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VALDE MELANCHOLICUS: OLIVER CROMWELL AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MEDICINE IN ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

Oliver Cromwell will forever be known as one of the more polarizing figures within the extensive history of England. Numerous biographies have been published on the life of Cromwell, focusing on his political career, his military career, as well as his time as Lord Protector. This was a position unique to Oliver and briefly his son, Richard. This piece will examine the life of Cromwell through the lens of his medical reputation. From this text, it will be made clear that Cromwell's personal reputation was significantly fixed upon this theme. Bouts of mania, madness, and melancholy all contributed to different understandings of Cromwell's mental state. These ailments, towards the end of his life, were accompanied by failing physical health, which was more thoroughly documented by this time. Cromwell's rise from an unknown country farmer to what was essentially royalty in all but name is therefore documented by his constitution. Through discussion of his health and medical practice in England, this rise to fame is portrayed through a fresh take on an oft studied figure in English history.

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Introduction

Oliver Cromwell is one of the more polarizing figures in British history. Over one-hundred and sixty biographies have been published on Cromwell, along with thousands of articles that bear his name.[1] Cromwell's résumé makes him an even more intriguing figure to study. Cromwell's military success, lengthy political career, and eventual role as Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland have provided the necessary material to produce these works. One aspect of his life not fully utilized by Cromwell's historians is his personal health. While it has not been the major component in many of Cromwell's biographies, his health is briefly mentioned by historians in connection with instances of illness. This study of Cromwell's health yields a new perspective on Cromwell. Cromwell was a man of passions. These passions would ultimately be reasonable for political aggravation and countless enemies, which plagued Cromwell throughout the entirety of his documented life.

An examination of Cromwell's health, not only during his reign as Lord Protector but throughout his lifetime, yields numerous accounts of mental and physical symptoms. The problem of attempting to provide a modern diagnosis of Cromwell's physical and mental illnesses lies in the fact that the medical environment in early seventeenth-century England was vastly different from that of today. However, many historians have speculated on the multitude of mental and physical illnesses that plagued Cromwell over his documented life. For example, Martyn Bennett, based on documented research of Cromwell's mental health, produced the

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[1] John Morrill, "Oliver Cromwell," In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and Lawerence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6765.

argument that Cromwell was a manic depressive, susceptible to extreme emotional highs and lows, which were brought about by situations of tension and high anxiety.[2] Bennett's opinion that Cromwell was suffering from a mental ailment throughout the entirety of his life is directly contrasted by Antonia Fraser, who argues in her 1973 biography entitled *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* that the height of Cromwell's fight with this mental illness came during a personal crisis from 1628 until 1631.[3] Other historians producing secondary texts use primary documentation to simply make known that Cromwell's health was a major part of his life. Wilbur Cortez Abbott, who composed Cromwell's documented life in his four volume work *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, references the notes from Cromwell's doctor during his personal crisis.[4] This indicates that Abbott felt Cromwell's health a worthy topic of discussion in this detailed biography of Cromwell. Ultimately, we must rely on primary accounts of Cromwell's symptoms to provide the basis for examination. From this task alone, numerous themes arise.

One of the recurring themes within the available primary source material is the political bias which manifests itself within accounts of Cromwell's illnesses; especially those relating to Cromwell's mental health and potential for Cromwell's death. Anecdotes depicting Cromwell's mental health as fragile and unstable became more frequent throughout his lifetime. Cromwell's rise from being an unknown Fenland farmer to becoming the most powerful commoner in the history of Britain ultimately yielded enemies; enemies who sought to prove that Cromwell was incapable of such feats. Originally, fellow Parliamentarians were against Cromwell, citing his

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[2] Martyn Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 22-23.
[3] Antonia Frasier, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 18.
[4] Wilbur Cortez Abbott, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. 1 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 64.

humble origins as reason to widely discredit him. This was accomplished by producing accounts of madness and mental illness, in order to undermine Cromwell's efforts in politics. From his role in the English Civil Wars, Cromwell earned the disdain of the Royalists, dedicated to the monarchy and its restoration. Royalists routinely celebrated false rumors of Cromwell's death and attempted to portray him as a passionate and unstable man, who was dangerous to the functioning of Parliament. Finally, during his time as Lord Protector, Cromwell was targeted by the Royalists, as well as the radical army group known as the Levellers. Both groups cited Cromwell's dangerous ambitions in his ultimate pursuit of the crown, as well as his disdain for working with Parliament, as reasons for their actions against him.

Attempts to sabotage Cromwell's political image, using his mental and physical health, were common. It becomes clear that a study of his personal health does not simply include medical and psychological perspectives. Cromwell's symptoms also characterized a political stigma. Demonization of Cromwell's character essentially led to Cromwell's role as a scapegoat for the unfavorable political situation in England during the first sixty years of the seventeenth-century. By focusing on Cromwell's medical shortcomings and passionate behavior as dangerous, his enemies could proceed to identify Cromwell as a leader in a fight to undermine the Royalist agenda. Cromwell's radical and aggressive tactics helped spurn these rumors of a passionate and dangerous man of ill mental health, who sought to overthrow the monarchy and eventually elevate himself to the throne. Rumors also could be spun to indicate weakness and incompetence, which occurred during Cromwell's first military engagement, as well as in response to assassination attempts during the Protectorate.

With that being said, an examination of Cromwell's outbursts and manic behavior will yield a potential diagnosis of madness and melancholy. According to the standards of the time, Cromwell's behavior does fit the seventeenth-century profile of a madman. Numerous instances of manic behavior, especially in times of severe political tension or moments of severe anxiety, also appear throughout Cromwell's documented life. The diagnosis of melancholy early on in his life also contributes to the general idea of a mentally unstable Cromwell. This idea is demonstrated by the references of many historians of Cromwell, as well as those by his contemporaries, to his personal crisis. A discussion of what actually constituted madness and mental illness in the early seventeenth-century offered in chapter one helps deal with this question of Cromwell's mental stability.

The opening chapter of this text will focus on the complicated seventeenth-century medical environment in which Cromwell lived, in order to effectively demonstrate why Cromwell's enemies felt they could justify his madness. Also included in the opening chapter is an examination of the first forty years of Cromwell's life. The lack of documentation during this period makes for less material on Cromwell's personal health than later chapters. However, the majority of the second half of the chapter focuses on a significant personal crisis that Cromwell experienced from 1628 until 1631. It was during this crisis that Cromwell was first diagnosed with melancholy. Therefore, this account functions in the overall structure of the paper as the beginning of this image of a mentally ill Cromwell, for both historians and undoubtedly his antagonists at the time. Its presence is more prominent at important political junctures of the text than at those without significant political upheaval.

Building on this personal crisis, chapter two initiates discussion of some of the fits of rage and mania Cromwell experienced during the initial years of his political and military careers, which includes episodes occurring between 1640 and 1646. During the time period covered in this chapter---which includes the first of two major English Civil Wars---Cromwell's symptoms were generally more mental than physical. Outbursts chronicled in this chapter indicate that Cromwell was significantly disillusioned with the bureaucratic workings of not only Parliament, but also the army. This theme of disillusionment, leading to demonstrations of passionate anger and bouts with melancholy, would become a major obstacle for the remainder of his lifetime and a major theme in later chapters.

Chapter three focuses on Cromwell's frustration with the idleness of Parliament and focuses on events between 1647 and 1653. His aggressive disbandment of the Rump Parliament included in this timeframe represents the one of many illustrations of Cromwell's behavior which made other Parliamentarians perceive him as a danger to government. This chapter also represents a transitional period for Cromwell, who was now beginning to feel the effects of old age. It also marks the beginning of the discussion of Cromwell's mental exhaustion in relation to his physical deterioration. The connection between conflict and physical illness begins during this timeframe, which essentially resulted in a buildup of Cromwell's anxiety which then manifested in physical ailments. Military campaigns in Scotland and Ireland from 1649 until 1651 were accompanied by significant illnesses, which were arguably the result of mental pressures.

Chapter four, following the transition offered up in chapter three, closes out Cromwell's life in discussion of Cromwell's gradually deteriorating health from 1653 until his death in 1658.

In the end, it was in fact Cromwell's mental exhaustion and disillusionment which drove the physical symptoms that resulted in his demise. His time as Lord Protector, from 1653 until his death in 1658, brought on similar outbursts and outcomes as those evident in his dealings with Parliament. Cromwell began his political career with the hope of rising to the occasion and providing England with a government it had been seeking throughout the chaos of the English Civil Wars. However, Cromwell's government was stymied by his own inability to work with the two protectoral Parliaments he summoned. Questions over his attitudes and motivations regarding the kingship also led to public opposition, which added to Cromwell's hindrances. Following the failure of his Parliaments and the deaths of close family members, Cromwell's spirit and vigor were broken and he died on September 3, 1658.

Cromwell's unique and riveting life provides historians with the motivation they need to conduct investigations into what made Cromwell the fascinating man that he was. Truly a captivating figure, Cromwell's background of military and political feats creates the persona of a confident and invincible man, who was admired, as well we feared by his public. However, primary accounts of Cromwell's behavior and secondary analysis provide conflicting interpretations of the man. A study of his personal health probes deeper and provides a more physical and mental understanding of the most powerful commoner in England's history.

Chapter 1

Medicine and Religion in Young Cromwell's England, 1599-1640

Before analyzing some of the important episodes of ill health and periods of significant pressure in Cromwell's life, it is important to discuss the medical environment of early seventeenth-century England. By introducing the medical concerns (diseases, common illnesses, etc.) of the time and the treatment methods, it will be made clear that the simplest affliction could result in severe consequences in an environment unfamiliar with modern medicine. Mental illness, from which Cromwell may have suffered, was even more difficult to treat effectively. Additionally, the expansive medical condition known in those times as melancholy, characterized by various physical elements, as well as mental components, will be discussed. Furthermore, the extremely vital relationship between providential beliefs and medical practice of the time will be examined.

In the study of the seventeenth-century English medical environment, the underdeveloped and primitive status of medicine becomes abundantly clear. "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries England was still a pre-industrial society, and many of its essential features closely resemble those of the under-developed areas of today," observes Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (a text published in 1971, but still hailed as one of the most influential works in the study of the religious and medical environment of the time).[5] Life expectancy during the period from 1600-1649 has been calculated at 36.4 years, which is shockingly low,

[5] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 3.

but also was impacted significantly by the high infant mortality rate in England.[6] Susceptibility to illness could also depend upon terrain and condition of the land on which individuals lived. "Some parts of the countryside were unhealthy, especially the marshy and estuarine areas of the south-east of England where "agues" or malaria and water-borne diseases flourished."[7] Cromwell himself was vulnerable to a variant of malarial symptoms at times of great stress in his life, which will be discussed in later chapters. Historian Thomas estimates that "in 1688, nearly eighty percent of the population lived in villages and hamlets," isolated and exposed to illness, which further complicated treatment.[8] This also led to a system of individualized medical treatment, which became especially important during the English Civil Wars.

Due to this dangerous environment, "acute infections undoubtedly accounted for many deaths," including diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and salmonella, which can easily be treated by modern medicine.[9] Stephen Bradwell, a London author, as well as a son and grandson of physicians, wrote in his text *Helps for Sudden Accidents* (1633), that "Our clocks of Health seldome go true: those of Death more certaine than believed."[10] This statement demonstrates the "preoccupation with the explanation and relief of human misfortune," inherent in numerous seventeenth-century texts to be discussed later in this chapter.[11] For now it is important to focus on the "relief" aspect of the problem.

The medical doctor of the early seventeenth-century was much simpler in terms of meetings with patients as described by Wear: "The fact that the most serious of illnesses were

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[6] Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.
[7] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine*, 12-13.
[8] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 3.
[9] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine*, 14.
[10] Ibid, 11.
[11] Thomas*, Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 5.

usually treated at home and the small-scale and specialized nature of semi-institutional care for the sick confirm the individualistic, one-to-one nature of early modern English medicine, centered on the transactions between single patients or their families and single practitioners."[12] Many villages relied entirely on one physician. This was due to the isolated nature of the countryside and the deficiency of physicians in the country (there were 814 physicians were licensed between 1603 and 1643).[13]

One such physician, who has been the subject of studies of seventeenth-century medical practitioners, was Richard Napier. The logistics of Napier's practice have been recorded in historian Michael Macdonald's work, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England.* Napier began his practice simply by treating sick neighbors, normally numbering from five to fifteen in one day.[14] Napier's patients covered a wide economic and class spectrum. He treated both the rich nobles and the poor peasants of England and did not cater exclusively to the wealthy as the majority of other physicians did.[15]

Cromwell in his youth frequently contacted Dr. Simcott, the physician in his home town of Huntingdon, even in the middle of the night. The charge for such services varied depending on the physician. However, many physicians, especially those based in London, catered exclusively to the upper class, who could afford their services. These services included medical attendance which cost about a pound a day according to Thomas.[16] In returning to the case of Richard Napier, Macdonald states that Napier's fees were comparatively small and only cost a laborer

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[12] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 25.
[13] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 10.
[14] Michael Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 26.
[15] Ibid, 46.
[16] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 11.

about one day's wages, or the monetary value of 12d (pennies) in England.[17] These factors led to the one-on-one attention, and also allowed for the physician to remedy an illness in the way they saw fit.

The following excerpt from Thomas depicts how the physician of Cromwell's time was trained and how the majority of the physicians went about practicing medicine:

> In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries university-educated physicians were given a purely academic training in the principles of humoral physiology as set out in the works of Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen. They were taught illness sprang from an imbalance between the four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile). Diagnosis consisted in establishing which of these humors was out of line, and therapy in taking steps to restore the balance, either by blood-letting (by venesection, scarification or applying leeches) or by subjecting the patient to a course of purges and emetics-also prescription of plasters, ointments and poisons.[18]

The use of medical remedies and physiological understandings of the ancient Roman Empire goes a long way in supporting the idea that seventeenth-century medicine was essentially antiquated. Napier's remedies for the illnesses of his patients adhered to methods of emptying the body of the illness. The use of purges, vomiting, bleeding, and a few herbal concoctions comprised the vast majority of his treatment methods.[19] As Thomas continues, physicians "focused on what we should regard as the symptoms of disease-fever or dysentery- rather than the disease itself…accordingly, doctors were quite unable to diagnose or treat most

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[17] Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 51.
[18] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 8.
[19] Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 28.

contemporary illness."[20] Focusing upon the individual symptoms rather than the disease oftentimes yielded bad results for doctor's seventeenth-century patients.

Ancient physician Galen's views on diseases---most notably his attention to the central role of humors---were foundational to 17th century British medical understandings and practices. Galen believed that "good health meant keeping one's humors in balance through diet and daily motion" while "bad habits and a bad diet were thought to produce an artificial black bile (melancholia adusta) that in turn caused deep depressions, optical and aural hallucinations, visions, sudden sadness or depression."[21] Cromwell himself was diagnosed with a case of melancholy during his personal crisis, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Galen's remedy for this involved, as historian Erik Midelfort explains, "the therapy of vomits, sweats, and bleeding- indeed many Galenists advocated bleeding with each change of the seasons so that one's physical and psychic system would reset for each season's conditions."[22] Unfortunately for Galenists, the population of England was not fond of their remedies; Thomas concluded that "the population at large disliked Galenic physic for its nauseous remedies, and was frightened by the prospect of surgery."[23] Public disdain for the most prominent and practiced medical method at the time adds to the already chaotic picture of medicine at the time.

Galenists believed that "mental disturbances were sometimes due to accidents (such as a blow to the head), sometimes to brain fevers ("phrenitis"), and sometimes to hereditary flaws"

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[20] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 8-9.
[21] Midelfort, H.C. Erik. "Madness and Melancholy." In *Europe, 1450-1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, edited by Jonathan Dewald, 5-9. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004. Accessed November 18, 2014. http://go.galegroup.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX3404900683&v=2.1&u=psucic&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=afe06965f0d45cad8f2fcddc328cd724
[22] Ibid.
[23] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 14.

and, in other instances, it was the disturbance of the four humors.[24] Thomas adds that "less dramatic forms of mental illness were regarded either as cases of melancholy to be treated by purging and blood-letting, or wrongly diagnosed as 'hysteria,' stemming from a condition of the uterus."[25]

Napier's notes on his patients specifically exhibiting signs of madness are useful in examining what actually constituted madness in the early seventeenth-century. According to Macdonald's study of Napier's notes, thirty-two percent of Napier's patients suffering from madness were "troubled in the mind," twenty percent were actually "melancholic", and six and a half percent were "suicidal."[26] Instead of simply combining these types of madness into one heading, Napier broke down his patient's symptoms in order to more thoroughly diagnose and treat their cases individually. For the purpose of this paper, it is also important to note that "the traditional hazards of economic life caused a great deal of reported distress among Napier's patients. Of the 767 disturbed people who described their problems to him, more than half of them were troubled by losses or indebtness that threatened to plunge them into ruin. Debt was by far the greatest single source of anxiety."[27] Much of Cromwell's early life was characterized by financial concerns, which connects him to this group of troubled patients.

Outward and extroverted signs of madness represented the sole means of identifying the disease. Seventeenth-century physician Nicholas Culpeper published a piece entitled *Culpeper's School of Physic* in 1659, which identifies some of the key components of the identification of madness. Culpeper lists some of these symptoms as such: "Sometimes laughing, sighing, then

[24] Midelfort, *Madness and Melancholy*.
[25] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 13.
[26] Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam,* 117.
[27] Ibid, 67.

sad, fearful, rash, doting, crying out, threatening, skipping, leaping, then serious."[28] Macdonald points specifically to manic laughter as the most common sign of madness. Philosopher and historian Michael Foucault, in his text *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* uses the concept of extreme passions to characterize those experiencing madness: "the savage danger of madness is related to the danger of the passions and to their fatal concatenation."[29] Macdonald also relates this mental illness to passions by claiming that "the behavior of the insane seemed to observers to be a pantomime of unchecked passion."[30] This notion of unchecked passion was of particular relevance to Cromwell's adult life; he apparently experienced a number of episodes of such extreme passions, episodes observed and commented on by those in contact with him. Whether these moments of unbridled passion qualify as madness will be observed.

For instance, physician George Baglivi, who practiced slightly after Cromwell's time, provides a medical link between Cromwell and madness. Baglivi, as discussed in *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* by Ilza Veith, "was certain that persons who are unable to control their passions and are plagued by hypochondria or melancholia could be helped even though they appear hopelessly incurable," by means of psychosomatic medicine, or delighting of the mind with activities such as physical exercise, travel, hunting, and other such activities.[31] Important for the study of Cromwell is the fact that Cromwell, in his early life, was diagnosed with melancholy and exhibited signs of hypochondria. The discussion of treatment is also an important theme to

[28] Nicholas Culpeper and John Gadbury. *Culpeper's School of Physick*. London: N.Brook, 1659.
[29] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Translated by Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 85.
[30] Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 140.
[31] Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 150-151.

draw from this quote, as it warrants further consideration of how madness was treated in a time where its detection and classification were difficult enough.

Many of the treatments used to combat madness in seventeenth-century England involved physical workouts and diet. In addition to the fresh air and physical activities included in Baglivi's quote, Foucault adds that physicians of the time recommended the use of cold water in order to "cool off" the mania, which was thought to be an illness of heat which made the brain dry, fragile, and dysfunctional.[32] Walking and running were also used as treatment options as they helped to distribute the humors throughout the body, relating back to the idea that an imbalance of humors created illness.

