GUY FAWKES VOLUME III
BY
WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

THE CONSPIRATORS

The conclusion shall be from the admirable clemency and moderation of the king; in that, howsoever these traitors have exceeded all others in mischief, yet neither will the king exceed the usual punishment of law, nor invent any new torture or torment for them, but is graciously pleased to afford them as well an ordinary course of trial as an ordinary punishment much inferior to their offence. And surely worthy of observation is the punishment by law provided and appointed for high treason: for, first, after a traitor hath had his just trial, and is convicted and attainted, he shall have his judgment to be drawn to the place of execution from his prison, as being not worthy any more to tread upon the face of the earth whereof he was made; also, for that he hath been retrograde to nature, therefore is he drawn backward at a horsetail. After, to have his head cut off which had imagined the mischief. And, lastly, his body to be quartered, and the quarters set up in some high and eminent place, to the view and detestation of men, and to become a prey for the fowls of the air. And this is a reward due to traitors, whose hearts be hardened; for that it is a physic of state and government to let out corrupt blood from the heart.—Sir Edward Coke's Speech on the Gunpowder Treason.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER I.
HOW GUY FAWKES WAS PUT TO THE TORTURE.

Intimation of the arrest of Guy Fawkes having been sent to the Tower, his arrival was anxiously expected by the warders and soldiers composing the garrison, a crowd of whom posted themselves at the entrance of Traitor's Gate, to obtain a sight of him. As the bark that conveyed the prisoner shot through London Bridge, and neared the fortress, notice of its approach was given to the lieutenant, who, scarcely less impatient, had stationed himself in a small circular chamber in one of the turrets of Saint Thomas's or Traitor's Tower, overlooking the river. He hastily descended, and had scarcely reached the place of disembarkation, when the boat passed beneath the gloomy archway, the immense wooden wicket closed behind it; and the officer in command springing ashore, was followed more deliberately by Fawkes, who mounted the slippery stairs with a firm footstep. As he gained the summit, the spectators pressed forward; but Sir William Waad, ordering them in an authoritative tone to stand back, fixed a stern and scrutinizing glance on the prisoner.

“Many vile traitors have ascended those steps,” he said, “but none so false-hearted, none so bloodthirsty as you.”

“None ever ascended them with less misgiving, or with less self-reproach,” replied Fawkes.

“Miserable wretch! Do you glory in your villany?” cried the lieutenant. “If anything could heighten my detestation of the pernicious creed you profess, it would be to witness its effects on such minds as yours. What a religion must that be, which can induce its followers to commit such monstrous actions, and delude them into the belief that they are pious and praiseworthy!”

“It is a religion, at least, that supports them at seasons when they most require it,” rejoined Fawkes.

“Peace!” cried the lieutenant, fiercely, “or I will have your viperous tongue torn out by the roots.”

Turning to the officer, he demanded his warrant, and glancing at it, gave some directions to one of the warders, and then resumed his scrutiny of Fawkes, who appeared wholly unmoved, and steadily returned his gaze.

Meanwhile, several of the spectators, eager to prove their loyalty to the king, and abhorrence of the plot, loaded the prisoner with execrations, and finding these produced no effect, proceeded to personal outrage. Some spat upon his face and garments; some threw mud, gathered from the slimy steps, upon him; some pricked him with the points of their halberds; while others, if they had not been checked, would have resorted to greater violence. Only one bystander expressed the slightest commiseration for him. It was Ruth Ipgreve, who, with her parents, formed part of the assemblage.

A few kindly words pronounced by this girl moved the prisoner more than all the insults he had just experienced. He said nothing, but a slight and almost imperceptible quivering of the lip told what was passing within. The jailer was extremely indignant at his daughter's conduct, fearing it might prejudice him in the eyes of the lieutenant.

“Get hence, girl,” he cried, “and stir not from thy room for the rest of the day. I am sorry I allowed thee to come forth.”

“You must look to her, Jasper Ipgreve,” said Sir William Waad, sternly. “No man shall hold an office in the Tower who is a favourer of papacy. If you were a good Protestant, and a faithful servant of King James, your daughter could never have acted thus unbecomingly. Look to her, I say,—and to yourself.”

“I will, honourable sir,” replied Jasper, in great confusion. “Take her home directly,” he added, in an under tone to his wife. “Lock her up till I return, and scourge her if thou wilt. She will ruin us by her indiscretion.”

In obedience to this injunction, Dame Ipgreve seized her daughter's hand, and dragged her away. Ruth turned for a moment to take a last look at the prisoner, and saw that his gaze followed her, and was fraught with an expression of the deepest gratitude. By way of showing his disapproval of his daughter's conduct, the jailer now joined the bitterest of Guy Fawkes's assailants; and ere long the assemblage became infuriated to such an ungovernable pitch, that the lieutenant, who had allowed matters to proceed thus far in the hope of shaking the prisoner's constancy, finding his design fruitless, ordered him to be taken away. Escorted by a dozen soldiers with calivers on their shoulders, Guy Fawkes was led through the archway of the Bloody Tower, and across the Green to the Beauchamp Tower. He was placed in the spacious chamber on the first floor of that fortification, now used as a mess-room by the Guards. Sir William Waad followed him, and seating himself at a table, referred to the warrant.

“You are here called John Johnson. Is that your name?” he demanded.

“If you find it thus written, you need make no further inquiry from me," replied Fawkes. “I am the person so described. That is sufficient for you.”

“Not so,” replied the lieutenant; “and if you persist in this stubborn demeanour, the severest measures will be adopted towards you. Your sole chance of avoiding the torture is in making a full confession.”

“I do not desire to avoid the torture,” replied Fawkes. “It will wrest nothing from me.”

“So all think till they have experienced it,” replied the lieutenant; “but greater fortitude than yours has given way before our engines.”

Fawkes smiled disdainfully, but made no answer.

The lieutenant then gave directions that he should be placed within a small cell adjoining the larger chamber, and that two of the guard should remain constantly beside him, to prevent him from doing himself any violence.

“You need have no fear,” observed Fawkes. “I shall not destroy my chance of martyrdom.”

At this juncture a messenger arrived, bearing a despatch from the Earl of Salisbury. The lieutenant broke the seal, and after hurriedly perusing it, drew his sword, and desiring the guard to station themselves outside the door, approached Fawkes.

“Notwithstanding the enormity of your offence,” he observed, “I find his Majesty will graciously spare your life, provided you will reveal the names of all your associates, and disclose every particular connected with the plot.”

Guy Fawkes appeared lost in reflection, and the lieutenant, conceiving he had made an impression upon him, repeated the offer.

“How am I to be assured of this?” asked the prisoner.

“My promise must suffice,” rejoined Waad.

“It will not suffice to me,” returned Fawkes. “I must have a pardon signed by the King.”

“You shall have it on one condition,” replied Waad. “You are evidently troubled with few scruples. It is the Earl of Salisbury's conviction that the heads of many important Catholic families are connected with this plot. If they should prove to be so,—or, to be plain, if you will accuse certain persons whom I will specify, you shall have the pardon you require.”

“Is this the purport of the Earl of Salisbury's despatch?” asked Guy Fawkes.

The lieutenant nodded.

“Let me look at it,” continued Fawkes. “You may be practising upon me.”

“Your own perfidious nature makes you suspicious of treachery in others,” cried the lieutenant. “Will this satisfy you?”

And he held the letter towards Guy Fawkes, who instantly snatched it from his grasp.

“What ho!” he shouted in a loud voice; “what ho!” and the guards instantly rushed into the room. “You shall learn why you were sent away. Sir William Waad has offered me my life, on the part of the Earl of Salisbury, provided I will accuse certain innocent parties—innocent, except that they are Catholics—of being leagued with me in my design. Read this letter, and see whether I speak not the truth.”

And he threw it among them. But no one stirred, except a warder, who, picking it up, delivered it to the lieutenant.

“You will now understand whom you have to deal with,” pursued Fawkes.

“I do,” replied Waad. “But were you as unyielding as the walls of this prison, I would shake your obduracy.”

“I pray you not to delay the experiment,” said Fawkes.

“Have a little patience,” retorted Waad. “I will not balk your humour, depend upon it.”

With this, he departed, and repairing to his lodgings, wrote a hasty despatch to the Earl, detailing all that had passed, and requesting a warrant for the torture, as he was apprehensive, if the prisoner expired under the severe application that would be necessary to force the truth from him, he might be called to account. Two hours afterwards the messenger returned with the warrant. It was in the handwriting of the King, and contained a list of interrogations to be put to the prisoner, concluding by

directing him “to use the gentler torture first, et sic per gradus ad ima tenditur. And so God speed you in your good work!”

Thus armed, and fearless of the consequences, the lieutenant summoned Jasper Ipgreve.

“We have a very refractory prisoner to deal with,” he said, as the jailer appeared. “But I have just received the royal authority to put him through all the degrees of torture if he continues obstinate. How shall we begin?”

“With the Scavenger's Daughter and the Little Ease, if it please you, honourable sir,” replied Ipgreve. “If these fail, we can try the gauntlets and the rack; and lastly, the dungeon among the rats, and the hot stone.”

“A good progression,” said the lieutenant, smiling. “I will now repair to the torture-chamber. Let the prisoner be brought there without delay. He is in the Beauchamp Tower.”

Ipgreve bowed and departed, while the lieutenant, calling to an attendant to bring a torch, proceeded along a narrow passage communicating with the Bell Tower. Opening a secret door within it, he descended a flight of stone steps, and traversing a number of intricate passages, at length stopped before a strong door, which he pushed aside, and entered the chamber he had mentioned to Ipgreve. This dismal apartment has already been described. It was that in which Viviana's constancy was so fearfully approved. Two officials in the peculiar garb of the place—a sable livery—were occupied in polishing the various steel implements. Besides these, there was the chirurgeon, who was seated at a side table, reading by the light of a brazen lamp. He instantly arose on seeing the lieutenant, and began, with the other officials, to make preparations for the prisoner's arrival. The two latter concealed their features by drawing a large black capoch, or hood, attached to their gowns over them, and this disguise added materially to their lugubrious appearance. One of them then took down a broad iron hoop, opening in the centre with a hinge, and held it in readiness. Their preparations were scarcely completed when heavy footsteps announced the approach of Fawkes and his attendants. Jasper Ipgreve ushered them into the chamber, and fastened the door behind them. All the subsequent proceedings were conducted with the utmost deliberation, and were therefore doubly impressive. No undue haste occurred, and the officials, who might have been mistaken for phantoms or evil spirits, spoke only in whispers. Guy Fawkes watched their movements with unaltered composure. At length, Jasper Ipgreve signified to the lieutenant that all was ready.

“The opportunity you desired of having your courage put to the test is now arrived,” said the latter to the prisoner.

“What am I to do?” was the reply.

“Remove your doublet, and prostrate yourself,” subjoined Ipgreve.

Guy Fawkes obeyed, and when in this posture began audibly to recite a prayer to the Virgin.

“Be silent,” cried the lieutenant, “or a gag shall be thrust into your mouth.”

Kneeling upon the prisoner's shoulders, and passing the hoop under his legs, Ipgreve then succeeded, with the help of his assistants, who added their weight to his own, in fastening the hoop with an iron button. This done, they left the prisoner with his limbs and body so tightly compressed together that he was scarcely able to breathe. In this state he was allowed to remain for an hour and a half. The chirurgeon then found on examination that the blood had burst profusely from his mouth and nostrils, and in a slighter degree from the extremities of his hands and feet.

“He must be released,” he observed in an under tone to the lieutenant. “Further continuance might be fatal.”

Accordingly, the hoop was removed, and it was at this moment that the prisoner underwent the severest trial. Despite his efforts to control himself, a sharp convulsion passed across his frame, and the restoration of impeded circulation and respiration occasioned him the most acute agony.

The chirurgeon bathed his temples with vinegar, and his limbs being chafed by the officials, he was placed on a bench.

