THESIS,

THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

UNDER CHARLES I.

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The English Revolution Under Charles I.

Every epoch of history has some distinguishing feature by which it can be readily recognized. The causes which produce them, however, are not so easily perceived as they are not always contemporaneous with their effects. The distinguishing feature of the middle of the 17th century is decidedly a revolutionary one. We see this exemplified not in England alone. Germany had just ended a thirty years war in which the greater part of Europe had been engaged. The English Revolution was one
of those struggles which historians have ever been pleased to relate, as it resulted in a triumph of democracy over aristocracy.

That we may best understand how this was accomplished and what the relations were which existed between these two factions, let us look at the life and Character of King Charles I. at the condition of affairs when he came to the throne and then at the growth and development of the House of Commons, the direct representatives of the people.

Charles I., the second King of the house of Stuart and the second son of James I., was born in Scotland in the year 1600.
During his boyhood he was frail and sickly, being troubled with a weakness in his knees, as well as having an impediment in his speech. He was often taunted by his elder brother, and was not at all popular among his companions. For these reasons we find him spending most of his time in study. His father intended that he should be educated so that he might be able to take the position as head of the religious affairs in England, which were at that time, and which had been for the past two centuries nearly as cumbersome as the throne itself. His education was directed to this end, up to the death of prince.
Henry. After this event, we find it entirely changed so as to harmonize with the different relations which he should bear to the Government. He was soon made prince of Wales and was brought more into the open court. Here he saw nothing practiced and heard nothing praised by the King or the court but deception, insincerity, and the obtaining of ends through any means. Everything was accomplished upon the supposition that the King's power was from the Divine One and consequently by the King could do no wrong. This teaching together with his early infirmities tended to create in him a
distrust in man and to give him that
cold and haughty spirit which reveals
itself in his after life. A knowledge
of this fact is the key by which we are
enable to unlock his subsequent
history.
Had it been the good fortune of Charles
I. to be born in a humbler position,
he would have graced it with the
purity of his morals and the
refinement of his tastes; or had
he ascended the throne in times of
peace, I doubt not but that he would
have ruled with justice and perhaps
would have been regarded as a
prince of extraordinary accomplish-
mements. He certainly had the faculty
to do what he believed to be right, and he maintained this principle even to the moment of his execution. But the spirit of the age was revolutionary, and Charles I. was entirely unable to check the great political torrents that had been accumulating for years and which were only waiting for a favorable opportunity to break forth in their devastating career.

Charles I. as a youth was chivalrous, as a husband, considerate; as a father, just. It has been said of him that he was—in fact—a scholar, a man of taste, a gentleman and a Christian—everything but a King.
He kept his court strict and orderly. He confined levity within its proper bounds. Baseness and every kind of immorality were looked upon with disfavor. He himself set a good example by being chaste, temperate, and serious. He carried this to such an extent that the sobs and court loungers of the two preceding reigns became out of fashion.

The amusements which he brought into his immediate court, and which had a great influence upon the people both morally and intellectually, were such as called forth the nobler and finer impulses of human nature. Walpole, who especially disliked the
King and his politics says, "During the prosperous state of the Kings affairs the pleasures of the court were carried on with much taste and magnificence; poetry, painting, music and architecture were all called in to make them rational amusements; and I have no doubt but what the celebrated festivals of Louis the 14th, were copied from the shows that were exhibited at Whitehall, in its time the most polite court in Europe. Ben Jonson was the Laureate. Inigo Jones, the inventor of the decorations, Lanier and Tresabosco composed the symphonies; the King, the Queen and the young nobility danced in the interludes."
The greatest and gravest fault which has been attributed to Charles I. and the one we would naturally suppose, would have influenced him the least, was his being led by weak and selfish rulers and men. For this reason we find him often yielding where he should have remained firm and remaining firm where he should have yielded. This lack of stability is especially noticeable in the granting of the Petition of Rights and his almost immediate breaking of it also at the beginning of the revolution we find him deciding one way today and on the morrow (being influenced in the mean time by his wife or his court) the opposite.
Such are a few of the more prominent features of his character. The condition of affairs when he came to the throne were decidedly unfavorable. We find England engaged in a foolish war with Spain, which grew out of the breaking of the marriage contract between Charles I. and the daughter of the Spanish King. On account of this war, we find Charles I. troubled with the same difficulty, which has ever been a thorn in the flesh of the English Sovereign— the obtaining of sufficient money to meet the necessary expenses of the Government. Even Elizabeth with all her frugality and determination of character, with the few wars that
she fought was not able to accomplish this desired end. Charles I thus with a large debt contracted before he came to the throne and with one daily increasing was placed in such a condition that the House of Commons could the more readily compel him to do their bidding.

