

William Allen, Cromwellian Agitator and "Fanatic"

WILLIAM ALLEN'S political career lasted little more than a decade. He lived during the most turbulent period of English history, and although his share in the great events of the revolutionary age was a minor one, it is an example of two striking political phenomena of the Puritan Revolution: the awakening of the lower classes and the radicalism of the religious sects. His life also provides a good example of the changing position of many Cromwellian soldiers who faithfully followed their leader in the civil war, but broke with him over religious and political issues.

In an examination before the House of Commons Allen described himself as a Warwickshire man and a felt-maker (i.e., a hat-maker) by trade, practising in Southwark. His first military service was in Denzil Holles' regiment of the army of the Earl of Essex.¹ Holles' regiment, raised in the summer of 1642, was mainly composed of London apprentices who were eager to enlist under a prominent Parliamentarian. With Essex it took the field in August. For two months they marched about the Midlands, where their lack of discipline became notorious. But they conducted themselves bravely in the first battle of the war, at Edgehill, "every one fighting like a Lion with most glorious successe." As a speaker told the officials of London, "These were the men that were, ignominiously, reproached by the name of *Round-Heads*; but by these *Round-Heads* did God shew himself a most glorious God."²

Holles' regiment was practically destroyed at the battle of Brentford, November 12th, 1642, the soldiers being either drowned in the Thames or captured, as Allen was. He was a prisoner for seven days, and, as he later said, condemned to be hanged, but was freed on taking an oath not to resist the king. On his release he promptly rejoined the Parliamentary forces, this time in the regiment of Philip Skippon, also part of Essex's army. Skippon's regiment participated in the relief of Gloucester (August-September 1643), and at the battle of Newbury, September 18th, where Allen was wounded. The army was much depleted during the winter, and whether Allen remained with his regiment is unknown. Such as took the field in 1644 were cornered in the West and surrendered to the Royalists on condition of marching to Southampton or Portsmouth before again taking arms.³ In 1645 Essex's army was dissolved, the regiments being combined with those of the armies

of Waller and Manchester into the New Model. About April 1646 William Allen became a trooper in Cromwell's regiment of horse.

By this time the war was practically over, the king was a prisoner, and all attention was focused on the problem of a settlement. Parliament had voted the establishment of a Presbyterian church, and showed little inclination to implement a resolution of 1644 promising toleration. A quarrel with the strongly Independent army was inevitable, for Parliament proposed to employ part of the troops in Ireland and to disband the rest, without giving guarantees for the payment of the soldiers' arrears or for their indemnity for acts committed during the war. More fundamental, however, was the soldiers' fear that the constitutional settlement of the kingdom was to be achieved by a legislature totally unrepresentative of the nation, and without consulting those who had won the victory. Recriminations began to fly back and forth between army and Parliament. Their determination not to be excluded led the soldiers to choose representatives, or "agitators," from each regiment. Allen and Samuel Whiting being nominated for Cromwell's regiment. It was in this capacity that Allen first came to public attention.

In April, 1647 the agitators drew up a stirring appeal to their commanders. They had been protected by providence from many dangers, they said, but now that the Royalists were vanquished they were sensible of a more dangerous threat to their liberties and lives. This was from a group of intriguers in Parliament, who now denounced them as enemies and deprived them of legal protection from lawsuits. "Our fellow Soldiers suffer at every Assize for Acts merely relating to that war." They could defend themselves from an enemy in the field, "but it is another and a farre worse Enemy we have to deal with, who like Foxes lurke in their dens, and cannot be dealt with though discovered, being protected by those who are intrusted with the Government of the Kingdome." The Irish expedition was nothing but a design to ruin the army, "a mere cloak for some who have lately tasted of sovereignty, and being lifted beyond the ordinary spheare of servants seek to become masters, and degenerate into tyrants." Until the rights and liberties of England were vindicated they would refuse service in Ireland.⁴

The nomination of the agitators was unprecedented, and naturally aroused misgivings in many quarters. To the army leaders they represented a serious threat to discipline. To the Presbyterian majority in Parliament they represented sectarianism and mutiny: "Traiterous Mutineers by the *Law Martiall* and the *Common Law* of the Land," is Prynne's description.⁵

Thoroughly alarmed, the Commons, on April 30th, called before the House Allen and two of his fellow-signatories, Edward Sexby

and Thomas Shepherd. They willingly gave their own histories, but refused to enlarge on their recent declaration, "they being only agents."⁶ Holles, Allen's old commander, thought their conduct outrageous :