“My warrant directs me to begin with the 'gentler tortures,' and to proceed by degrees to extremities,” observed the lieutenant, significantly. “You have now had a taste of the milder sort, and may form some conjecture what the worst are like. Do you still continue contumacious?”

“I am in the same mind as before,” replied Fawkes, in a hoarse but firm voice.

“Take him to the Little Ease, and let him pass the night there,” said the lieutenant. “To-morrow I will continue the investigation.”

Fawkes was then led out by Ipgreve and the officials, and conveyed along a narrow passage, until arriving at a low door, in which there was an iron grating, it was opened, and disclosed a narrow cell about four feet high, one and a few inches wide, and two deep. Into this narrow receptacle, which seemed wholly inadequate to contain a tall and strongly-built man like himself, the prisoner was with some difficulty thrust, and the door locked upon him.

In this miserable plight, with his head bent upon his breast,—the cell being so contrived that its wretched inmate could neither sit, nor recline at full length within it,—Guy Fawkes prayed long and fervently; and no longer troubled by the uneasy feelings which had for some time haunted him, he felt happier in his present forlorn condition than he had been when anticipating the full success of his project.

“At least,” he thought, “I shall now win myself a crown of martyrdom, and whatever my present sufferings may be, they will be speedily effaced by the happiness I shall enjoy hereafter.”

Overcome, at length, by weariness and exhaustion, he fell into a sort of doze—it could scarcely be called sleep—and while in this state, fancied he was visited by Saint Winifred, who, approaching the door of the cell, touched it, and it instantly opened. She then placed her hand upon his limbs, and the pain he had hitherto felt in them subsided.

“Your troubles will soon be over,” murmured the saint, “and you will be at rest. Do not hesitate to confess. Your silence will neither serve your companions nor yourself.” With these words the vision disappeared, and Guy Fawkes awoke. Whether it was the effect of imagination, or that his robust constitution had in reality shaken off the effects of the torture, it is impossible to say, but it is certain that he felt his strength restored to him, and attributing his recovery entirely to the marvellous interposition of the saint, he addressed a prayer of gratitude to her. While thus occupied, he heard—for it was so dark he could distinguish nothing—a sweet low voice at the grating of the cell, and imagining it was the same benign presence as before, paused and listened.

“Do you hear me?” asked the voice.

“I do,” replied Fawkes. “Is it the blessed Winifred, who again vouchsafes to address me?”

“Alas, no!” replied the voice; “it is one of mortal mould. I am Ruth Ipgreve, the jailer's daughter. You may remember that I expressed some sympathy in your behalf at your landing at Traitor's Gate to-day, for which I incurred my father's displeasure. But you will be quite sure I am a friend, when I tell you I assisted Viviana Radcliffe to escape.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Guy Fawkes, in a tone of great emotion.

“I was in some degree in her confidence,” pursued Ruth; “and, if I am not mistaken, you are the object of her warmest regard.”

The prisoner could not repress a groan.

“You are Guy Fawkes,” pursued Ruth. “Nay, you need have no fear of me. I have risked my life for Viviana, and would risk it for you.”

“I will disguise nothing from you,” replied Fawkes. “I am he you have named. As the husband of Viviana—for such I am—I feel the deepest gratitude to you for the service you rendered her. She bitterly reproached herself with having placed you in so much danger. How did you escape?”

“I was screened by my parents,” replied Ruth. “It was given out by them that Viviana escaped through the window of her prison, and I was thus preserved from punishment. Where is she now?”

“In safety, I trust,” replied Fawkes. “Alas! I shall never behold her again.”

“Do not despair,” returned Ruth. “I will try to effect your liberation; and though I have but slender hope of accomplishing it, still there is a chance.”

“I do not desire it,” returned Fawkes. “I am content to perish. All I lived for is at an end.”

“This shall not deter me from trying to save you,” replied Ruth; “and I still trust there is happiness in store for you with Viviana. Amid all your sufferings, rest certain there is one who will ever watch over you. I dare not remain here longer, for fear of a surprise. Farewell!”

She then departed, and it afforded Guy Fawkes some solace to ponder on the interview during the rest of the night.

On the following morning Jasper Ipgreve appeared, and placed before him a loaf of the coarsest bread, and a jug of dirty water. His scanty meal ended, he left him, but returned in two hours afterwards with a party of halberdiers, and desiring him to follow him, led the way to the torture-chamber. Sir William Waad was there when he arrived, and demanding in a stern tone whether he still continued obstinate, and receiving no answer, ordered him to be placed in the gauntlets. Upon this, he was suspended from a

beam by his hands, and endured five hours of the most excruciating agony—his fingers being so crushed and lacerated that he could not move them.

He was then taken down, and still refusing to confess, was conveyed to a horrible pit, adjoining the river, called, from the loathsome animals infesting it, “the dungeon among the rats.” It was about twenty feet wide and twelve deep, and at high tide was generally more than two feet deep in water.

Into this dreadful chasm was Guy Fawkes lowered by his attendants, who, warning him of the probable fate that awaited him, left him in total darkness. At this time the pit was free from water; but he had not been there more than an hour, when a bubbling and hissing sound proclaimed that the tide was rising, while frequent plashes convinced him that the rats were at hand. Stooping down, he felt that the water was alive with them—that they were all around him—and would not, probably, delay their attack. Prepared as he was for the worst, he could not repress a shudder at the prospect of the horrible death with which he was menaced.

At this juncture, he was surprised by the appearance of a light, and perceived at the edge of the pit a female figure bearing a lantern. Not doubting it was his visitant of the former night, he called out to her, and was answered in the voice of Ruth Ipgreve.

“I dare not remain here many minutes,” she said, “because my father suspects me. But I could not let you perish thus. I will let down this lantern to you, and the light will keep away the rats. When the tide retires you can extinguish it.”

So saying, she tore her kerchief into shreds, and tying the slips together, lowered the lantern to the prisoner, and without waiting to receive his thanks, hurried away.

Thus aided, Guy Fawkes defended himself as well as he could against his loathsome assailants. The light showed that the water was swarming with them—that they were creeping by hundreds up the sides of the pit, and preparing to make a general attack upon him.

At one time, Fawkes determined not to oppose them, but to let them work their will upon him; but the contact of the noxious animals made him change his resolution, and he instinctively drove them off. They were not, however, to be easily repulsed, and returned to the charge with greater fury than before. The desire of self preservation now got the better of every other feeling, and the dread of being devoured alive giving new vigour to his crippled limbs, he rushed to the other side of the pit. His persecutors, however, followed him in myriads, springing upon him, and making their sharp teeth meet in his flesh in a thousand places.

In this way the contest continued for some time, Guy Fawkes speeding round the pit, and his assailants never for one moment relaxing in the pursuit, until he fell from exhaustion, and his lantern being extinguished, the whole host darted upon him.

Thinking all over, he could not repress a loud cry, and it was scarcely uttered, when lights appeared, and several gloomy figures bearing torches were seen at the edge of the pit. Among these he distinguished Sir William Waad, who offered instantly to release him if he would confess.

“I will rather perish,” replied Fawkes, “and I will make no further effort to defend myself. I shall soon be out of the reach of your malice.”

“This must not be,” observed the lieutenant to Jasper Ipgreve, who stood by. “The Earl of Salisbury will never forgive me if he perishes.”

“Then not a moment must be lost, or those ravenous brutes will assuredly devour him,” replied Ipgreve. “They are so fierce, that I scarcely like to venture among them.”

A ladder was then let down into the pit, and the jailer and the two officials descended. They were just in time. Fawkes had ceased to struggle, and the rats were attacking him with such fury that his words would have been speedily verified, but for Ipgreve's timely interposition.

On being taken out of the pit, he fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood; and when he came to himself, found he was stretched upon a couch in the torture-chamber, with the chirurgeon and Jasper Ipgreve in attendance. Strong broths and other restoratives were then administered; and his strength being sufficiently restored to enable him to converse, the lieutenant again visited him, and questioning him as before, received a similar answer.

In the course of that day and the next, he underwent at intervals various kinds of torture, each more excruciating than the preceding, all of which he bore with unabated fortitude. Among other applications, the rack was employed with such rigour, that his joints started from their sockets, and his frame seemed torn asunder.

On the fourth day he was removed to another and yet gloomier chamber, devoted to the same dreadful objects as the first. It had an arched stone ceiling, and at the further extremity yawned a deep recess. Within this there was a small furnace, in which fuel was placed, ready to be kindled; and over the furnace lay a large black flag, at either end of which were stout leathern straps. After being subjected to the customary interrogations

of the lieutenant, Fawkes was stripped of his attire, and bound to the flag. The fire was then lighted, and the stone gradually heated. The writhing frame of the miserable man ere long showed the extremity of his suffering; but as he did not even utter a groan, his tormentors were compelled to release him.

On this occasion, there were two personages present who had never attended any previous interrogation. They were wrapped in large cloaks, and stood aloof during the proceedings. Both were treated with the most ceremonious respect by Sir William Waad, who consulted them as to the extent to which he should continue the torture. When the prisoner was taken off the heated stone, one of those persons advanced towards him, and gazed curiously at him.

Fawkes, upon whose brow thick drops were standing, and who was sinking into the oblivion brought on by overwrought endurance, exclaimed, “It is the King;” and fainted.

“The traitor knew your Majesty,” said the lieutenant. “But you see it is in vain to attempt to extort anything from him.”

“So it seems,” replied James; “and I am greatly disappointed, for I was led to believe that I should hear a full confession of the conspiracy from his own lips. How say you, good Master chirurgeon, will he endure further torture?”

“Not without danger of life, your Majesty, unless he has some days' repose,” replied the chirurgeon, “even if he can endure it then.”

“It will not be necessary to apply it further,” replied Salisbury. “I am now in full possession of the names of all the principal conspirators; and when the prisoner finds further concealment useless, he will change his tone. To-morrow, the commissioners appointed by your Majesty for the examination of all those concerned in this dreadful project, will interrogate him in the lieutenant's lodgings, and I will answer with my life that the result will be satisfactory.”

“Enough,” said James. “It has been a painful spectacle which we have just witnessed, and yet we would not have missed it. The wretch possesses undaunted resolution, and we can never be sufficiently grateful to the beneficent Providence that prevented him from working his ruthless purpose upon us. The day on which we were preserved from this Gunpowder Treason shall ever hereafter be kept sacred in our church, and thanks shall be returned to Heaven for our wonderful deliverance.”

“Your Majesty will act wisely,” replied Salisbury. “The Ordinance will impress the nation with a salutary horror of all Papists and traitors,—for they are one and the same thing,—

and keep alive a proper feeling of enmity against them. Such a fearful example shall be made of these miscreants as shall, it is to be hoped, deter all others from following their cause. Not only shall they perish infamously, but their names shall for ever be held in execration."

"Be it so," rejoined James. "It is a good legal maxim—Crescente malitiâ, crescere debuit et œna."

Upon this, he left the chamber, and, traversing a number of subterranean passages with his attendants, crossed the drawbridge near the Byward Tower to the wharf, where his barge was waiting for him, and returned in it to Whitehall.

At an early hour on the following day, the commissioners appointed to the examination of the prisoner, met together in a large room on the second floor of the lieutenant's lodgings, afterwards denominated, from its use on this occasion, the Council Chamber. Affixed to the walls of this room may be seen at the present day a piece of marble sculpture, with an inscription commemorative of the event. The commissioners were nine in number, and included the Earls of Salisbury, Northampton, Nottingham, Suffolk, Worcester, Devon, Marr, and Dunbar, and Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice. With these were associated Sir Edward Coke, attorney-general, and Sir William Waad.

The apartment in which the examination took place is still a spacious one, but at the period in question it was much larger and loftier. The walls were panelled with dark lustrous oak, covered in some places with tapestry, and adorned in others with paintings. Over the chimney-piece hung a portrait of the late sovereign, Elizabeth. The commissioners were grouped round a large heavily carved oak table, and, after some deliberation together, it was agreed that the prisoner should be introduced.