English physician and chemist Edward Jorden in his work *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* focusing on the treatment of hysteria and similar diseases, discusses an entirely different method of treatment used in conjunction with the previously mentioned treatments of the time to control mental, as well as physical illness. Jorden remarked: "But by reason of the confident persuasion which melancholic and passionate people may have in theme: according to the saying of Auicen, that the confidence of the patient in the mean used is oftentimes more available to cure diseases then all other remedies whatsoever."[33] This quote refers to faith, or Providence, and the role that such held in the lives of the people of the early seventeenth-century. Diagnosing and treating madness and mental illness proved immensely challenging for physicians of the time, and, for the purposes of this text, it represents a useful transition into how religion played a part in medical practice and how it led to an attempt

[32] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 169.
[33] Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London: John Windet, 1603), 64.

to “specify where and when one should think of madness as a medical problem and when as a religious disorder.”[34]

In the introduction of the text *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England*, editors Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham make clear the strong connection between religion and the medical practices. When discussing the beliefs of a physician, the historians note: “it was quite clear that if one proposed that life was not something imposed upon the human body from outside, but was a characteristic or property of the parts themselves, or an emergent property of their interrelations, then one was liable to be accused of impiety or even heresy.”[35] The title of *Religio Medici* itself---literally meaning “Religion of a Physician”---indicates a strong connection between a physician and his supposed faith. Additionally, *Religio Medici* discusses the prominent English intellectual and physician Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), who was a Christian accused of expressing atheism.

> Sir Thomas is presented as a physician who on the one hand was tolerant in the domain of religion, and who on the other also claimed that faith and reason-for which people have read religion and science (in the modern sense of that term)-are separate domains which can and should take their proper, complementary roles in one’s understanding of the structure and functioning of the universe.[36]

The phrase “Complementary roles” is important to note here, as Grell and Cunningham note the idea that both religion and medicine would provide a strong link to God no matter which course was taken. “What Browne is claiming,” Grell and Cunningham write, “is that the physician is not

[34] Midelfort, *Madness and Melancholy.*
[35]Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), 5.
[36] Ibid, 12.

doomed to atheism, but his natural studies should lead him to God, as much as his religious studies will do…Religio Medici, the religion of a physician, thus constitutes a double route to God."[37] Historian Andrew Wear, on the other hand, argues that the connection between religion and medicine depends more on the religious aspect of the relationship. On religion, he contends: "it took on the role of medicine by explaining why disease occurred and by offering healing through prayer and repentance; and it arrived at a *modus vivendi* with physicians and their remedies and allowed secular medicine to exist without much interference."[38] Browne maintains that the relationship between medicine and religion constituted a balanced formula for the ideal method of healing, while Wear argues that the survival of medicine relies primarily on religion's toleration of its practice (had the opposite been true, medicine would have in fact been discontinued and religious healing would have comprised the entirely of medical practice. This, however, was not the case, and the bond between the two emphasized in *Religio Medici* created an environment where both were considered effective methods of treatment.

Religion affected not only the seventeenth-century physician, but also the seventeenth-century common folk as well. Divine Providence, God's involvement or intervention in the world, was strongly associated with the beliefs and lifestyle of the common man, whether a poor peasant farmer or intellectual. One prominent example of this Divine Providence at work comes from the diary of Ralph Josselin (1617-1683), a village clergyman. On the death of his children Josselin remarked: "god shall make mee to see this dealing of his to bee for the best."[39] God accounted for both the misfortunes and the avoidance of disasters considered good fortune for

[37] Ibid, 40.
[38] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 30.
[39] Ralph Josselin and Alan Macfarlane, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1976), 114.

the population, which only sought answers as to why such things occurred. "Only a reading of the actual Diary will bring home to the reader the constant, almost obsessional discussion of pain and sickness."[40] Josselin's constant references to God's forgiveness or wrath make clear the impact of religion on his live. The same belief in Providence can be applied to the rest of the deeply religious population at the time, including Cromwell. After his conversion, Cromwell's letters and speeches frequently included references to God, indicating his own strong belief in Divine Providence.

In discussing Divine Providence, it is important to first argue God's proclivity to heal and work hand-in-hand with medicine as depicted in *Religio Medici*, in order to make near calamities seem to be evidence of his cure. "God's word worketh marvelously unto the health of them that believe. And therefore in the word of God it is called the word of health or salvation," declared Thomas Becon (1511-1567), an English Protestant reformer. Becon believes that simply the belief in God represents a universal form of treatment for any ailment. Healing through prayer was a large part of this belief, a belief foundational to non-secular means of healing in seventeenth-century England. In discussing the treatment of melancholy, Puritan oracle William Perkins (1558-1602) proclaimed: "Physic alone was not enough to cure melancholy."[41] Thomas adds "but only the good words and prayers of learned men that must restore them again to perfect health," in regards to the treatment of melancholy.[42] Indeed, there was debate at the time about the use of secular medicine versus the use of prayer and good faith in healing and to what extent each should be used for treatment. This debate was further manifest in the later exchanges

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[40] Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (New York: Ingram, 1977), 170.
[41] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 14.
[42] Ibid, 42.

between Galenists and Paracelsians/ Helmontians. However, not all of God's work was focused upon healing.

God's powers extended far beyond helping the faithful: his Providence also represented destructive powers, which caused fear of retribution for sin among the people.

> God also caused illness; he was a destroyer as well as a healer…English Protestants, especially Calvinists, added to the sense of original sin the view that illnesses were also God's punishment for their own present-day sins Illness became a sign of God's providence, a running commentary on an individual's or, in the case of plague, a community's behavior.[43]

Ralph Josselin and many others of the time referred to these divine misfortunes as God's "darts and arrows." For example, "When Mrs. Mary dyed, my heart trembled, and was perplexed in the dealings of the Lord so sadly with us, and desiring God not to proceed on against us with his darts and arrows; looking backe into my way, and observing why God hath thus dealt with mee."[44] Macfarlane describes this fear with much effectiveness: "There emerges here a principle of thought of considerable importance: the principle that pain and evil came from God…Again and again he traces his own and the nation's troubles back to God."[45] This trend is evident in Josselin's diary and arises out of the vulnerability of the English people to the disease-filled nature of their environment. This was principally an attempt by Josselin to make sense out of such a hostile environment, using religious reasoning. It shows the truly religious nature of society at that time. Even when God was punishing the population, the belief, according to

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[43] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 30.
[44] Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, 205.
[45] Macfarlane, *The Family Life*, 173.

Josselin, was that "God doth not always knit his brows when he striketh… Affliction is one way of evidencing love," evidence of true religious spirituality.[46]

Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London, written by historian Paul S. Seaver, is another text which helps to demonstrate the power of Divine Providence. Nehemiah Wallington, the subject of the text, was a Puritan artisan. Wallington wrote extensively and his view of Divine Providence is frequently emphasized in the text. One illustration of his religious faith is his conclusion that the fires that devastated London from late 1654 through early 155 marked God's judgement.[47] Seaver explains in some detail the connection in Wallington's mind between divine intervention, illness, and calamities:

> The problem, as Wallington saw it, was not in the obscurity of God's message but in the obliviousness of man. We either ignore those afflictions visited to us in our daily lives, or, "if we do take notice, we look no further than the secondary means, as thus when we are sick [we assume unthinkingly that] it was such an air that made me sick," not bothering to ask who should afflict us or why: "they do not say, it was for such a sin, and I will reform it."[48]

Wallington's belief was that Providence was routinely ignored in his time. Illness, according to Wallington, resulted from God's wrath and punishment of sins.

These above descriptions of the distinct overlapping of religion and medicine makes clear the complications and anxieties and circumstances facing the typical seventeenth-century Briton.

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[46] Ibid, 174.

[47] Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century (London*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 173.

[48] Ibid, 48.

And, for the first forty years of Cromwell's life, he experienced much of the same. Oliver Cromwell was born on April 25, 1599 in Huntingdon, England. The town of Huntingdon lies upon the north bank of the River Great Ouse (a possible contributing environmental factor behind some of the illnesses Cromwell experienced later in his life). As any scholar of Cromwell will admit, there exists very little material and few records from the first forty years of Cromwell's existence. Only two episodes of ill health will be noted in this chapter: Cromwell's mental and physical crisis from 1628-1631 and his chest infection that occurred during his time in St. Ives (sometime between 1631 and 1638).

It is apparent to Cromwell historians that social and economic factors during the first few decades of Cromwell's life resulted in his personal crisis. Cromwell, being on the lower fringes of the gentry, was a rather typical English child of his time. He attended grammar school (Huntingdon Grammar School) and was, according to Cromwell biographer Antonia Frasier, a naughty child. He was called the "Apple Dragon" because of his theft of apples from local orchards.[49] He later attended college at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Cromwell entered college on April 23, 1616 and was forced to exit on June 24, 1617 after the death of his father, Robert Cromwell. This event is fairly significant in Cromwell's early life not just because of the loss of his father, but also because of the repercussions. Cromwell was forced to leave school in order to care for his now widowed mother and seven unmarried sisters. The death of his father placed Cromwell under considerable financial pressure, which complicated future career choices. Even when Robert Cromwell was alive the family barely held a place on the fringes of the landed gentry. Cromwell was forced to work the land of the family's estate in order to support his family.

[49] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 18.

Instances of ill health and great mental and physical struggle are not documented in Cromwell's life at this time; however Cromwell's marriage to Elizabeth Bourchier in London in 1620 strongly influenced the direction of Cromwell's life. Bourchier's familial connections to powerful English gentry of the time, including the powerful merchant Oliver St. John, the Earl of Warwick, and the powerful Barrington family, provided Cromwell with important contacts for his future in politics. These connections helped launch a long political career, which would help Cromwell rise through the social ranks, beginning in 1628 when Cromwell was selected as the Member of Parliament for Huntingdon.

Although Cromwell delivered only one documented speech, which was against the Arminian Bishop Richard Neile, and received very little recognition in Parliament, this event essentially marked Cromwell's introduction to politics. Cromwell unquestionably saw the politics of the time as chaotic and the English situation to be very bleak (as Charles I quickly cancelled this Parliament and ruled without it for the next eleven years). Without a doubt this situation created a negative view of politics in the mind of Cromwell.[50]

The death of his father, his required support of his family, and his marriage into a higher class family greatly affected Cromwell and resulted in his personal crisis, which occurred from 1628 until 1631. As a brief reference to future themes, the year 1628 is otherwise notable because it marked Cromwell's first election to Parliament. The interconnection between his mental and physical health and his involvement in politics is a central theme in this thesis. Several Cromwell historians have argued various accounts of what happened and the resulting implications. John Morrill labeled this period of Cromwell's life a "Personal Crisis," induced by

[50] Morrill, "Oliver Cromwell."

physical and mental stress, in his Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry on Cromwell. Morrill describes Cromwell as becoming aggressive and involved in various confrontations, which resulted in his absence in the local government of Huntingdon.[51] Martyn Bennett, in his text *Oliver Cromwell*, provides the most promising description for Cromwell's medical condition at the time: "His symptoms were physical; bad stomach aches after meals, excessive phlegm and a cough. Yet he was labeled *Valde Melancholicus*: Truly melancholic."[52] Frasier adds "dry skin and stomach pain" as symptoms of Cromwell's mysterious illness, and even attributes his actions to a nervous breakdown.[53] Those treating Cromwell's illness include two physicians of the time: Dr. Simcott, who was the local physician for Huntingdon, and Dr. Theodore Mayerne, an internationally prominent physician based in London during Cromwell's crisis.

Dr. Simcott paints a very peculiar picture of Cromwell as a patient. According to Wilbur Cortez Abbott, whose *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* provides a medley of primary source material for this thesis, claims that Dr. Simcott referred to Cromwell as "splenetic," relating to an issue of the spleen, and describing Cromwell as bad-tempered and spiteful, in his personal notes.[54] Bennett offers this compelling description and hypothesis: "It has been noted that he was a man of extremes: he could be plunged into the deepest despair, yet reach the heights of elation…Cromwell's fierce demonization of enemies, his inability to distance himself from an argument with which he disagreed, may also be the result of a mental problem."[55] Bennett's conclusion made good use of Simcott's observations, which may include

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 22.
[53] Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector*, 36.
[54] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, 64.
[55] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 22-23.

an element of bias based upon the following account of Cromwell's medical relationship with Simcott:

> A Huntingdon based Doctor Simcott implied that Cromwell was a hypochondriac who during the mid-1630s would have him dragged out of bed at all hours on the premise that he was dying. Cromwell's mood swings bear some resemblance to bi-polar disorder. This would account for the extremes of mood, the inability to sleep during the 1630s and the bizarre thoughts that allegedly ran through his head during the 1630s health crisis: at one time apparently he thought that he would become the greatest man in the kingdom.[56]

While a definitive diagnosis on a patient who lived centuries in the past cannot be made, Simcott's and Bennett's views point towards troubling mental disturbances. The hallucination of becoming the greatest man in the kingdom is further documented in Abbott's text: "and there went a story of him, that in the daytime, lying melancholy in his bed, he believed that a spirit appeared to him and told him that he should be the greatest man (not mentioning the word King) in this kingdom."[57] Simcott's credibility is in question in this particular instance; however this episode remains relevant nonetheless, as Cromwell's premonition came true.

It was Cromwell's other physician, Doctor Theodore Mayerne, who diagnosed Cromwell with melancholy. Unlike Simcott, a plethora of information exists on the practice of Mayerne. Mayerne was a French physician, born in Geneva on September 28, 1573. He studied medicine at the University of Montpellier in France, before coming to England after treating the Earl of Salisbury, who became ill while staying in France. He was asked to England to treat King James I's ill wife, Queen Anne and soon accepted the post of chief physician to James I and became the

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[56] Ibid, 23.
[57] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 65.

most prominent physician in London. Problems ensued for Mayerne as he tried to incorporate newer Paracelsian and Helmontian treatments in with the old Galenic system.[58]

Paracelsian and Helmontian medical practices essentially replaced the Galenic practice and became the main source of medical treatment during the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth period. "Both medical systems were attractive," Wear explains, "because of their stress on divine enlightenment and Christian charity. The Paracelsian and Helmontian physician believed himself to be directly illuminated by God with medical knowledge," which led to the belief that Galenic medicine was atheistic and uncharitable.[59] Remedies among the two practices also differed greatly, with Galenists using mainly herbal remedies and Paracelsians and Helmontians using chemical remedies. Paracelsian physicians used salt, sulphur, and mercury, while Helmontian physicians used water.[60] Fortunately, with the knowledge that Mayerne was of Paracelsian allegiance, we can determine that Cromwell's melancholy was treated with some form of chemical remedy. As little is known on the treatment of Cromwell's diagnosed melancholy, it is more important to discuss the form of melancholy which Cromwell suffered during this crisis.

The scholar and physician Robert Burton and his text entitled *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* provide historians with the description of the malady known as melancholy in seventeenth-century England. Burton's basic description of melancholy is as follows: "Melanelius out of Galen, Ruffus, and Aetius describe it to be a bad and peevish disease, which makes men degenerate into beasts."[61] Burton's description of melancholy parallels Ralph Josselin's diary in the relation to Providence in treatment of medical conditions. "Generall causes

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[58] Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Mayerne, Sir Theodore Turquet de (1573–1655)," (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*), Last modified 2004. Accessed November 18, 2014. http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18430.
[59] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 354.
[60] Ibid, 46.
[61] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* (Phildadelphia: T. Wardle, 1836), 162.

are either *Supernaturall*, or *naturall*. *Supernaturall* are from God and his Angells, or by Gods permission from the Divell, and his Ministers…Physitians and Physick can doe no good, we must submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God, acknowledge our offences, call to him for mercy."[62] Connections are again drawn to the punishment of sin through illness from God. Burton lists numerous causes of melancholy, which represent the *naturall*. The list includes many different foods, including many meats, bad air, standing water, and also mental causes of melancholy, which include shame and disgrace, envy, anger, vanity, poverty and want, and the death or maiming of a loved one.[63]

Distinct episodes manifesting these causes could most certainly be applied to Cromwell. However, they could also be applied to many individuals of the time, bringing about the question of the frequency of the diagnosis of melancholy in seventeenth-century England. Cromwell's diagnosis, by this reasoning, would be "not, perhaps, surprising, for there were many melancholy men in England at that time."[64] As demonstrated by Napier's notes, depression could take many forms. From this, we can assume that some of those diagnosed with melancholy were not in fact melancholic.

Disregarding the diagnosis of melancholy allows historians to highlight an alternate reason for Cromwell's illness: religious conversion. Antonia Frasier provides a large section of text contending that Cromwell's personal crisis constituted a spiritual conversion to Puritanism. After all, Cromwell's educational environment had been surrounded by the presence of Puritan ideals. Both his headmaster at Huntingdon Grammar School, Thomas Beard, and his headmaster at college, Dr. Samuel Ward were of strong Puritan belief. The Puritans believed in a "darkness

[62] Ibid, 172-174.
[63] Ibid, 212-356.
[64] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 64.

which envelopes the spirit before its conversion," which would be synonymous with this episode of melancholy.[65] Following this episode, Cromwell "led a very strict life for about eight years before the war," a life which now featured strong religious tendencies, previously not relevant to his character.

There is documented evidence that Cromwell himself felt this experience to be a religious conversion of sorts. A letter, composed in 1638, for his cousin Mrs. St. Johns is proof of his belief:

> Yet to honour my God by declaring what He hath done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find: That He giveth springs in a dry and barren wilderness where no water is…Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put forth himself in the cause of his God than I…He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness…He giveth me to see light in His light…Blessed be His name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine!...You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness, and hated the light. I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true; I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. O the riches of His mercy![66]

Cromwell continued to live by Puritan lifestyle following this bout of melancholy, which Martyn Bennett believes to have been "intensely personal and perhaps born of the effects of melancholy upon his psyche."[67]

In 1631, following an embarrassing verbal outburst directed to an alderman of Huntingdon named Bernard, Cromwell was forced to sell almost all of his property (adding up to

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[65] Frasier, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector*, 38.
[66] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 97.
[67] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell,* 23.

1800£) and move to nearby St. Ives in shame and disgrace. During his five years in St. Ives, Cromwell was widely described as "a plain russet-coated man," who lived a quiet life. The most important medical detail of Cromwell's stay in St. Ives came from the town clerk, who recorded that Cromwell "usually frequented divine service at church, and that he generally wore a piece of red flannel round his neck, as he was subject to an inflammation of the throat."[68] Cromwell spent this time as a farmer in the area, and therefore may have been susceptible to a malarial cough brought on by the local River Great Ouse. Upon inheriting a substantial estate from an uncle on his mother's side, Cromwell now became a prosperous man with "no record of ill health." Upon his move to Ely in 1638, it seemed as if "the period of storm and stress seemed to have passed."[69] Apart from having his son Robert Cromwell (1621-1639) die while away at school, Cromwell experienced an extremely productive and positive atmosphere leading up to his re-entrance to Parliament in 1640. In Abbott's words, Cromwell "was a well-known and rising man, closely connected with powerful interests and strongly supported by one of the most closely-knit and influential groups in England," the Puritans.[70]

Cromwell's election to Parliament closed the first forty years of his life. While these years were not as historically momentous or thoroughly documented compared to the later years of his life, the early years played a pivotal role in shaping the Cromwell that would later be given the title of Lord Protector of England. They establish a pattern of interrelationship between bodily and spiritual health that would define his experience of events for the remainder of his life. His personal crisis of 1628 represented a turning point in not only his religious attitude, but also his public life and political future. Following his recovery from his personal crisis,

[68] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 81.
[69] Ibid, 94-95
[70] Ibid, 110.