They were sent for, and carry'd themselves at the Bar in a slighting braving manner, refusing to answer such questions as the Speaker, by order of the House, ask'd them; saying they were employ'd by the Army, and could not without leave from thence discover any thing. Many the House resenting this high affront, were earnest to have them severely punish'd; but that Party stood as stiffly for them, insomuch that the worthy Burgess of *Newcastle*, Mr. *Warmworth*, stood up and said he would have them committed indeed, but it should be to the best Inn of the Town, and good Sack and Sugar provided them, which was as ridiculous, as 'twas a bold and insolent scorn put upon the Parliament; at last even Mr. Skippon himself excused them, said they were honest Men, and wisht they might not be too severely dealt with : whereupon the House flatted, let them go without punishment, and by tameness encreas'd their madness and presumption. Whereas had they serv'd them as Mr. *Cromwel* afterwards did their fellows, hang'd one of them (they all well deserving it) it might probably have given a stop to their Career, and prevented a great deal of mischief, which has since befallen the Kingdom by their means.⁷

In the end the House sent a message to the army that they would provide "a considerable sum of money for them before their disbanding," and that an ordinance should be brought in for their indemnity. Such half-measures fell on deaf ears, and the agitators resolved, they wrote to the rest of the army on May 19th, "neither to take monie, nor march from one another."⁸ Ten days later they drew up a petition to Fairfax, begging him to prevent the disbanding before their grievances were redressed. An ominous note was sounded in their warning that unless their leaders helped them to gain satisfaction they would take matters into their own hands.⁹

Fairfax and Cromwell were convinced that justice was on the army's side, although both were anxious to restrain the soldiers lest their actions provoke an open breach. On June 3rd, however, Cromwell left London and joined the army at Newmarket, having, as it is presumed, ordered Cornet Joyce to secure the king. Henceforth it was Cromwell who dominated the affairs of the army, the agitators, as Lilburne wrote, being unjustly deprived of their power.

On June 14th the agitators issued another declaration, reaffirming their determination to insist on a satisfactory settlement of the liberties and peace of the kingdom, "which is that blessing of God than which, of all worldly things, nothing is more dear unto us or more precious in our thoughts, we having hitherto thought all our present enjoyments (whether of life, or livelihood, or nearest relations) a price but sufficient to the purchase of so rich a blessing."¹⁰ Again, on July 15th, they asserted their determination to stick together and to aim at "the glory of God, the just preservation and safety of the Kings Person, the just privileges of Parliament, the redeeming of the Lives and Liberties of the Free-People of *England*, from Tyranny, Oppression, and Injustice; the maintenance of just Lawes, and the necessary support and defence of this Kingdome, together with the free and impartial distribution of Justice to all."¹¹ A similar appeal to the navy appeared about the same time.¹²

Henceforth the agitators began to direct their efforts less towards satisfaction of their immediate grievances and more towards the achievement of a constitutional settlement. The Leveller doctrines of John Lilburne had begun to find many converts. Various views were canvassed in the momentous debates in the army council in July, 1647, and there William Allen was a frequent speaker. Like many of the soldiers he chafed under Cromwell's restraint, urging an immediate march on London, and declaring "wee should take power out of men's hands."¹³ Again, when Cromwell argued that force ought to be used only in the last resort, Allen replied that although the soldiers appreciated their commanders' efforts to achieve a settlement, "truly wee have waited soe longe as our patience is expended."¹⁴ In subsequent speeches Allen argued that the army's friends were losing out in Parliament, and that the estates disavowed the soldiers but permitted them to be "traduc't, revil'd, and rail'd uppon both in pulpitts and presses."¹⁵ If they delayed others would contrive a settlement without them. Cromwell immediately refuted Allen, and succeeded in postponing a decision long enough to transmit the soldiers' desires without a demonstration such as the agitators demanded.

On July 17th Henry Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law and most intimate political ally, presented his constitutional scheme to the army council. The Heads of the Proposals provided for a renewal of Government by king and Parliament, but transferred sovereignty to the latter. The plan was ahead of its time in providing for toleration and for the bringing of Parliament under popular control, but as Ireton was thought to have allowed the king to suggest some changes it was natural that the agitators should be distrustful. Allen's suspicion was immediately aroused. Let this programme be well considered and debated, he urged. Most of them

were "butt young Statesmen, and nott well able to judge how longe such thinges which wee heare now read to us may bee to the ends for which they are presented."¹⁶

Yet Allen was closer to Ireton and Cromwell than to the Levellers. Indeed, he was soon to be repudiated by his fellow-soldiers. In August the agitators addressed Fairfax with new proposals. They asked for a free and legal Parliament, from which the usurpers should be excluded.¹⁷ For the moment the army leaders had turned to the possibility of negotiation with the king, but they soon became convinced of the unlikelihood of success in this direction, and in August at last gave way to the urgings of the agitators and occupied London. Weeks of fruitless exchanges followed, during which the soldiers lost patience with both their leaders and their representatives, and inclined more and more towards the schemes of Lilburne. In October five regiments, including Cromwell's and Ireton's, cashiered their agitators and elected new spokesmen, styled "agents," who presented the Leveller manifesto, "The Case of the Armie Truly Stated." The suggestion in this, that pressure had been put on the old agitators "to betray the trust the Regiments reposed in them," and other charges, that by Ireton's dissimulation "many of them are corrupted," and that they "did more consult their own advancement than the public settlement," explain the soldiers' decision to secede Allen and his colleagues. Lilburne, in fact, specifically denounced Allen as Cromwell's "officious and extraordinary creature."¹⁸