Sir William Waad then motioned to Topcliffe, who was in attendance with half a dozen halberdiers, and a few moments afterwards a panel was pushed aside, and Guy Fawkes was brought through it. He was supported by Topcliffe and Ipgreve, and it was with the greatest difficulty he could drag himself along. So severe had been the sufferings to which he had been subjected, that they had done the work of time, and placed more than twenty years on his head. His features were thin and sharp, and of a ghastly whiteness, and his eyes hollow and bloodshot. A large cloak was thrown over him, which partially concealed his shattered frame and crippled limbs; but his bent shoulders, and the difficulty with which he moved, told how much he had undergone.

On seeing the presence in which he stood, a flush for a moment rose to his pallid cheek, his eye glowed with its wonted fire, and he tried to stand erect—but his limbs refused

their office—and the effort was so painful, that he fell back into the arms of his attendants. He was thus borne forward by them, and supported during his examination. The Earl of Salisbury then addressed him, and enlarging on the magnitude and horrible nature of his treason, concluded by saying that the only reparation he could offer was to disclose not only all his own criminal intentions, but the names of his associates.

“I will hide nothing concerning myself,” replied Fawkes; “but I shall be for ever silent respecting others.”

The Earl then glanced at Sir Edward Coke, who proceeded to take down minutes of the examination.

“You have hitherto falsely represented yourself,” said the Earl. “What is your real name?”

“Guy Fawkes,” replied the prisoner.

“And do you confess your guilt?” pursued the Earl.

“I admit that it was my intention to blow up the King and the whole of the lords spiritual and temporal assembled in the Parliament House with gunpowder,” replied Fawkes.

“And you placed the combustibles in the vault where they were discovered?” demanded Salisbury.

The prisoner answered in the affirmative.

“You are a Papist?” continued the Earl.

“I am a member of the Church of Rome,” returned Fawkes.

“And you regard this monstrous design as righteous and laudable—as consistent with the religion you profess, and as likely to uphold it?" said the Earl.

“I did so,” replied Fawkes. “But I am now convinced that Heaven did not approve it, and I lament that it was ever undertaken.”

“Still, you refuse to make the only reparation in your power—you refuse to disclose your associates?” said Salisbury.

“I cannot betray them,” replied Fawkes.

“Traitor! it is needless,” cried the Earl; “they are known to us—nay, they have betrayed themselves. They have risen in open and armed rebellion against the King; but a sufficient power has been sent against them; and if they are not ere this defeated and captured, many days will not elapse before they will be lodged in the Tower.”

“If this is the case, you require no information from me,” rejoined Fawkes. “But I pray you name them to me.”

“I will do so,” replied Salisbury; “and if I have omitted you can supply the deficiency. I will begin with Robert Catesby, the chief contriver of this hell-engendered plot,—I will next proceed to the superior of the Jesuits, Father Garnet,—next, to another Jesuit priest, Father Oldcorne,—next, to Sir Everard Digby,—then, to Thomas Winter and Robert Winter,—then, to John Wright and Christopher Wright,—then, to Ambrose Rookwood, Thomas Percy, and John Grant, and lastly, to Robert Keyes.”

“Are these all?” demanded Fawkes.

“All we are acquainted with,” said Salisbury.

“Then add to them the names of Francis Tresham, and of his brother-in-law, Lord Mounteagle,” rejoined Fawkes. “I charge both with being privy to the plot.”

“I have forgotten another name,” said Salisbury, in some confusion, “that of Viviana Radcliffe, of Ordsall Hall. I have received certain information that she was wedded to you while you were resident at White Webbs, near Epping Forest, and was cognisant of the plot. If captured, she will share your fate.”

Fawkes could not repress a groan.

Salisbury pursued his interrogations, but it was evident, from the increasing feebleness of the prisoner, that he would sink under it if the examination was further protracted. He was therefore ordered to attach his signature to the minutes taken by Sir Edward Coke, and was placed in a chair for that purpose. A pen was then given him, but for some time his shattered fingers refused to grasp it. By a great effort, and with acute pain, he succeeded in tracing his Christian name thus:—

“Guido”
While endeavouring to write his surname, the pen fell from his hand, and he became insensible.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER II.
SHOWING THE TROUBLES OF VIVIANA.

On coming to herself, Viviana inquired for Garnet; and being told that he was in his chamber alone, she repaired thither, and found him pacing to and fro in the greatest perturbation.

“If you come to me for consolation, daughter,” he said, “you come to one who cannot offer it. I am completely prostrated in spirit by the disastrous issue of our enterprise; and though I tried to prepare myself for what has taken place, I now find myself utterly unable to cope with it.”

Guy Fawkes subscribing his Examination after the torture
“If such is your condition, father,” replied Viviana, “what must be that of my husband, upon whose devoted head all the weight of this dreadful calamity now falls? You are still at liberty—still able to save yourself—still able, at least, to resist unto the death, if you are so minded. But he is a captive in the Tower, exposed to every torment that human ingenuity can invent, and with nothing but the prospect of a lingering death before his eyes. What is your condition, compared with his?”

“Happy—most happy, daughter,” replied Garnet, “and I have been selfish and unreasonable. I have, given way to the weakness of humanity, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for enabling me to shake it off.”

“You have indulged false hopes, father,” said Viviana, “whereas I have indulged none, or rather, all has come to pass as I desired. The dreadful crime with which I feared my husband's soul would have been loaded is now uncommitted, and I have firm hope of his salvation. If I might counsel you, I would advise you to surrender yourself to justice, and by pouring out your blood on the scaffold, wash out your offence. Such will be my own course. I have been involuntarily led into connexion with this plot; and though I have ever disapproved of it, since I have not revealed it I am as guilty as if I had been its contriver. I shall not shun my punishment. Fate has dealt hardly with me, and my path on earth has been strewn with thorns, and cast in grief and trouble. But I humbly trust that my portion hereafter will be with the blessed.”

“I cannot doubt it, daughter,” replied Garnet; “and though I do not view our design in the light that you do, but regard it as justifiable, if not necessary, yet, with your feelings,

I cannot sufficiently admire your conduct. Your devotion and self-sacrifice is wholly without parallel. At the same time, I would try to dissuade you from surrendering yourself to our relentless enemies. Believe me, it will add the severest pang to your husband's torture to know that you are in their power. His nature is stern and unyielding, and, persuaded as he is of the justice of his cause, he will die happy in that conviction, certain that his name, though despised by our heretical persecutors, will be held in reverence by all true professors of our faith. No, daughter, fly and conceal yourself till pursuit is relinquished, and pass the rest of your life in prayer for the repose of your husband's soul."

"I will pass it in endeavouring to bring him to repentance," replied Viviana. "The sole boon I shall seek from my judges will be permission to attempt this."

"It will be refused, daughter," replied Garnet, "and you will only destroy yourself, not aid him. Rest satisfied that the Great Power who judges the hearts of men, and implants certain impulses within them, for his own wise but inscrutable purposes, well knows that Guy Fawkes, however culpable his conduct may appear in your eyes, acted according to the dictates of his conscience, and in the full confidence that the design would restore the true worship of God in this kingdom. The failure of the enterprise proves that he was mistaken—that we were all mistaken,—and that Heaven was unfavourable to the means adopted,—but it does not prove his insincerity."

"These arguments have no weight with me, father," replied Viviana; "I will leave nothing undone to save his soul, and whatever may be the result, I will surrender myself to justice."

"I shall not seek to move you from your purpose, daughter," replied Garnet, "and can only lament it. Before, however, you finally decide, let us pray together for directions from on high."

Thus exhorted, Viviana knelt down with the priest before a small silver image of the Virgin, which stood in a niche in the wall, and they both prayed long and earnestly. Garnet was the first to conclude his devotions; and as he gazed at the upturned countenance and streaming eyes of his companion, his heart was filled with admiration and pity.

At this juncture the door opened, and Catesby and Sir Everard Digby entered. On hearing them, Viviana immediately arose.

"The urgency of our business must plead an excuse for the interruption, if any is needed," said Catesby; "but do not retire, madam. We have no secrets from you now. Sir

Everard and I have fully completed our preparations," he added, to Garnet. "Our men are all armed and mounted in the court, and are in high spirits for the enterprise. As the service, however, will be one of the greatest danger and difficulty, you had better seek a safe asylum, father, till the first decisive blow is struck."

"I would go with you, my son," rejoined Garnet, "if I did not think my presence might be an hinderance. I can only aid you with my prayers, and those can be more efficaciously uttered in some secure retreat, than during a rapid march or dangerous encounter."

"You had better retire to Coughton with Lady Digby and Viviana," said Sir Everard. "I have provided a sufficient escort to guard you thither,—and, as you are aware, there are many hiding-places in the house, where you can remain undiscovered in case of search."

"I place myself at your disposal," replied Garnet. "But Viviana is resolved to surrender herself."

"This must not be," returned Catesby. "Such an act at this juncture would be madness, and would materially injure our cause. Whatever your inclinations may prompt, you must consent to remain in safety, madam."

"I have acquiesced in your proceedings thus far," replied Viviana, "because I could not oppose them without injury to those dear to me. But I will take no further share in them. My mind is made up as to the course I shall pursue."

"Since you are bent upon your own destruction,—for it is nothing less,—it is the duty of your friends to save you," rejoined Catesby. "You shall not do what you propose, and when you are yourself again, and have recovered from the shock your feelings have sustained, you will thank me for my interference."

"You are right, Catesby," observed Sir Everard; "it would be worse than insanity to allow her to destroy herself thus."

"I am glad you are of this opinion," said Garnet. "I tried to reason her out of her design, but without avail."

"Catesby," cried Viviana, throwing herself at his feet, "by the love you once professed for me,—by the friendship you entertained for him who unhesitatingly offered himself for you, and your cause, I implore you not to oppose me now!"

"I shall best serve you, and most act in accordance with the wishes of my friend, by doing so," replied Catesby. "Therefore, you plead in vain."

“Alas!” cried Viviana. “My purposes are ever thwarted. You will have to answer for my life.”

“I should, indeed, have it to answer for, if I permitted you to act as you desire,” rejoined Catesby. “I repeat you will thank me ere many days are passed.”

“Sir Everard,” exclaimed Viviana, appealing to the knight, “I entreat you to have pity upon me.”

“I do sincerely sympathise with your distress,” replied Digby, in a tone of the deepest commiseration; “but I am sure what Catesby advises is for the best. I could not reconcile it to my conscience to allow you to sacrifice yourself thus. Be governed by prudence.”

“Oh no——no!” cried Viviana, distractedly. “I will not be stayed. I command you not to detain me.”

“Viviana,” said Catesby, taking her arm, “this is no season for the display of silly weakness either on our part or yours. If you cannot control yourself, you must be controlled. Father Garnet, I intrust her to your care. Two of my troop shall attend you, together with your own servant, Nicholas Owen. You shall have stout horses, able to accomplish the journey with the greatest expedition, and I should wish you to convey her to her own mansion, Ordsall Hall, and to remain there with her till you hear tidings of us.”

“It shall be as you direct, my son,” said Garnet. “I am prepared to set out at once.”

“That is well,” replied Catesby.

“You will not do me this violence, sir,” cried Viviana. “I appeal against it, to you, Sir Everard.”

“I cannot help you, madam,” replied the knight, “indeed, I cannot.”

“Then Heaven, I trust, will help me,” cried Viviana, “for I am wholly abandoned of man.”

“I beseech you, madam, put some constraint upon yourself,” said Catesby. “If, after your arrival at Ordsall, you are still bent upon your rash and fatal design, Father Garnet shall not oppose its execution. But give yourself time for reflection.”

“Since it may not be otherwise, I assent,” replied Viviana. “If I must go, I will start at once.”

“Wisely resolved,” replied Sir Everard.

Viviana then retired, and soon afterwards appeared equipped for her journey. The two attendants and Nicholas Owen were in the court-yard, and Catesby assisted her into the saddle.

