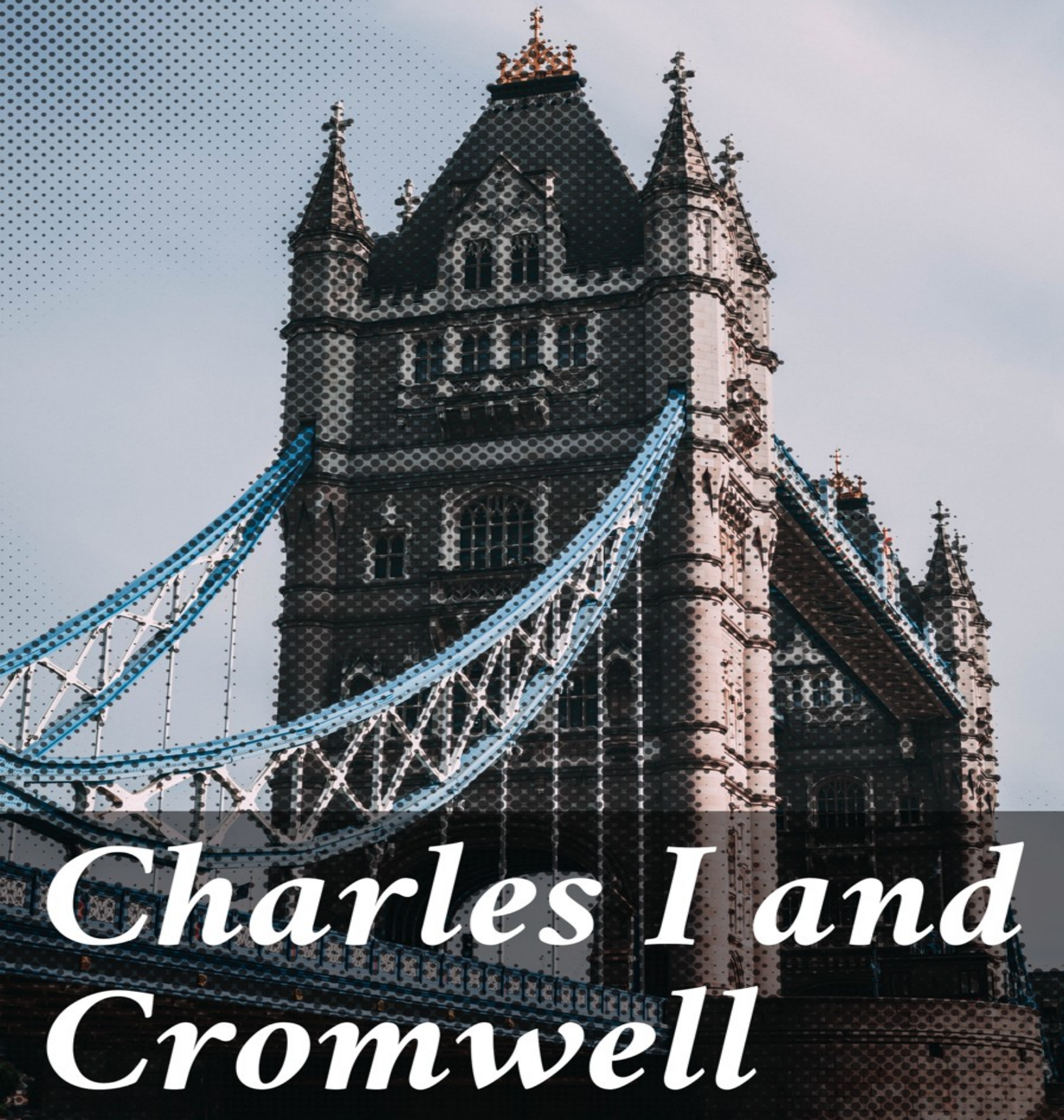


G. M. Young



*Charles I and
Cromwell*

G. M. Young

Charles I and Cromwell



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066356002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION](#)

[PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION](#)

[I](#)

[II](#)

[III](#)

[IV](#)

[V](#)

[VI](#)

[VII](#)

[VIII](#)

[IX](#)

[X](#)

[XI](#)

[XII](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION

[Table of Contents](#)

I had hoped at one time to write a companion piece to *Charles I and Cromwell*, which was to have been called *Charles I and Pym*. Every great institution, it has been said, follows the direction imparted to it by one hand, and it seemed to me that in creating for himself the part of Leader, Pym set Parliament on a course which without him it might never have taken. No doubt we can see foreshadowings of the part in earlier Parliaments, but it is not till 1640 that we are aware of a conscious need consciously met.