Allen was thus repudiated by his fellows. Henceforth he identified himself with Cromwell and Ireton, and his promotion to a captaincy about this time doubtless reflects his political orientation.¹⁹ As to a constitutional programme, he shared Cromwell's doubts on the difficult choice facing the commanders. He seems to have been readier to dispense with the monarchy, although hopeful that a settlement with the king could be reached. He still yearned for unity on the part of the soldiers, but in the General Council, while Goffe called for a delay until God should speak to them, Allen urged that the question be put to an issue: "As first, concerning the King. You say you will sett uppe the Kinge as farre as may be consistent with, and nott prejudiciall to the liberties of the Kingedome; and really I am of that minde [too]. If the setting uppe of him bee not consistent with them, and prejudiciall to them, then downe with him; but if hee may bee soe sett uppe—which I thinke he may—[then set him up]."²⁰ The next few days showed that the Levellers were gaining in the Council of the Army, and that there was considerable sentiment in favour of bringing the king to justice. The threat to discipline led Fairfax to dismiss the junior officers and agitators from head-

quarters, and to summon the regiments to a rendezvous. Here, at Corkbush Field, the commander reminded the soldiers of the efforts he and the general officers had made on their behalf, and promised to try to procure redress of their grievances, an end to the present Parliament, and provision for future Parliaments which would be equally representative of the people. His insistence that the settlement as a whole should be left to Parliament was unacceptable to one regiment, however, and order was only restored after the ranking officer had been arrested and one of the mutineers shot.²¹

The ranks closed in December, 1647, as a result of the king's refusal to accept the Four Bills and his signing the Engagement with the Scots. The army was now convinced that no confidence could be placed in him. A great prayer meeting took place in the Army Council, where Allen was observed to have sought God "sweetly and spiritually."²² The outbreak of the second Civil War led to another such meeting at Windsor Castle, of which Allen wrote a detailed account some years after. In this he explains the perplexities of the army at the failure of their negotiations with Parliament and the king. "We in the army [were] in a low, weak, divided, perplexed condition . . . some us judging it a duty to lay down arms, and quit our stations, putting ourselves into the capacities of private men, since what we had done, or was yet in our hearts to do, tending, as we judged, to the good of these poor nations, was not accepted by them." First, however, they determined to seek the Lord. Three days of prayer took place, on April 29th, 30th, and May 1st, 1648. On April 30th Cromwell proposed "a thorough consideration of our actions as an army, as well as our ways particularly, as private Christians, to see if any iniquity could be found in them." This they did, and were rewarded on May 1st, when they discovered "the very steps (as we were then all jointly convinced) by which we had departed from the Lord, and provoked him to depart from us; which we found to be those cursed carnal conferences, our own wisdom, fears, and want of faith, had prompted us the year before to entertain with the king and his party." All were tremendously moved, and agreed to fight against those enemies, and to "call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed."²³

To some extent this account may be coloured by Allen's subsequent religious conversion, but in the main it is accepted as a faithful description of the most momentous decision in the history of the New Model.

William Allen accompanied Cromwell to Ireland in 1649, and spent the next five years there, as a captain (later lieutenant-colonel) and adjutant-general of the English forces.²⁴ In the Cromwellian army the adjutant-general's duties were not well defined, but they seem to have involved general assistance to the

commander, both of an administrative and a tactical kind, and Allen engaged in both types of activities. He and Henry Cromwell were sent by Ireton with a party of horse and foot against the enemy in King's County, where they reduced the stronghold of Ballybawn. A little later in 1651 he was with Ludlow at the taking of Clare Castle.²⁵ He also negotiated some of the most important treaties by which the enemy surrendered.²⁶

The correspondence of Allen and his comrades is highly revealing of the attitude of the godly party toward the defeated race. At first they were convinced that their victories were a sign of the distinction God had made between them and the Irish. Later the outbreak of sickness in the English garrisons, which "laid heapes upon heapes," profoundly stirred them, and convinced them that the Lord was displeased with their complacency. "But at last, by all these sad stroakes from heaven, wee were raised out of that sleepy secure condition to call upon his name, seeke his face, and begg to know his minde in these judgements, which while wee were doing he both discovered the sinn which was our departure and back-sliding from him, forgetting him and the things hee hath done for us growing cold, and dead in our duties one towards another, as alsoe towards his worship and service, together with our love of the world, and too much conforming to the fashions of it, not distinguishing ourselves from, but pertakeing with the natives of this cuntry in their sinn, an soe pertakeing in their judgements."²⁷