“Do not lose sight of her,” he said to Garnet, as the latter mounted.

“Rest assured I will not,” replied the other.

And taking the direction of Coventry, the party rode off at a brisk pace.

Catesby then joined the other conspirators, while Sir Everard sent off Lady Digby and his household, attended by a strong escort, to Coughton. This done, the whole party repaired to the court-yard, where they called over the muster-roll of their men, to ascertain that none were missing,—examined their arms and ammunition,—and finding all in order, sprang to their steeds, and putting themselves at the head of the band, rode towards Southam and Warwick.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER III.
HUDDINGTON.

About six o'clock in the morning the conspirators reached Leamington Priors, at that time an inconsiderable village; and having ridden nearly twenty miles over heavy and miry roads,—for a good deal of rain had fallen in the night,—they stood in need of some refreshment. Accordingly, they entered the first farm-yard they came to, and proceeding to the cow-houses and sheepfolds, turned out the animals within them, and fastening up their own steeds in their places, set before them whatever provender they could find. Those, and they were by far the greater number, who could not find better accommodation, fed their horses in the yard, which was strewn with trusses of hay and great heaps of corn. The whole scene formed a curious picture. Here was one party driving away the sheep and cattle, which were bleating and lowing,—there, another rifling a hen-roost, and slaughtering its cackling inmates. On this hand, by the direction of Catesby, two stout horses were being harnessed with ropes to a cart, which he intended to use as a baggage-waggon; on that, Sir Everard Digby was interposing his authority to prevent the destruction of a fine porker.

Their horses fed, the next care of the conspirators was to obtain something for themselves: and ordering the master of the house, who was terrified almost out of his senses, to open his doors, they entered the dwelling, and causing a fire to be lighted in the chief room, began to boil a large kettle of broth upon it, and to cook other provisions. Finding a good store of eatables in the larder, rations were served out to the band. Two casks of strong ale were likewise broached, and their contents distributed; and a small keg of strong waters being also discovered, it was disposed of in the same way.

This, however, was the extent of the mischief done. All the conspirators, but chiefly Catesby and Sir Everard Digby, dispersed themselves amongst the band, and checked any disposition to plunder. The only articles taken away from the house were a couple of old rusty swords and a caliver. Catesby proposed to the farmer to join their expedition. But having now regained his courage, the sturdy churl obstinately refused to stir a foot with them, and even ventured to utter a wish that the enterprise might fail.

“I am a good Protestant, and a faithful subject of King James, and will never abet Popery and treason,” he said.

This bold sally would have been answered by a bullet from one of the troopers, if Catesby had not interfered.

“You shall do as you please, friend,” he said, in a conciliatory tone. “We will not compel any man to act against his conscience, and we claim the same right ourselves. Will you join us, good fellows?” he added, to two farming men, who were standing near their master.

“Must I confess to a priest?” asked one of them.

“Certainly not,” replied Catesby. “You shall have no constraint whatever put upon you. All I require is obedience to my commands in the field.”

“Then I am with you,” replied the fellow.

“Thou'rt a traitor and rebel, Sam Morrell,” cried the other hind, “and wilt come to a traitor's end. I will never fight against King James. And if I must take up arms, it shall be against his enemies, and in defence of our religion. No priests,—no papistry for me.”

“Well said, Hugh,” cried his master; “we'll die in that cause, if need be.”

Catesby turned angrily away, and giving the word to his men to prepare to set forth, in a few minutes all were in the saddle; but on inquiring for the new recruit, Sam Morrell, it was found he had disappeared. The cart was laden with arms, ammunition and a few sacks of corn; and the line being formed, they commenced their march.

The morning was dark and misty, and all looked dull and dispiriting. The conspirators, however, were full of confidence, and their men, exhilarated and refreshed by their meal, appeared anxious for an opportunity of distinguishing themselves. Arrived within half a mile of Warwick, whence the lofty spire of the church of Saint Nicholas, the tower of Saint Mary's, and the ancient gates of this beautiful old town could just be discerned through the mist, a short consultation was held by the rebel leaders as to the expediency of attacking the castle, and carrying off the horses with which they had learnt its stables were filled.

Deciding upon making the attempt, their resolution was communicated to their followers, and received with loud acclamations. Catesby then put himself at the head of the band, and they all rode forward at a brisk pace. Crossing the bridge over the Avon, whence the castle burst upon them in all its grandeur and beauty, Catesby dashed forward to an embattled gate commanding the approach to the structure, and knocking

furiously against it, a wicket was opened by an old porter, who started back on beholding the intruders. He would have closed the wicket, but Catesby was too quick for him, and springing from his steed, dashed aside the feeble opposition of the old man, and unbarred the gate. Instantly mounting again, he galloped along a broad and winding path cut so deeply in the rock, that the mighty pile they were approaching was completely hidden from view. A few seconds, however, brought them to a point, from which its three towers reared themselves full before them. Another moment brought them to the edge of the moat, at this time crossed by a stone bridge, but then filled with water, and defended by a drawbridge.

As no attack like the present was apprehended, and as the owner of the castle, the celebrated Fulke Greville, afterwards Lord Brooke, to whom it had been recently granted by the reigning monarch, was then in the capital, the drawbridge was down, and though several retainers rushed forth on hearing the approach of so many horsemen, they were too late to raise it. Threatening these persons with destruction if any resistance was offered, Catesby passed through the great entrance, and rode into the court, where he drew up his band.

By this time, the whole of the inmates of the castle had collected on the ramparts, armed with calivers and partisans, and whatever weapons they could find, and though their force was utterly disproportioned to that of their opponents, they seemed disposed to give them battle. Paying no attention to them, Catesby proceeded to the stables, where he found upwards of twenty horses, which he exchanged for the worst and most jaded of his own, and was about to enter the castle in search of arms, when he was startled by hearing the alarm-bell rung. This was succeeded by the discharge of a culverin on the summit of the tower, named after the redoubted Guy, Earl of Warwick; and though the bell was instantly silenced, Rookwood, who had dislodged the party from the ramparts, brought word that the inhabitants of Warwick were assembling, that drums were beating at the gates, and that an attack might be speedily expected. Not desiring to hazard an engagement at this juncture, Catesby gave up the idea of ransacking the castle, and ordered his men to their horses.

Some delay, however, occurred before they could all be got together, and, meanwhile, the ringing of bells and other alarming sounds continued. At one time, it occurred to Catesby to attempt to maintain possession of the castle; but this design was overruled by the other conspirators, who represented to him the impracticability of the design. At length, the whole troop being assembled, they crossed the drawbridge, and speeded along the rocky path. Before the outer gate they found a large body of men, some on horseback, and some on foot, drawn up. These persons, however, struck with terror at their appearance, retreated, and allowed them a free passage.

On turning to cross the bridge, they found it occupied by a strong and well-armed body of men, headed by the Sheriff of Warwickshire, who showed no disposition to give way. While the rebel party were preparing to force a passage, a trumpet was sounded, and the Sheriff, riding towards them, commanded them in the King's name to yield themselves prisoners.

“We do not acknowledge the supremacy of James Stuart, whom you call king,” rejoined Catesby, sternly. “We fight for our liberties, and for the restoration of the holy Catholic religion which we profess. Do not oppose us, or you will have cause to rue your temerity.”

“Hear me,” cried the Sheriff, turning from him to his men: “I promise you all a free pardon in the King's name, if you will throw down your arms, and deliver up your leaders. But, if after this warning, you continue in open rebellion against your sovereign, you will all suffer the vilest death.”

“Rejoin your men, sir,” said Catesby, in a significant tone, and drawing a petronel.

“A free pardon and a hundred pounds to him who will bring me the head of Robert Catesby,” said the Sheriff, disregarding the menace.

“Your own is not worth half the sum,” rejoined Catesby; and levelling the petronel, he shot him dead.

The Sheriff's fall was the signal for a general engagement. Exasperated by the death of their leader, the royalist party assailed the rebels with the greatest fury, and as the latter were attacked at the same time in the rear, their situation began to appear perilous. But nothing could withstand the vigour and determination of Catesby. Cheering on his men, he soon cut a way across the bridge, and would have made good his retreat, if he had not perceived, to his infinite dismay, that Percy and Rookwood had been captured.

Regardless of any risk he might run, he shouted to those near to follow him, and made such a desperate charge upon the royalists that in a few minutes he was by the side of his friends, and had liberated them. In trying, however, to follow up his advantage he got separated from his companions, and was so hotly pressed on all sides, that his destruction seemed inevitable. His petronels had both brought down their mark; and in striking a blow against a stalwart trooper his sword had shivered close to the handle. In this defenceless state his enemies made sure of him, but they miscalculated his resources.

He was then close to the side of the bridge, and, before his purpose could be divined, struck spurs deeply into his horse, and cleared the parapet with a single bound. A shout of astonishment and admiration arose alike from friend and foe, and there was a general rush towards the side of the bridge. The noble animal that had borne him out of danger was seen swimming towards the bank, and, though several shots were fired at him, he reached it in safety. This gallant action so raised Catesby in the estimation of his followers, that they welcomed him with the utmost enthusiasm, and rallying round him, fought with such vigour, that they drove their opponents over the bridge and compelled them to flee towards the town.

Catesby now mustered his men, and finding his loss slighter than he expected, though several were so severely wounded, that he was compelled to leave them behind, rode off at a quick pace. After proceeding for about four miles along the Stratford road, they turned off on the right into a narrow lane leading to Snitterfield, with the intention of visiting Norbrook, the family residence of John Grant. On arriving there, they put the house into a state of defence, and then assembled in the hall, while their followers recruited themselves in the court-yard.

“So far, well,” observed Catesby, flinging himself into a chair; “the first battle has been won.”

“True,” replied Grant; “but it will not do to tarry here long. This house cannot hold out against a prolonged attack.”

“We will not remain here more than a couple of hours,” replied Catesby: “but where shall we go next? I am for making some desperate attempt, which shall strike terror into our foes.”

“Are we strong enough to march to the Earl of Harrington's mansion near Coventry, and carry off the Princess Elizabeth?” asked Percy.

“She were indeed a glorious prize,” replied Catesby; “but I have no doubt, on the first alarm of our rising, she has been conveyed to a place of safety. And even if she were there, we should have the whole armed force of Coventry to contend with. No—no, it will not do to attempt that.”

“Nothing venture, nothing have!” cried Sir Everard Digby. “We ought, in my opinion, to run any risk to secure her.”

“You know me too well, Digby,” rejoined Catesby, “to doubt my readiness to undertake any project, however hazardous, which would offer the remotest chance of success. But

in this I see none, unless, indeed, it could be accomplished by stratagem. Let us first ascertain what support we can obtain, and then decide upon the measures to be adopted."

"I am content," returned Digby.

"Old Mr. Talbot of Grafton is a friend of yours, is he not?" continued Catesby, addressing Thomas Winter. "Can you induce him to join us?"

"I will try," replied Thomas Winter; "but I have some misgivings."

"Be not faint-hearted," rejoined Catesby. "You and Stephen Littleton shall go to him at once, and join us at your own mansion of Huddington, whither we will proceed as soon as our men are thoroughly recruited. Use every argument you can devise with Talbot,—tell him that the welfare of the Catholic cause depends on our success,—and that neither his years nor infirmities can excuse his absence at this juncture. If he will not, or cannot come himself, cause him to write letters to all his Catholic neighbours, urging them to join us, and bid him send all his retainers and servants to us."

"I will not neglect a single plea," replied Thomas Winter, "and I will further urge compliance by his long friendship towards myself. But, as I have just said, I despair of success."

Soon after this, he and Stephen Littleton, with two of the troopers well-mounted and well-armed, rode across the country through lanes and by-roads, with which they were well acquainted, to Grafton. At the same time, Catesby repaired to the court-yard, and assembling his men, found there were twenty-five missing. More than half of these it was known had been killed or wounded at Warwick; but the rest, it was suspected, had deserted.

