inclination to it, but no positive resolution ; Notwithstanding preparations were made in order to a storm, the Souldiers cheerfully made their faggots, and were drawn in readines for a storm, but upon further consideration were for that time drawn back to their quarters ; and more time being taken, there were 8 long Bridges, betwixt 30 and 40 foot length, devised to be made by Lieutenant-general Hamond, the Lieutenant-general of the Ordnance (a Gentleman of approved fidelity, and of a most dexterous and ripe invention for all such things) which were approved of by the Commanders and Officers, and accordingly ordered to be made, and were of very great use to the Souldiers in the storm.

This day, the General going over the river to view the posts on the other side, was graciously delivered from a great danger he was near unto by a sudden surprisal of the Tide called the Eager, where he very narrowly escaped drowning.

Wednesday July 16 a Counsel of War was again called, and several propositions were made for the framing of our Army, and reduction of the town, both being of great consequence, and vehemently desired by us. To rise with our whole Army and leave the town unattempted, was conceived to be very prejudiciall to our future progresse ; To sit down before it (being a place of that strength, and we not sure to carry it) leaving the Enemy*** at Liberty to rally his broken forces, seemed very hazardous.

The blocking of it up by Forts on both sides with a part of our Army was propounded ; but the difficulty of laying a Bridge over the River through the violence of the current, (which yet was necessary for the maintaining a communication between our quarters on both sides) hindred that designe.

It was propounded to attempt it by approaches; But it was considered, that if we should have gone that way, it would have proved very tedious ; and if during our stay about it any great glut of rain should have fallen, it would have laid us wet in our trenches, and disabled us from effecting the business.

At last, a resolution to storm it was agreed upon, though it carried the greatest danger with it : yet the desire which the Army had to be speedily free for the further service of the Kingdom, surmounted all difficulties : the storming being thus happily resolved on, to

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the great and generall satisfaction of all the Army, both Officers and Souldiers ; Lots were drawn for every one to take their posts, some to storm, some to be reserves, others to alarm, but the time of falling on not yet determined.

Friday July 18. It was resolved at a Counsel of War, that the time of the storm should be on Monday morning towards dawning of the day. The Brigade appointed to storm on that side towards Devon was commanded by Major General Massey, being the Regiments of Col. Welden, Col. Inglesby, Col. Fortescue, Col. Herbert, Col. Birch, and Major General Massie's own Regiment : the Regiments designed on this side, were the Generals, Major-Generals, Col. Pickerings, Col. Montagues, Sir Hardresse Wallers, the Regiment commanded by Lieut. Col. Pride, Col. Rainsboroughs, and Col. Hamonds. The General rode round about the town this day, to see if all things were in readines for the storm, that both sides might fall on together. On the Lords day, July 20, Mr. Peters in the forenoon preached a Preparation Sermon, to encourage the Souldiers to go on : Mr. Bowles likewise did his part in the afternoon. After both Sermons, the Drums beat, the Army was drawn out into the field :* The Commanders of the forlorn hope who were to begin the storm, and the Souldiers, being drawn together in the field, were there also afresh exhorted to do their duties (with undaunted courage and resolution) by Mr. Peters, who did it (as one says of him) "tàm Marte,quàm Mercurio." As soon as it grew dark, the Souldiers drew every one to their severall Posts allotted them to storm ; the signe when the storm was to begin, was, the shooting off three peeces of Ordnance on this side, which the Forces on the other side were to take notice of, and to fall on at the instant : and on Monday, July 22, about two of the clock in the morning, the storm began accordingly on this side of the town, (the Forces on the other side only alarming the Enemy, which kept them upon the Line, expecting a storm). Our Forlorn hope was manfully led on by Lieut. colonel Hewson ; and as valiantly seconded by the Generals Regiment, commanded by Lieut. colonel Jackson ; and the Major- generals, commanded by Lieut. colonel Ashfield. The Bridges prepared to passe over the Moat** were quickly brought to the Ditch, and thrown in, on which the Souldiers with little losse got over the deep ditch, and with undaunted courage mounted the Enemies works (notwithstanding the great