Thereafter the Puritans determined to govern themselves more strictly, particularly with reference to the enemy. Allen signed the notable letter to Parliament in May 1652, deploring "our general aptness to lenity towards and composure with this enemy." The "bloodguiltiness" of the Irish, and God's revealed intention to pursue them with "farther severity," led the officers to urge harsher rather than more lenient terms for the conquered land.²⁸

Allen was one of the parliamentary commissioners in Ulster, where the large Scottish population was hostile to the Republic. The Scots were "more or less perverse according to the temper of their respective ministers," reported the commissioners, who accordingly proposed a scheme of transplantation, by which the Ulster Scots would be removed to some other part of Ireland.²⁹ Although welcomed by the government, the idea was eventually abandoned when the Scots proved willing to give security for their peaceable behaviour. The plan was, however, the origin of the transplantation of the Irish which the Puritans later pursued with such drastic consequences. The Cromwellian settlement of Ireland more than fulfilled his demands for severity, and by 1654 a note of remorse appears in Allen's correspondence: "Pray for us, that now we come to possess houses we have not built, and vineyards

we have not planted, we may not now forget the Lord and his goodness to us."³⁰

Allen was married to Elizabeth Huish, daughter of a Devonshire man. She brought her family to Ireland in 1651.³¹ Her sister married Quartermaster-General John Vernon, and the two brothers-in-law were much in each other's company.³² All were ardent members of the Baptist congregation at Waterford, under Thomas Patient, and Allen's outlook from about 1651 was dominated by the principles of the group which he now embraced. An incident in which he was involved illustrates significantly the religious divisions among the Puritans. In 1651 the Council of State sent over John Rogers, an Independent preacher, appointed to the pulpit in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The congregation included a number of Baptists against whose tenets Rogers pronounced strongly. News of this came to Waterford, and Patient and his followers determined to rebuke the Baptists at Dublin for backsliding. Allen and Vernon carried their message :

We hear you do not walk orderly together, but are joined in fellowship with such as do fundamentally differ in judgment and practice, to wit, such as agree not with you about the true state of a visible church, nor the fundamental ordinances thereof . . . The end of church fellowship is the observation of all Christ's commands, but this your practice crosseth in that you agree to walk with such as have not, nor practice, the Ordinance of dipping believers, and by your communion with them in church administration you are made guilty of their sin of disobedience.

Put bluntly, "the Jews," they said, "might as well had admitted uncircumcised persons to eat the Passover."³³ The upshot was a schism in the congregation at Dublin, which was eventually taken over by the Baptists, Rogers giving up his pulpit and returning to England after six months' preaching.

Another group was more obstinate. The Presbyterians in Ireland ran foul of the Commonwealthsmen for their refusal to subscribe to the Engagement. This was an oath required of all persons, to be faithful to the revolutionary government, without a king or House of Lords, and this the Presbyterians refused to swallow. They were therefore directed to send two of their number to Dublin to satisfy Fleetwood and the council of officers for their obstinacy. After some debate it was urged that if ministers expected protection from the state they should be willing to promise fidelity. One of the Presbyterians replied that this might be true for those who refused the Engagement out of worldly and political considerations, but that the Presbyterians refused "merely in con-

science," and that as they were numerically inconsiderable the government should not insist. To this Allen objected, "Papists would and might say as much for themselves, and pretend conscience as well as they." The reply was a non-sequitur, but nonetheless crushing in a group which included a number who had acquiesced in the events of 1649: Papists could kill Protestant kings but Presbyterians not. The effect was "a great silence." Eventually the officers abandoned the attempt to enforce the Engagement, especially after Cromwell's coup in 1653.³⁴

The Presbyterian who described this incident complained that "the Anabaptist faction carried most sway." The influence which Allen and his co-religionists exerted in Ireland was certainly strong. Politically it verged on extreme republicanism, and explains the dismay with which they viewed Cromwell's assumption of the Protectorate. Looking back on this event some years later Allen was convinced that it constituted a fatal lapse on the part of the army. In the civil war God was with them, their enemies fled. Then in 1647 they faltered: instead of trusting in the Lord they yielded to human motives, particularly in their negotiations with the king. These led into labyrinths, "out of which nothing but the wisdom of the Lord directing to seeking him, and consulting your duty according to His Word could extricate you." Resort to prayer brought them back to the path, and from 1648 to 1653 the army was led by the Lord. The dissolution of the Rump was justified, because the members were "men not spirited for the further work of the Lord in that day." The Nominated (Barebones) Parliament, by "discouraging the bad, countenancing the good, attempting to break and remove oppressive yoaks, and to assert the liberty of the poor people of the Lord, as well as others," prosecuted the true ends of government better than any parliament before or since. In establishing the Protector, however, the army raised up a king, in nature if not in name, imposed the Instrument of Government on the nation, and imprisoned those who dissented³⁵

This was Allen's later view. In 1654 he was less outspoken, and attempted to persuade Cromwell of the Baptists' loyalty. Protesting against rumours of their disaffection he wrote:

Wee can noe sooner Speak (though in never so peaceable and Christian a way) of these things but we are in England Judged Enemies to the government, ready to rise, nay, up in Arms against it, and what not. Oh my Lord, have you knowne us soe long and yet suspect us soe soone; have we been adictedt to such things as these? . . . If God bring you a day of distresse when freinds may best be knowne, you will find most of those that have been tearmed the most dissatisfied

one here stand by you and your authority . . . and in the mean time, though you may not find them with the multitude shouting you up in your titles in the streets, yet will I trust be found Supplicating at the throne of grace for that wisdom for you from above which is first pure and then peaceable.³⁶

To a private correspondent, however, Allen expressed serious misgivings. "As to the person in chief place, I confess I love and honour him, for the honour God hath put upon him, and I trust will yet continue; I mean that of uprightheartedness to the Lord, though this last change with his [its?] attendancies hath more stumbled me than ever any did; and I still have many thoughts of heart concerning it."³⁷ To another friend, who had recently resigned his commission, Allen expressed sympathy but explained that "though things are not as I wish they were, yet I do not judge that a call to leave a station in which I am by providence set."³⁸

Certainly there is no evidence that the Baptists in Ireland were prepared to rise against the Protector. They had had blood and war enough, wrote Allen.³⁹ Yet they could not acquiesce in setting up a new monarchy without the consent of the people, and Allen's stern conscience demanded an accounting. Toward the end of 1654 he returned to England and sought an interview with the Protector himself. Cromwell heard a frank expression of Allen's dissatisfaction, and the two parted "in a huffe," Allen going down to the West Country to his wife's family. Here he threw himself into activity with the Baptists, at whose meetings he was said to have criticized the government roundly. "All the country rings of his dissatisfaction," wrote an informant.⁴⁰

The time was critical. Knowledge of Royalist, Leveller, and Fifth-Monarchy plots made imperative the crushing of disaffection in the army. Cromwell was actively purging all officers whose loyalty was suspect, and could hardly tolerate public criticism such as Allen indulged in. Accordingly Allen was put under confinement in his father-in-law's house at Sand, in Devon. It is noteworthy, however, that the most searching inquiries failed to reveal evidence of treasonable activities on Allen's part. The worst that could be discovered was that he had highly commended the Republican Ludlow, and that he had declared that Cromwell might have ruled in the interest of honest men without taking so much power to himself. A letter from Cromwell, justifying his action, provoked a sweeping denial by Allen, who went on to reproach the Protector for his own backsliding. "What my esteem hath been of you in some vertical forsaking days I believe you can remember; and I can truly say, if I have erred, it hath been, I fear, in esteeming too highly of you." This was an ill reward for thirteen years' faithful service. "The Lord grant you may find more

mercy from him in the great day, than I have had from you in this."⁴¹

Allen found a defender in Charles Fleetwood, Lord Deputy of Ireland, who was well known for his conciliatory outlook, and who wrote urging Allen's release, he having promised not to act against the government.⁴² Accordingly, about the spring of 1655, Allen came out of confinement and removed to London.

From the capital Allen maintained a busy correspondence with Ireland which brought him into disrepute with Henry Cromwell, Fleetwood's successor as Lord Deputy. Since Allen was "representing things in the worst sense," the Deputy urged that he be sent back to Ireland, where he was returned in October, 1655, after making a promise of fidelity to the Protectorate.⁴³ Almost immediately fresh accusations of sedition were brought against him. Allen's presence, wrote one of Thurloe's correspondents from Dublin, was responsible for "divers unfit speeches and practices,"⁴⁴ and even at the funeral sermon preached for Allen's wife the Baptists were full of their persecution.⁴⁵ Henry Cromwell reported that Allen was not apt to forgive nor forget injuries. He went on to complain that Vernon, his brother-in-law, at a morning lecture in December, 1655, castigated the Deputy, preaching "that it was a great judgement for the people of God to be under young or wicked governors," who were apt to believe lies against the poor saints. Though their rulers pretended to be for the lambs of Jesus, "yet it as as Pharaoh was for Joseph, and as Herod for John Baptist, only to serve their ends upon them."⁴⁶ Not until the two brothers were "well disposed of," wrote the Deputy, was there hope of quietness.⁴⁷

Matters came to a head in December 1656, when Vernon, Allen, and two other Baptist officers resigned their commissions. Not having been employed lately, they told the Deputy, they could no longer conscientiously accept their pay. At a subsequent meeting, "subtle and grave Mr. Allen brought up the rear, and was more ingenuous than the rest in declaring that the ground of his dissatisfaction took its rise from the first change of the government [Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump], forseeing that they should be no way able to answer the end for which they first engaged; and being now more fully convinced of it, and looking upon himself as formerly discharged by his highness, he thought it best for him to draw to a more retired condition." Henry Cromwell accepted their resignations, and on the whole subsequent events justified his satisfaction that there was little to fear from the Baptists henceforth.⁴⁸ Their resignations did the officers credit, and seem amply to confirm that they had no intention of plotting against the government. Had they been conspirators it is unlikely that they would have left the comparative security of their military posts.