Among the Athenians there was a man who had lately come into the front rank. His name was Themistocles.

So quietly, and one might say, so innocently, does Herodotus bring his greatest character on to the stage. With hardly more noise does Pym make his entrance in the page of Clarendon.

While men gazed upon each other looking who should begin (much the greatest part having never before sat in Parliament), Mr. Pym, a man of good reputation, but much better known afterwards, who had been as long in those assemblies as any man then living, brake the ice.

It is April 1640, and of the members there assembled in Westminster, not one, we may be sure, in his angriest fancy, had for a moment dreamed that the debate then opened might issue in war. Yet war came. On August 22, 1642, the King raised his standard at Nottingham. What had happened in the meantime?

Or, to put it another way—what had those who drew the sword really in mind? A question to which both sides, with equal assurance and for the most part with equal sincerity, would have given the same reply. They were in arms to maintain the Fundamental Laws of England against a usurped and arbitrary power. And, pressed to say what those fundamental laws were, neither party could have given an answer which to us would seem historically valid. There were no Fundamental Laws—only such general ideas of government as might be collected from Plantagenet statutes and Tudor practice: case law, we might say, in abundance, but no jurisprudence.

Take, for instance, Ship money, which was in the minds of everybody who came up to Westminster that April. What fundamental law did that levy violate? Suppose a pinnacle had come flying into Plymouth harbour with the tidings

Spanish ships of war at sea We have sighted
fifty-three,

then, beyond a doubt, the danger to the realm would have authorized the King in Council to call on the seaports for men and shipping, or money if no ships were to be had. And the inland shires and boroughs? Not so clear, though some black-letter sage could have pointed out that in

Domesday Book, Malmesbury was charged with 20 shillings to feed the King's sailors, and Malmesbury is far enough inland. But suppose the message was: 'there is much activity in the Spanish dockyards and talk of a descent on Ireland next summer.' Then, the danger not being imminent, the King must lay the matter before his other Council, namely Parliament, and ask the Commons to sustain, by means of a subsidy, his endeavours to keep the realm in safety.

That, I think, is sound law. But in the operation it supposes that the two parties, the King-in-Council and the King-in-Parliament, are in harmony, each respecting the rights of the other, and each acknowledging its own limitations. Parliament cannot set fleets and armies in motion—only the King can do that. And rightly, because only the King—that is the Privy Council—knows enough to give the necessary orders. On the other side, the King cannot pay the shipwrights and sailors out of his personal income. He must ask Parliament to find the wherewithal: rightly again, because only Parliament knows where the money is and how it can best be collected. All that had been settled, or seemed to have been settled, in the Middle Ages—*de tallagio non concedendo* and the rest—when wool was the chief jewel of the kingdom, and only the wool-merchants knew how to discount a bill on Florence or Bruges, and who, in the long run, would have to pay the tax. When judgment was given for the Crown in the case of Hampden, it was plain that the harmony was lost; and that the country was both angry and alarmed. If Ship money, why not Army

money? If a shilling on my field, why not a pound? And that was what Strafford never understood.

Elizabeth, in like circumstances, would have staged one of her motherly appearances—you know how careful I am in the management of the revenue and that I would not ask for a subsidy unless the country really needed it. I am most truly grateful to you for calling my attention to certain abuses which have crept in, and the offenders shall be smartly punished. As for Ship money, I see you don't like it, and we won't talk of rights. So come to the Palace and kiss my hand, and then go back to the country and take care of my poor people. But you will vote that subsidy, won't you?