Cromwell became one of the most avid defenders of Puritanism in all of England, as well as one of the most ambitious politicians of the time. Although Cromwell was not yet susceptible to the malarial fevers that would sporadically appear during the remainder of his life, many of the important political, military, and social events of his life would also brought into play this interrelationship between the health of the body and the health of the soul.

Chapter 2

Passionate Politics: Cromwell's Dangerous Nature, 1640-1646

Similarly to the first forty years of Cromwell's existence, the years 1640 through 1646 did not yield substantial documentation on Cromwell's physical or mental ailments. More useful to historians are the representations of Cromwell. His appearance and behavior in Parliament, his passion on and off the battlefield, and accounts of injuries he received as the result of war provided occasions for his contemporaries to make comments on his behavior. Opinions on Cromwell's health, as will be demonstrated, varied significantly between political allies and enemies. From the beginning until the end of these years, a tumultuous time for England itself, Cromwell rose from his role as an unknown, underappreciated Parliamentarian, to become arguably one of the greatest military strategists in England's history. This notoriety and the struggles involved in Cromwell's rise, resulted in further interpretations and commentaries on his physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

Cromwell could not escape criticism for the emotional highs and lows, manifesting at major times of anxiety in his life. During the first half of the 1640s, Cromwell exhibited what can only be considered to be manic behavior. He also exhibited extreme fits of rage, which resulted in personal attacks against his contemporaries. This behavior was considered even more bizarre because of the fact it was being displayed by a Parliamentarian. These mental lapses, combined with physical injuries suffered in major campaigns of the First English Civil War, make this brief period in the life of Cromwell that much more valuable for historians. Cromwell himself does not reflect upon these injuries and afflictions in his own personal letters and

speeches. The bulk of the descriptions and characterizations of Cromwell's physical and mental health come from his contemporaries, which is why it is important to begin with these accounts from both allies and enemies of Cromwell.

Early in Cromwell's return to Parliament in 1640, representing Cambridge, a contemporary account of Cromwell's personal appearance is provided by Sir Philip of Warwick, a fellow Parliamentarian, as well as a historian. This account indicates that the little known Parliamentarian received a cold reception upon his reentrance to Parliament and even if this account was later edited by Warwick before publication, Warwick's role as a dedicated Royalist negatively influenced this account. Warwick's account followed a speech Cromwell made to Parliament on behalf of the infamous John Lilburne, imprisoned for distributing unlicensed literature (a crime which Cromwell did not perceive as worthy of incarceration). Of Cromwell, Warwick remarked:

> Although he was of a good enough build, he was very ordinarily dressed in a plain cloth suit, which appeared to have been made by a bad country tailor. In addition his linen was plain, and not very clean; and there was even a speck or two of blood upon his neck-band, which was not much larger than his collar… his "countenance was swollen and reddish, his voice sharp and untenable…"[71]

Other members of Parliament commented on Cromwell's appearance as "slovenly." This depiction of Cromwell, based upon this point of view, was of a man unfamiliar with the functioning of Parliament. One could argue that this depiction of Cromwell's dress and physical appearance were used to undermine his speeches and actions in Parliament. This dismissal of

[71] Sir Philip Warwick, *Memoirs of the Reign of King Charles I with a Continuation to the Happy Restoration of King Charles II*, (1701).

Cromwell, based upon dress and appearance, demonstrates the general feeling that Cromwell was an oddity and out of place in Parliament, especially later on when he began to exhibit the signs of passion.

Speculation on what created the specks of blood on his collar could of course lead back to the throat infection he experienced during his time in Ely, or perhaps occurring from simply a bloody nose or shaving mishap. References made of Cromwell's red and swollen face would be repeated at latter times in Cromwell's life. Whether this points to some sort of breathing problem or was purely a result of nerves and anxiety when speaking to a group of men who showed disdain for the rookie Parliamentarian is unknown. Based on the fact that no documented evidence is available to verify indicators of illness on Cromwell's part at this time, Warwick's account and the opinions of the other Parliamentarians is particularly influential.

The speech in question provides an introductory demonstration of Cromwell's apparently unchecked passion, a character attack directed at him in numerous disagreements evident in the remainder of his political career, as well as in his military career. Parliamentarians of the time undoubtedly saw Cromwell as odd, unnecessary, or even dangerous. As mentioned in the previous chapter, unchecked passions during the early seventeenth-century often pointed to the diagnosis of madness. Michel Foucault wrote of passions that: "The savage danger of madness is related to the danger of the passions and to their fatal concatenation."

Cromwell routinely demonstrated his unchecked passion during his time in Parliament. An example of this occurred during Cromwell's work with the first committee he was assigned to in Parliament. A committee of thirty-two men, including Cromwell, was created in order to consider claims arising from a dispute over the draining of the Fens outside of Ely and

Huntingdon. The Fens were marshy areas, which provided a livelihood to many of those in the vicinity. This was an issue which Cromwell had played a part in previously. He had and now would represent the commoners, this time against Lord Mandeville, who before the Fens were drained, had enclosed areas of it to keep intact. The commoners then destroyed the barriers, leading Mandeville to petition Parliament for their rebuilding and to the distribution of sixty writs against the commoners for destroying the barriers in the first place.

Cromwell responded to this project with a hatred and anger so uncharacteristic of the time, that he was severely reprehended by Edward Hyde, the future Earl of Clarendon. Clarendon, in his later work entitled *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, Begun in the Year 1641*, described Cromwell's explosive response to Mandeville's request as "with so much indecency and rudeness, and in language so contrary and offensive…his whole carriage was so tempestuous, and his behavior so insolent."[72] Although there was a clear elitist political bias motivating Clarendon's account, an outburst of this magnitude was undeniably uncharacteristic of politicians of the time. Now that the influential Earl of Clarendon had chronicled this violent and unrestrained side of Cromwell, it was only a matter of time before Cromwell would be considered the most unstable and politically volatile man in Parliament.

Several historians of Cromwell have linked this outburst with the one directed at Bernard, which forced Cromwell to leave Huntingdon back in 1631. "He revealed the same qualities of unrestrained passion which continually brought him under censure," writes Abbott, who recognized that Cromwell certainly struggled with an uncontrolled anger in the face of

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[72] Edward Hyde Earl of Clarendon, and William Dunn Macray, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, Begun in the Year 1641,* Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 89.

opposition.[73] Morrill attributes this fearless, unyielding attitude to "his faith and trust in God" which led to his violent and defensive outbursts and "as a result he was dropped from the opposition front bench speaker's panel after May 1641."[74] Although he no longer spoke frequently in the full house, Cromwell continued to work on numerous committees. However, this experience enhanced the feeling of loathing for the affairs of Parliament, which would continue upon his return to Parliament full time in 1645, after his military service had ended. Cromwell's fellow Parliamentarians, as demonstrated by Warwick's and Clarendon's accounts of his lack of Parliamentary decorum, were dismissive of this disruptive and passionate MP for Cambridge, and we are to understand that the lack of respect was mutual.

At the outbreak of the First English Civil War, the man who would later be considered one of the finest soldiers in the history of England had absolutely no military experience whatsoever. However, Fraser points out that in more ways than one, Cromwell was a fighter. Moreover, Fraser contends that Cromwell's apparent melancholy had receded. "His last action before the war, a well-planned, successful pirate's raid, showed how far Mayerne's melancholy introverted patient had progressed, whether in the House of Commons, on committees, raising troops or simply plundering royal plate."[75] This verdict on Fraser's part contradicts with what a number of Cromwell's fellow MPs highlighted about his fiery and impulsive manner. Fraser may perhaps surmise that Cromwell's passionate language and extroverted delivery revealed improvement from the mental illness which incapacitated him toward the end of the 1620s. Whether or not Cromwell received further attention for this potential continuance of mental illness is undocumented. Historians of Cromwell have done little to indicate that Cromwell's

[73] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 132.
[74] Morrill, *Oliver Cromwell.*
[75] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 86.

illness had ever actually been cured and it has become an assumption that Cromwell recovered to full strength at some point. This was most likely during his time as a farmer at Ely. However this matters little, since certain political colleagues of Cromwell still were convinced that he suffered from mental health problems. Additionally, Cromwell was believed to be a hypochondriac, as noted by Dr. Simcott back in Huntingdon, so Cromwell could well have believed that he was still ill.

Fraser continues to argue on the behalf of an improved Cromwell, at least prior to some of his signs of illness exhibited during the war campaigns. The quote used above, in reference to a small scale military raid in which Cromwell took part before the outbreak of the war, is Fraser's introduction to Cromwell as a new man, accepting participation in any cause worthy of his time. Both Bennett and Abbott have noted Cromwell's appointment to eighteen different committees within his first year in Parliament. This number would have been abnormal for a Parliamentarian of his experience. Bennett does note, however, that Cromwell's status in Parliament had likely not changed a great deal from his prior experience in government. Bennett argues this by claiming the fact that: "Cromwell was not backed up by many people and so his affairs were slow to bear fruit."[76] Nevertheless, this level of dedication to his Parliamentary work would indicate that Cromwell was mentally sound, at least for his initial months in the Long Parliament.

Cromwell's significant involvement as an effort to overcome his illness, which certainly seems to have been ongoing, is a viable assertion. For Cromwell, immersing himself in Parliamentary affairs possibly served as a method of therapy to deal with his ongoing mental

[76] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 42.

illness. It is noteworthy that physician George Baglivi recommended "delighting of the mind with activities," in order to treat bouts of madness and melancholy. Perhaps, we then have an instance of Cromwell performing self-treatment by involving himself in numerous committees and later, warfare, in order to give himself a purpose and overcome his ailment. While Cromwell's critics saw his behavior as deranged, and it has been examined with this theme in mind thus far, Cromwell's involvement in his Parliamentary duties may also have been his way of overcoming some of the concerns plaguing him mentally.

This theme of Cromwell treating himself by immersion in Parliamentary duties is supported by the English poet John Milton's account of Cromwell's metaphorical war with his own mental health. Milton's quote is also useful in determining how contemporary opinions on Cromwell's health varied greatly between his allies and his enemies. Milton, in *Defensio Secunda*, remarked: "He first acquired the government of himself, and over himself acquired the most signal victories, so that on the first day he took the field against the external enemy, he was a veteran in arms, consummately practiced in the toils and exigencies of war."[77] Milton, similarly to Fraser, maintains that Cromwell's illness had been overcome by the time Cromwell took the field of battle. The figurative warfare in this case represented Cromwell's battle with his illness. This may be referring to the diagnosis of melancholy or the chest infections from Cromwell's time in Ely, but it is also possible to surmise that Milton is referencing an ongoing mental illness.

Milton's quote also provided a defense of Cromwell, and a fascinating example of how Cromwell's allies viewed the symptoms of mental illness he exhibited. While his critics used his outbursts and unrestrained passion to create an image of a unstable and volatile Cromwell, his

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[77] John Milton, *Defensio Secunda*, (1654).

allies saw Cromwell as having conquered his personal illness---and the outbursts as passionate, not in terms of mental instability, but in terms of a driven and idealistic individual with significant goals. In short, Cromwell's enemies produced accounts of incompetence, while allies produced accounts of greatness and efficiency.

Before exploring some of the dangers and injuries which befell Cromwell during battle, it is important to first discuss the medical environment during Civil War-era England. Recalling the medical environment of the time is crucial to understanding what soldiers, including Cromwell himself, faced off the battlefield. As will be demonstrated, Cromwell faced both mental and physical setbacks and accidents, which ultimately affected his emotions off the field of battle. Prior to the outbreak of the war, England did not have a standing army, and therefore many of the men suiting up were unfamiliar with the equipment and were ill trained heading into battle. Muskets, pikes, and even horses in Cromwell's case, all presented challenges to these hastily gathered soldiers.

It was, oddly enough, a horse which gave Cromwell his first significant physical injury, in the form of a blow to the head, which incapacitated him for weeks. In April of 1643, now under the rank of Colonel, Cromwell and his men had set up headquarters at Peterborough during their siege of Croyland. After much plundering of the local cathedral by Cromwell's men, an incident occurred with ominous timing, and was fortunately documented by antiquary, Simon Gunton.

> A finger of divine vengeance touched Cromwell…For being at that time quartered in the house of Mr. Cervington, commonly called the Vineyard, at the east end of the Cathedral, out of the court of which dwelling there was a passage into the churchyard, ascending by

> three or four stone steps, Cromwell, as others did, riding up those steps, his horse fell under him, and rising suddenly under the lintels of the door, dashed his head against the lintels, so that he fell to the ground as dead, was so carried into the house, and it was about a fortnight ere he could be recovered; those who were eye-witnesses affirmed that the blow raised splinters in his scalp near a finger's length.[78]

Gunton's reference to a "divine vengeance" is the first important piece of this quote. Gunton was obviously not an ally of Cromwell based upon the depiction of this event. That stems from Cromwell's destruction of the local cathedral, a church where Gunton would later serve as the Prebend. Research on Gunton also shows that he had strong ties to prominent Royalists, including King Charles's cousin, James Stuart, with whom Gunton stayed during the Civil War. Therefore, depicting Cromwell as an iconoclast was obviously meant to demonize him even further than other accounts already had.

Gunton's description of the size of the splinters in Cromwell's scalp may have been an exaggeration. Gunton's portrayal may have been subject to Royalist bias as well, in order to make this severe head injury more dramatic than it actually was. Cromwell was, as the quote states, confined to a house for two weeks as he recovered from this injury, indicating a serious injury. However, the pain of embarrassment was more likely the worst part for Cromwell, as Royalist enemies now could tell tales of the great Oliver Cromwell and his inability to control his horse, and a major head injury which they could have used to further their argument of mental imbalance. Cromwell obviously does not include this incident in his own personal letters and

[78] Simon Gunton and Simon Patrick. *The History of the Church of Peterburgh* (London, 1686), 92.

speeches. Whether this is due to his embarrassment or to the fact he actually may have sustained a major head injury and forgot the injury, historians cannot know.

Physical injuries such as this one were a common theme of war, even off the battlefield. Sickness was also a dangerous risk for off-duty soldiers. Cromwell had spent the majority of the summer of 1643 "riding, recruiting, raiding, begging and threatening every one for men, money and arms, but most of all for money for "the cause.""[79] One account of Cromwell's distress over the ongoing financial troubles even suggests that Cromwell broke down and wept over the general and widespread lack of funds.[80] Financial backing for the army would arguably not increase significantly until the formation of the New Model Army in 1645. Therefore, sometimes his men lacked basic essentials, such as socks and shoes, which made them even more susceptible to illness.

Significantly for the Parliamentarian Army, in November of 1645, military operations ceased as an illness incapacitated nearly half of the foot soldiers. During seventeenth-century warfare in England, fighting during the winter was uncommon. Breaks from the fighting were meant to protect the soldiers from exposure, leading to illness. In this particular case, because of the cold and wet conditions of an early winter, influenza was the culprit[81]. Cromwell, as discussed by McMains, "was as susceptible as anyone to infectious disease. And he was at risk during military campaigns." However, as far as historians can discern, Cromwell was surprisingly unaffected by this illness.[82]

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[79] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 263.
[80] Thomas Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*. Edited by S.C. Lomas. Vol. 1 (London: Metheun, 1904), 128.
[81] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 390.
[82] McMains, *The Death of Oliver Cromwell*, 62.

In the study of Cromwell's mental health, it is crucial to study the ways in which Cromwell responded to the imminent threat of battle. An account of Cromwell at the Battle of Naseby in June of 1644 describes odd pre-battle behavior on Cromwell's part. This account comes from Joshua Sprigg, personal chaplain to Sir Thomas Fairfax, general for the Parliamentarians. Fraser, as a secondhand observer, describes Cromwell's behavior as "exultation at the prospect of battle, a mood which even took the extreme form of a sort of wild glee," while another observer called it "a fit of exuberant laughter."[83] Certainly this behavior was odd, right before a major battle was about to take place. Cromwell does reference this episode by attributing it to his belief in God's Providence: "I could not riding alone about my business, but smile out to God in praises, in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to naught things that are."[84] This evidence of what many would consider to be an emotional high right before a morbid and bloody battle would reinforce Bennett's claim that Cromwell possessed a manic depressive personality, experiencing lows which included his diagnosis of melancholy and his illness at the end of 1646, as well as highs such as this account of laughter and glee. Cromwell's proclivity to experience such behavior when faced with tense situations manifests in later episodes as well.

Before delving into further consideration into Cromwell's battlefield demeanor, a fuller description of seventeenth-century battlefield conditions and battlefield medical practices is in order. The study of battlefield medicine in the English Civil Wars is rather difficult because of numerous factors. Historian Barbara Donagan explains: "Care for the war's victims has been little studied, in part because much of it was small scale, localized, and *ad hoc*, and records are

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[83] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 158.

[84] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 365.

consequently dispersed and fragmentary."[85] This aspect of small scale and limited medical treatment helped to make this environment, in which accidents as well as forcibly inflicted wounds were common, even more deadly.

First of all, the ratio of battlefield surgeons in relation to soldiers was shockingly low. With only one surgeon and two assistants for a one thousand soldier regiment, the odds of reaching an injured soldier in time to help were slim.[86] However, as we know from Royalist surgeon Richard Wiseman, the practitioners were well aware of the advantages of timely treatment of the wound. Wiseman, in his text *Severall Chirurgicall Treatises*, discusses the condition of a gunshot wound if it is not immediately treated and dressed. Wiseman describes the "deadly Colour," of a wound, which would inflame and produce "Matter…of a foetid smell" if left untreated. Finally, if the wound begins to enter a state of gangrene, "the Patient commonly dies."

Another major cause of high fatality rates, as referenced by Wiseman in his text, was the fact that many local surgeons were called upon to help. Their inexperience in treating such gruesome and complex injuries likely cost many soldiers their lives.[87] Death may have also been the choice of many soldiers, given the extent of some of their injuries. Wiseman provides an account of a Scottish soldier, whose elbow joint was crushed by a musket ball. Wiseman

[85] Barbara Donagan, "The Casualties of War: Treatment of the Dead and Wounded in the English Civil War," In *Soldiers, Writers, and Statesmen of the English Revolution*, by Austin H. Woolrych, I. J. Gentiles, John S. Morrill, and Blair Worden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 115.
[86] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 130.
[87] Richard Wiseman, *Severall Chirurgicall Treatises* (London, 1676), 407-409.

encouraged the solider to fight through the injury. But in response, the soldier cried "Give me drink, and I will die," after which Wiseman declares he did.[88]

Common battlefield wounds during this time varied beyond what would commonly be thought, and treatments were similar in nature. Obviously cannon balls, musket balls, and sharp pikes were all capable of killing a man. Wounds from the butt end of a musket, as well as stab wounds from combat knives and swords were common in situations of hand to hand combat. These injuries, however, do not include the accidental, which included anything from the burns from an explosion, to broken bones or head wounds from incidents involving soldiers inexperienced with horses, as Cromwell can attest to.

Treatment of these wounds took a number of different forms, as we know from the practice of Wiseman. "Extraction of bullets, suturing, splinting, bandaging, bleeding and cauterizing as well as the application of ointments and medicines" were some of the noted methods of treatment. Wiseman, as noted by Donagan in her article "The Casualties of War: Treatment of the Dead and Wounded in the English Civil War," favored remedies targeting the spirit as well. "Wiseman trusted to nature's curative powers;" powers which included warmth, rest, tranquility, drink, and diet.[89] Considering the circumstances, the surgeons had one of the most difficult jobs on the battlefield.

