

next king, and so Shaftesbury and his followers, in spite of Charles's own statement to the contrary, gave out that Charles had secretly married Monmouth's mother, Lucy Walters (a Welshwoman of low character), and that therefore Monmouth was the rightful heir to the throne. It was a most unwise step, and not only disgusted the more moderate members of Shaftesbury's party, but cost their leader the favour of the King. Meanwhile the Exclusion Bill had passed the Commons with an overwhelming majority, but was thrown out by the Lords, chiefly owing to the efforts of Halifax, who, in a convincing speech, clearly proved that the claims of **Mary, the Princess of Orange**, and daughter of James, Duke of York, were greatly superior to those of Monmouth. Halifax was a man of "great and ready wit," who prided himself on being neither Whig nor Tory, but a "Trimmer," *i.e.* one "whose duty it was to throw himself against each party, whenever it grew violent in consequence of success," just as a person is said to "trim a boat," or keep it on even keel by shifting his position.

At this stage of the proceedings, a message from the King, announcing his intention never to consent to the Exclusion Bill made the Commons furious. They refused to grant supplies until the Bill was passed, and petitioned Charles to remove Halifax from his Council for ever. In the face of such determined opposition, Charles's only course was to dissolve Parliament and appeal to the justice of the nation.

**NOTE.**—While the country was in this state of intense agitation the "Anti-popery Party" secured the execution of the aged Lord Stafford, a man of blameless life and the leader of the Roman Catholics. The whole force of informers came forward to swear away the old man's life. The charge brought against him was, that he had encompassed the death of the king, but the evidence was worthless, and after a trial of six days he was condemned to be executed. He received his sentence with holy resignation, exclaiming, "*God's holy name be praised.*" Charles knew he was innocent, but made no attempt to spare his life. "*I cannot save him,*" he said, "*because I dare not.*" On the scaffold he made frequent protestations of his innocence. "*We believe you, my lord,*" cried the sympathizing crowd. The execution of Stafford did much to dispel the belief in Oates' plot and weakened Shaftesbury's influence.

7. **The Third or Oxford Parliament and the Tory re-action, 1681.** In 1681 the crisis came. The King's appeal to the