Whatever effect this scrutiny might secretly have upon Catesby, he maintained a cheerful and confident demeanour, and mounting a flight of steps, harangued the band in energetic and exciting terms. Displaying a small image of the virgin to them, he assured them they were under the special protection of heaven, whose cause they were fighting—and concluded by reciting a prayer, in which the whole assemblage heartily joined. This done, they filled the baggage-cart with provisions and further ammunition, and forming themselves into good order, took the road to Alcester.

They had not gone far, when torrents of rain fell, and the roads being in a shocking condition, and ploughed up with ruts, they turned into the fields wherever it was practicable, and continued their march very slowly, and under excessively disheartening

circumstances. On arriving at the ford across the Avon, near Bishopston, they found the stream so swollen that it was impossible to get across it. Sir Everard Digby, who made the attempt, was nearly carried off by the current. They were therefore compelled to proceed to Stratford, and cross the bridge.

“My friends,” said Catesby, commanding a halt at a short distance of the town, “I know not what reception we may meet with here. Probably much the same as at Warwick. But I command you not to strike a blow, except in self-defence.”

Those injunctions given, attended by the other conspirators, except Percy and Rookwood, who brought up the rear, he rode slowly into Stratford, and proceeding to the market-place, ordered a trumpet to be sounded. On the first appearance of the troop, most of the inhabitants fled to their houses, and fastened the doors, but some few courageous persons followed them at a wary distance. These were harangued at some length by Catesby, who called upon them to join the expedition, and held out promises, which only excited the derision of the hearers.

Indeed, the dejected looks of most of the band, and the drenched and muddy state of their apparel, made them objects of pity and contempt, rather than of serious apprehension: and nothing but their numbers prevented an attack being made upon them. Catesby's address concluded amid groans of dissatisfaction; and finding he was wasting time, and injuring his own cause, he gave the word to march, and moved slowly through the main street, but not a single recruit joined him.

Another unpropitious circumstance occurred just as they were leaving Stratford. Two or three of his followers tried to slink away, when Catesby, riding after them, called to them to return, and no attention being paid to his orders, he shot the man nearest him, and compelled the others, by threats of the same punishment, to return to their ranks. This occurrence, while it occasioned much discontent and ill-will among the band, gave great uneasiness to their leaders. Catesby and Percy now brought up the rear, and kept a sharp look-out to check any further attempt at desertion.

Digby and Winter, being well acquainted with all the Catholic gentry in the neighbourhood, they proceeded to their different residences, and were uniformly coldly received, and in some cases dismissed with reproaches and menaces. In spite of all their efforts, too, repeated desertions took place; and long before they reached Alcester, their force was diminished by a dozen men. Not thinking it prudent to pass through the town, they struck into a lane on the right, and fording the Arrow near Ragley, skirted that extensive park, and crossing the hills near Weethly and Stoney Moreton, arrived in about an hour and a half, in a very jaded condition, at Huddington, the seat of Robert Winter. Affairs seemed to wear so unpromising an aspect, that Catesby, on entering the

house, immediately called a council of his friends, and asked them what they proposed to do.

“For my own part,” he said, “I am resolved to fight it out. I will continue my march as long as I can get a man to follow me, and when they are all gone, will proceed alone. But I will never yield.”

“We will all die together, if need be,” said Sir Everard Digby. “Let us rest here to-night, and in the morning proceed to Lord Windsor's mansion, Hewel Grange, which I know to be well stocked with arms, and, after carrying off all we can, we will fortify Stephen Littleton's house at Holbeach, and maintain it for a few days against our enemies.”

This proposal agreed to, they repaired to the court-yard, and busied themselves in seeing the wants of their followers attended to; and such a change was effected by good fare and a few hours' repose, that the spirits of the whole party revived, and confidence was once more restored. A slight damp, however, was again thrown upon the satisfaction of the leaders, by the return of Thomas Winter and Stephen Littleton from Grafton. Their mission had proved wholly unsuccessful. Mr. Talbot had not merely refused to join them, but had threatened to detain them.

“He says we deserve the worst of deaths,” observed Thomas Winter, in conclusion, “and that we have irretrievably injured the Catholic cause.”

“And I begin to fear he speaks the truth,” rejoined Christopher Wright. “However, for us there is no retreat.”

“None whatever,” rejoined Catesby, in a sombre tone. “We must choose between death upon the battle-field or on the scaffold.”

“The former be my fate,” cried Percy.

“And mine,” added Catesby.

An anxious and perturbed night was passed by the conspirators, and many a plan was proposed and abandoned. It had been arranged among them that they should each in succession make the rounds of the place, to see that the sentinels were at their posts—strict orders having been given to the latter to fire upon whomsoever might attempt to fly—but, as Catesby, despite his great previous fatigue, was unable to rest, he took this duty chiefly upon himself.

Returning at midnight from an examination of the court-yard, he was about to enter the house, when he perceived before him a tall figure, with a cloak muffled about its face, standing in his path. It was perfectly motionless, and Catesby, who carried a lantern in his hand, threw the light upon it, but it neither moved forward, nor altered its position. Catesby would have challenged it, but an undefinable terror seized him, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. An idea rose to his mind that it was the spirit of Guy Fawkes, and, by a powerful effort, he compelled himself to address it.

“Are you come to warn me?” he demanded.

The figure moved in acquiescence, and withdrawing the cloak, revealed features of ghastly paleness, but resembling those of Fawkes.

“Have I long to live?” demanded Catesby.

The figure shook its head.

“Shall I fall to-morrow?” pursued Catesby.

The figure again made a gesture in the negative.

“The next day?”

Solemnly inclining its head, the figure once more muffled its ghastly visage in its cloak, and melted from his view.

For some time Catesby remained in a state almost of stupefaction. He then summoned up all the resolution of his nature, and instead of returning to the house, continued to pace to and fro in the court, and at last walked forth into the garden. It was profoundly dark; and he had not advanced many steps when he suddenly encountered a man. Repressing the exclamation that rose to his lips, he drew a petronel from his belt, and waited till the person addressed him.

“Is it you, Sir John Foliot?” asked a voice, which he instantly recognised as that of Topcliffe.

“Ay,” replied Catesby, in a low tone.

“Did you manage to get into the house?” pursued Topcliffe.

“I did,” returned Catesby; “but speak lower. There is a sentinel within a few paces of us. Come this way.”

And grasping the other's arm he drew him further down the walk.

“Do you think we may venture to surprise them?” demanded Topcliffe.

“Hum!” exclaimed Catesby, hesitating, in the hope of inducing the other to betray his design.

“Or shall we wait the arrival of Sir Richard Walsh, the Sheriff of Worcestershire, and the posse comitatûs?” pursued Topcliffe.

“How soon do you think the Sheriff will arrive?” asked Catesby, scarcely able to disguise his anxiety.

“He cannot be here before daybreak—if so soon,” returned Topcliffe, “and then we shall have to besiege the house; and though I have no fear of the result, yet some of the conspirators may fall in the skirmish; and my orders from the Earl of Salisbury, as I have already apprised you, are, to take them alive.”

“True,” replied Catesby.

“I would not, for twice the reward I shall receive for the capture of the whole party, that that desperate traitor, Catesby, should be slain," continued Topcliffe. “The plot was contrived by him, and the extent of its ramifications can alone be ascertained through him.”

“I think I can contrive their capture,” observed Catesby; “but the utmost caution must be used. I will return to the house, and find out where the chief conspirators are lodged. I will then throw open the door, and will return to this place, where you can have our men assembled. If we can seize and secure the leaders, the rest will be easy.”

“You will run great risk, Sir John,” said Topcliffe, with affected concern.

“Heed not that,” replied Catesby. “You may expect me in a few minutes. Get together your men as noiselessly as you can.”

With this he hastily withdrew.

On returning to the house, he instantly roused his companions, and acquainted them with what had occurred.

“My object,” he said, “is to make Topcliffe a prisoner. We may obtain much useful information from him. As to the others, if they offer resistance, we will put them to death.”

“What force have they?” asked Sir Everard Digby, with some uneasiness.

“It is impossible to say precisely,” replied Catesby; “but not more than a handful of men, I should imagine, as they are waiting for Sir Richard Walsh.”

“I know not what may be the issue of this matter,” observed Robert Winter, whose looks were unusually haggard; “but I have had a strange and ominous dream, which fills me with apprehension.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Catesby, upon whose mind the recollection of the apparition he had beheld rushed.

“Catesby,” pursued Robert Winter, taking him aside, “if you have any sin unrepented of, I counsel you to make your peace with Heaven, for I fear you are not long for this world.”

“It may be so,” rejoined Catesby, firmly; “and I have many dark and damning sins upon my soul, but I will die as I have lived, firm and unshaken to the last. And now, let us prepare for our foes.”

So saying, he proceeded to call up the trustiest of his men, and enjoining profound silence upon them, disposed them in various places, that they might instantly appear at his signal. After giving them other directions, he returned to the garden, and coughed slightly. He was answered by a quickly-approaching footstep, and a voice demanded,

“Are you there, Sir John?”

Catesby answered in a low tone in the affirmative.

“Come forward, then,” rejoined Topcliffe.

As he spoke there was a rush of persons towards the spot, and seizing Catesby, he cried, in a triumphant tone, while he unmasked a lantern, and threw its light full upon his face,

“You are caught in your own trap, Mr. Catesby. You are my prisoner.”

“Not so, villain,” cried Catesby, disengaging himself by a powerful effort.

Springing backwards, he drew his sword, and making the blade describe a circle round his body, effected his retreat in safety, though a dozen shots were fired at him. Leaping the garden wall, he was instantly surrounded by the other conspirators, and the greater part of the band, who, hearing the reports of the fire-arms, had hurried to the spot. Instantly putting himself at their head, Catesby returned to the garden; but Topcliffe and his party had taken the alarm and fled. Torches were brought, and, by Catesby's directions, a large heap of dry stubble was set on fire. But, though the flames revealed every object for a considerable distance around them, no traces of the hostile party could be discerned.

After continuing their ineffectual search for some time, the conspirators returned to the house, and abandoning all idea of retiring to rest, kept strict watch during the remainder of the night. Little conversation took place. All were deeply depressed; and Catesby paced backwards and forwards within a passage leading from the hall to the dining-chamber. His thoughts were gloomy enough, and he retraced the whole of his wild and turbulent career, pondering upon its close, which he could not disguise from himself was at hand.

“It matters not,” he mentally ejaculated; “I shall not die ignominiously, and I would rather perish in the vigour of manhood than linger out a miserable old age. I have striven hard to achieve a great enterprise, and having failed, have little else to live for. This band cannot hold together two days longer. Our men will desert us, or turn upon us to obtain the price set upon our heads. And, were they true, I have little reliance upon my companions. They have no longer the confidence that can alone insure success, and I expect each moment some one will propose a surrender. Surrender! I will never do so with life. Something must be done—something worthy of me—and then let me perish. I have ever prayed to die a soldier's death.”

As he uttered these words unconsciously aloud, he became aware of the presence of Robert Winter, who stood at the end of the passage, watching him.

“Your prayer will not be granted, Catesby,” said the latter. “Some dreadful doom, I fear, is reserved for you and all of us.”

“What mean you?” demanded the other, uneasily.

“Listen to me,” replied Robert Winter. “I told you I had a strange and appalling dream to-night, and I will now relate it. I thought I was in a boat upon the river Thames, when all at once the day, which had been bright and smiling, became dark and overcast,—not dark like the shades of night, but gloomy and ominous, as when the sun is shrouded by an eclipse. I looked around, and every object was altered. The tower of Saint Paul's stood awry, and seemed ready to topple down,—so did the spires and towers of all the surrounding fanes. The houses on London Bridge leaned frightfully over the river, and the habitations lining its banks on either side, seemed shaken to their foundations. I fancied some terrible earthquake must have occurred, or that the end of the world was at hand.”

“Go on,” said Catesby, who had listened with profound attention to the relation.