*and small shot which showed about them) beat them from their Ordnance, turn'd them upon the enemy, and let down their drawbridge ; which made many of their Foot instantly cry, *** Quarter, quarter." The Bridge being let down, Captain Rainolds, who commanded the forlorn hope of horse, immediately entred, and scoured the streets of that part of the Town so gained, called Eastover, with much gallantry and resolution, even up to the Draw-bridge**** over the main Ditch, leading to the second Town : whereupon the rest of the Officers and Souldiers that were in a body, and yet annoyed us in that part of the town which we had won, threw down their arms, and had fair quarter given them : (there were about 600 taken prisoners, Officers and Souldiers). The Enemy instantly made barricadoes at the gate upon the bridge, and drew up the bridge that divided one part of the town from the other. Our forces had not been two houres in the first town, but the Enemy shot granadoes, and slugs of hot iron, and fired it on both sides, which by the next morning burnt that part***** of the town (of goodly buildings) down to the ground, except three or four houses, Major Cowel, who had a good share in that service, standing all that while in the midst of the street, which was both sides on fire, keeping guards to prevent the Enemies fallying upon them : Captain Sampson, in that remarkable action, received a shot.*

The General, hoping that the Storm might have wrought upon the Souldiers, and the Fire upon the Townsmen, so far, that they would have hearkened to a treaty ; renewed his Summons, which the Governour***** peremptorily refused, according to his allegiance (as he said) whereupon, Tuesday, July 22, it was resolved to alarm the town by our forces on this side, and to storm it by the other forces on the other side, at two of the clock the next morning; for which purpose the General was there in person to see it done, though it was held fit on after considerations, only to alarm on both sides, which much amazed the Enemy, and kept him waking that night : Also about two of the clock in the afternoon, the General sent to the Governour a Trumpet with a message to this purpose, that his denial of fair tearms had wrought in him no other thoughts, but of compassion towards those that were innocent, who otherwise might suffer through the Governour's obstinacy : Wherefore he signified his noble pleasure, that

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all women and children that would accept of this liberty, should come forth of the town by four of the clock in the afternoon, which being made known to them, the Governour's Lady and divers others came out. They were no sooner come forth, but our Cannon plaid fiercely into the town, Granadoes were shot, and slugs of hot iron in abundance, whereby several houses in the town were fired, and the wind being high increast the flame, the townsmen within were in great distraction, every man employed how to save his house and goods, the Enemy in a great amazement, and the Governour so far melted with the heat of the fire, as to send forth Tom Elliot in haste, to desire to know the General's terms; The General refused to admit of any treaty at all, resolved that the Governour and they within that had destroyed so fine a town, should have no conditions, but should submit to mercy; which being signified to the Enemy, they yet would try the General with these three particulars.

First, that the Governour with all the Officers and Gentlemen that were in the Town, with their servants, horses, swords, pistols and cloak-bags, might march with a safe Convoy to Exeter.

Secondly, that all the souldiers might likewise march to Exeter leaving their armes.

Thirdly, that all Clergiemen in the town, and Townsmen may have liberty to march with us, or abide at home.

The General returns these.

1. To all their lives.
2. To the inhabitants, their liberty and freedome from plunder.
3. Neither Officers nor Souldiers to be plundred of the clothes they have upon them.
4. The Gentlemen to be disposed of as the Parliament shall appoint, and in the mean time to have civil usage.

Six Hostages to be sent, and an answer in a quarter of an hour.

Tho. Fairfax.

The Governour returned answer, that he found those Propositions so ill resented, both by the Gentlemen and Souldiers,* that he could not accept of them. The general thereupon gave order to the souldiers to stand upon their guard, and go to their duties; Tom Elliot desired nothing might be done till he returned, leaving Sir John Heale as caution,

which was agreed to; and he presently returned with an answer of submission to the Generals Articles, only slipt in a motion for himself, that he might have liberty to carry the news to the King upon his Parol. May he have more such imployment till peace be settled!

Thereupon the Hostages were sent. Sir John Heale, Sir Hugh Windham, Mr. Waldron, Mr. Warr, Mr. Siddingham, Mr. Speake. And we sent some into the Town to them.

They were to deliver the Town and yield themselves prisoners the next morning by eight of the clock, and all that night they employed themselves to quench the fire in the town. The losse of men in this storm was not many, Mr. Martin an Officer in the train had his leg shot, and afterwards cut off, whereof he died, he behaved himself valiantly.