In the spring of 1657, when the Parliament's offer of the kingship to Cromwell was in the air, there appeared the famous pamphlet *Killing No Murder*, showing the lawfulness of assassinating the Protector, to whom the pamphlet was ironically dedicated. Although Silius Titus lent stylistic help, in the main the piece was the work of Edward Sexby, who, as an agitator in 1647, had stood before the bar of the Commons with William Allen, and who was now the recognized leader of the Levellers. He placed Allen's name on the title-page, and forty years later the story was told that Oliver sent for Allen and asked him if he was the author. "Allen desired to see the booke, which Oliver lent him to read; and then Allen told him, that he knew well enough that he had not the capacity enough to be the author; but that if he had been able to have writ it, he would with all his heart have done it."⁴⁹ Before long Sexby was captured and confessed to the authorship, but the government continued to keep Allen under surveillance, intercepted his correspondence, and maintained spies among the Baptist groups which he and Vernon visited. The two brothers-in-law were busily engaged in the south-west, where, about this time, they founded a Baptist church at Dalwood.⁵⁰ In 1658 they issued a strange tract which well exemplifies the Baptist spirit. *The Captive taken from the Strong* was an account of the conversion of their sister-in-law, Deborah Huish, whose soul-sufferings and spiritual torments had after fourteen years been set at rest by an inward awakening. Allen apologized for the "homely dress" of the pamphlet, thinking "its own natural simple attire would best become it." Yet with all its crudities, the work has an air of conviction not unworthy of Bunyan himself.⁵¹

In May 1658, Allen and Vernon attended a general meeting of Baptists at Dorchester, where there was a great debate about the state of the church, and where the leaders also discussed privately the prospect of union with the Fifth-Monarchy party.⁵² The decision was put off, but Oliver's death (September 3rd, 1658) aroused new apprehensions in the government. An officer whom Thurloe had detailed to spy on Allen and Vernon wrote, "there was never more necessity to watch them than at this ticklish posture of affaires . . . The contrariety they possesse against his highnesse's interest ingageth me to mind his late highnesse and your commands. I have, I hope, already indifferent good spies among them . . . Certainly they are persons of as much venome and revenge as any whatsoever, and will not spare to adventure on anything, that may give them the least hope of successe."⁵³

It is certainly difficult to reconcile these charges with the other evidence relating to Allen's conduct, although the breaches which now existed between old comrades of the civil war are amply illustrated. It was at this juncture that Allen published his *Memorial*

of the meeting of officers at Windsor in 1648. As regards the present crisis, this was harmless enough, for Allen's remedy for the divisions of the nation was to seek the will of the Lord in prayer, as they had done a decade earlier. But it was damning that he should have spoken of a revival of "the old dying cause," which implied a restitution of the rule of the saints disturbed in 1653.⁵⁴

For a short time his hopes were realized. The dissolution of Richard Cromwell's Parliament (April 22nd, 1659) was followed by the recall of the republican Rump. Much to the disgust of the officers, the Rump restored a number of Baptists to the army, including Allen, who was given command of a regiment of horse in Ireland.⁵⁵ Rather than join them, however, Allen remained in England and engaged in writing and politics.

The confusion following the fall of the Protectorate was the heyday of the constitution-framers, and Allen was no exception. With nineteen other Baptists, Fifth-Monarchists, and Levellers he issued *An Essay toward Settlement upon a Sure Foundation*, denouncing government by a single person, urging the removal of tithes, and demanding liberty of conscience.⁵⁶ Like other constitutional schemes of that season this came to nothing. Allen's own momentary eminence ended in January 1660, when General Monck wrote to the Speaker, deploring his recent appointment in Ireland, and styling him "noe good friend of yours." He was accordingly, removed from his command.⁵⁷ The Long Parliament's dissolution (March 16th, 1660) and the plans for a general election foreshadowed new divisions, and Allen made his last plea for a republic of saints. In *A Word to the Army, touching their Sin and Duty* he implicitly recognized the army as one of the estates of the nation. To reveal to the officers and the rank and file how they had strayed from the path of righteousness would make possible "their recovery to that path of unfeigned repentance." Adopting a historical treatment, he showed how the army had prospered so long as they had asserted God's design by the gradual exaltation of the Lord Jesus. The death of Oliver, he wrote, should have led them to consider well their errors and their next steps, but they set up another Protector, deposed him, then called the Rump back into existence, which in turn had now dissolved itself. While these crimes were planned by the commanders, the soldiers had a share in the sin, having executed the will of their officers and having concurred in the Protectorate, in violation of earlier declarations against government by a single person. The only remedy was to acknowledge Jesus as king and saviour, and to seek the Lord: "Yea, this were the way to lay such a Magna Charta as would stand more sure against alterations than any you can lay."