The most powerful emotion on the battlefield was fear, which made the mental aspect of warfare just as dangerous as the physical. The soldiers' ability to fight confidently was their mastery of this fear of injury or worse. Donagan provides an insightful description of the destructive effects of the artillery on the physical, as well as the mental constitution of the

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[88] Ibid, 451.
[89] Donagan, "Casualties," 199.

common soldier. "One of the chief uses of artillery was as an instrument of terror. It worked against troops, as at Alresford, when the sight of the execution done by a single gun led one body of royalists to flight."[90] This destructive power can be applied to the whole of the army, not just the artillery. At the time of the war, the honor in fighting until death was the commonly accepted social norm. Thus, soldiers were often prepared for this possibility and accepted that death may be close. This outlook makes consideration of Cromwell's risk management skills that much more important to gauging his battlefield health. Being a soldier who was fresh to the terrors of war, Cromwell's ability to cope with battle was likely tested early on. This is also where battlefield interpretations of Cromwell's risk management become exceedingly important for historians.

Cromwell entered his first actual engagement at the Battle of Edgehill in October of 1642, at the age of forty-three years old. Although Cromwell's role may not have been significant in this battle, attention to Cromwell's battlefield inaction provided an opportunity for his opponents to level damning accusations his way. In 1649, Lieutenant Denzil Holles brought a charge of cowardice against Cromwell for his absence from the majority of the fighting in this battle, which was later supported by a similar account from Sir William Dugdale. Holles's account, published in his personal memoirs, accuses Cromwell of: "Base keeping out of the field at Keinton Battle; where he with his troops of horse came not in, impudently and ridiculously affirming, the day after, that he had been all that day seeking the army and place of fight, though his quarters were but at a village near hand."[91] The antiquary Sir William Dugdale, after surveying the battlefield, discovered that Cromwell was in "a steeple within view of the battle;

[90] Barbara Donagan, *War in England 1642-1649* (Oxford University, 2008), 89.
[91] Baron Denzil Holles and John Toland, *Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles, Baron of Ifield in Sussex, from the Year 1641 to 1648* (London, 1699), 17.

and there discerning by a perspective-glass the two wings of their horse to be utterly routed, made such hast to be gone, that instead of descending the stairs by which he came up, he swing'd down by a Bell-rope and ran away with his troop."[92] The timing of these accounts indicates that they coincided with Cromwell solidifying his role as a political force in the Commonwealth, which helps us identify the Dugdale's motives for bringing up this account of a mentally weak and cowardly Cromwell.

Referring to Holles's depiction of Cromwell's role at the Battle of Edgehill, Fraser asserts that Cromwell may have in fact been lost prior to the battle and therefore was not seen until Dugdale saw him surveying the chaotic field from the nearby steeple. Both Fraser and Abbott come to the defense of Cromwell and assert that this image of him as a coward seems farfetched, based upon later actions of heroism and overall reputation from future battles. Even if this episode was the result of a brief episode of cowardice, it was likely due to the shock of Cromwell's first real battle and was the result of inexperience. Such shock was likely fairly typical for a soldier new to battlefield combat. Nevertheless, this would have certainly been a useful account for Royalists in opposition to Cromwell, in showcasing his potential cowardliness. It is noteworthy too that following his alleged flight from the steeple, Cromwell gathered his troops and entered the fight, ultimately saving the Parliamentarian army from an ugly defeat. This account provided historians with the first image of the courageous side of Cromwell, which enhanced his popularity.

Cromwell did not escape the war free of inflicted injury. Significantly for those interested in the personal heroism of Cromwell, two accounts of injury of Cromwell in the major battles of

[92] Sir William Dugdale, *A Short View of the Late Troubles in England* (Oxford, 1681), 110.

the First English Civil War provide historians with the critical representations of these injuries, as well as advance consideration of Cromwell's reputation in the eyes of his enemies and his companions. The first description comes from biographer and poet turned soldier John Vicars, in his work *God's Ark Overtopping the World's Waves*:

> Our men went on in several bodies singing Psalms… Colonel Cromwell well fell with brave resolution upon the Enemy, immediately after Dragooners had given him the first volley, yet they were so nimble as that within half pistol shot they gave him another. His horse was killed under him at the first charge and fell down upon him; and, as he rose up, he was knocked down again…but afterwards he recovered a poor horse in a soldier's hands, and bravely mounted himself again. Truly, this first charge was so home-given and performed with so much admirable courage and resolution by our troops that the Enemy stood not another.[93]

Vicars is a particularly intriguing figure in this case. He was a faithful Presbyterian man, who strongly opposed Independents, the party which Cromwell associated himself. Yet his volumes of text on the war portrayed the Parliamentarians "in a heroic light," while "he is scathing in his presentation of the Royalists, and emphatic in asserting divine providence on the parliamentarian side." Vicars even produced eulogies of Cromwell and the other Parliamentarian leaders.[94] The account of Cromwell's gallant return to the action of battle is portrayed with obvious envy and respect for Cromwell.

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[93] John Vicars, *Magnalia Dei Anglicana. Or, Englands Parliamentary Chronicle,* Vol. 3, *God's Ark Overtopping the World's Waves* (London, 1646), 45.

[94] Julia Gasper, "Vicars, John (1580-1652)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Last modified January 2008.

This event, which could even be considered a near death experience, apparently had no effect on the consciousness and body of Cromwell. Cromwell, after having his horse abruptly killed and having the carcass allegedly fall onto his body, simply performed the modern day equivalent of "shrugging-off" this brush with death and returned to the action of the battle, which was ultimately a victory for the Parliamentary forces. This story would become one of many which would help produce Cromwell's reputation for heroic grace among his allies. Support from Cromwell's soldiers also was a trademark of his reputation.

The account of his injury and heroic return at the infamous Battle of Marston Moor in July of 1644 provides another depiction of Cromwell's bravery and heroism in the face of imminent danger. This is also the earliest documented case of the major injury inflicted upon Cromwell during the war. The Earl of Clarendon described the injury as "above the shoulders," but there is uncertainty as to whom or what caused the wound.[95] According to Fraser, Parliamentarian Bulstrode Whitelocke attributed the wound to a careless pistol shot from one of his own men, which would have been defined as friendly-fire. However, the more likely cause was a stab wound from a sword, which Royalist Colonel Marcus Trevor took credit for. For treatment of this injury, Cromwell was sent off to a neighboring cottage to have the wound dressed. Cromwell's value to the army likely led to quick treatment of the wound and therefore prevented any further damage from blood loss of inflection. Although it was a neck wound, it would not prove serious and Cromwell made a speedy return to the action and, in due course, led his cavalry unit to a resounding victory.

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[95] Clarendon, *The History*, Vol. 3, 375.

The Earl of Clarendon once again serves as our narrator, as this account came from his text on the history of the English civil wars. Clarendon's account seems unbiased to Cromwell, especially given their past history. The Royalists' role as the losers of the battle may also contribute to a lack of scorn or even a softening of Cromwell's part in the victory. Reflecting upon the battle, Joshua Sprigg remarked this about Cromwell: "It was observed God was with him and he began to be renowned."[96] Divine Providence, according to those around Cromwell, radiated from him and led to his success. Cromwell believed the same, as was exhibited by his attitude at the Battle of Naseby. It is worth mentioning that it was perhaps this feeling of Providence which allowed Cromwell to cope with some of the close calls he experienced in his military career. This is evident at some points more than others, but one episode in which Cromwell is entirely faithful to this principal is at the death of his son.

The coping power of Providence was certainly evident in Cromwell's handling of the death of his son Oliver. "In the early weeks of the year young Oliver Cromwell died at Newport Pagnell," Bennett chronicles, "Cromwell had probably left the area by the time his son died of small pox, a garrison-town disease. He was later to say that it cut him to the heart, although there are no contemporary letters dealing with the death of Oliver directly."[97] However, in the wake of Marston Moor later in the same year, Cromwell did compose a letter to his brother-in-law Valentine Walton, in which he referred to his loss. "Sir, God hath taken away your eldest son by a cannon-shot. It brake his leg. We were necessitated to have cut it off, whereof he died. Sir, you know my trials this way; but the Lord supported me with this: that the Lord took him into the

[96] Joshua Sprigg and Nathaniel Fiennes. *Anglia Rediviva, Englands Recovery* (London, 1647), 12.
[97] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 75-76.

happiness we all pant after and live for."[98] Based upon this letter, Cromwell relied heavily on his faith to cope with loss. Another element of his coping mechanism was his total investment in the war effort.

In association with previously mentioned illness which befell the Parliamentarian soldiers in November of 1645, there was a rumor spreading around the Royalist camp of Cromwell's affliction. : "Cromwell is either dead or soe desperately sicke of the bloody fluxe, that he is for the present uselesse, and must be soe long if he recovers at all."[99] By this point in the war, the Royalists were in need of some major assistance if they were to be victorious. This story, had it proven true, would have provided them with the spark they needed. This speaks volumes about Cromwell's reputation after nearly four years of war, and it shows a transition from a stress on madness to physical ill-health in accounts of the opposition.

Such growing fame and recognition influenced consideration of Cromwell's mental constitution as well, as evidenced by two more outbursts, occurring during the war. First, it is necessary to return to an incident in which Cromwell's temper once again got the better of him. In the Ely Cathedral in January of 1644, the Reverend Mr. Hitch frequently held a choir-service. Cromwell himself was apparently fond of music, but he found the music performed here to be offensive for unknown reasons. Cromwell therefore warned Mr. Hitch that if the music was not discontinued, he and his soldiers would arrive to force the issue. Mr. Hitch ignored the warnings and thus Cromwell arrived to enforce his decree in person. John Walker, biographer and author of *Sufferings of the Clergy*, recounts what transpired next:

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[98] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 287.
[99] McMains, *The Death of Oliver Cromwell*, 62.

> Cromwell, with a party of soldiers attended by the rabble, came into the church in time of divine service, with his hat on; and directing himself to Mr. Hitch, said 'I am a man under authority and am commanded to dismiss this assembly.' Upon which Mr. Hitch made a pause; but Cromwell and the rabble passing up towards the communion table, Mr. Hitch proceeded with the service; at which Cromwell returned; and laying his hand on his sword in a passion, bid Mr. Hitch leave off his fooling and come down; and so drove out the whole congregation.[100]

Walker was a clergyman and ecclesiastical historian. Therefore Cromwell's interruption of the services and verbal bullying of the minister likely did not sit well with him. Walker is portraying the event secondhand, since he was born thirty years after the incident occurred.

This episode was likely retold and highly stressed by opposition Royalists. By the time this event occurred, Cromwell's star was on the rise. Therefore, whether true or false, any story of capricious nature would be a tool for the Royalists to utilize against him. This episode, in which Cromwell was directly threatening a religious officer, was likely included in building the case for a mentally unstable Cromwell. This event can be considered another unrestrained outburst, which a controlled and politically savvy Cromwell would not commit. Since Ely was the location of this episode, it leaves us to wonder if the aspect of revenge was a part of this odd exchange of hostilities, as was the case with Bernard. Perhaps an undocumented dispute with Hitch during Cromwell's residence in Ely contributed to the tension in Walker's account of the dispute.

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[100] John Walker, *The Sufferings of the Clergy during the Great Rebellion* (London, 1862), 23.

In the case of Bernard, Cromwell wrote a letter to his old nemesis during his time back in Huntingdon, which was in the winter between 1642 and 1643. "It's true, Sir, I know you have been wary in your carriages: be not too confident thereof. Subtlety may deceive you; integrity never will…I hope you will give no cause. If you do, I must be pardoned what my relation to the public calls for."[101] This letter accompanied orders from Cromwell to look into some of Bernard's political activities, as Bernard was believed to be involved with the Royalists in one way or another. The letter comes across as threatening in tone, and leads us to question if Cromwell was one to hold a grudge. To carry this type of lasting anger does not help the image of Cromwell as a peaceful and stable individual. Since is letter comes directly from his pen, there is no historical bias or interpretation being included. This was a passionately forward and unhinged Cromwell at his best.

The most prominent and most widely publicized account of this version of Cromwell comes from his argument with the Earl of Manchester, his commanding general for the majority of the last year. Beginning in the spring of 1644, Cromwell had begun to resent the sluggish actions of Edward Montagu, the 2nd Earl of Manchester, including his failure to follow the beaten Royalist forces following their defeat at Marston Moor. Cromwell, according to Abbott, first expressed his distaste with Manchester's actions, or lack thereof, in a letter to Walton on September 5, 1644. "We have some amongst us much slow in action; if we could all intend our own ends less, and our ease too, our business in this Army would go on wheels for expedition…Pardon me that I am thus troublesome. I write but seldom; it gives me a little ease to pour my mind, in the midst of calumnies, into the bosom of a friend."[102] The inaction of

[101] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 210.
[102] Ibid, 292.

Manchester drove Cromwell into this "troublesome" state of mind, and forced action on Cromwell's part. This marks the beginning of a major rivalry, which began on the battlefield but was finished in Parliament.

In the autumn of 1644, Cromwell brought his complaints against Manchester before Parliament. By this point, Manchester had confessed his desire to end the war altogether, which infuriated Cromwell and led to further verbal diatribe against Manchester. Manchester, in retaliation for Cromwell's accusations, called Cromwell: "mutinous and defiant" and added "that he plotted the overthrow of crown and aristocracy, that he favored the wilder and more dangerous of the sects, that his language was fierce and unrestrained, if not actually dangerous to the state, while it was in keeping with Cromwell's character, and no doubt was true in part or altogether, was of no avail."[103] Once Manchester discovered that he needed to defend his reputation against Cromwell, he likely knew the route which he could take. "Fierce and unrestrained" were the most fitting adjectives to describe Cromwell. Drawing upon his verbal attacks against Bernard, Mandeville (Manchester, before he obtained this title), Hitch, and now Manchester again, enemies of Cromwell had the evidence to make a clear case for mental instability, as Manchester does here.

Manchester additionally critiques Cromwell for the makeup of his own army. Cromwell, who was a stanch member of the Independent Party at this time, was accused by Manchester of filling his own ranks with solely Independent soldiers. Cromwell did nothing to deny this allegation and responded by criticizing the Scots present in Manchester's own army, by exclaiming that: "In the way they carry themselves now… I would as soon draw my sword

[103] Ibid, 313.

against them as against any in the King's army."[104] The Scots already despised Cromwell because he had not given them any credit for the army's victory at Marston Moor. Cromwell, again, seems to be unable to restrain himself by making these bold and violent statements. Manchester used this passage from Cromwell in preparing his own defense, in which he portrayed the newly popular war hero as insane and "wild."

Continuing his defense, Manchester produced the following statement, supposedly told to him by Cromwell: "My Lord, if you will stick firm to honest men, you shall find yourself at the head of an army that shall give the law to king and Parliament." Clarendon, who recounts the story of the exchange, also notes that these comments "startled those who had always an aversion to Cromwell and had observed the fierceness of his nature, and the language he commonly used when there was any mention of peace."[105] Manchester's statement of what Cromwell had told him is likely true. Cromwell did possess a very aggressive mindset at this point in time. Additionally, Manchester now wanted peace, whereas before, he had fought for the same cause as Cromwell. Therefore, this additional piece of text on the opinions of those avid opponents of Cromwell comes off as hypocritical, and cannot be viewed as fully credible evidence of the mental state of Cromwell. This was a case of the politically conservative Parliamentarians, versus the more liberal minded Parliamentarians. Although Cromwell had become extremely popular in many circles, he had now made enemies out of the Scots, as well as the Lords, who shared Manchester's caution in relation to the war effort. These confrontations are what ultimately pressured Cromwell into his last major ailment of this time frame.

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[104] John Bruce and David Masson, *The Quarrel Between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell: an Episode of the English Civil War*, Vol. 12, Royal Historical Society [London] Publications (New York, 1875), 93.
[105] Clarendon, *The History*, Vol. 3, 184-185.

Following the end of his military duties in the First English Civil War, Cromwell returned to his full time post in Parliament at the beginning of 1647. He quickly became frustrated with the Presbyterian opposition to his Independent agenda of religious toleration. The man whom Archbishop Williams had called "the most dangerous Enemy that his Majesty had," was now powerless to push his agenda in a supposedly allied Parliament.[106] This disillusionment with his lack of power in Parliament would haunt him for the remainder of his political career.

Cromwell quickly became discouraged and experienced a period of deep depression at the thought of returning to a Parliament in which he had no voice. "Oliver's mood sank by degrees into a depression very different from the triumphant exaltation of the military campaigns."[107] By August he wrote to Fairfax "with real despair:" "Things are not well in Scotland: would they were in England! We are full of faction and worse."[108] While events in England were truly chaotic, Cromwell's mood appeared, as Fraser notes, sink by degrees into a depression and great anxieties which Cromwell had not displayed since his financial woes during the early campaigns of the civil war. Again a point can be made for Bennett's manic depressive diagnosis, since Cromwell seems to have experienced extremes of happiness, anger, and in this case, emotional melancholy.

This combination of a muddled political environment in England, which was in the midst of Shuttle Diplomacy in order to get custody of the king from Scotland, as well as new factions forming in Parliament which would eventually become the Second English Civil War, caused Cromwell to profess an attitude of defeat. Cromwell feared the factions in England, as well as resented the fact that---even with enhanced personal power and influence---he nevertheless was

[106] John Hackett, *Bishop Hacket's Memoirs of the life of Archbishop Williams,* Vol. 2 (London, 1715), 212.
[107] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 182.
[108] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, 410.

still not a force to be reckoned with, mainly because of his reputation with the lords in Parliament.

Such anxieties culminated in his final illness covered in this chapter. In January of 1647, Cromwell stopped attending Parliament and did not return until late February or early March. Cromwell's account of his illness is documented in a personal letter to Sir Thomas Fairfax.

> It hath pleased God to raise me out of a dangerous sickness; and I do most willingly acknowledge that the Lord hath (in this visitation) exercised the bowels of a Father toward me. I received in myself the sentence of death, that I might learn to trust in him that raiseth from the dead, and have no confidence in the flesh. It's a blessed thing to die daily, for what is there in this world to be accounted of. The best men according to the flesh, and things, are lighter than vanity.[109]

This episode of illness draws religious comparisons to the personal crisis Cromwell experienced from 1628-31, which his Puritan contemporaries considered to be his conversion. Fraser cites Abbott in labeling the illness in question "an impostume in the head (an infected swelling which we should now call an abscess)." Fraser, in the spirit of Cromwell's mental health, calls into question the reason for this abscess, a possible sign of stress in the medical environment of today.

> There must be some question whether psychosomatic pressures did not at least add to his collapse…The delicate relationship between psychosomatic illness and physical disease is of course famously difficult to analyze with any precision. It is clear that Cromwell's ill-health had an original nervous strain in it, hence the early crisis at Huntingdon,

[109] Ibid, 429.

> breakdown and the consultation with Sir Theodore Mayerne…But we can believe with safety that these troubles, showing every sign of worsening as the year wore on, worked heavily on one of Cromwell's nervous temperament and produced at least a disturbed and run-down condition in which he was highly prone to receive infection.[110]

This continuous wearing down of Cromwell's temperament will be made evident in later chapters. This particular illness is undoubtedly a result of Cromwell's depressed state from his difficulties in Parliament and with England's uncertain future.