Wednesday July 23. The town was surrendred, about 1000 Officers and Souldiers, besides Gentlemen and malignant Clergy, ** marched out as prisoners. There were taken in the town about 44 barrels of powder, 1500 armes, 44 piece of ordnance, 400 weight of match, Enemies goods of great value, that had been carried for security into that place, and were seized by the Commissioners of the Parliament, and sould; and 5s. a man raised upon the sale, to be bestowed as a reward upon the common souldiers for their good service in the storming of the place.

That which may seem to allay the happiness of the successe was, that the town was fired; but truly though in strictness of souldiery this might be very well justified, yet God in his providence concurred to the justice of it, and our acquittance: They refused treaty after part taken, they fired the part we had taken, and rang the bells for joy when they saw it blaze: and as we are credibly informed, they fired the town themselves, in many places where fireworks could do no hurt, the souldiers saying, "The Town did it to be rid of them"; *** the town said, the souldiers did it, when they were in little hopes to hold it. But God be thanked considerable. As first, that by it a line of garrisons was drawn over that isthmus of ground between the South-sea and Seveine, by Bridgwater, Taunton, Lime, and Langport, it being from Bridgwater to Lime little above twenty miles, by which the Counties of Devon and Cornwall then wholly in the Enemies possession, except Plymouth, were in a manner blockt up from all

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entercourse with the Eastern parts, a business of no small consequence, if we had proceeded no further. Likewise this being taken, our Army was at liberty for further work, which was a great mercy at that time of the year. It was a great gain with little losse : and that which addes as much to the commendation of the action, as any thing, we kept our Articles exactly, which is not only honourable in the eyes of men, but acceptable in the sight of God, and that which this war had scarce formerly attained ; and it was not done without some difficulty now, in regard our souldiers had suffered so much, and Cornwall was so near.

Thursday July 24. All the day was spent in ordering the manner of sending away the prisoners, and securing Malignants goods in the town. And thus you have that gallant fight at Langport crowned with an easie recovery of that considerable strength of Bridgewater, whose natural fortification by water, they that knew, must needs conclude, God was the Bridge by which our Army got over.

Such is Mr. Sprigge's story of the storming of Bridgwater. The very quaintness of his diction, and his unrestrained partiality for the cause of the Parliament, are interesting, and significant in their way. He omits to relate the very narrow escape which Cromwell had of being shot on July 12th. He and Fairfax were viewing the town defences, and venturing too near the Castle, a shot was fired by Mrs, Wyndham, the governor's wife, which killed the man standing at Cromwell's side. Within a few days Cromwell again was in danger. He narrowly escaped being drowned in the Parret. Either of these accidents, had it terminated in a different manner, would probably have changed the history of England.

The town suffered deplorably. In Eastover scarcely a house was left undamaged, and the fire raged fearfully.* Wyndham, furious at the success gained there, poured a perfect rain of hot shot across the river at Fairfax's men, seeking to dislodge them, or to put Eastover in a blaze. Tactically, of course, he was right. Better to lose Eastover than to lose all. But there were abler men storming at the gate of the great bridge, and directing the Parliament's forces, than were defending the town from within. When Cromwell turned the great guns

which had been taken from the Royalists at Naseby, and the mortar pieces, upon the western part of the town, all was soon over. The streets were fired ** in three places, notably at the Cornhill, in High Street, and St. Mary Street. The fire spread rapidly, and threatened to consume the whole town. Wyndham was bound to surrender, or to see the place burned to the ground. He rightly yielded, though it must have been with a heavy heart. Having only the horse that carried him, he took his quarter and rode to Weston the same night.

The booty was considerable, as Mr. Sprigge has pointed out. Beside the arms and prisoners, there was all Lord Goring's and Colonel Wyndham's baggage, a great stock of provisions, and a hundred thousand pounds in money, jewels, and plate. Many people, relying upon the impregnability of the town, had lodged their belongings there for safety. A huge sale of the spoils held in the market-place provided further largess for the soldiery, who were already highly paid, and so delighted was the Parliament with the capture of Bridgwater that another ;£5000 was sent to Fairfax to dispose of as he would amongst his men. Many old buildings, of course, were greatly damaged. When the Ironsides succeeded in storming the Bridge Gate they drove the defenders before them into the market-place, past the High Cross, and into St. Mary's Church. It was probably at this time that the beautiful north porch was so sadly damaged, for the one blot upon Cromwell's men was that they were simply vandals and ruffians in a church.*** There was little likelihood of any trace of mediavalism remaining in St. Mary's under Devenish, but the Parliamentary troops so hated churches and churchmen that they were not scrupulous. It was a mercy that the building was not more seriously damaged.

