

king. But, whatever Cromwell's plans were, he had no intention of dispensing with an "elected assembly" of some kind or other, and yet he hesitated to summon a "free" Parliament, fearing lest a majority of Royalists should be returned and the old order of things restored. He therefore ordered the Independent ministers throughout the three kingdoms to send in the names of men "*who were faithful, fearing God and hating covetousness,*" and well qualified, from a religious point of view, to undertake Parliamentary duties. From these names he selected 140 members and invited them to meet him at Whitehall. Most of them were men of respectable character, and independent means; many of them men of eminent ability. Some were Fifth Monarchy Men, who believed that the time was come for the rule of the "Saints," and that they themselves were the very saints, who were called upon to rule. Others were Anabaptists and Independents. But they were perhaps the most unpractical set of politicians, who ever undertook the duties of a government. Instead of attempting to reform existing constitutions, they set vigorously to work to destroy them, and tried to crowd into the short space of a few months the work of years. (1) They abolished the Court of Chancery without providing another tribunal to take its place; (2) They suppressed the payment of tithes as being oppressive, and substituted the free contributions of congregations for the support of the clergy; (3) They destroyed private patronage, because some of the patrons were said to have presented livings to unsuitable persons, and they then placed the appointment of ministers in the hands of parishioners; (4) They tried to simplify the administration of law by compiling a single code of laws, but the committee appointed to carry out this work did not contain a single lawyer; (5) Lastly, it is said they even contemplated the substitution of parts of the Mosaic Law for the ancient laws of England.

These extraordinary schemes of legislation exposed the assembly to the ridicule and contempt of all parties. The gentry, lawyers, and the clergy, all in fact, who had anything to lose, began to regard the sweeping measures of these so-called reformers with fear and apprehension, and in a short time the Barebone's Parliament became quite as