For Cromwell, the years 1640 through 1646 represented a major period of political, economic, and social change, which would leave Cromwell with a lasting reputation as a mentally unstable and overly passionate dissenter, as well as a courageous and unrelenting force on the field of battle. While major physical illnesses were not yet a factor in Cromwell's life, his shortcomings in Parliament in 1646 manifested as a fairly severe illness at the beginning of 1647, which showcases the role of psychosomatic illness in the life of Cromwell. According to Cromwell's critics, signs of mental illness plagued Cromwell in the form of angry, uncontrolled outbursts in stressful situations, manic moments, both high and low. His allies more positively saw Cromwell as having overcome his illness and as having a strong desire to argue his cause. Either way, this time frame marked a period of heightened success for Cromwell, from which he received both good and bad publicity. The next six years in Cromwell's rise to the Protectorate would yield similar medical challenges.

[110] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 186.

Chapter 3

Political Instability: Cromwell's Administrative Frustrations, 1647-1653

Between 1647 and 1653, Cromwell resided in a time of political instability and significant decision-making. Although the First English Civil War ended, questions of governmental structure now took center stage for Parliament and the newly popular Lieutenant-General Cromwell. The question of what to do with Charles I, the perpetrator of the war, plagued Cromwell to the point of episodic manic relapses and further resulting outbursts, directed at those who opposed him. Even after the execution of Charles had taken place, the Royalist uprisings provided an excuse for Cromwell to leave his post in Parliament and return to battle. From 1649 through 1651, Cromwell participated in two significant military campaigns: military expeditions to Ireland and Scotland to suppress Royalist strongholds. Through these campaigns, Cromwell continued to build his reputation, but unfortunately he also suffered further physical and mental decline. Cromwell, fifty years of age in 1649, experienced illnesses which would ultimately lead to his death less than a decade later.

From these illnesses, historians are able to examine Cromwell's melancholic mindset (a condition that manifested itself on a regular basis). Much of Cromwell's melancholic sentiment at the time was directed at his son, Richard. The failures of two separate Parliaments, the Long Parliament, which included its purged remnant the Rump Parliament of the Commonwealth, and his beloved Barebones Parliament of saints, also weighed heavily on his consciousness. Characterizations and reactions to Cromwell's illnesses act like a barometer in gauging what the

English public thought of him. Obviously, upon false news of Cromwell's death, his Royalist antagonists celebrated. However, the general feeling within the Commonwealth's Parliament from such news was panic. Commonwealth-era Parliamentarians viewed the death of Cromwell as a devastating setback to the stability and governance of the nation. These reactions show the polarizing effect Cromwell had on the politics of the era, especially in the Commonwealth Period, preceding the establishment of the Protectorate. The period between 1647 and 1653 marks the final stretch of time before Cromwell ascended to the uniquely powerful position of Lord Protector, considered essentially equal to the monarchy in the minds of many of Cromwell's English contemporaries. This time period is, in turn, important to understanding what ailments, physical and mental, Cromwell carried with him into the position of Lord Protector.

An important theme in this chapter is the highly unstable and contentious political environment in England that served as the backdrop for Cromwell's illnesses. The environment in question emerged from key events of the timeframe, including the Second English Civil War, the execution of King Charles I, and the establishment of the Republic. Cromwell was integrally involved in these major political events and all impacted his physical and mental health. Familiarity with these events is important to understanding the immensely challenging setting in which England's political elite operated.

Following the closing of the First English Civil War, there was a power vacuum left by the capture of Charles I, held by the Scots. Three English factions vied for political power in the absence of the monarch. These factions were the Royalists, still loyal to the Stuart family; the Independents, consisting of the New Model Army; and the Presbyterians of the English

Parliament. Charles would again be the instigator of a war. Following his release by the Scots to the English Parliament for a large settlement, Charles escaped and was able to recruit the Scots to invade England in 1648. In association with the invasion, Royalist uprisings took place across England, which required Cromwell and the New Model Army to suppress. The victory of the army led to a reevaluation of attempts to negotiate with the king over the restoration of the monarchy. At this point, the gap between the interests of Parliament and New Model Army became much larger. Parliament voted in favor of continued negotiations with Charles, while Cromwell and the New Model Army argued against this.

The result of this fundamental disagreement was Pride's Purge. On December sixth and seventh of 1648, members of Parliament who were not supportive of the military were forcibly removed from their seats. This military coup produced the Rump Parliament which Cromwell would later dissolve angrily. This purge was also successful in continuing to widen the gap between the sentiments of Parliament, the army and the Royalists and created a tense political situation which dogged and impaired Cromwell until the end of his life. In the more immediate future, this event also did not bode well for Charles.

Even after the purge and the army's forceful show of strength, support for a trial for Charles' crimes against England was weak. Only sixty-eight Parliamentarians attended Charles' trial in January of 1649. Fifty-nine commissioners, including Cromwell, signed his death warrant and Charles was executed on January 30, 1649. Charles' execution added to the political tumult and uncertainty. With the destruction of the traditional monarchy, questions now arose about the future of England.

Following Charles' execution, a republic known as the Commonwealth of England was declared. The Rump Parliament held both legislative and executive powers, while a small Council of State was created to handle some executive functions as well. Cromwell was notably a member of both; at least until the Rump was dissolved. Disagreement still plagued the new government. The Leveller movement, which was a sect within the army which sought greater freedom for the people (including religious freedom and popular sovereignty), frequently butted heads with Cromwell and the other Grandees, or senior officers of the landed gentry who were opposed to the Levellers' radical proposals. Disagreement between the two groups began in 1647 when the "Agreement of the People" manifestos proposed (these manifestos called for constitutional changes to the English government). The manifestos arguably set off the infamous Putney Debates in 1647, during which the future format of the English government was debated. The tension between the Levellers and Cromwell's Grandees continued well into 1649; featuring numerous mutinies on the part of the Levellers.

The regrouping of Royalists in Ireland led to Cromwell's campaign in the country. Following Cromwell's successful suppression of the Royalists in Ireland, the Scots declared their loyalty to Charles II. Cromwell then led a final military campaign into Scotland. Following Cromwell's victory, he returned to the extremely unstable political environment of England. Even the most composed politician would have struggled in such a chaotic and rebellious setting. For Cromwell, who had a tendency for unchecked passion and abruptness, events such as the

execution of Charles, renewed military campaigns, and assuming the post of Lord Protector all put an immense strain on his mental and physical health.[111]

It is important to note, before going onto the evidence of Cromwell's outbursts from this time period, that Cromwell himself was acutely aware that he experienced these episodes of passionate rage, manic behavior, and melancholic sentiment:

> During one of his speeches at Reading, Cromwell had spoken frankly of the other side to his dual nature, that impulsive streak which often succeeded these periods of uncertainty. He was one who was apt on occasion to be very swift in his affections and desires, believing dangers to be imaginary rather than real "and truly I am very often judged for one that goes too fast that way."[112]

Fraser highlights here Cromwell's impulsive and rash manner. Cromwell's opponents criticized him as aggressive and prone to reckless fighting. For Cromwell, however, this statement shows that he was in fact aware of this side of his personality and that he was prone to losing his temple. Moreover, Cromwell scorns this tendency of his enemies to demonize his character because of these passionate outbursts. This was an aspect of Cromwell's personality which continued during this time period.

The first major instance of Cromwell's lack of self-control is shown in his dealings with King Charles I. Specifically, an aspect of revenge, as seen previously with Bernard at Huntingdon, is worth closer examination. At the beginning of negotiations with the King, Cromwell originally sought a peaceful agreement and met with him on a couple occasions, in

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[111] For further reading on the political environment of England from 1646-1648, see Robert Ashton's *Counter-Revolution: The Second Civil War and Its Origins*, 1646-1648.
[112] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 206.

order to secure that agreement. Cromwell legitimately thought that the king wanted to negotiate. However, following the events of the Putney Debates, this was obviously not the case. The debates, which took place between the Levellers and Grandees, represented the beginning of breakdown in communication between the king and the Grandees. During these debates, the Levellers expressed interest in a trial in order to bring Charles to justice for his role in the First English Civil War. The Grandees, fearing a total breakdown of army discipline in relation to this question, suspended the debates and attempted to obtain control of the army before continuing the debates. It was during this time that Charles, fearful of the Levellers' intensions, escaped from custody. While many argued that Cromwell instigated Charles' escape, this claim is doubtful, since it would not be long before Cromwell's resolve to negotiate with the king ended. After the king's escape from Hampton Court on November 11, 1647, he negotiated the aforementioned deal with the Scots. Once Cromwell heard of the upcoming invasion, his patience with the king ran out. From this point on, Cromwell expressed feelings of hatred and betrayal in his letters and speeches regarding the king.

In a speech in the House of Commons on January 3, 1648, Cromwell is documented to have declared that "Thou shalt not suffer a hypocrite to reign," after which he placed his hand on his sword, indicating strong feeling and imminent action.[113] Additionally, Cromwell composed a letter to be sent to Colonel Robert Hammond, the governor of the Isle of Wight, in which a vengeful tone is taken. "The House of Commons is very sensible of the King's dealings, and of our brethren's in this late transaction. You should do well if you have anything that may discover juggling, to search it out, and let us know it."[114] The "King's dealings" portion of this text is

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[113] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 229.
[114] Ibid, 577.

referring to Charles attempting to negotiate with the Scots, instead of Parliament and the Army. To historians, this letter evidences a kind of betrayal on the part of Charles towards Cromwell, who in turn foreclosed any chance of a negotiated settlement with the king. Obviously Charles' betrayal of Cromwell's trust created an ideal situation for Cromwell to showcase his infamous anger, which in this situation may have been meant to demonstrate what happened to those who tried to double-cross him. The second large-scale civil war that followed Charles' negotiation with the Scots certainly further amplified Cromwell's anger toward the monarch.

Cromwell's revenge upon Charles and the accompanying rage associated with it is observable during the signing of the king's death warrant in January of 1649. The prospect of the signing of the warrant for the death of the king allegedly drove Cromwell into an enthusiastic frenzy, to a point where he physically forced those Parliamentarians who were hesitant to sign the document. In regards to Richard Ingoldsby, initially hesitant to sign the document, Cromwell is noted to have run at him, taken him by the hand to the warrant, and cried out that "though he had escaped him all the while, he should now sign that paper as well as they."[115] This account, from Clarendon, was accompanied by accounts from Thomas Waite, Colonel Ewer, and others, all declaring that Cromwell forced numerous individuals to sign the warrant in a wildly exuberant manner. However, accounts of these stories being fabricated out of hatred for Cromwell also exist, including Lucy Hutchinson, in an attempt to save her husband from trial for the offense.[116] Morrill discredits the entirety of these accounts as simply legend, claiming that the only useful account from the whole regicide episode is the famous account from Philip Warwick,

[115] Clarendon, *History*, 222.
[116] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 287.

in which Cromwell looks at the body of Charles and utters "cruel necessity."[117] Either way, many accounts point to Cromwell's desire to execute the King. Although he was strongly against the execution originally, Cromwell changed his stance based on Charles' attempt to double-cross him. This would not be the last time that his passions drove him to a boiling point, especially within situations of double-dealing.

Cromwell's dealings with the Rump, as well as the future Barebones Parliament, were sources of considerable angst and irritation for him from 1648 until the Protectorate. This was mainly due to the fact that Cromwell still had large pockets of enemies scattered throughout England's political landscape. For example, the Levellers were strongly against Cromwell because they believed that he secretly desired to be the next king of England, following the execution of Charles. The Levellers were unhappy with the new government of the Commonwealth and therefore verbally attacked Cromwell frequently to argue their position. The *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, a weekly Royalist sympathizing publication written by Marchamont Nedham, as well as the testimony of Leveller John Lilburne, provide us with a couple examples of propaganda relating to Cromwell's unstable nature.

In the edition of *Mercurius Pragmaticus,* published on February 27, 1649, Cromwell was targeted for an alleged conflict with Henry Marten and his "levelling crew." In the text, Cromwell is referred to as "Ruby Nose" and was said to have drawn his dagger.[118] This anecdote, whether true or false, drew upon Cromwell's reputation for having a forceful temper. It is not surprising that his Royalist enemies, especially in the wake of Charles' execution, would attempt to exploit this previously known weakness. Based upon his past infractions, the readers

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[117] Morrill, *Oliver Cromwell*.
[118] *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, February 27, 1649.

would naturally assume that Cromwell would utilize such violent actions in order to make his own point heard. The addition of "Ruby Nose," a common insult resulting from the story of Cromwell as a brewer, provides historians with the Royalist perception of Cromwell, as well as ideas of personal reputation and image intended to undermine his character. *The Hunting of the Foxes from Newmarket and Triploe Heath to Whitehall by Five Small Beagles*, another pamphlet from March of 1649, argues that Cromwell is now seeking the kingship himself and again utilizes the image of Cromwell as deranged and unstable. "…He will weep, howl and repent, even while he doth smite you under the first rib."[119] Cromwell is portrayed as a tyrant, which was important for the Royalists and Levellers to demonstrate at a time of much political uncertainty.

John Lilburne also provided his own personal account of Cromwell's unhappiness, in the form of supposedly private ranting:

> I tell you sir, you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them or they will break you; yea, and bring all the guilt of the blood and treasure shed and spent in this kingdom upon your heads and shoulders, and frustrate and make void all that work that, with so many years' industry, toil, and pains, you have done, and so render you to all rational men in the world as the most contemptible generation of silly, low-spirited men in the earth to be broken and routed by such a despicable, contemptible generation of men as they are…I tell you again, you are necessitated to break them.[120]

The above passage provides further evidence of an unrestrained Cromwell---and a weak and broken Cromwell too. Cromwell's reference to breaking his enemies into submission reveals

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[119] *The Hunting of the Foxes from Newmarket and Triploe Heath to Whitehall by Five Small Beagles*, March 1649.
[120] Mildred Ann Gibb, *John Lilburne, the Leveller: A Christian Democrat* (London: L. Drummond, 1947), 259.

obvious frustration with dysfunction in government. Lilburne may have exaggerated the extant of Cromwell's anger to enhance the story. However, as Cromwell's stock continued to rise through the military ranks and his opposition began to shrink, these malicious verbal diatribes dissipated. The defeat of the Levellers and Royalists in military campaigns also helped quiet his opposition.

In turning to the military campaigns of this time frame, the most useful anecdotes referencing fits of anger are drawn from Cromwell's campaign in Ireland. First, it is important to note that Cromwell, as with many Englishmen of the time, was not fond of the Irish. They comprised, to him, a barbaric race and the prevalence of the Catholic religion among the population likely angered Cromwell.

However, there is also a role for personal health to play in the rage directed against the Irish. On the trip over to Ireland, beginning on July 11, 1649, Cromwell is said to have suffered the effects of seasickness. Hugh Peter, being in the presence of Cromwell on the ship, described him as being as seasick as anyone he had seen in his life.[121] This was an ominous start to Cromwell's Irish campaign, and its effects on Cromwell's mental state seemed substantial. As Fraser speculates: "It is true that Cromwell's health throughout his entire nine months odd in Ireland was poor and this no doubt had the accustomed influence of such inconveniences in depressing-or exacerbating- his spirits."[122] Cromwell, already an emotionally charged and providential individual, likely took this illness as a sign, or even justification for his behavior at the town of Drogheda. While this is a purely speculative rationale, Cromwell's behavior during

[121] Raymond Phineas Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peters, 1598-1660* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1954), 353.
[122] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 326.

the siege would prove legendary and lead to the questioning of his motives. It was at the siege of Drogheda that Cromwell experienced his most violent outburst yet.

"Cromwell," in the words of Fraser, "lost his self-control at Drogheda, literally saw red…and was seized with one of those sudden brief and cataclysmic rages which would lead him later to dissolve Parliament by force."[123] Cromwell's unrestrained fury at the siege was caused by the difficulty he had in capturing the occupants of the town. Following a failed attempt to break through the walls, Cromwell himself led troops through a breach in order to allow time for the remainder of the army to enter. Once this had been accomplished, a group of defenders led by the Royalist governor of Drogheda, Sir Arthur Aston, circled back to a fortification at Mill Mount. After the situation seemed insurmountably bleak, the Royalist group asked for surrender, but was denied. Cromwell, "in a white heat of passion…ordered all to be put to sword."[124] Although Cromwell attributed his actions to the laws of war and his direction from God, Fraser expresses little doubt that Cromwell lost control in this instance. A blind fury simply took over, as Cromwell ordered the execution of unarmed men, specifically English men, and not the barbaric Irish he hated. This episode represented a departure from Cromwell's normally merciful nature. Cromwell's letter to Parliament depicting the events notes that he saw the violence as a necessity, but also acknowledges this episode with Aston's men as "being in the heat of action."[125] The lack of remorse in Cromwell's recollection of the event is what drives the scandal surrounding the siege at Drogheda.

Cromwell experienced his next bout of passionate anger in the next military campaign in Scotland. Again, the role of illness plays heavily into this account. At the time, Cromwell was

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[123] Ibid, 340
[124] Ibid, 337.
[125] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 126-127.

involved in a dispute with a local couple over a collection of records. Lord Warriston and his wife sought the return of the records through the form of a letter to Cromwell, which reportedly sent Cromwell into a fever. “Aubrey asserted wildly afterwards that he had been in such a rage (or pain) that he had pistolled two commanders who had come to his room.”[126] This account describes Cromwell in a debilitated rage over his illness.

The timing for this episode of anger is more important to this overall discussion. Cromwell was now at the end of an illness, which had lasted on and off for approximately five months. The effects of two foreign campaigns upon his physical health had now begun to interfere with his mental wellbeing and vice-versa. The reliability of this account is brought into question though, since the man who produced this account, writer John Aubrey, had strong ties to Royalist sources, including Charles II himself. However, Aubrey’s account of an increasingly violent Cromwell precedes one of the most notable episodes of aggression and subsequent fit of rage in his life.