Considering the probabilities of the result of the storming of Bridgwater, as from this distance of time they may be estimated, it is clear that the advantage lay on the side of the forces of Fairfax and Cromwell. They were united ; they were splendidly disciplined ; they were inspired

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by the most vigorous mind and personality of that age. These qualifications much more than outweighed the advantages of the well-manned, well-fortified, well-provisioned town. If the same fight, in the same conditions, had to be fought out again to-day, the same result would follow. War is largely an affair of the genius of the generals. It cannot be denied that Cromwell possessed a genius for war. He ruled England by the sword for fifteen years ; the army which the Parliament created mastered its makers, and reduced them to impotence. Under any other leader save Cromwell this would probably have been ruin to the country, and when he died, leaving a standing army of fifty thousand men on English soil, the liberties of England were never nearer to becoming the prey of a military despotism which might have wrecked the state. The situation was critical ; only the Restoration, and the disbanding of the Ironsides, saved the position until Parliament could recover its real power.

But other events which transpired showed that Wyndham had no real chance of success in defending the town. When Eastover was gained by Fairfax's forces, and Captain Reynolds had secured possession of that part of the town, 500 of the Royalist foot surrendered. Of these 300 promptly took the Covenant and joined Fairfax, expressing their pride at being captured by such an enemy. Thus within the walls were divided counsels, and men who had no loyalty and no stability. In a word, Bridgwater Castle was Royalist, so were its governor and garrison, and some of the inhabitants. But Taunton was for the Parliament, under the famous Blake of Bridgwater, and there were many people in Bridgwater who shared the same views. In conditions such as these, the result was a foregone conclusion. The town was doomed to fall because of its divided adherence ; and it did fall.* It had against it the greatest military genius then living in Europe. But it did not need a Cromwell to reduce it. The real enemy was the half-heartedness of many within the town gates.

Some of the waverers, one would think, were sorry when the order came from

London at the end of the year to dismantle the old Castle, once the pride of the town. Indignation at the order was openly expressed, but this was futile. It was clearly the natural thing for the Parliament to wish to see the Castle slighted and dismantled, for it was in some sense a badge of the Royalists and of ancient feudal power. *Vae metis!* William Briwere's fine old building was thrown down, and it became a quarry for the builder. Had Bridgwater men been truly united in the day of their siege, had they really been inspired with the stimulus of a great conviction or by the possession of a splendid ideal, they might have won the day, and their castle would have been standing now.



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The Puritans in the day of their power had undoubtedly given cruel provocation. They ought to have learned, if from nothing else, yet from their own discontent, from their own struggles, from their own victory, from the fall of that proud hierarchy by which they had been so heavily oppressed, that in England, and in the seventeenth century, it was not in the power of the civil magistrate to drill the minds of men into conformity with his own system of theology. They proved, however, as intolerant and as meddling as ever Laud had been. They interdicted under heavy penalties the use of the Book of Common Prayer, not only in churches, but even in private houses. It was a crime in a child to read by the bedside of a sick parent one of those beautiful collects which had soothed the grief of forty generations of Christians. Severe punishments were denounced against such as should presume to blame the Calvinistic mode of worship. Clergymen of respectable character were not only ejected from their benefices by thousands, but were frequently exposed to the outrages of a fanatical rabble. Churches and sepulchres, fine works of art and curious remains of antiquity, were brutally defaced." — Macaulay's *History of England*, chap. II.

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* *Anglia Rediviva*; England's recovery: being the history of the motions, Actions,

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and successes of the Army under the immediate conduct of His Excellency Sir Thos. Fairfax, Kt., Captain-General of all the Parliament's forces in England. Compiled for the Publique good by Joshua Sprigge, M. A. London : printed by R. W. for John Partridge, and are to be sold at the Parot in Paul's Church-yard, and the Cock in Ludgate Street, 1647.