But that was not Charles's way. He would go on arguing when there was no more to be said: and he would sell what he ought to have given. So this April. The Exchequer calculated that twelve subsidies, spread over three years, would see the country through its difficulties, without recourse to Ship money. The figure, at first hearing, was formidable: on reflection it seemed no great matter. But, beyond all question, the Commons had the right to debate the amount and the mode of assessment and collection: and it must have been fairly clear to any man of sense, that once launched on this discussion the Commons would certainly raise the question of Ship money, which was still being capriciously collected, and sulkily paid. And Charles thrust it into the faces of the Commons. He insisted that he had a right to Ship money. True, he offered to sell it—the price being that the Commons should pass his subsidies without debate. And as there was no likelihood of the Commons coming into this bargain, Parliament was

dissolved. *And men had much of the misery in view that shortly came to pass.* The dissolution of that Parliament was in fact the first blow struck in the Civil War.

The members went home to their shires, gloomy and anxious. But there is one group we should like to follow, to Broughton near Banbury, where Lord Saye and Sele kept such state as his narrow means allowed: a man of whom it might be said that he would hold a more conspicuous place in history if he had not had the misfortune to be a peer. Not that he regarded it as a misfortune, because he seems to have believed in peers as Saint Simon believed in dukes, or Sir Vavasour Firebrace in baronets. Indeed if he had had his way, New England would have started life under a government of Lords selected by himself. Disappointed there, he set himself to develop Old Providence Island, under a less aristocratic regime, with a Board of Governors which included among other Puritan notables John Pym, Treasurer to the Company. Their offices were in Gray's Inn Lane, and there, so the Oxford gossip ran, the notions canvassed at Broughton were put into Parliamentary shape.

'Don't allow any private gatherings before Parliament or during Parliament. That is where the mischief is hatched.' Strafford knew what it was to be a leader without a party, and therefore what a leader with a party might do. And it is in those private meetings that parties take shape, that men get to know each others' leanings and aptitudes, and so discover what support they can rely on when the time for action comes. Gossip apart, we might be certain that in that summer of 1640 someone was at work to make sure that

when Parliament met (as meet it must quite soon) the parts would be assigned, the procedure agreed, the objective fixed, the approaches planned. The proof is in the sequel. The members who came up in November, to take their seats in what was to be known as the Long Parliament, found a party there, and, if not yet a leader, a group, exercising, though not in office, the Parliamentary functions of a Government—to frame a programme, and get it through.

It is one of the commonest experiences in history that a problem which to one generation is insoluble, to the next is perfectly simple. Ideas have to be invented no less than machines. We, with the advantage of a backward view, can see that, the problem being how to keep Council and Parliament in harmony, the solution is that the Councillors, the Ministers of the Crown, should, in effect, be appointed by the party which has the majority in the House of Commons; and right from the beginning of the Long Parliament we are conscious that crude projections of this solution are in the air. Rather more than projections, because at one moment it seems as if, those Councillors being removed who did not enjoy the confidence of Parliament—Laud and Strafford in the Tower, Finch and Noy in exile—a group who did would succeed to their places and authority, with the Earl of Bedford Lord Treasurer, Pym Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the Commons. One of the most curious speculations in our history is—how would things have gone if that grave and upright peer had lived? He was in the prime of life, and in every way a sound man: a Churchman who was liked by the Nonconformists, a Peer who was trusted by the Commons, a man of affairs, a

patron of the arts, with an excellent Parliamentary record. He was admitted to the Privy Council on February 3, 1641, but he would not assume office until he had worked out his plans for restoring the national finances. Early in May he was taken suddenly ill. From Bedford House he could hear the roar of the London mob calling for blood, and he died on the morning of that Sunday which Charles was to remember on the scaffold, the Sunday when he consented to Strafford's death.

Such a call means that fear is at work in the multitude, and Pym, with his Army plots and Popish plots, was a master of alarms. Of what, then, were men most afraid in those months? I think the answer is two-fold. First, there was the fear that the King might use force against Parliament: Parliament which was the only defence against arbitrary inroads on the rights of property. Here the country gentlemen and their yeomen, the merchants of London and Bristol and their 'prentices, are at one—another foreshadowing, because from here we can see in the distance the alliance of the Whig party and the City. Triennial Parliaments, abolition of Ship money, of Star Chamber and High Commission, all the popular legislation of those early months when the Long Parliament was still a united body, meant nothing so long as the King had an army and was prepared to use it.