Following Cromwell’s military expeditions to Ireland and Scotland, he was engaged in the debate over the dissolution of the ineffective Rump Parliament. Significantly regarding the matter of Cromwell’s own personal therapy, he became involved in numerous campaigns in order to keep his mind clear, in mitigate mental strain. He was accorded Captain-Generalship of the Army, and became a member of the Council of State, the Irish Committee, the Scottish Committee, the Committee for Trade, and others of less importance. Anxious to achieve a political settlement, Cromwell was ecstatic when the Rump reportedly became involved in discussions to step down in April 1653 (as per Cromwell’s plan to assemble a Parliament of

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[126] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 381.

influential and religious men to guide the nation). Reflecting upon the apparent resolution, Cromwell wrote: “And upon this we had great satisfaction, and we did acquiesce, and had hope, if our expedient would receive a loving debate, that the next day we should have some such issue thereof as would have given satisfaction to all.”[127]

Unfortunately for Cromwell, the following morning, the vast majority of the Rump met in opposition to this proposal and purportedly began discussing the Parliament’s prolongation. Cromwell did not respond well to what he viewed as double-crossers and therefore became violent in word, as well as in action. Three separate accounts of Cromwell’s rage come from George Whitelocke, Algernon Sidney, and Edmund Ludlow, all present during the event at Cromwell’s home at Whitehall. Calm words quickly turned to rage, which made him speak “with so much passion and discomposure of mind as if he had been distracted.” He also began walking back and forth, kicking the ground and shouting at old enemies and referring to them as “Whoremasters” or drunkards. Even Cromwell knew that his language was unacceptable. “Perhaps you think this is not parliamentary language...I confess it is not, neither are you to expect any such from me…It is not fit that you should sit as a Parliament any longer. You have sat long enough unless you had done more good.”[128]

This episode marks the pinnacle of Cromwell’s reputation for furious outbursts. An outburst of this magnitude had never overcome Cromwell before. One could argue that the violent slaughtering of soldiers at Drogheda was similar in nature. However, this was Parliament, a body in which individuals did not speak with one another with such violent passion. Even prior outbursts never featured language such as this, with no regard for the implications. By this point

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[127] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 59.
[128] Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1656*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 264.

in his career, in which he had obtained new levels of popularity and a large following, it is possible that he no longer feared retribution. However, this theory can be debunked by the fact that Cromwell never showed this type of erratic behavior again in his life. A potential argument could be made that he simply lost control, like many do at points of high tension or in the face of opposition. But as Fraser states, these accounts of his behavior, at least being observed at the time, point to something else:

> Cromwell acted in a fit of uncontrollable passion, the kind of sudden berserk fury of which his career provides a number of bouts, including the famous massacre of Drogheda. In each case, he felt himself suddenly assailed by some unlooked for piece of aggression or double-dealing, and reacted accordingly. His language alone in Parliament, the accusations of whoremastering, to say nothing of the physical manifestations of his rage…point to some deep-seated disturbance beyond ordinary frustration or mere exasperation.[129]

Fraser connects this outburst with Cromwell's on-going struggle with a mental disorder. While in control of the symptoms the majority of the time, Cromwell's intense resentment and anger toward the ineptitude of the Rump Parliament lead to this loss of control. In this case, his resentment and anger toward the ineptitude of the Rump Parliament lead to this loss of control. Therefore, it can be asserted that Cromwell struggled with this condition for the entirety of his documented life. The biased accounts of passionate and dangerous bouts of anger can be validated. Also relevant to this validation of mental distress are the cases of mania Cromwell experienced, in the form of extreme happiness, sadness, and anger. In order to continue this

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[129] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 421-422.

probe into Cromwell's psyche during his pre-Protectorate years, it is crucial to review accounts of these emotional highs and lows. Fortunately, numerous documented accounts exist; complied by allies and enemies, as well as in his own personal letters and speeches.

The first noticeable trend, upon closer examination of these episodes, is the fact that as Cromwell gained more notoriety and acclaim, the accounts of manic behavior increase in number. This time period contains more accounts of this type of ailment than the previous one. For example, accounts of Cromwell's manic emotional highs, in the form of exuberant and unnecessary laughing, provide the origins of Cromwell's distress. For example, in a discussion with Edmund Ludlow over the issue of monarchical government, Cromwell exhibited some very odd behavior on the dire topic. In his memoirs, Ludlow recalls how no one, including Cromwell, would provide him with definitive answers as to how leadership would proceed following Charles I's execution. According to the Cambridge magazine, a secondary source which discusses the alleged incident, the story goes that Cromwell threw a pillow at the head of Ludlow and began to laugh, in what only could be considered a manic tone, given the grim nature of the situation.[130] This demonstrated not only that Cromwell was unsure of what was to come for England, but also that the tension of the situation was plaguing him. Ludlow was fed up with such uncertainty; therefore he may have sought to produce this image of Cromwell as unstable in order to urge others into action. However, the account is famously repeated, and Fraser addresses the laughter as "manic in origin," based on the action of beginning a pillow fight at this inappropriate moment.[131] Episodes of this nature are likely what Bennett references in relation to his diagnosis of Cromwell as a manic depressive. Emotional highs similar to this, occurring in

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[130] David Nelson Beach, "Thomas Hughes, Co-Operator," *The Cambridge Magazine,* February 1896, 91.
[131] Fraser, *Lord Protector,* 232.

direct correlation with tense moments or topics, yield opinions of this nature. The future of England was no doubt an issue Cromwell thought about very frequently. Based upon this response, it produced a lot of anxiety.

This incident predates a similar episode, retold by Cromwell's fellow regicide, Thomas Waite. According to Waite, during the trial of Charles I, Cromwell was seen laughing, smiling, and heckling while the trial proceeded.[132] Waite's comments, possibly taken after the regicide, may have been biased because of the significant pressure Cromwell put on him to sign the warrant for Charles' death. But, in relation to the previous account of Cromwell's manically upbeat behavior when faced with a significant dilemma, this episode becomes more believable---especially to those enemies of Cromwell, who assumed that he had eyes on the throne.

Cromwell was undoubtedly troubled by the execution of the king, as well as the resulting consequences for England's future. Another justification on his part may have been the factor of revenge, because in his mind, Charles had crossed him. Therefore, even the morbid thought of Charles' death brought him glee. Of additional note, Cromwell experienced far more episodes of melancholy, especially when still physically ailing from two military campaigns in a row.

Two instances arise of Cromwell weeping at the thought of England's ambiguous future. These occasions show a weakened and volatile Cromwell (especially before his enemies). According to Clarendon, "when he (Cromwell) spake of the nation's being to be involved in new troubles, he would weep bitterly, and appear the most afflicted man in the world."[133] Clarendon's comments carry a tone of skepticism about Cromwell's true intentions.

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[132] *State Trials, Cobbett's Complete Collection*, Vol. V (1810), 1212-1216.
[133] Clarendon, *History,* vol. 4, 223.

Cromwell's worry over the future is also present in a later account of weeping in front of his Scottish hosts. Scottish Presbyterian minister Robert Blair recounts that Cromwell's eyes filled with tears as they discussed the idea of organized religion within England, which led Blair to later refer to Cromwell as "a greeting devil."[134] This issue, closer to Cromwell's heart at the time, also shows that Cromwell was struggling with England's future. Not only did Cromwell experience emotional breakdowns in concern over his country's governmental and religious future, but also in regard to its military success.

At the Battle of Dunbar, on September 3, 1650, Cromwell led his extremely outnumbered and significantly ill troops to a victory, which some consider his greatest. However, the night prior to the battle, Cromwell experienced anxiety at a level he had not exhibited before. In his personal memoirs, Ambrose Barnes describes how a servant named Mr. Henry Hudson recalled Cromwell's behavior. "…he [Cromwell] rid all the night before, through the several regiments by torch-light upon a little Scots nag, biting his lip till the blood had ran down his chin, without his perceiving it, his thoughts being busily employed to be ready for the action now at hand."[135] This perception of Cromwell's anxiety before the battle compares with his fit of manic laughter and happiness preceding the Battle of Naseby. Both accounts show that under significant pressure for long periods of time, Cromwell was likely to crack mentally and show it with manic laughter, or extreme anxiety. The state of England during this time likely stressed him to a point of such outbursts and bizarre moments of anxiety such as this. The dissolution of the Rump Parliament also provides further indications of anxiety and even melancholy.

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[134] William Row, *Life of Robert Blair*, Edited by Thomas MacCrie (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1848), 210.
[135] Ambrose Barnes and William Hylton Dyer Longstaffe, *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes* (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1867), 111.

In a letter to an unknown personal friend on the 1st of September, 1652, during the worsening of the crisis between the army and Parliament, Cromwell expressed obvious signs of melancholy. "You absent; Fleetwood is gone; I am left alone -almost so- but not forsaken. Lend me one shoulder. Pray for me."[136] Cromwell was, at this time, still deeply conflicted over the correct course for England's future. Similar melancholic results occurred following the ultimate failure of his innovative Barebones Parliament. Upon the creation of the Barebones Parliament, Cromwell produced a speech including attitudes of happiness and relief at the dissolution of the Rump and the beginning of a new era. "You are as like the forming of God as ever people were," marked the ecstatic nature of Cromwell on this day.[137]

However, following the lack of progress with the Barebones Parliament in the form of political opposition, Cromwell returned to a state of melancholy. In a letter addressed to his friend, Lieutenant-General Charles Fleetwood, he again conveys a sense of loneliness and vulnerability. "Truly I never more needed all help from my Christian friends than now!"[138] Both of these quotations point to a sense of loneliness, brought on by political opposition from the Rump, as well as political failure of his much hoped-for Barebones Parliament. Familial woes, as well as the addition of illness as an instigator, play into the most significant example of Cromwell's melancholic sentiments.

During a significant illness occurring in the Irish town of Ross, which will be discussed later, Cromwell began to discuss, in a melancholic tone, his concerns for his son Richard, who would eventually take his post as Lord Protector upon Oliver's death. Cromwell's comments at Ross portray Richard in a very negative light; especially when compared with his daughter-in-

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[136] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 575-576.
[137] Ibid, 63.
[138] Ibid, 89.

law, Dorothy. In regards to Dorothy's lack of writing and his son's lack of ambition, Cromwell declares irritably: "As for Dick, I do not expect it from him, knowing his idleness, but I am angry with my daughter as a promise-breaker…I desire you to call upon my son to mind the things of God more and more…"[139] Cromwell seemed fearful of Richard's lack of initiative and based upon the religious tone, his lifestyle. Again the idea of loneliness manifests in Cromwell's scolding of his children when they failed to write to him. Later on, again in a letter to Richard Mayor, Richard's father-in-law, Cromwell expressed melancholic concern for Richard. "I hope you give my son good counsel; I believe he needs it. He is in a dangerous time of his age, and it's a very vain world."[140] While Cromwell was no doubt greatly concerned about Richard, much of the force behind his melancholy was rooted in his worry over England's political future.

Further, the Ross letter came at a time of illness, when Cromwell was likely more vulnerable and also unable to commit to significant military work. The second letter was written on July 17, 1650, after the Irish campaign and prior to the Scottish campaign. This would have been a time principally of duties involved with Parliament and the affairs for England's post-monarchical future, which are ultimately responsible for Cromwell's bouts of mania.

Upon reaching fifty years of age, illness in the form of physical ailments became a larger part of Cromwell's life---as well as his life in the eyes of his loyal supporters, enemies, and fellow Parliamentarians. This period witnesses Cromwell weathering numerous illnesses, including the malarial fevers which many have argued eventually led to his death. However, chronologically and in regard to severity of illness, the first significant illness Cromwell received during this time was a severe attack of gout while seizing the strongly fortified Pembroke Castle

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[139] Ibid, 160.
[140] Ibid, 289.

in Wales in May of 1648, during the Second English Civil War. The annoyance of the attack of gout was matched in by the difficulty in seizing the castle, held by the Royalist opposition. The only surviving account of Cromwell's gout comes from a Captain Phillips, who recalls Cromwell being laid up with gout at Lamphey House.[141]

Gout was not an ailment to be treated lightly in the seventeenth-century. Improper treatment often led to the victim being physically handicapped. Gout, according to the Archbishop William Laud, was responsible for the death of James I almost fifty years earlier. "It was the gout, which, by the wrong application of medicines, was driven from his feet to his inward vital parts."[142] James I also was suffering from many other more lethal ailments at the time so this diagnosis is almost certainly incorrect, however the case demonstrates the seriousness of the ailment. Cromwell was restricted to bed rest for a large portion of the seven week siege. Treatments for the illness seemed to have been primarily based upon external remedies, and specifically cooling remedies, to reduce the pain until the condition had subsided, although the famous English physician Thomas Sydenham denounced these treatments. He declared "external remedies to ease the pain of the Gout, I hitherto know none."[143] The mystery surrounding the treatment of gout led to caution by Cromwell's physicians. After the ailment was corrected, Cromwell returned to battle.

Not surprisingly, the most significant physical ailments and injuries took place while Cromwell was on his military campaigns in Ireland and Scotland. "Cromwell's health throughout his entire nine months in Ireland," Fraser writes, "was poor and this no doubt had the accustomed

[141] John Roland Phillips, *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches*, Vol. ii (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 392.
[142] Dr. William Laud, *The Autobiography of Dr. William Laud: Archbishop of Canterbury and Martyr/ Collected from His Remains* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1839), 34.
[143] Thomas Sydenham and George Wallis, *A Treatise of the Gout and Dropsy*, (Philadelphia: 1971), 379.

influence of such inconveniences in depressing –or exacerbating- his spirits."[144] As discussed, the seasickness which began his campaign to Ireland was only a prelude to more sinister illnesses which incapacitated Cromwell while in Ireland. The illness at Ross represents the first of many illnesses which plagued Cromwell during the campaign.

In the same letter to Richard Mayor in which he first expressed concern for his son, Cromwell also stated: "I have been crazy in my health, but the Lord is pleased to sustain me."[145] As Fraser speculates: "It was quite possibly his first bout of the low malarial fever that was to plague him later…a form of malaria which was extremely common in the seventeenth century: it was not, however, a fatal disease, being of the benign tertiary variety."[146] Further discussion of whether or not this disease proved lethal to Cromwell will be included in the next chapter. However, in examining this bout, it is important to note that Cromwell was incapacitated from his arrival on October 17, 1649 until late November. Many biographies of Cromwell do not include this episode of illness. However, the importance of this illness as the first of many is undeniable. Cromwell's age was beginning to show, and the military campaigns only hastened his physical deterioration.

The short amount of rest between Cromwell's time in Ireland and his departure to campaign in Scotland added to Cromwell's vulnerability to illness. Cromwell remained in London only three weeks before heading to Scotland (leaving June 28, 1650). Additionally, the army's winter break was shorter than usual, possibly due to Cromwell's desire to quickly stamp out Scottish resistance. This combination of factors took its toll upon the aged Cromwell, for "on 8 February he fell desperately sick in the Canongate house, probably as a direct result of

[144] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 326.
[145] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 3, 160.
[146] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 347.

immersion in a snowstorm while campaigning near Linlithgow." Cromwell attempted to return to action faster than he should have. "Cromwell found himself involved in three relapses within the next few weeks."[147] He was not able to return to planning the campaign until the end of the month. Again, as with his letter to Richard Mayor, he used the term "crazy" to describe his health.

In a letter addressed to Lady Cromwell back in London in March, a servant described Cromwell's condition as such: "Truly Madam, my Lord took his rest very well on Tuesday night last, and so (blessed be God) he has done every night since, and sometimes in the day also, so that he is better sensible both in Dr. Goddard's judgment and his own; hath a better stomach and grows stronger."[148] In reference to "a better stomach," Bennett and Gaunt both add dysentery to the list of ailments Cromwell was suffering from.[149] Dysentery often involves fever and severe weakness and therefore may have been considered to be part of the assumed malarial ailment. Dysentery also constituted a large portion of the cases of disease among the English soldiers on the campaign, so its diagnosis may have been an entirely separate matter. Whatever the illness may have consisted of, Cromwell was very ill and it did not take long for word of this illness to reach England.

This summary of Cromwell's improving health directly contradicts other politically-motivated accounts of Cromwell's health. The Royalists, for example, believed Cromwell to be violently ill to a point of insanity, which was based upon the false testimony that Cromwell's staff was keeping his letters from him. The most extreme rumors of all came from The Hague and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. The belief that Cromwell had committed suicide was common

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[147] Ibid, 378.
[148] *Perfect Summary of Exact Passages*, March 7, 1651.
[149] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 191. Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell*, 130.

there.[150] Even the clergyman Ralph Josselin believed that Cromwell had perished. His diary entry for March 22, 1651 reads: "reported that Cromwell was dead…at night our newes came, and Major Haynes letter of 8. of March, which said the Gen. was sicke and could not bee spoken with." His entry for the following day reads: "the newes of Cromwell's death if true will extremely lift up the enemy." It was on the 25th of March when Josselin finally "heard as if Cromwell alive."[151] Josselin's skepticism regarding Cromwell's death reflects the reliability and bias of the information.

Similar rumors were forwarded home to England as Cromwell continued to experience symptoms in Scotland. By May, Cromwell was once again ill. The likely cause, as already discussed, was the dispute with Lord Warrington and his wife, which likely wore on Cromwell and weakened his resolve. Cromwell's illness was apparently severe enough that "the General was [believed to be] dying" and "a commission was drawn to Haselrig, Lambert, Fleetwood, and Whaley to gouverne the army."[152] Fraser identifies the illness as a fever, with the addition of a kidney stone, which put him in enough pain to supposedly pistol the two commanders in Aubrey's account of his violence. This time, the illness drew the concern of Parliament. To the Lord President of the Council of State on June 3, 1651, Cromwell wrote:

> I have received yours of the 27th of May, with an order of Parliament for my liberty to return into England for a change of air, that thereby I might the better recover my health; all which came unto me whilst Dr. Wright and Dr. Bates, whom your Lordship sent down, were with me. I shall not need to recite the extremity of my late sickness: it was so

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[150] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 380.
[151] Josselin, *Diary*, 239-240.
[152] Archibald Johnston Lord Wariston, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1911), 52-53.

> violent that indeed my nature was not able to bear the weight thereof. But the Lord was pleased to deliver me, beyond expectation, and to give me cause to say once more, "He hath plucked me out of the grave!"…I beseech you give me the boldness to return my humble thankfulness to the Council for sending two such worthy persons.[153]

This letter contains numerous observations about Cromwell's role in England at this time, as well as the effects of his past history of illness on the fragility of his public image. Cromwell's significant role as the most powerful man in England was now a reality. The governing body of England was aware of this fact, and therefore was greatly concerned for his health after rumors of severe illness and even death circulated. Cromwell was, in a very real sense, being championed as the only hope for progress and resolution. Therefore, a return to England in the company of two of the most prominent physicians of the time was in the nation's best interest. The two physicians were Dr. Lawrence Wright, who was already Cromwell's primary physician, and Dr. George Bate, who would go on to become Cromwell's chief physician in the Protectorate. Bate had previously served as Charles I's primary physician, leading to speculation that he was responsible for Cromwell's death. Although Cromwell was allegedly feeling better by the time the physicians arrived (credited to Divine Providence), the medical advice given to Cromwell is intriguing.

In *Via Recta*, a text published by the prominent medical writer Tobias Venner, the discussion of the effects of "dirty air" provides valuable insight into this advice from Cromwell's doctors:

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[153] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 421.

> Marshy, low-lying or enclosed land with foggy, thick, damp, and stagnant air was considered dangerous. Its air filled the body with 'excremental humors,' and was 'the very root of all diseases of the braine and sinewes…and to speake all in a word, a general torpidity of both minde and body'…the realization that the death rate was high in marshy areas, where "agues" (in our terms, fevers that would include malarial fever) were endemic, gave support to such a view.[154]

This medical belief, along with potential bias toward the Scots, caused Cromwell's doctors to advise this. They likely saw Scotland as an area of polluted air as the cause for Cromwell's illness and successive relapses. Similar reasoning, though not documented, likely applied to his illness in Ireland as well. The desire to bring Cromwell back to England, in order to demonstrate that he was in fact alive, was motivation for Parliament and the Council to call him back.

Seventeenth-century treatment of the malarial fevers (of the kind Cromwell allegedly suffered from) is a bit of a mystery. Treatment of fever, or "ague" as it was commonly referred to, took various forms. In a medical environment where little was known about the disease itself, it often came down to the patient to choose which treatment suited best. For example, Joseph Lister in his autobiography discussed his preference for the purging of the blood from his body, over the cordials he had previously been receiving.[155] Physicians who frequently practiced purging, or bloodletting, as a form of healing argued that they could in fact feel the "feavorish blood" leaving the body of the patient.[156] The treatment Cromwell received for his fevers, outside of bed rest, is not adequately documented. Dr. Wright was a strict Galenist and likely

[154] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 191. Tobias Venner, *Via Recta* (London: Edward Griffen, 1620), 1-2.
[155] Joseph Lister, *The Autobiography of Joseph Lister*, Edited by T. Wright (London: John Russell Smith, 1842), 43.
[156] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 409.

advocated bloodletting to once again balance the four humors.[157] Dr. Bate, however, would have likely advocated some form of cordial treatment or use of chemicals in the tradition of the newer Paracelsian and Helmontian treatments.[158]

Uncertainty surrounds the question of whether or not Cromwell had any physicians around him initially, before Dr. Goddard, Dr. Wright and Dr. Bate were sent to assist him in Scotland. It is likely that his army had brought along a few qualified physicians, given the distance. It is even more likely that some travelled along since the Scottish, as well as the Irish campaign, was marred by multiple outbreaks of disease among the soldiers.

