

Meanwhile the excitement in London was intense. Twenty thousand citizens signed a petition praying for Strafford's death, and an angry mob crowded round Whitehall, howling for his execution. Charles was at the mercy of his enemies. If he refused to give his assent, the Commons would immediately withhold the payment due to the Scots, and England would again be invaded by a Scottish army. Strafford wrote to his royal master, telling him that he would willingly release him from his promise of protection, if by doing so it would lead to better times. After some pitiful hesitation, Charles gave his assent, remarking as he did so, "*the Earl of Strafford is a happier man than I am.*" Even his enemies were surprised. "*What,*" exclaimed Pym, "*has he given us Strafford? then he can refuse us nothing.*"

On the 12th of May, 1641, in the presence of 200,000 persons, the great English statesman was beheaded. His stern courage never once forsook him. His friends warned him of the vast crowd of unsympathizing spectators assembled to witness his fall. "I know," said he proudly, "how to look death in the face and the people too. I thank God I am not afraid of death, but as cheerfully put off my doublet at this time, as ever I did when I went to bed." The last words, which fell from his lips were, "*Put not your trust in princes.*" The public joy knew no bounds; streets blazed with bonfires, bells rang from the steeples, and "many that came to town to see the execution rode away in triumph."

NOTE.—Strafford suffered death not so much for any crime, which he had committed worthy of the extreme penalty, but because his enemies feared him as being the most dangerous of all their opponents. To his everlasting disgrace, Charles made no effort to save his faithful minister. His assent to the Bill of Attainder, by which Strafford was condemned to death, is the one act of his life, which may be characterized as mean, selfish and contemptible. "*It may be capable of explanation but never of excuse.*"

The death of Strafford brought Charles face to face with an angry and determined House of Commons.

2. Constitutional Reforms and Safe-guards passed by the Parliament, 1641. So far the Parliament had been