“The stream, too, changed its colour,” continued Robert Winter, “and became red as blood, and the man who rowed my boat was gone, and his place occupied by a figure masked and habited like an executioner. I commanded him to row me ashore, and in an instant the bark shot to land, and I sprang out, glad to be liberated from my mysterious conductor. My steps involuntarily led me toward the cathedral, and on entering it, I found its pillars, shrines, monuments, and roof hung with black. The throng that ever haunt Paul's Walk had disappeared, and a few dismal figures alone traversed the aisles. On approaching them, I recognised in their swollen, death-like, and blackened lineaments, some resemblance to you and our friends. I was about to interrogate them, when I was awakened by yourself.”

“A strange dream, truly,” observed Catesby, musingly, “and coupled with what I myself have seen to-night, would seem to bode evil.”

And he then proceeded to describe the supernatural appearance he had beheld to his companion.

“All is over with us,” rejoined Robert Winter. “We must prepare to meet our fate.”

“We must meet it like men,—like brave men, Robert,” replied Catesby. “We must not disgrace ourselves and our cause.”

“You are right,” rejoined Robert Winter; “but these visions are more terrible than the contemplation of death itself.”

“If you require further rest, take it,” returned Catesby. “In an hour I shall call up our men, and march to Hewel Grange.”

“I am wearied enough,” replied Robert Winter, “but I dare not close my eyes again.”

“Then recommend your soul to Heaven,” said Catesby. “I would be alone. Melancholy thoughts press upon me, and I desire to unburden my heart to God.”

Robert Winter then left him, and he withdrew into a closet where there was an image of the Virgin, and kneeling before it, prayed long and fervently. Arising in a calmer frame of mind, he returned to the hall, and summoning his companions and followers, their horses were brought forth, and they commenced their march.

It was about four o'clock when they started, and so dark, that they had some difficulty in finding the road. They proceeded at a slow pace, and with the utmost caution; but notwithstanding this, and though the two Winters and Grant, who were well acquainted with the country, led the way, many trifling delays and disasters occurred. Their baggage-cart frequently stuck fast in the deep ruts, while the men missing their way, got into the trenches skirting the lane, and were not unfrequently thrown from their horses. More than once, too, the alarm was given that they were pursued, and a sudden halt ordered; but these apprehensions proved groundless, and, after a most fatiguing ride, they found themselves at Stoke Prior, and within two miles of Hewel Grange.

Originally built in the early part of the reign of Henry the Eighth, and granted by that monarch to an ancestor of its present possessor, Lord Windsor, this ancient mansion was quadrangular in form, and surrounded by a broad deep fosse. Situated in the heart of an extensive park, at the foot of a gentle hill, it was now approached from the brow of the latter beautiful eminence by the rebel party. But at this season, and at this hour, both park and mansion had a forlorn look. The weather still continued foggy, with drizzling showers, and though the trees were not yet entirely stripped of their foliage, their glories had altogether departed. The turf was damp and plashy, and in some places partook so much of the character of a swamp, that the horsemen were obliged to alter their course.

But all obstacles were eventually overcome, and in ten minutes after their entrance into the park, they were within gunshot of the mansion. There were no symptoms of defence apparent, but the drawbridge being raised, it was Catesby's opinion, notwithstanding appearances, that their arrival was expected. He was further confirmed in this idea when, sounding a trumpet, and calling to the porter to let down the drawbridge, no answer was returned.

The entrance to the mansion was through a lofty and machiolated gateway, strengthened at each side by an embattled turret. Perceiving a man at one of the loopholes, Catesby discharged his petronel at him, and it was evident from the cry that

followed that the person was wounded. An instant afterwards calivers were thrust through the other loopholes, and several shots fired upon the rebels, while some dozen armed men appeared upon the summit of the tower, and likewise commenced firing.

Perceiving Topcliffe among the latter, and enraged at the sight, Catesby discharged another petronel at him, but without effect. He then called to some of his men to break down the door of an adjoining barn, and to place it in the moat. The order was instantly obeyed, and the door afloat in the fosse, and springing upon it, he impelled himself with a pike towards the opposite bank. Several shots were fired at him, and though more than one struck the door, he crossed the moat uninjured. So suddenly was this daring passage effected, that before any of the defenders of the mansion could prevent him, Catesby had severed the links of the chain fastening the drawbridge, and it fell clattering down.

With a loud shout, his companions then crossed it. But they had still a difficulty to encounter. The gates, which were of great strength, and covered with plates of iron, were barred. But a ladder having been found in the barn, it was brought forward, and Catesby mounting it sword in hand, drove back all who opposed him, and got upon the wall. He was followed by Sir Everard Digby, Percy, and several others, and driving the royalists before them, they made their way down a flight of stone steps, and proceeding to the gateway, threw it open, and admitted the others. All this was the work of a few minutes.

Committing the ransacking of the mansion to Digby and Percy, and commanding a dozen men to follow him, Catesby entered a small arched doorway, and ascended a winding stone staircase in search of Topcliffe. His progress was opposed by the soldiers, but beating aside all opposition, he gained the roof. Topcliffe, however, was gone. Anticipating the result of the attack, he had let himself drop from the summit of the tower to the walls, and descending by the ladder, had made good his retreat.

Disarming the soldiers, Catesby then descended to the court-yard, where in a short time a large store of arms, consisting of corslets, demi-lances, pikes, calivers, and two falconets, were brought forth. These, together with a cask of powder, were placed in the baggage-waggon. Meanwhile, the larder and cellar had been explored, and provisions of all kinds, together with a barrel of mead, and another of strong ale, being found, they were distributed among the men.

While this took place, Catesby searched the mansion, and, partly by threats, partly by persuasion, induced about twenty persons to join them. This unlooked-for success so encouraged the conspirators, that their drooping spirits began to revive. Catesby appeared as much elated as the others, but at heart he was full of misgiving.

Soon afterwards, the rebel party quitted Hewel Grange, taking with them every weapon they could find. The forced recruits were placed in the midst of the band, so that escape was impracticable.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER IV.
HOLBEACH.

Avoiding the high road, and traversing an unfrequented part of the country, the conspirators shaped their course towards Stourbridge. As they reached Forfield Green, they perceived a large party descending the hilly ground near Bromsgrove, and evidently in pursuit of them. An immediate halt was ordered, and taking possession of a farm-house, they prepared for defence.

Seeing these preparations, their pursuers, who proved to be Sir Richard Walsh the Sheriff of Worcestershire, Sir John Foliot, three gentlemen named Ketelbye, Salwaye, and Conyers, attended by a large posse of men, all tolerably well armed, drew up at some distance from the farm, and appeared to be consulting as to the prudence of making an attack. Topcliffe was with them; and Catesby, who reconnoitered their proceedings from a window of the dwelling, inferred from his gestures that he was against the assault. And so it proved. The royalist party remained where they were, and as one or two of their number occasionally disappeared, Catesby judged, and correctly, that they were despatched for a reinforcement.

Not willing to wait for this, he determined to continue his march, and, accordingly, forming his men into a close line, and bringing up the rear himself, they again set forward. Sir Richard Walsh and his party followed them, and whenever they were in a difficult part of the road, harassed them with a sudden attack. In this way, several stragglers were cut off, and a few prisoners made. So exasperated did Catesby become by these annoyances, that, though desirous to push forward as fast as possible, he halted at the entrance of a common, and prepared for an engagement. But his purpose was defeated, for the royalist party took another course, nor did he see anything more of them for some time.

In about an hour the rebels arrived at the banks of the river Stour, not far from the little village of Churchill, and here, just as they were preparing to ford the stream, the sheriff and his followers again made their appearance. By this time, also, the forces of their opponents were considerably augmented, and as more than a third of their own party were engaged in crossing the stream, which was greatly swollen by the recent rains, and extremely dangerous, their position was one of no slight peril.

Nothing daunted, Catesby instantly drew up his men on the bank, and, after a short skirmish, drove away the enemy, and afterwards contrived to cross the river without much loss. He found, however, that the baggage-cart had got immersed in the stream, and it was feared that the powder would be damaged. They remained on the opposite bank for some time; but as their enemies did not attempt to follow them, they took the way to Holbeach, a large and strongly built mansion belonging, as has been already stated, to Stephen Littleton. Here they arrived without further molestation, and their first business was to put it into a complete state of defence.

The Explosion at Holbeach

After a long and anxious consultation, Sir Everard Digby quitted them, undertaking to return on the following day with succours. Stephen Littleton also disappeared on the same evening. His flight produced a strong impression on Catesby, and he besought the others not to abandon the good cause, but to stand by it, as he himself meant to do, to the last. They all earnestly assured him that they would do so, except Robert Winter, who sat apart, and took no share in their discourse.

Catesby then examined the powder that had been plunged in the water in crossing the Stour, and found it so much wetted as to be nearly useless. A sufficient stock of powder being of the utmost consequence to them, he caused all the contents of the barrel, not dissolved by the immersion, to be poured into a large platter, and proceeded to dry it before a fire which had been kindled in the hall. A bag of powder, which had likewise been slightly wetted, was also placed at what was considered a safe distance from the fire.

“Heaven grant this may prove more destructive to our enemies than the combustibles we placed in the mine beneath the Parliament House!" observed Percy.

“Heaven grant so, indeed!” rejoined Catesby, with a moody smile. “They would call it retribution, where we to perish by the same means which we designed for others.”

“Jest not on so serious a matter, Catesby,” observed Robert Winter. “For my own part, I dread the sight of powder, and shall walk forth till you have dried this, and put it away.”

“You are not going to leave us, like Stephen Littleton?” rejoined Catesby, suspiciously.

“I will go with him,” said Christopher Wright; “so you need be under no apprehension.”

Accordingly, he quitted the hall with Robert Winter, and they proceeded to the court-yard and were conversing together on the dismal prospects of the party, when a tremendous explosion took place. The roof of the building seemed rent in twain, and

amidst a shower of tiles, plaster, bricks, and broken wood falling around, the bag of powder dropped untouched at their feet.

“Mother of mercy!” exclaimed Christopher Wright, picking it up. “Here is a providential occurrence. Had this exploded, we must all have been destroyed.”

“Let us see what has happened,” cried Robert Winter.

And, followed by Christopher Wright, he rushed towards the hall, and bursting open the door, beheld Catesby enveloped in a cloud of smoke, and pressing his hand to his face, which was scorched and blackened by the explosion. Rookwood was stretched on the floor in a state of insensibility, and it at first appeared that life was extinct. Percy was extinguishing the flames, which had caught his dress, and John Grant was similarly occupied.

“Those are the very faces I beheld in my dream,” cried Robert Winter, gazing at them with affright. “It was a true warning.”

Rushing up to Catesby, Christopher Wright clasped him in his arms, and extinguishing his flaming apparel, cried, “Wretch that I am! that I should live to see this day!”

“Be not alarmed!” gasped Catesby. “It is nothing—it was a mere accident.”

“It is no accident, Catesby,” replied Robert Winter. “Heaven is against us and our design.”

And he quitted the room, and left the house. Nor did he return to it.

“I will pray for forgiveness!” cried John Grant, whose vision was so much injured by the explosion that he could as yet see nothing. And dragging himself before an image of the Virgin, he prayed aloud, acknowledging that the act he had designed was so bloody that it called for the vengeance of Heaven, and expressing his sincere repentance.

“No more of this,” cried Catesby, staggering up to him, and snatching the image from him. “It was a mere accident, I tell you. We are all alive, and shall yet succeed.”

On inquiry, Christopher Wright learnt that a blazing coal had shot out of the fire, and falling into the platter containing the powder, had occasioned the disastrous accident above described.

ToC

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER V.
THE CLOSE OF THE REBELLION.