First, at Wexford, Ireland in October of 1649, the army experienced an outbreak of dysentery. The wet and windy weather of the approaching winter is what likely triggered the outbreak.[159] In the following month, during the siege of Waterford, sickness once again became a problem. Cromwell reports, in his letter to the Speaker of Parliament, William Lenthall, that their foot soldiers were "falling sick near ten of a company every night they were upon duty," which ultimately led to estimates of nearly one thousand deaths.[160] These sicknesses overtaking the army in Ireland likely were the result of a lack of tents---a problem which is blamed for the sickness of soldiers in Scotland as well. The rainy nature of Scottish summers and the lack of tents, according to the Commonwealth's magazine publication *Mercurius Politicus*, resulted in the incapacitation of two thousand Cromwell's soldiers during August of 1650.[161]

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[157] Peter Elmer, "Wright, Laurence (1590–1657)," In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004),

[158] Elizabeth Lane Furdell, "Bate, George [pseud. Theodorus Veridicus] (1608–1668)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[159] Fraser, *Lord Protector*, 342.

[160] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 176.

[161] *Mercurius Politicus*, August 1650.

Based upon these accounts of illness among a large portion of the English soldiers, it becomes clear why Cromwell suffered as many ailments as he did. The elements within the visited countries, as well as the lack of adherence to the weather in regards to winter campaigning in Scotland, coupled with the active movements of Cromwell and his army, thus created a "perfect storm" in which disease could ravage the common man. Remembering that Cromwell was at an advanced age, his susceptibility to such diseases was up, and he now had his own personal health working against him, as well as the mental pressures of leading a country through a time of great political and governmental uncertainty, in the face of much opposition and speculation regarding his mental, as well as newly pertinent physical health.

Therefore, this time period from 1647 through 1653 represented a time of significant change for Cromwell's personal health. During his time in Scotland, Cromwell began to recognize the true nature of his mortality. In a letter to his wife Elizabeth, on September 4, 1650 (the day after the battle of Dunbar), Cromwell concluded: "I grow an old man, and feel infirmities of age marvelously stealing upon me."[162] This comment ominously preceded his lengthy bout with fever, which lasted a period of five months in the eyes of the English public.

Accounts of his untimely outbursts and manic behavior now gave way to reports of incapacitation from severe illness and even reports of death, circulating between groups of enemies and allies alike. Cromwell's role in the new, yet unstable Republic ultimately led to further distress and aggravation. This new reputation of poor health would, significantly, carry over into his time as Lord Protector. His rise to fame was complete, and now he would enter the

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[162] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, 329.

position for which he was most famous for; opening up even more interpretations of his personal health.

His passionate outbursts at the expense of his political reputation did not cease with his role as Lord Protector. Cromwell's irritation with government bureaucracy continued; even after he took the leading role in it. By becoming Lord Protector, Cromwell expanded the base of opposition against him. While he intended to use the Protectorate as a way to improve the political situation in England, he was unable to do so because of his past.

Chapter 4

Royal Disillusionment: Cromwell's Role as Lord Protector, 1653-1658

Cromwell's rise to the office of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales enshrines him as one of the most revolutionary and inspiring figures in the study of English history. The position itself was created solely for Cromwell, and briefly his son Richard assumed the role, before the traditional monarchy was restored in 1660. Therefore, Cromwell confronted political pressures unique to his own situation. During his five year reign as Lord Protector, the manic episodes Cromwell had exhibited previously became less frequent. Cromwell's status as the most powerful man in the kingdom likely led to the dissipation of such rumors. Cromwell's popularity had enabled many of the more dubious rumors to be disregarded as such. Rumors of outbursts and passionate fits, which enemies frequently used against him in the past, continued however to contribute to Cromwell's political woes as Lord Protector. These examples of political rumors can also, of course, reflect the chronically hostile and unstable political environment in which Cromwell operated his government. Although more significant problems now plagued the most powerful man in England, reputation still played a significant role in Cromwell's authority.

For example, Cromwell's intentions, as well as the actual extent of his authority, were constantly being called into question. When rumors spread that Cromwell sought to become king in the opening months of 1657, a petition was circulated in Parliament which was to counter this appointment. This question of kingship plagued Cromwell throughout the remainder of his life. Cromwell's dissolving of two more Parliaments prior to the five month minimum assembly

period in favor of rule for himself and the Council of State also drew scorn. Numerous dissident groups added to feelings of paranoia Cromwell was reportedly experiencing. Throughout the entirety of the Protectorate, the Levellers and Royalists were severely weakened by Cromwell's appointment as Lord Protector, yet still managed to draw enough support to harass Cromwell, especially when allegations surfaced about Cromwell's desire to become king. Religious sects, such as the Baptists and Quakers, also strongly opposed the new Lord Protector. The Fifth Monarchists, who had allied with Cromwell in forming the Barebones Parliament previously, now also manifested as an enemy as well. This deeply religious group strongly opposed the creation of the Commonwealth and Cromwell's role in it because of the dissolution of the Barebones Parliament in favor of the Instrument of Government, which created the Commonwealth.

During this time period, Cromwell continued to struggle with his lifelong disillusionment with Parliament and its shortcomings. For the majority of the Protectorate, the government functioned mainly through him and the Council of State. This is the best indication of Cromwell's disdain for the Parliamentary system. Cromwell's resistance to the summoning of Parliament is reminiscent to Charles I's eleven year rule without Parliament from 1629 until 1640. The majority of those opposed to Cromwell felt that his ruling style was comparable to that of a monarch, and thus feared his intentions as the ruler of England.

Assassination attempts were also frequent and helped contribute to the sense of instability during the Protectorate. Royalists and Levellers, both fearing Cromwell's ambitions as Lord Protector, planned assassination plots against Cromwell. Although they were unsuccessful, they were enough to create rumors that Cromwell was drinking himself to death out of fear of his

premature demise. Even the posthumous rumor that Dr. Bate poisoned him with mercury is still the subject of many works on Cromwell. He likely attributed his longevity and wellbeing to Divine Providence. Cromwell's unwavering confidence in the face of death, displayed on numerous occasions throughout his lifetime, continued through the Protectorate. Even while battling his final illness, Cromwell's remained confident that he would overcome it.

Cromwell reigned as Lord Protector until his death on September 3, 1658. The fact that the Protectorate was not as prosperous as Cromwell had hoped took a heavy toll on the aging leader. The considerable and persistent opposition to his policies, as well as his clear uncertainty as to his role in the new government, caused Cromwell to never feel entirely comfortable as Lord Protector. Frequent illnesses, especially toward the end of his life, reinforced his uncertainty over his role as Lord Protector. Even Cromwell's death brought with it uncertainty, evidenced by the fact that it was in the midst of one of his final bouts of illness that he finally, after much debate, chose his son Richard as his successor. Therefore, the demands of the Protectorate itself added to his mental distress which ultimately ever-worsened physical ill-health. This deterioration was made worse by the passing of his favorite daughter Bettie and other close friends and family. By the end of his life, and by default the end of the Protectorate, Cromwell was a mentally, spiritually, and physically broken man. Therefore, Cromwell's time as Lord Protector is the most important time period for the study of his health.

To begin examination on the Protectorate, the remaining accounts of mania from Cromwell must be discussed, in order to continue to show the role of mental illness that punctuated Cromwell's political career. First, in response to a failure of policy, Cromwell once again exhibited his formidable anger. Much of Cromwell's time as Protector was dedicated to

foreign policy. He attempted to seize Spanish territory in the West Indies as part of his Western Design to unite Protestant nations against the Spanish. Cromwell sent Robert Venables and William Penn as his admirals to the West Indies to accomplish this goal. However, the only Caribbean territory acquired was Jamaica. At Hispaniola in mid-April of 1655, the English navy suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Spanish. The resulting fury from Cromwell gave his opposition the furious reaction they had become accustomed to. Fraser notes: "The Royalists spread news of a more tempestuous reaction from the Lord Protector: he was supposed to have fallen into such convulsions of anger that he actually fell dead. In this, the wish was no doubt father to the thought."[163] Also in notable opposition, the Fifth Monarchists viewed the failure as a sign from God. The level of anger is obviously exaggerated here. However, the Earl of Clarendon also received word that Cromwell had exhibited "violent distempers" upon receiving the news and Cromwell's closest advisors were silent on the matter. This episode demonstrates the amount of pressure Cromwell now put himself under to succeed as the head of state, in addition to his role as the enemy of so many opposing sects.

In similar fashion, Cromwell continued to display his abrupt anger in dealings with Parliament. Cromwell dissolved two separate Parliaments during his reign, opting instead to rely upon his own rule and rule of the Council. In January of 1655 and February of 1658, Cromwell used his authority to dissolve Parliament abruptly and without consulting his Council of State, indicating extreme frustration and rage. The first dissolution of Parliament in 1655 was in response to a constitutional bill being composed, which would have given Parliament more power by limiting the council and blocking Cromwell from vetoing bills. From this episode, it becomes clear that the Instrument of Government had many enemies.

[163] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 529-530.

Most of these enemies were opposed to Cromwell's role as Lord Protector, a position viewed as far too king-like. Much of the ire directed at Cromwell comes from this comparison. Disappointment and annoyance characterized his closing speech: "…that Cavalier party (I could wish some of them had thrust in here to have heard what I say)… the Cavalier party have been designing and preparing to put this nation in blood again…"[164] The show of aggravation in reference to the presence of the Cavaliers highlights Cromwell's disappointment with those opposing his regime and at the same time portrayed a certain amount of paranoia in Cromwell's tone, which will be discussed later on in the chapter. The use of the Civil War term "cavalier" is also an important part of this quote. The use of the term indicated that a political divide was still in effect between Cromwell and those loyal to the royal line. Cromwell felt defeated by what he saw as defiance from Parliament.

The final Parliament of Cromwell's Protectorate was disbanded in February 1658. This Parliament was dissolved much more abruptly: beginning on January 20, 1658 and ending February 4, 1658. The much shorter duration in comparison to the previous Parliament shows that Cromwell had essentially been worn down by the resistance to his reign. The disagreement between the Lord Protector and Parliament was over the powers of "the other house," which was being created with a similar structure as the House of Lords had been before the Commonwealth. Parliament feared the power of this house and created a petition which would deny this house any of the House of Lords' power. The sheer volume of the opposition was likely more of a problem for Cromwell than the issue itself. That much opposition in a body as significant as Parliament could prove dangerous. Therefore, Cromwell acted by angrily dissolving what he saw as a disobedient Parliament.

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[164] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 3, 583.

His anger was undoubtedly magnified by the fact that his close friend John Thurloe delivered the news of the petition at a late hour. Cromwell's aggravation with the entire matter is documented by an angry exchange with his son-in-law and close friend, Charles Fleetwood. When Fleetwood protested against Cromwell dissolving Parliament, Cromwell replied "you are a milksop, by the living God I will dissolve the House."[165] By this point, which was upon Cromwell's arrival at the Lord's House and in the presence of a significant number of the Lords, Cromwell was firm on his decision to dissolve Parliament. This reference to Fleetwood as a "milksop," synonymous with weakling or coward, was made in the heat of the moment and showcases Cromwell's notorious anger and proclivity to lose control.

The speech he made in reference to the dissolution becomes almost violent in nature, and can be compared to some of his earlier outbursts. First, he takes a scolding tone in reference to the creation of a second house and then references Parliament's inaction in response to the threat that Charles Stuart represented to England:

> You granted that I should name another house and I named it with integrity, I did. I named it out of men that can meet you wheresoever you go, and shake hands with you, and tell you that it is not titles, it is not lordship, it is not this or that that they value, but a Christian and English interest. Men of your own rank and quality, and men that I approved my heart to God in choosing…loving the same things that you love…[166]

In reference to Scotland's declaration of Charles II as their king in 1650, Cromwell threatened Parliament with the assumption that the army was "at the waterside, drawn down towards the

[165] John Thurloe, *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, Edited by Thomas Birch, vol. 7 (London, 1742), 811.
[166] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 4, 729-730.

waterside, ready to be shipped for England…If this, I say, be the effect of your sitting I think it high time that an end be put to your sitting and I do declare to you here that I do dissolve this Parliament."[167]

Cromwell's frustration with Parliament and its opposition is clearly demonstrated by this speech. The first quote indicates that he viewed Parliament as ungrateful, due to its resistance to the creation of a second house, especially considering Parliament had first sought to create it. The second quote, concerning the threat of Charles coming to England to take power, indicates that Cromwell also blamed Parliament for inactivity in reference to this threat. Paranoia on the part of Cromwell also likely played a role in this pronouncement, as Cromwell was likely suspicious of Royalists in Parliament. The episode as a whole demonstrates that Cromwell was highly fearful of the political environment of England at the time. Opposition from the Royalists and Levellers had plagued him for some time now; however he now began to distrust the actions of Parliament as well. Therefore, this environment likely played heavily on Cromwell's mental state and likely helped wear him down physically as well. Further episodes involving his opposition would continue to disprove this fact and would continue to haunt Cromwell for the remainder of his life.

One of the most prominent and dangerous forms of opposition to Cromwell came in the form of assassination attempts. Numerous assassination attempts were made on Cromwell's life, which likely contributed to the feeling of paranoia he experienced. Although the attempts themselves were not successful, the effects they had on Cromwell's public reputation were damaging. The mental toll that the assassination attempts took on Cromwell's psyche was likely

[167] Ibid, 732.

even more substantial. There were persistent Royalist rumors of Cromwell's alcoholism related to his apparently consuming fear of death. In opening discussion of these attempts, it is first important to describe the more significant attempts and their agents.

The first significant attempt on Cromwell's life took place in May of 1654, under the leadership of a former Royalist Colonel named John Gerard. Gerard and other radical Royalists believed that the death of Cromwell would ensure the return of the monarchy under Charles II. The plan involved Gerard and a group of thirty men abducting Cromwell while he was traveling between his residence at Whitehall and Hampton Court. Fortunately for Cromwell, Thurloe got wind of the plot and changed Cromwell's route at the last minute, in order to avoid disaster. This attempt was confirmed by John Lambert, one of Cromwell's administrative major-generals, in a letter to a relative in London: "We have assurances of a very bloody attempt to have been acted upon the Lord Protector, but I hope the neck of it is broken…"[168] Fraser argues that this attempt was allowed to continue as long as it did in order to overhype the attempt and increase public disdain for the perpetrators. While this would have provided an ideal opportunity to produce negative public sentiment toward the Royalist sect, the likelihood of risking the Protector's life to achieve this goal would be doubtful. The penalties were not specifically harsh, but were highly publicized, in order to discourage further attempts and to demonize Royalists.

The other three large scale assassination attempts made against Cromwell were concocted by Miles Sindercombe, a prominent Leveller. Therefore, the two most prominent opposition sects had devised assassination plans. Sindercombe's first attempt included the rental of a house near Westminister Abbey, where Cromwell was attending a sermon by John Owen in September

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[168] S.C. Newton, ed. *A Calendar of the Bright Papers* (Sheffield, England: Central Library), JP43/ BR78.

of 1656. Sindercombe and a couple of Royalist accomplices planned to shoot Cromwell as he exited. A large crowd gathered around Cromwell and caused Sindercombe to abandon the attempt. Sindercombe's second attempt, under the leadership of fellow Leveller, Colonel Edward Sexby, involved a similar assault against Cromwell while he was traveling to Hampton Court for a brief respite. Cromwell, either because of knowledge of the plot or simply by chance, decided to go by boat instead and the attempt was thwarted. The final unsuccessful attempt on Cromwell's life by Sindercombe's crew took advantage of Cromwell's insistence on continuing to visit Hyde Park, even though he was extremely vulnerable. The park offered open spaces and foliage, which were perfect for an attempt. John Cecil, one of the co-conspirators, was supposed to casually merge with Cromwell's entourage, before shooting Cromwell and making a quick escape on his horse. Cecil later claimed that his horse was ill and he felt he would not be able to escape and backed out of the plan. Sindercombe was later captured and committed suicide before he could be executed for his role in the assassination attempts.

Cromwell's courage to continue his scheduled duties without fear contrasted with the rumors being spread by the Royalists of the Lord Protectors' great fear of assassination. The popular opinion among Royalists of the time was that Cromwell was drinking himself to death.[169] The obvious portrayal of Cromwell as a coward and weakling was meant to undermine his public image. However, the Royalist's betrayal likely created more of a stir among the English commoners. As had been the case throughout Cromwell's life, political reputation continued to be his Achilles' heel.

[169] Isaac Foot, *Oliver Cromwell and Abraham Lincoln* (Royal Society of Literature, 1941).

Hesitation on the part of Sindercombe and his crew has been credited to failures in execution. However, one cannot discount the fact that Sindercombe and his crew were likely hesitant because they were unsure of what Cromwell's assassination would produce. While Sindercombe and his Leveller supporters probably felt that the monarchy would be restored, they could not be certain that England would not be thrown into political chaos instead. Cromwell's regime capitalized on this widespread uneasiness.

Cromwell's supporters did have an efficient method to discourage further attempts on Cromwell's life. If Cromwell were to become king of England, the Royalists would be deterred in their own mission to see the monarchy continued in England. The hereditary element of the office would mean that Cromwell's son Richard would become king at his death, legitimizing what would become the Cromwellian royal line. While this solution seemed fitting to many supporters of Cromwell, Oliver himself struggled tremendously with the decision. This issue of whether to accept the kingship or not contributed significantly to the instability in Commonwealth politics at the time.

There is evidence that this struggle over the kingship issue contributed to Cromwell's worsening health problems. While many of his contemporaries called for him to accept the kingship, Cromwell himself was not quite ready to do so. "I deal plainly and faithfully with you, I cannot think that God would bless me the undertaking of anything that would justly and with cause grieve them" [the people]. "That they will be troubled without cause, I must be a slave if I should comply with any such humours."[170] Cromwell believed that if he was to be king, God would provide him with the blessing to do so. It is also likely that he desired the position simply

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[170] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches,* vol. 4, 472.

because of the fact that much of his opposition would be silenced by his new title. Cromwell's rise to the throne would certainly have afforded him more authority than his position as Lord Protector. The amount of time that this issue was discussed also indicates that it was a difficult decision. For nearly six weeks Cromwell agonized over the possibility of ascending to royal status.

The link between Cromwell's agonizing over this decision and diminished physical health is apparent. This is ably chronicled by Fraser:

> …Several planned meetings with the committee had to be cancelled at the last minute in consequence of his indisposition. Whether it was indeed ill-health or whether the equivalent agonies of simple indecision were the cause of his illness, at all events the whole atmosphere was fraught with tension. And when the Protector did meet the committee again on 20 April, they found him half-dressed, in his gown, with a black scarf tied roughly round his neck.[171]

Ultimately, Cromwell decided to reject the offer of kingship and instead received a ceremony very similar to a coronation. The Protectorate would remain just that. In conjunction with the other problems within the Protectorate, including radical opposition and the question of legitimacy of the government, his reign took a heavy toll on his mental and physical health overall.