** Fairfax.

*** Cromwell

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* On the west side of the town a ditch ran from the North Gate, past the Castle, to the Parret ; also in an opposite direction from the North Gate along the entire length of the Mount, joining a ditch in North Street which ran southwards to Moat Lane (near Albert Street). The south side of the town was similarly protected. On the Eastover side there were also ditches, but the course of these is now difficult to trace accurately.

** i.e. Bridgwater.

*** The Royalist troops.

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* In the neighbourhood of Horsey and Bower.

** Eastover was thoroughly well fortified. *Vide* a petition from Sir Edmund Wyndham to the King (January 31st, 1668) for sums of money expended in ammunition and soldiers' clothing, and for the repayment of £1200 which Wyndham and others had advanced for fortifying Eastover. State Papers (Domestic)

***** The bridge over the Parret.

***** Eastover.

***** Colonel Wyndham.

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*i.e. of Bridgwater.

** The " malignant " clergy were those who were not for the Parliament.

***Mr. Sprigge is here evidently trusting to rumour only. He is anxious to make the Parliamentary case good. we found much more of it standing then we expected. Some things there are which made the businesse

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* Sir Thomas Fairfax wrote the

following appeal on behalf of the Bridgwater people two years after the siege : — *To the Commissioners for the monthly assessment in the Countie of Somersett, and to the High Constable of the hundred of North Petherton, and every of them.*

Having perused a certificate under the hands of Tho. Wroth, Knight, Col. John Pyne, and Col. Robt Blake, members of the Honble House of Commons in this present Parliam', in the behalf of the Burrow of Bridgwater, in the Countie of Somerset, importing an inequallitie of taxes and paym^{ts} charged upon the same by the Hundred of North Petherton, whereof the said burrow is a part ; and particularly in this present monthly assessment, wherein the rest of the said hundred doth presse the said burrow, and limits thereof, to pay a third part with the said hundred, whereas upon good informacion it is but the eighteenth [eighth] part of the said hundred. I therefore desire yow all that accordingly you lay no more on the said burrow and limits thereof, in the said monthly assessm^t and other publique rates, then according to the proporcion of the eighth part as aforesaid ; forbearing to trouble the said towne anie farther in that behalf; and the rather, for that the said towne hath susteyned exceeding great losses by fire ; almost one third part thereof being burnt down to the ground in the late seidge thereof ; the Parliament having besides declared their desires and intencions to redresse all grievances of this nature through the inequality of rates in the kingdome : thus not doubting of your readie conformitie to a thing soe just and equall, thus attested by the members aforesaid, who well know the different state and condicon both of the said towne and hundred. «.

I remaine,

*"Windsor, the second " Your verie assured
of December, 1647.*

friend,

T. Fairfax.

**December 23rd, 1656. Henry Milles, mayor of Bridgwater, writes to John, Lord Desborow, General of the West and M.P. : *Your ready assistance encourages me to represent our cases, we having no help towards repairing 120 dwelling houses consumed in the late war. We beg your order for some stones undisposed of, belonging to the late garrison, viz. a small sconce at the foot of*

the bridge, and a wall near the castle, 50 feet long and 5 or 6 high, towards the rebuilding of our alms-houses, which were utterly demolished ; many poor shall bless you for them." [An order thereon in Council was made that the mayor and aldermen may take down and carry away the said stones for repairing the almshouses, without payment] — *Cal. of State Papers*.

*** One of Cromwell's chief difficulties was to restrain his musketeers and dragoons from invading by main force the pulpits of ministers whose discourses, to use the language of that time, were not savoury ; and too many of our cathedrals still bear the marks of the hatred with which those stern spirits regarded every vestige of Popery." — Macaulay's *History*, chap. I.

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Letter from Sir Thos. Fairfax to Lord Fairfax, 24th July, 1645 : — "*Yesterday I gave an account to both Houses of our taking: Bridgwater, part of it by storm, and finding their obstinacy I was forced to fire two or three houses which presently made them to render the toune.*" In a P.S. he adds: *King is expected this night in Bristowe, if the news of taking Bridgwater stay him not. His greatest hopes now seemes to be in the club-men ; and God's providence is much scene in the timely taking of this toune. If the King had had time to have got out his forces and these numerous club-men together, we must have left it.*" Dated from Neare Bridgwater.

[N.B. — This letter is exceedingly valuable as showing what might have been done if Bridgwater, with a whole heart, had vigorously resisted the attack of the Parliamentary forces.]