The other was the fear of Rome, of Jesuits, of the northward surge of the Counter-Reformation. And the two things are so intricately connected that no one clue will serve us in the labyrinth of controversy: we have constantly

to be dropping one and groping for another. But if there is a point where, so to say, they can be knotted together it is—Episcopacy.

Where would a wise man have taken his stand in that debate? It is extraordinarily difficult to think one's way into a world where, for instance, a man (and one of the most brilliant men of his generation, young Vane) might abstain from the Communion for two years because he could not get a clergyman to administer it to him standing: while the Dean of Worcester could be charged with Popish leanings because he made the choirboys come in two by two instead of rushing into the chancel in a bunch. With Popish leanings—as who might say—with bourgeois ideology. Indeed, if we made a spectrum of opinion—Rome, the Arminian Anglican, the Calvinist Anglican, the Presbyterian, and the Anabaptist, we might match it with another more familiar—the Fascist, the Conservative, the Liberal, the Socialist, and the Communist. It is not a comparison to be forced, but it is one usefully to be kept in mind.

In matters of religion Pym was Elizabethan. He upheld the penal legislation against Catholics on Elizabethan grounds. They were not to be punished for believing as they did, but they were to be prevented from doing the things to which their beliefs inclined them—assassination plots, gunpowder treason, Irish rebellions. And he would, I think, have concurred in Hooker's defence of the Establishment. Our order, the episcopal order, Hooker maintained, is certainly very ancient, and there is nothing in it contrary to natural reason or the revealed will of God. Also it is the legal order, and it perfectly fits the social and political structure of

the realm. You aver that your order, the presbyterian order, was instituted by Christ. But you have failed to prove it, and in practice you will find that it does not fit our national fabric. I have nothing to say against Geneva or Scotland. But Scotland and Geneva are not England. 'By the goodness of Almighty God, and his servant Elizabeth, we are.'

Unluckily, the new Anglicanism, traditional, sacramental, ritualist, fitted the Stuart conception of monarchy all too well. This is where our clues approach each other. The *Jus Divinum* claimed for the Bishops was only too like the Reserve of Power, the prerogative claimed for the King. When Parliament was not sitting, neither was controllable. When it was, the Bishops, Crown nominees, might on a division sway the balance in the Lords. And yet if there was a Fundamental Law in England, it was that the church is governed by Bishops and that all Bishops are Lords of Parliament. It was possible to suppose, or at least to imagine, that there had been a Plantagenet Constitution under which Parliament met regularly to redress grievances, impeach ministers, make laws and vote supplies: and that this present Parliament was only exercising a long-intermitted authority: that it was engaged upon a conservative reformation, bringing the pristine beauty of the old constitution into light, its wisdom into operation. All that we might have heard a hundred times from all quarters of the House. But it was impossible to pretend that removing Bishops from their House—still more abolishing the Episcopal order—was anything but a revolution. If the Bishops, why not the Barons, one member asked, and if the

Barons, why not all the others? Here is the crack which will widen till it splits the Commons, leaving Pym the leader not of the House, but of the Puritan Party. Materially, the story is immensely complicated by the affairs of Scotland and the affairs of Ireland, by the Covenant on one side and the Catholic rebellion on the other. But the formal truth emerging is that there is no room in the same constitution for a Sovereign choosing his own Council and a Leader commanding a majority in the House of Commons.

And that majority was visibly shrinking, was losing its popularity and its prestige. After all, someone must govern the country, someone must give orders, someone must raise money to meet the expenditure of the state. Certainly there is danger from Rome—look at Ireland. But there is danger from Geneva too—look at Scotland. That the Bishops have behaved very foolishly, we all admit. But will Presbyteries be any wiser, any less troublesome? Will extempore prayer, and sermons three hours long, do more for the spiritual welfare of the people than the ancient liturgy, Sunday by Sunday repeated in the cherished form? And will the rights of property be any more secure if taxes are to be levied by Parliamentary ordinance? The King may use force against the Houses. Suppose Pym and his waning party use force against the King—against his friends, against the Church? And there is a force willing enough to be employed, and paid, in such a cause—the Scottish Army. Treason no doubt it would be to use them—in Strafford's case the Judges had advised that to quarter troops on the King's subjects, if unwilling, would be tantamount to levying war on the King's Majesty, and the Scottish army was as