In 1655, the incoming Venetian Ambassador Sagredo described Cromwell as aged "with signs that his health is not stable and perfect."[172] Royalist rumors also returned to the theme of

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[171] Fraser, *The Lord Protector*, 608.
[172] C.S.P. Venetian 1655-56, 124.

mental illness and insanity. A Royalist letter from London to the Duke of Ormonde taking up residence with Charles II said this of Cromwell: "Some say he is in many times like one distracted, and in there fits he will run about the house and into the garden, or else ride out with very little company which he never doth when he is composed and free from disorder."[173] While this report was likely fraudulent, it possibly contains a bit of truth.

It was in the midst of his Protectoral reign that Cromwell's health took a turn for the worse. The ill health which had plagued him in Ireland and Scotland would return as the stress of the Protectorate began to take its toll on the aging Cromwell. The first of these final significant illnesses occurred in winter of 1655. Most prominently, Cromwell suffered a series of bladder troubles stemming from a stone, for which he had to contact "an excellent chirurgeon" in Paris for a consultation. When this surgeon refused, a Royalist surgeon from London named James Moleyns provided his services. Moleyns provided an unknown cure, which may have been surgery to remove the stone based on his specialty. A feud followed regarding payment. Moleyns refused to accept payment from Cromwell because of his sympathies, so Cromwell replied "let him alone, he is mad, but he has done me good and I don't want to harm him."[174] Cromwell later sent £1,000 to Moleyns and asked him to accept it in the name of King Charles.

Gout continued to haunt Cromwell as well. His primary physician Dr. Bate reported Cromwell's frequent consumption of alcohol to deal with the immense pain of the stone. Medical beliefs at the time also led Cromwell to his carriage, where it was hoped that he could dislodge the stone with violent motion.[175] In January 1656, Cromwell reportedly consulted his surgeon to remove a boil on his chest, which had inhibited his ability to accomplish a great deal of work

[173] George Bate, *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia*, vol. II (London, 1685), 199.
[174] *Part 2*. Vol. XXIV of *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* (1930-1931), 1442.
[175] Bate, *Elenchus*, vol. II, 199.

because of the significant amount of pain. These ailments proved to be extremely detrimental to Cromwell's health. Either based upon the duration of the ailments, or upon the pain being indicated by Cromwell mixed with his aging form, Grandees were preparing for the death of the Protector. However, by the end of March 1656, Cromwell was healthy again. It would not be long before Cromwell was once again assaulted by illness, which, at this point in his life, routinely plagued his aged body. The principal reason for such worsening health was almost certainly the burdens of Protectorate rule.

In fact, Cromwell's next major illness occurred in August of 1657, only a few months after his long personal dilemma over kingship. Cromwell was stricken with a series of painful catarrhs. Normally catarrhs can be associated with the common cold, which would prove an unlikely ailment, due to the time of year. Therefore, the significance of this illness lies in the cause. The occurrence of this illness on the tail end of his crisis over kingship indicates that it was more likely an illness born from the mental and emotional stress of the past few months. The existence of this ailment in addition to the undisclosed illnesses during his dilemma over whether or not to accept the kingship continues to add to the evidence indicating that Cromwell mentally and physically cracked under pressure. This illness is also evidence of Cromwell's advanced age and susceptibility to illness in general during the Protectorate. While it would not prove to be his final sickness, the effects of the catarrhs still incapacitated Cromwell for a large portion of August. He was confined to the healing waters of Hampton Court, which were used as a medical remedy of the time.

Almost exactly a year later, Cromwell began to succumb to the illness which would be his last. Although the last six months of his reign were uncharacteristically uneventful following

the abrupt dissolution of the second and final Parliament of the Protectorate, Cromwell was now fifty-nine years old (well beyond the average life span at that time). The year began with sinister rumors of ill health from those around Cromwell, including the belief that he suffered from insomnia and kept to his room, and reports that he now suffered from vertigo and migraines. Cromwell also reportedly called for a surgeon by the name of Boone to look at an abscess on his back.[176] From these reports, it is clear that Cromwell's health was widely believed to be deteriorating rapidly. Reports of a fading Protector led to a panic among England's governmental elite, similar to what occurred during his illness in Scotland. Thurloe references the potential death of Cromwell with "great alarum…being in the posture we are now in," while Fleetwood confirmed that "these late providences hath much retarded our publicke resolutions."[177] While premature mourning for the Protector was a large part of the equation, the bigger question was over his successor. Cromwell once again was indecisive about who he felt should be the next Lord Protector, and chose his son Richard only shortly before his death.

Further images of an ill and dying Cromwell helped to increase the magnitude of his health scares of early 1658. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, visited Cromwell at Hampton Court in mid-August between bouts of illness and was stunned by the sickly appearance of Cromwell. "And I saw and felt a waft of death go forth against him that he looked like a dead man."[178] The day after Fox made this observation he returned to see Cromwell, only to be turned away and told that Cromwell was once again ill. Fox's observation characterizes the general population's outlook on Cromwell's health during his last few months. Even those who were unable to receive news of the Protector's significant illness were able to determine that

[176] C.S.P. Venetian, 1657-59, 44.
[177] Thurloe, *State Papers,* VII, 320.
[178] George Fox, *Journal*. Edited by N. Penney (Cambridge: 1924), 327.

something significant was wrong just based upon Cromwell's lack of public appearances. Cromwell's perseverance with past ailments was likely an encouragement to those who hoped for his recovery. But unfortunately, this would be his final illness.

While it was a physical manifestation of ailments which ultimately caused his death, there were also triggers that created the mental pressures necessary for Cromwell to once again fall victim to physical ailments. The growing number of illnesses Cromwell experienced during the Protectorate is an indication that he was struggling with his role. A series of deaths in the months prior to Cromwell's own passing contributed to Cromwell's weakened state, which is evidenced by comments made by Richard. In June of 1658, Oliver Claypole, Cromwell's grandson, died at the age of one year. Additional deaths within the Cromwell family included his niece, Lavinia Whetstone and his son-in-law Robert Rich, who both passed away in February of 1658. Additionally, Cromwell's past war comrade and Rich's grandfather the Earl of Warwick died a short time later. The most significant death of all, however, was the death of Bettie Claypole. According to Dr. Bate, Bettie suffered from "an inward imposthume of her loins," which was possibly cancer of the womb or stomach and caused her a great deal of pain.[179] Bettie spent her last months at Hampton Court where Cromwell spent a lot of time with her.

Richard Cromwell, in reference to his sister's death and the impact on his father said this: "It is one thing to have the greatest bough lopt off, but when the axe is laid to the root then there is no hope remaining; such was our real fear."[180] Biographer Samuel Carrington added to this metaphor by declaring: "Even as branches of Trees being cut and lopped in an ill season, do first draw away sap from the tree…In like manner, during the declining age of his late Highness, it

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[179] Bate, *Elenchus*, vol. II, 233.
[180] *Lansdowne MSS* (London: British Museum) 823, f.89.

was an ill season, in which men usually do as it were reap all their consolation from the youth and vigour of their children."[181] Bettie's death was the final contributing event to Cromwell's demise. Bennett sums up: "Spiritually he was drained; deaths within the family weakened his morale,"---already low based upon his actions in 1658, including his lack of attendance at council meetings (of which he attended just nineteen of seventy-two total sessions occurring after January of 1658).[182]

Disillusionment with the failures of his two Protectoral Parliaments and a sense of political paralysis also undoubtedly contributed to Cromwell's exhaustion. His speech given at the disbandment of his second Protectoral Parliament carries a tone of hopelessness and failure, directly in contrast to Cromwell's general enthusiasm for political change in England. One such reference to the difficulty of his task shows the resentment Cromwell now had for it:

> Give me leave to interpose this. No man, no man, but a man mistaken and greatly mistaken, could think that I, that hath a burden upon my back for the space of fifteen or sixteen years…would seek such a place as I bear. I cannot [but] say it in the presence of God, in comparison of which all we that are here [are] like poor creeping ants upon the earth, that I would have been glad, as to my own conscience and spirit, to have been living under a wood-side, to have kept a flock of sheep, rather than to have undertaken such a place as this was…[183]

Cromwell's disappointment with his lack of success was ultimately the feeling which gripped him in the months immediately prior to his death. From this, again it is amply evident that

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[181] S. Carrington, *The History of the Life and Death of His Most Serene Highness Oliver Late Lord Protector* (London, 1659), 219.
[182] Bennett, *Oliver Cromwell*, 259.
[183] Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 4, 729.

Cromwell's symptoms were just as much due to mental exhaustion and disillusionment as they were due to physical exhaustion and old age.

On August 17, 1658, Cromwell was stricken with severe pain in his bowels and his back. The next day, he began to be attacked by fits of fever, which many have diagnosed as malaria. The doctors and Cromwell himself were, however, not worried about the condition which would take Cromwell's life less than three weeks later. According to Dr. Frederick F. Cartwright and Michael D. Biddis, in their work *Disease and History*, malaria remained a fairly common ailment in England up until about 1840. Cromwell likely acquired the disease either early in his childhood or more likely in the squalid swamps of Ireland during his military campaign there. He suffered from "tertian-agues," which were three day cycles of malarial fever, rotating between cold, hot, and sweating, in addition to chronic anemia. The disease was usually not deadly to those of good health, which explains Cromwell's resilience to it for the majority of his life. However, in his old and worn down state, Cromwell proved more susceptible to it. Treatment used to combat the illnesses included the use of Peruvian *quina-quina* bark, which was a treatment from the previously mentioned Dr. Sydenham.[184]

However, the pain in the bowels and back is not accounted for in the malarial arsenal. Therefore many scholars and physicians, including Dr. Bate, believe that it was also possibly blood poisoning caused by an infection of the kidneys and bladder. Upon examining Cromwell's body, Bate recalled the condition of Cromwell's spleen. "Though sound to eye" it was actually "a mass of disease and filled with matter like the lees of oil."[185] The condition of the spleen supports the case for the infection as the reason for Cromwell's death. The lower rate of death

[184] Frederick Cartwright and Michael D. Biddis, *Disease and History* (New York: Crowell, 1972), 141-44.
[185] Ibid, 143.

among those experiencing the tertian agues would indicate that the infection was more likely the cause. The stretches of illness, following up by periods of slight recovery occurring from August 17, 1658 until his death on September 3, 1658 would thus be accounted for by the malarial fevers. But the final blow was likely dealt by the infection, which took advantage of Cromwell's weakened state.

Rumors of poison also surfaced because of the rapid deterioration of Cromwell's constitution. McMains' text entitled *The Death of Oliver Cromwell*, deals with this topic significantly. Upon exploring Bate's publication of his medical notes, entitled *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia*, McMains claims that Bate altered Cromwell's medical records: "…his inaccuracies surely were disingenuous disguises thrown over Cromwell's medical condition rather than excusable time-fogged recollections."[186] McMains suspicion that Bate was poisoning Cromwell with mercury was shared by many of Bate's royalist friends, as well as Bulstrode Whitelock and the Reverend John Prestwich.[187] On what he believed to be his deathbed in 1663, Bate reportedly confessed to giving Cromwell a dose of poison to Cromwell which "hastened him to his end."[188] McMains argues that this confession was legitimate and may fit with the questionable medical records Bate kept on Cromwell. Also, McMains references the fact that Cromwell's last moments were spend in a state of syncope, which contradicts the shaking fit which the ague would have caused. However, McMains does not account for the possibility that the stone was the cause of Cromwell's death. Since historians cannot rule out the possibility that Cromwell was poisoned by the Royalist Bate, it remains a mystery. What is certain, however, is that Cromwell passed away on September 3, 1658.

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[186] McMains, *Death of Oliver Cromwell*, 85.
[187] Ibid, 115.
[188] Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses,* vol. 2 (London, 1791), col. 424.

Cromwell's death was met with a calm sort of acceptance among much of the English public. Thurloe said of the peace that "there is not a dogg that wags his tongue, so great a calm are we in."[189] Even Royalists were quiet at this occasion, undoubtedly stunned by the death of their sworn enemy. The chaotic and unstable environment which worn down the Protector was at least temporary calmed by the succession of his son, Richard. Cromwell's allies' lament for the loss of their leader can be summed up by the words of George Lawrence, who gave a sermon in October of 1658. "We have lost a Captain, a Shield, the Head, an Heir of Restraint, the Breath of our Nostrils, an Healer, a Shepherd, a Father and a Nursing Father, a Corner-stone, a Builder, a Watchman, an Eye, a Saviour, a Steersman and Rector, a Pilot and a Common Husband."[190] Cromwell's importance to England is characterized well by this ode. Cromwell was the modern definition of a journeyman, whose impact on the country he sought to improve was immeasurable. Cromwell's role in the creation of the Commonwealth, which saw him rise to power as Lord Protector left a lasting legacy. To Cromwell's allies, he was a spirited and determined leader, destined to accomplish countless feats in war, in government, and in spiritual fortitude. To his enemies, Cromwell represented a manic, passionate and dangerous traitor. His role as Lord Protector fueled both groups, making this period of Cromwell's life relevant to a study of his personal health.

What the Protectorate proved about Cromwell was that he did in fact have the tendency to crack under pressure; especially in the face of uncertainty and opposition. The burdens of operating a far-less-than-effective government proved to be too much for this common Fenland farmer to handle. As evidenced by his outbursts against Protectoral Parliaments and at his

[189] Thurloe, *State Papers,* vol. VII, 374.
[190] John Chandos, *In God's Name* (1971), 516.

disillusionment over his lack of success, Cromwell's proper place was not as Lord Protector. Cromwell's passion and desire to make real improvement in the politically unstable English government proved unsuccessful. The nature of the Protectorate itself, now seen as simply a placeholder for the Royal line, set Cromwell up for failure. Cromwell showed himself incapable of dealing with the twin forces of opposition and radicalism. By the time old age gripped him, he was already mentally weary. The most important evidence of this trend comes from Cromwell himself in reference to his regret over becoming Lord Protector in the first place. His tone indicates a weariness that could only be associated with a long life of political struggles. One can only wonder how different history would be if Cromwell had in fact remained a small farmer at St. Ives, instead of undertaking his political journey. Certainly the mental fatigue that wore on his mind and body throughout his later years would not have been present. Even after his death, Cromwell's legacy as Lord Protector and reputation as a highly emotional and possible manic depressive personality induced fear in the Royalists who insisted on exhuming the body and making sure the Protector did not have more fight in him.

Conclusion

Cromwell's Legacy

Cromwell's influence over England and the results of his reign were not cut short by his death. Two and a half years later, on January 20, 1661, Cromwell's body was exhumed in order to conduct a posthumous execution. Following the failure of the Protectorate under the questionable leadership of Richard, the Royalist line was restored under Charles II, who called for this action to be completed on the twelve year anniversary of the death of his father, at the hands of Oliver Cromwell. This act stems from the notion of blame which plagued Cromwell throughout his entire career. In the eyes of the Royalists, Cromwell was the face of this dark period of history known as the Commonwealth, in which England's government was thrown into turmoil. The process of digging up Cromwell and executing him as if he were still alive symbolized killing the traitor who had overthrown the monarchy. Similar to the accusations of insanity and celebrations of Cromwell's possible demise, this posthumous execution symbolized Cromwell as being held responsible for their struggles. It is therefore defensible to claim that Cromwell was thus demonized by these accounts of mental illness, the latter of which are ultimately impossible to prove as legitimate. The focus on Cromwell's political reputation becomes that much more important to the study of his personal health overall.

Ultimately, Oliver Cromwell's destiny was to change English history forever. Even to this day, Cromwell is known by the British as one of the greatest men in their history. The strongest indication of Cromwell's power is reflected by the quick restoration of the monarchy

following his death and his son Richard’s failure to effectively rule under the Protectorate. Although the changes Cromwell instituted for England’s government were undone, and the government basically returned to its past state, Cromwell’s legacy still remains. The importance of a study of his health yields more about the man himself than any evaluation of his military strategy or charismatic leadership. This image of Cromwell as a man does, however, get distorted by Cromwell’s contemporaries’ personal opinions.

Cromwell’s personal and political reputations were frequently used against him during his lifetime. Royalists manufactured an image of Cromwell of instability and reckless passion, dangerous to England as a whole. Through the use of Cromwell’s aggressive outbursts and episodes of manic behavior, including extreme highs in the face of tension and extreme lows when he was unable to produce results within Parliament, Cromwell’s opponents attempted to undermine his political agenda by depicting him as unstable. The showcasing of numerous illnesses, especially later in his life, would thus translate to Cromwell’s weakness and inability to effectively lead government. This style of political defamation is an unexpected benefit to emerge out of a study of Cromwell’s health. The demonization of Cromwell’s character and political abilities, based upon insults of this caliber, were a result of opposition to Cromwell as Lord Protector.

From a purely medical standpoint, a study such as this directly confronts the questions surrounding the relationship between historical research and psychological methodology. While many of Cromwell’s passionate outbursts and melancholic episodes likely constituted a certain amount of political bias, Mayerne’s diagnosis of melancholy early on in his political career cannot be ignored. While a modern medical diagnosis cannot be made, Cromwell’s behavior

would certainly have been diagnosed as madness in his own time. Therefore, we are left to determine whether Cromwell's behavior was that of a madman, or if he was simply a passionate man, who was sometimes caught up in the heat of the moment. Speculation in respected secondary source biographies widely cited in this paper support both viewpoints, as would likely be the case in a larger, biographical study on Cromwell. Fraser's inherent belief that Cromwell's mental illness peaked during his personal crisis and only improved from there contradicts with Bennett's contention that Cromwell's manic depressive nature was prevalent throughout his entire documented life. Certainty one could argue that there is middle ground here as well. Again, it is not possible for the medical world of today to make a case for either side, leaving this question of Cromwell's mental state open-ended.

A more certain diagnosis can be made in reference to Cromwell's deteriorating health at the end of his life. Cromwell's age certainly contributed to the physical and mental fatigue he confessed to have experienced in his later years. The idea that Cromwell's disillusionment led to mental breakdowns of sorts is undeniable and is evidenced by his passionate and unrestrained disbandment of numerous Parliaments throughout his years in government. His strong concern for his country and its link to melancholic language and behavior is also a sign of this strong connection between mental struggle and outward sources of anxiety. By the end of his life, Cromwell simply broke down. The effects of age, coupled with his lifelong struggle with what he saw as an unrelenting government finally yielded his demise, in the form of an endless line of illnesses. As evidenced by his speech at the closing of his Second Protectoral Parliament, Cromwell wished he had never undertaken the task he set out to do. Whether this was just one of those moments of unrestrained frustration or if he truly was disillusioned with his career is moot. Cromwell's mental health provided the rationale for bizarre behavior throughout his life.

What this study ultimately reveals about Cromwell is that he was a complex individual and under a significant amount of pressure. He proves to be the perfect figure to study because of numerous factors. His involvement in one of the most chaotic periods of English history runs parallel to his own chaotic and unpredictable nature. His role as the usurper of the royal line and its resulting implications also provide the necessary documentation needed for such an undertaking. His numerous documented illnesses allow for the similar study between history and medicine. Ideally, this thesis will be viewed less as a biographical look at one of the most famous and widely studied figures in history, and more as a model for future studies of polarizing figures like Oliver Cromwell.

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