In all this, like many another adherent of "the good old cause,"

Allen defied an earlier age and lost sight of reality "in a web of fantasy spun from the apocalyptic visions and violent history of an earlier chosen people."⁵⁸ His pamphlet was too much for the Council of State, already jeopardized by the recent mutiny under Lambert, and in April, 1660, Allen was committed to confinement in Lambeth House for endeavouring to debauch the soldiers from their obedience.⁵⁹ He was still in custody of the sergeant-at-arms of the Commons in September, and in prison in December, being then described with his fellows as "very hearty and . . . taking a great deal of joy in their affliction."⁶⁰ Possibly he enjoyed a short period of freedom, but a "Will. Allen" was taken prisoner in the general seizure of Anabaptists and "fanatics" in January, 1661, after the Fifth-Monarchy rising under Thomas Venner.⁶¹ The Baptists denied any share in Venner's plot, and Allen was probably released, for in April, 1661 the former Adjutant-General was again ordered to be apprehended, and was lodged in the Gatehouse, where on June 19th his and Vernon's release was finally ordered, they giving security of £1,000 to leave the kingdom within fifteen days.⁶² Whether they complied is not known, and the brothers-in-law almost disappear from the records henceforth. The last mention occurs in 1667, when Allen and several others contributed to an elegy on Vernon, who died on May 29th of that year.⁶³

Thus, like so many who had been thrust to the forefront, Allen was swallowed by obscurity. The vision of the millenium which he and so many of his fellows entertained was consigned to oblivion. Yet he grasped that government must ultimately rest on the consent of the people and that toleration must ultimately prevail. He deserves remembrance as a zealot who defied the most powerful ruler of the age, and whose religious fervour was guarantee of the survival of dissent in the more hostile atmosphere of the Restoration.

¹ *The Clarke Papers*, ed. C. H. Firth, I (1891), pp. 430-431.

² G. Davies, "The Parliamentary Army under the Earl of Essex, 1642-5," *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XLIX (1934), pp. 37, 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴ The letter is printed in *A Declaration of the Engagements, Remonstrances, Representations, Proposals, Desires and Resolutions from His Excellency Sir Tho: Fairfax, and the Generall Council of the Army* (London, 1647), p. 9, and in Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War* (London, 1842), I, pp. 201-5. I quote from the version printed by William Prynne, *The hypocrites unmasking* (London, 1647).

⁵ Prynne, *The hypocrites unmasking*, p. 4.

⁶ John Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, VII (London, 1701), pp. 474-475.

⁷ *Memoirs of Denzil, Lord Holles* (London, 1699), pp. 89-90.

⁸ *Clarke Paper*, I, pp. 87-88.

⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, VII, p. 498.

¹⁰ William Haller and Godfrey Davies, eds., *The Leveller Tracts, 1647-1653* (New York, 1944), pp. 51-63.

¹¹ *A Declaration from the Agitators* (1647), quoted in Sir James Berry and Stephen G. Lee, *A Cromwellian Major General: The Career of Colonel James Berry* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 42-44.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 35-38.

¹³ *Clarke Papers*, I, pp. 180-181.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194, 199-201.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁷ *The Humble Address of the Agitators of the Army to his Excellency Sir Thomas Fairfax* [14 Aug., 1647] (London, 1647).

¹⁸ A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty* (London, 1938), p. 442; Haller and Davies, *The Leveller Tracts*, p. 68; *Clarke Papers*, I, xlvii; Don M. Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestos of the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1944), p. 42.

¹⁹ Sir Charles Firth and Godfrey Davies, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army* (Oxford, 1940), II, p. 614.

²⁰ *Clarke Papers*, II, p. 247.

²¹ Firth and Davies, *Regimental History*, II, pp. 457-458.

²² *Clarke Papers*, II, p. 247.

²³ *A faithful memorial of that remarkable meeting... at Windsor Castle* (London, 1659), in *Somers Tracts*, VI (London, 1811), pp. 498-504. Allen was in some sort of attendance on the king during his last months of captivity, and carried to Bishop Juxon the king's request that he should wait on him after he had been sentenced (*William Lilly's History of his Life and Times* (London, 1822), pp. 144-145; *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, ed. C. H. Firth [Oxford, 1894], I, p. 218).

²⁴ I infer that he was on Cromwell's staff during the Irish campaign, because when Cromwell left Ireland in May, 1650 Lord Broghill announced he would obey no one but Ireton and Allen (Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Stuarts and during the Interregnum*, II [London, 1909], 267).

²⁵ James Caulfield, ed., *Cromwelliana* (Westminster, 1810), p. 102; *Memoirs of Ludlow*, I, p. 290.