The marriage of Charles I to the daughter of the French King was especially distasteful to the Puritans, as she was an avowed Roman Catholic and was fond of music and dancing. She was ever partial to the manners and customs of her people. She seems to have been made only for pleasant weathers and instead of
being an aid to the throne she was a hindrance. The royalist aware of the influence that she exerted over the will of her husband attributed to her what they would have found difficult to explain in the conduct of this king. We find in the ordinary affairs of life that troubles like poisons are accumulative and, that the evils of the father often extend to the son. It was so in the case of Charles I. For when James I. came to the throne, he brought with him a large number of his Scotch noblemen and created a great many peers from the lower ranks of society. Such acts were especially disagreeable to the English noblemen
as it decreased their power and deprived them to a great extent of their splendor, which they had ever been justly proud. The subject, however, which agitated the common people the most, and the one which was closely related to their political freedom, was the habit which the previous kings had of doing away with those parts of the Constitution which were adverse to the ends that they wished to accomplish. They based their right to do this on that clause of the magna charta which reads “or by the laws of the land.” Under this clause, they claimed, that they had the right to deprive their subjects of their property through taxation
and forced loans) and, even of their lives if they could give as a reason for so doing that the welfare of the nation demanded it, but which was in reality, the carrying out of their selfish desires. The House of Commons objected to this translation and gave in its stead that it was only through the process of the Law, through laws made by their sanction that such acts could be accomplished. Besides this, the Star Chamber, the Arbitrary court, with its bad and pernicious influence, ever rendering its verdict against justice and in favor of the king, was in constant session. The collecting of tonnage and poundage
was a means through which the former
kings had of obtaining money. This
was donated to them upon their
coming to the throne. It was given
to Charles I., however, for only one year.
Thus we see that the spirit of opposition
between these two factions was fast
becoming manifest. And, though
the surface was calm there was a strong
undercurrent which would not be
controlled, until the common people
had obtained those rights which
would be in harmony with their
advanced ideas. They especially desired
that each king should have his parlia-
ment and, that the house of commons,
over the affairs of the country, should
predominate. That they should still retain their thirteenth government under a monarch and that in religious affairs, the Protestant church should have the controlling influence. Such a state of affairs they brought about by the execution of their sovereign.

Charles I. came to the throne a party man although he himself was unaware of it. Previous to his reign there had originated a new religious sect and a new party in politics both of which believed in an absolute monarchy. This religious sect caused their doctrine to be preached in their pulpits, while the members of the political party freely discussed theirs as they were about
their daily work. The uniting of these two factions made the two great political parties about equal in number. This fact alone would tend to increase the feelings of animosity, and thus it is not at all strange, that the King upheld the cause which was so closely related to his interest, and that he should consider the remainder of his subjects not only enemies to the state, but also to himself. Had he a wise minister to show him his mistake, the rebellion would not then have occurred, however, it was fortunate to the English people and to the growth of their constitution, that the rebellion was fought. For in looking over the history
of England, we find that it is only through this medium that their political rights have been gained and their constitution developed. It was in the middle of the 11th century that we see the Normans overthrowing the old Saxon institutions and completing the establishment of feudalism. During the middle of the 13th century we see de Montfort joining with the Bishops and Barons against Henry III. and his nobility and compelling them to introduce into the Government popular Representatives which eventually became the House of Commons. The war of the roses taking place during the 15th century did away to a great extent with the power of the nobility.
and thus left the contending power in the hands of the King and the house of commons. The growth of the house of commons after this was slow. Under the two last Henries we find it weak and submissive. It was often used by these kings to accomplish their desires and then as a means through which they escaped the censure which arose from their illegal acts.

However, during Elizabeth's reign we find them gathering their strength and beginning to assert their rights yet letting many an act of injustice pass unnoticed through the respect that they bore to their brave and high-minded Queen. But when James I. a ruler of
Scotland, poor in money and deficient in those executive powers which at that time were indispensable in a king, came to the throne. The house of Commons quite naturally began to assert their power. The conditions were especially favorable for its rapid development, as there was a weak king, who was aided by a council that was still weaker. On this side, on the other, a people, who were active, ambitious, prosperous, and strengthened by a most determined spirit. It is only under similar conditions that rebellions take place. The prosperity of the English during the reign of Elizabeth was great.
They were constantly sending out exploring expeditions, founding colonies and establishing trading posts. Their merchants were carrying on a large trade both domestic and foreign. All classes were laying those broad foundations of material wealth from which England is today deriving so much benefit. The literature preceding the reign of Charles I. shows the same general activity. It reveals this by the number of old words and expressions which were being remodelled as well as by the number of new words which came into use. We see the great dramatical writers take up the political questions of the day and use them in their works. They did
more than this, they went back in the history of England and selected those positions which would best show the true relations that existed between the King and his subjects. These writers, living as they did in the open air of society and becoming acquainted with men of every class, were able to give to their characters a style that was rich and glowing and above all a tint which was natural. Their works being constantly played before the people, together with the many pamphlets that were continually being issued all over the land, kept the people in a state of mental activity. The influence which came from the
The revival of the ancient languages was making itself felt among the common people. The habits and customs of the lower classes were improving, their homes were becoming more comfortable and they were beginning to feel that true English spirit which can come only through independence.

The games and amusements which they entered into were such as to make a strong and vigorous body. The common people in Ireland were in a far worse condition. The subject of religion was still a prominent question among them and it was the cause of many a death.
during the rule of Strafford. In Scotland the affairs were not much better, riots were frequent, the people objected to the introduction of the religious system of England into their church. Such were the conditions of the common people, known as the Gentry, or as the land owners. They were men whose ancestors had once filled Europe and Asia with their victories and renown.

To this class belonged the greater part of the House of Commons. Men, who presented a strange compound of qualities which have probably never before been seen together—being at once cool sagacious politicians.
brave high spirited soldiers and enthusiastic devotees and somewhat ascetic theologians, so that amid that band in many a breast, beneath a rough exterior, plain, cold, moribund, there burned along with the fierce determined spirit of a republican soldier, the concentrated pride of a nobility of twenty generations? Such were the men of the stamp of Coke, Pym, Strafford, Elliot, Wentworth, Belden. They were men who dared to risk all to save all. Men who were acquainted with their time, who had the ability to demand and obtain from their sovereign "The Petition of Rights," and, when
he refused to obey its precepts. These men still acting under the same influences could resort to the last and highest authority—Force— which is left with two parties when both believe themselves to be in the right. They could declare war against their Sovereign, raise, support, and train an army, defeat his followers, capture and lawfully try their King, condemn and lead him to the block and exile his family.