Unable longer to endure the agony occasioned by his scorched visage, Catesby called for a bucket of water, and plunged his head into it. Somewhat relieved by the immersion, he turned to inquire after his fellow-sufferers. Rookwood having been carried into the open air, had by this time regained his consciousness; Percy was shockingly injured, his hair and eyebrows burnt, his skin blackened and swollen with unseemly blisters, and the sight of one eye entirely destroyed; while John Grant, though a degree less hurt than his companions, presented a grim and ghastly appearance. In fact, the four sufferers looked as if they had just escaped from some unearthly place of torment, and were doomed henceforth to bear the brand of Divine wrath on their countenances. Seeing the effect produced on the others, Catesby rallied all his force, and treating the accident as a matter of no moment, and which ought not to disturb the equanimity of brave men, called for wine, and quaffed a full goblet. Injured as he was, and smarting with pain, Percy followed his example, but both John Grant and Rookwood refused the cup.

“Hark 'e, gentlemen,” cried Catesby, fiercely, “you may drink or not, as you see fit. But I will not have you assume a deportment calculated to depress our followers. Stephen Littleton and Robert Winter have basely deserted us. If you have any intention of following them, go at once. We are better without you than with you.”

“I have no thought of deserting you, Catesby,” rejoined Rookwood, mournfully; “and when the time arrives for action, you will find I shall not be idle. But I am now assured that we have sold ourselves to perdition.”

“Pshaw!” cried Catesby, with a laugh that communicated an almost fiendish expression to his grim features; “because a little powder has accidentally exploded and blackened our faces, are we to see in the occurrence the retributive justice of Heaven? Are we to be cast down by such a trifle? Be a man, and rouse yourself. Recollect that the eyes of all England are upon us; and if we must fall, let us perish in a manner that becomes us. No real mischief has been done. My hand is as able to wield a blade, and my sight to direct a shot, as heretofore. If Heaven had meant to destroy us, the bag of powder which has been taken up in the yard, and which was sufficient not only to annihilate us, but to lay this house in ruins, would have been suffered to explode.”

“Would it had exploded!” exclaimed John Wright. “All would then have been over.”

“Are you, too, fainthearted, John?” cried Catesby. “Well, well, leave me one and all of you. I will fight it out alone.”

“You wrong me by the suspicion, Catesby,” returned John Wright. “I am as true to the cause as yourself. But I perceive that our last hour is at hand, and I would it were past.”

“The indulgence of such a wish at such a moment is a weakness,” rejoined Catesby. “I care not when death comes, provided it comes gloriously; and such should be your feeling. On the manner in which we meet our fate will depend the effect which our insurrection will produce throughout the country. We must set a brave example to our brethren. Heaven be praised; we shall not perish on the scaffold!”

“Be not too sure of that,” said Grant, gloomily. “It may yet be our fate.”

“It shall never be mine,” cried Catesby.

“Nor mine,” added Percy. “I am so far from regarding the recent disaster as a punishment, though I am the severest sufferer by it, that I think we ought to return thanks to Heaven for our preservation.”

“In whatever light the accident is viewed,” observed John Wright, “we cannot too soon address ourselves to Heaven. We know not how long it may be in our power to do so.”

“Again desponding,” cried Catesby. “But no matter. You will recover your spirits anon.”

John Wright shook his head, and Catesby, pulling his hat over his brows to hide his features, walked forth into the court-yard. He found, as he expected, that general consternation prevailed amongst the band. The men were gathered together in little knots, and, though they became silent as he approached, he perceived they were discussing the necessity of a surrender. Nothing daunted by these unfavourable, appearances, Catesby harangued them in such bold terms that he soon inspired them with some of his own confidence, and completely resteadied their wavering feelings.

Elated with his success, he caused a cup of strong ale to be given to each man, and proposed as a pledge, the restoration of the Romish Church. He then returned to the house; and summoning the other conspirators to attend him in a chamber on the ground-floor, they all prayed long and fervently, and concluded by administering the sacrament to each other.

It was now thought necessary to have the damage done by the explosion repaired, and a few hours were employed in the operation. Evening was fast approaching, and Catesby,

who was anxiously expecting the return of Sir Everard Digby, stationed himself on the turreted walls of the mansion to look out for him. But he came not; and, fearing some mischance must have befallen him, Catesby descended. Desirous of concealing his misgivings from his companions, he put on a cheerful manner as he joined them.

“I am surprised ere this that we have not been attacked,” remarked Percy. “Our enemies may be waiting for the darkness, to take us by surprise. But they will be disappointed.”

“I can only account for the delay by supposing they have encountered Sir Everard Digby, and the force he is bringing to us,” remarked Christopher Wright.

“It may be so,” returned Catesby, “and if so, we shall soon learn the result.”

In spite of all Catesby's efforts he failed to engage his companions in conversation, and feeling it would best suit his present frame of mind, and contribute most to their safety, to keep in constant motion, he proceeded to the court-yard, saw that all the defences were secure, that the drawbridge was raised, the sentinels at their posts, and everything prepared for the anticipated attack. Every half hour he thus made his rounds, and when towards midnight he was going forth, Percy said to him,

“Do you not mean to take any rest, Catesby?”

“Not till I am in my grave,” was the moody reply.

Catesby's untiring energy was in fact a marvel to all his followers. His iron frame seemed wholly unsusceptible of fatigue; and even when he returned to the house, he continued to pace to and fro in the passage in preference to lying down.

“Rest tranquilly,” he said to Christopher Wright, who offered to take his place. “I will rouse you on the slightest approach of danger.”

But though he preserved this stoical exterior, Catesby's breast was torn by the keenest pangs. He could not hide from himself that, to serve his own ambitious purposes, he had involved many loyal and worthy (till he had deluded them) persons in a treasonable project, which must now terminate in their destruction; and their blood, he feared, would rest upon his head. But what weighed heaviest of all upon his soul was the probable fate of Viviana.

“If I were assured she would escape,” he thought, “I should care little for all the rest, even for Fawkes. They say it is never too late to repent. But my repentance shall lie between my Maker and myself. Man shall never know it.”

The night was dark, and the gloom was rendered more profound by a dense fog. Fearing an attack might now be attempted, Catesby renewed his vigilance. Marching round the edge of the moat, he listened to every sound that might betray the approach of a foe. For some time, nothing occurred to excite his suspicions, until about an hour after midnight, as he was standing at the back of the house, he fancied he detected a stealthy tread on the other side of the fosse, and soon became convinced that a party of men were there. Determined to ascertain their movements before giving the alarm, he held his breath, and drawing a petronel, remained perfectly motionless. Presently, though he could discern no object, he distinctly heard a plank pushed across the moat, and could distinguish in the whispered accents of one of the party the voice of Topcliffe. A thrill of savage joy agitated his bosom, and he internally congratulated himself that revenge was in his power.

A footstep, though so noiseless as to be inaudible to any ear less acute than his own, was now heard crossing the plank, and feeling certain it was Topcliffe, Catesby allowed him to land, and then suddenly advancing, kicked the plank, on which were two other persons, into the water, and unmasking a dark lantern, threw its light upon the face of a man near him, who proved, as he suspected, to be Topcliffe.

Aware of the advantage of making a prisoner of importance, Catesby controlled the impulse that prompted him to sacrifice Topcliffe to his vengeance, and firing his petronel in the air as a signal, he drew his sword, and sprang upon him. Topcliffe attempted to defend himself, but he was no match for the skill and impetuosity of Catesby, and was instantly overpowered and thrown to the ground. By this time, Percy and several of the band had come up, and delivering Topcliffe to the charge of two of the stoutest of them, Catesby turned his attention to the other assailants. One of them got across the moat; but the other, encumbered by his arms, was floundering about, when Catesby pointing a petronel at his head, he was fain to surrender, and was dragged out.

A volley of musketry was now fired by the rebels in the supposed direction of their opponents, but it could not be ascertained what execution was done. After waiting for some time, in expectation of a further attack, Catesby placed a guard upon the spot, and proceeded to examine Topcliffe. He had been thrown into a cellar beneath the kitchen, and the two men were on guard over him. He refused to answer any of Catesby's questions, though enforced by threats of instant death. On searching him some letters were found upon him, and thrusting them into his doublet, Catesby left him, with the strictest injunctions to the men as to his safe custody.

He then proceeded to examine the other captive, and found him somewhat more tractable. This man informed him that Topcliffe had intended to steal into the house

with the design of capturing the conspirators, or, failing in that, of setting fire to the premises. He also ascertained that Topcliffe's force consisted only of a dozen men, so that no further attack need be apprehended.

Notwithstanding this information, Catesby determined to be on the safe side, and doubling the sentinels, he stationed one of the conspirators, all of whom had sprung to arms at his signal, at each of the exposed points. He then withdrew to the mansion, and examined Topcliffe's papers. The first despatch he opened was from the Earl of Salisbury, bearing date about the early part of Fawkes's confinement in the Tower, in which the Earl expressed his determination of wringing a full confession from the prisoner. A bitter smile curled Catesby's lip as he read this, but his brow darkened as he proceeded, and found that a magnificent reward was offered for his own arrest.

“I must have Catesby captured,” ran the missive,—"so see you spare no pains to take him. I would rather all escaped than he did. His confession is of the last importance in the matter, and I rely upon your bringing him to me alive.”

“I will at least balk him of that satisfaction,” muttered Catesby. “But what is this of Viviana?”

Reading further, he found that the Earl had issued the same orders respecting Viviana, and that she would be rigorously dealt with if captured.

“Alas!” groaned Catesby; “I hope she will escape these inhuman butchers.”

The next despatch he opened was from Tresham, and with a savage satisfaction he found that the traitor was apprehensive of double-dealing on the part of Salisbury and Mounteagle. He stated that he had been put under arrest, and was detained a prisoner in his own house; and fearing he should be sent to the Tower, besought Topcliffe to use his influence with the Earl of Salisbury not to deal unfairly with him.

“He is rightly served!” cried Catesby, with a bitter smile. “Heaven grant they may deal with him as he dealt with us!”

The consideration of these letters furnished Catesby with food for much bitter reflection. Pacing the room to and fro with uncertain footsteps, he remained more than an hour by himself, and at last yielding to the promptings of vengeance, repaired to the cellar in which he had placed Topcliffe, with the intention of putting him to death. What was his rage and mortification to find both the guard and the prisoner gone! A door was open, and it was evident that the fugitives had stolen to the moat, and, swimming noiselessly across it in the darkness, had securely effected their retreat.

Fearful of exciting the alarm of his followers, Catesby controlled his indignation, and said nothing of the escape of the prisoner to any but his confederates, who entirely approved of the policy of silence. They continued on the alert during the remainder of the night, and no one thought of seeking repose till it was fully light, and all danger of a surprise at an end.

Day dawned late and dismally. The fog that had hung round the mansion changed just before daybreak into drizzling rain, and this increased ere long to heavy and drenching showers. Everything looked gloomy and depressing, and the conspirators were so disheartened, that they avoided each other's regards.

Catesby mounted the walls of the mansion to reconnoitre. The prospect was forlorn and melancholy to the last degree. The neighbouring woods were obscured by mist; the court-yard and garden flooded with rain; and the waters of the moat spotted by the heavy shower. Not an object was in view, except a hind driving cattle to a neighbouring farm. Catesby shouted to him, and the fellow with evident reluctance approaching the brink of the moat, was asked whether he had seen any troops in the neighbourhood. The man answered in the negative, but said he had heard that an engagement had taken place in the night, about five miles from thence, near Hales Owen, between Sir Everard Digby and Sir Richard Walsh, and that Sir Everard's party had been utterly routed, and himself taken prisoner.

This intelligence was a severe blow to Catesby, as it destroyed the last faint hope he had clung to. For some time he continued wrapt in thought, and then descended to the lower part of the house. A large fire had been kept up during the night in the hall, and the greater part of the band were now gathered round it, drying their wet clothes, and conversing together. A plentiful breakfast had been served out to them, so that they were in tolerably good spirits, and many of them talked loudly of the feats they meant to perform in case of an attack.

Catesby heard these boasts, but they fell upon an idle ear. He felt that all was over; that his last chance was gone; and that the struggle could not be much longer protracted. Entering the inner room, he sat down at table with his companions, but he ate nothing, and continued silent and abstracted.