²⁶ Negotiations for the surrender of Limerick (John T. Gilbert, *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641 to 1652* [Dublin, 1879-1880], III, pt. ii, pp. 243-244); agreement with the Irish brigade in Tipperary and Waterford (*ibid.*, pp. 296, 299); Kilkenny (*Memoirs of Ludlow*, I, p. 315; Robert Dunlop, ed., *Ireland under the Commonwealth* [Manchester, 1913], I, pp. 185-186, 201, 202; Gilbert, *Contemporary History*, III, pt. i, p. 94); surrender of Viscount Muskerry in Munster (Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth*, I, pp. 224, 228). In July, 1652 the officers in Ireland employed Allen, with Colonel John Hewson, to carry a message to the Council in State, requesting "that a competent maintenance might be speedily provided for maimed soldiers and the widows and orphans of those who died in the service of Ireland" (*Memoirs of Ludlow*, I, p. 528; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1651-52* [London, 1878], p. 347; *Commons Journals*, VII [n.p., n.d.], pp. 162-163).

²⁷ Ireton, Allen, and others to Cromwell, 10th July, 1651, pr. in John

Nickolls, *Original Letters and Papers of State addressed to Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1743), pp. 72-74.

²⁸ *Memoirs of Ludlow*, I, pp. 512-513.

²⁹ Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth*, II, pp. 329-332.

³⁰ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1742), II, p. 215.

³¹ A. H. A. Hamilton, *Quarter Sessions from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Anne* (London, 1878), p. 160; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1651 (London, 1877), p. 554.

³² Another connection in Irish official circles was James Standish, Receiver-General of Ireland, whom Allen addressed in correspondence as "uncle."

³³ St. John D. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland (1647-1661)* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 23-24; Edward Rogers, *Some Account of the Life and Opinions of a Fifth-Monarchy Man . . . John Rogers* (London, 1867), p. 29. Under Fleetwood's government Allen and Vernon were members of a committee to achieve "the effectual preaching of the Gospel in Ireland, but efforts to attract preachers were unsuccessful" (Seymour, *Puritans in Ireland*, p. 61).

³⁴ Patrick Adair, *A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, ed. W. D. Killen (Belfast, 1866), pp. 195-196.

³⁵ *A Word to the Army, touching their Sin and Dutie . . . by William Allen . . . an unfeigned seeker of their souls welfare* (London, 1660).

³⁶ Louise Fargo Brown, *The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth-Monarchy Men* (Washington, 1912), pp. 142-143, quoting British Museum Harleian MS. 4106, f. 226.

³⁷ *Thurloe State Papers*, II, pp. 214-215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

³⁹ *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 1 (March, 1930), p. 18.

⁴⁰ *Thurloe State Papers*, III, pp. 140, 143; W. C. Abbott, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937-47), III, p. 45. That Allen seemed to go about in disguise aggravated his offence.

⁴¹ *Thurloe State Papers*, III, pp. 140-141.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 246.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 744; IV, pp. 55, 108.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 192, 197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 328. In the same year the father-in-law of Allen and Vernon was committed to the Devonshire assizes for saying that the Protector was a rogue (Hamilton, *Quarter Sessions from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Anne*, p. 160).

⁴⁷ *Thurloe State Papers*, IV, p. 433.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 670-672, 729. Allen and Vernon continued to hold meetings in Dublin (*ibid.*, VI, pp. 222-223).

⁴⁹ C. H. Firth, *The Last Years of the Protectorate* (London, 1909-1910), I, pp. 229-230.

⁵⁰ A. C. Underwood, *A History of the British Baptists* (London, 1947), p. 74.

⁵¹ *The Captive Taken from the Strong* (London, 1658).

⁵² *Thurloe State Papers*, VII, pp. 138-140; Brown, *Baptists and Fifth-Monarchy Men*, pp. 132-133.

⁵³ *Thurloe State Papers*, VII, p. 385.

⁵⁴ *Somers Tracts*, VI, pp. 498-504.

⁵⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1659-1660* (1886), p. 13; Godfrey Davies, *The Restoration of Charles II* (San Marino, California, 1955), p. 245.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Baptists and Fifth-Monarchy Men*, p. 189 cf. H. G. Tibbutt, *Colonel John Okey, 1606-1662* (Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc., 1955), p. 98.

⁵⁷ *Clarke Papers*, IV, p. 252; Firth and Davies, *Regimental History of Cromwell's Army*, II, pp. 594, 613-614.

⁵⁸ A. H. Woolrych, "The Good Old Cause and the Fall of the Protectorate," *Camb. Hist. Jour.*, XIII (1957), p. 160.

⁵⁹ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1659-60*, p. 573.

⁶⁰ Berry and Lee, *A Cromwellian Major General*, p. 262.

⁶¹ *London's Glory, or the Riot and Ruine of the Fifth-Monarchy Men* (London, 1661).

⁶² Berry and Lee, pp. 262-263; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1661-62* (1861), p. 12.

⁶³ *Bochim. Sighs poured out by some troubled Hearts* (n.p., n.d.).

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