“It is now my turn to reproach you,” observed Grant. “You look deeply depressed.”

“Sir Everard Digby is a prisoner,” replied Catesby, sternly. “His capture grieves me sorely. He should have died with us.”

All echoed the wish.

Catesby arose and closed the door.

“The attack will not be many hours delayed,” he said; “and unless there should be some miraculous interposition in our behalf, it must end in our defeat. Do not let us survive it,” he continued earnestly. “Let us swear to stand by each other as long as we can, and to die together.”

“Agreed!” cried the others.

“And now,” continued Catesby, “I must compel myself to take some nourishment, for I have much to do.”

Having swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread, and drained a goblet of wine, he again visited every part of the habitation, examined the arms of the men, encouraged them by his looks and words, and became satisfied, unless some unlooked-for circumstance occurred to damp their ardour, they would offer a determined and vigorous resistance.

“If I could only come off victorious in this last conflict, I should die content,” thought Catesby. “And I do not despair of it.”

The rain continued till eleven o'clock, when it ceased, and the mist that had attended it partially cleared off. About noon, Catesby, who was on the look-out from the walls of the mansion, descried a large troop of horsemen issuing from the wood. He immediately gave the alarm. The bell was rung, and all sprang to arms.

By this time the troop had advanced within a hundred yards of the house, and Catesby, who had rushed into the court-yard, mounted a turret near the gate to watch their movements, and issue his commands. The royalists were headed by Sir RichardWalsh, who was attended on the right by Sir John Foliot, and on the left by Topcliffe. Immediately behind them were Ketelbye, Salwaye, Conyers, and others who had accompanied the posse comitatûs the day before. A trumpet was then sounded, and a proclamation made in a loud voice by a trooper, commanding the rebels in the King's name to surrender, and to deliver up their leaders. The man had scarcely concluded his speech when he was for ever silenced by a shot from Catesby.

A loud and vindictive shout was raised by the royalists, and the assault instantly commenced. Sir Richard Walsh directed the attack against the point opposite the drawbridge, while Sir John Foliot, Topcliffe, and the others dispersed themselves, and

completely surrounded the mansion. Several planks were thrust across the moat, and in spite of the efforts of the rebels many of the assailants effected a passage.

Catesby drove back the party under Sir Richard Walsh, and with his own hand hewed asunder their plank. In doing this, he so much exposed himself that, but for the injunctions of the Sheriff, who commanded his followers not to fire upon him, he must have been slain.

The other rebel-leaders displayed equal courage, and equal indifference to danger, and though, as has just been stated, a considerable number of the royalists had got across the moat, and entered the garden, they had obtained no material advantage. Sir John Foliot and Topcliffe commanded this party, and encouraged them to press on. But such a continued and well-directed firing was kept up upon them from the walls and windows of the mansion, that they soon began to show symptoms of wavering.

At this juncture, and while Topcliffe was trying to keep his men together, a concealed door in the wall was opened, and Catesby issued from it at the head of a dozen men. He instantly attacked Topcliffe and his band, put several to the sword, and drove those who resisted into the moat. Foliot and Topcliffe with difficulty escaped across the plank, which was seized and pulled over to his own side by Catesby.

But the hope which this success inspired was instantly crushed. Loud shouts were raised from the opposite wing of the mansion, and Catesby to his great dismay perceived from the volumes of smoke ascending from it that it was on fire. Uttering an exclamation of rage and despair, he commanded those with him not to quit their present position, and set off in the direction of the fire.

He found that an outbuilding had been set in flames by a lighted brand thrown across the moat by a trooper. The author of the action was named John Streete, and was afterwards rendered notorious by another feat to be presently related. Efforts were made to extinguish the conflagration, but such was the confusion prevailing that it was found wholly impossible to do so, and it was feared that the destruction of the whole mansion would ensue.

Disaster after disaster followed. Another party had crossed the moat, and burst into the court-yard. In the desperate conflict that ensued, Rookwood was shot through the arm, and severely wounded by a pike, and was borne into the house by one of his followers, whom he entreated to kill him outright, but his request was refused.

Meantime, the drawbridge was lowered, and with loud and exulting shouts the great body of the royalists crossed it. Catesby now perceived that the day was irretrievably

lost. Calling to Christopher Wright, who was standing near him, to follow him, and rushing towards the court-yard, he reached it just as the royalists gained an entrance.

In numbers both parties were pretty, well matched, but the rebels were now thoroughly disheartened, and seeing how matters must end, many of them threw down their arms, and begged for mercy. A destructive fire, however, was still kept up on the royalists by a few of the rebels stationed on the walls of the mansion, under the command of John Wright.

Putting himself at the head of a few faithful followers, Catesby fought with all the fury of despair. Christopher Wright was shot by his side. Grant instantly sprang forward, but was cut down by a trooper. Catesby was too busily occupied to attend to the fate of his companions, but seeing Thomas Winter near him, called to him to come on.

“I can fight no longer,” said Thomas Winter. “My right arm is disabled by a bolt from a cross-bow.”

“Then die,” cried Catesby.

“He shall die—on the scaffold,” rejoined Topcliffe, who had heard the exclamation. And rushing up to Thomas Winter, he seized him, and conveyed him to the rear of his party.

Catesby continued to fight with such determined bravery that Sir Richard Walsh, seeing it would be vain to take him alive, withdrew his restrictions from his men, and ordered them to slay him.

By this time most of the rebels had thrown down their arms. Those on the walls had been dislodged, and John Wright, refusing to yield, was slaughtered. Catesby, however, having been joined by Percy and half a dozen men, made a last desperate charge upon his opponents.

In doing this, his sword shivered, and he would have fallen back, but found himself surrounded. Percy was close behind him, and keeping together, they fought back to back. Even in this disabled state, they made a long and desperate resistance.

“Remember your oath, Percy,” cried Catesby. “You have sworn not to be taken to the scaffold.”

The Death of Catesby

“Fear nothing,” replied Percy. “I will never quit this spot alive.”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he fell to the ground mortally wounded, and the same shot that had pierced his breast had likewise stricken Catesby. It was fired by the trooper, John Streete, who has just been mentioned.

Collecting all his force, Catesby struck a few terrible blows at his opponents, and, dashing through them, made for the house. Just as he reached the door, which was standing open, his strength failed, and he fell to the ground. In this condition, he dragged himself into the vestibule, where there was a large wooden statue of the Virgin, and clasping his arms around it pressed his lips to the feet of the image. He was followed by Streete, with his drawn sword in one hand and a petronel in the other, prepared to finish his work. But ere he could reach him, Catesby had expired.

"So," exclaimed Topcliffe, who came up the next moment, with Sir Richard Walsh, "we have been robbed of our prey. The Earl of Salisbury will never forgive me for this disappointment."

"I am glad I have done it, though," observed Streete. "To kill two such traitors with one shot is something to talk of."

"You will be well rewarded for it, no doubt," remarked Topcliffe, sarcastically.

"I care not whether I am or not," rejoined Streete. "I have done my duty, and besides I have avenged my comrade, Richard Trueman, who was shot by this traitor when he read the proclamation."

"I will take care that your brave action is duly represented to his Majesty," observed Sir Richard Walsh.

And he failed not to keep his promise. Streete received a pension of two shillings a day for the rest of his life—no inconsiderable sum in those days.

The conflict was now at an end, for though some few of the more desperate of the rebels continued to struggle after their leaders had fallen, they were soon disarmed. Sir Richard Walsh and Topcliffe went in search of the other conspirators, and finding Rookwood and Grant, who though severely wounded were not dead, lying in the hall, immediately secured them. Rookwood on their approach made an effort to plunge his dagger into his breast, but his hand was stayed by Sir Richard Walsh.

"We shall not go away quite empty-handed," cried Topcliffe. "But these are sorry substitutes for Catesby.

“Has Catesby escaped?” demanded Grant, faintly.

“Ay, to the other world,” replied Topcliffe.

“He has kept his word,” groaned Grant.

“He may have escaped some part of his punishment,” said Topcliffe, bitterly; “but the worst remains. His quarters will be exposed on every gate in London, and his head on the bridge. As to you, traitors, you know your doom.”

“And are prepared for it,” rejoined Grant.

A guard being left over the prisoners, Sir Richard Walsh and Topcliffe then went to see that the other captives were properly secured. Some few having made their escape into the adjoining fields, they were pursued and recaptured.

The whole of the prisoners were then conveyed to Stourbridge, where they were lodged in the gaol, after which Sir Richard Walsh despatched a messenger to the Earl of Salisbury and the Lords of the Council acquainting them with what he had done.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER VI
HAGLEY

Robert Winter, it may be remembered, immediately after the explosion, quitted Holbeach, and did not return to it. He proceeded to the neighbouring thicket, and while wandering about in a state bordering on distraction encountered Stephen Littleton, who had likewise deserted his companions on the same day. Acquainting him with the disastrous occurrence that had taken place, and stating his impression that both God and man were against them, and that it would be vain as well as impious to struggle longer, he proposed to him to surrender. But Stephen Littleton so strongly combated this opinion, that he at last consented to make an effort to escape. This, however, was no easy matter, nor could they devise a plan that appeared feasible. Both were well provided with money; but under present circumstances it would be of little use to them. A large price being set on their heads, and the whole country alarmed, they scarcely knew where to seek shelter. After a long debate, they quitted the covert, and keeping clear of all habitations, took the direction of Stourbridge.

On approaching the Stour, at a point opposite Churchill, where they knew the river was fordable, they perceived Sir Richard Walsh's force approaching, and threw themselves into a ditch to avoid observation. It was quite dark when they again ventured forth, and at the peril of their lives they forded the Stour, which was swollen more than it had been in the morning by the long-continued rain. Their design was to proceed to Hagley, the residence of Stephen Littleton's sister, Mrs. Littleton, and to claim her protection. This magnificent mansion lay about two miles on the other side of the river, in the heart of an extensive park, but they were obliged to take a circuitous route of nearly double the distance to reach it, and when at length they arrived there, and were about to steal into the court-yard; they found it occupied by a portion of Sir Richard Walsh's troop.

Overcome by anxiety and fatigue, and scarcely knowing whither to proceed, they recrossed the park, and sought out the cottage of a poor woman, whose two sons had joined their ill-fated expedition, and were at that moment under arms at Holbeach. She was a good Catholic, and they thought they might confide in her. Arriving at her cottage, they glanced in at the window, and perceiving her, as they concluded, alone, and cooking a small piece of meat at the fire, they raised the latch, and entered the house. The woman turned at their approach, and uttering a cry of surprise and alarm, pointed towards a back room. They then saw that they had betrayed themselves; but the caution came too late, and a stalwart trooper, alarmed by the cry, issued from the back room.

From the wretched appearance of the new-comers, he at once guessed that they were rebels, and felt satisfied, from the richness of their apparel, dirtied and stained as it was, that they were persons of consequence. Accordingly, he drew a brace of petronels, and holding them at their heads, commanded them to surrender.

They were too much taken by surprise, and too enfeebled to offer resistance, and the trooper calling to the old woman to bring a cord to bind them, at the same time unloosed his own girdle, with which he fastened Robert Winter's arms behind his back. In doing this, he was compelled to lay down his petronels, and he had scarcely done so, when the woman snatched them up, and gave them to Stephen Littleton, who presented them at his head.

It was now the turn of the conspirators to triumph. In another instant, Robert Winter was released by the old woman, and the pair throwing themselves upon the trooper, forced him to the ground. They then dragged him to the back room, and stripped him of his habiliments, which Stephen Littleton put on instead of his own attire, and binding him hand and foot, returned to the old woman. At the request of Robert Winter, she furnished him with a suit of clothes belonging to one of her sons, and then set before them the best eatables she possessed. They were ravenously hungry, and soon disposed of the viands. Meanwhile, their hostess told them that the whole country was in arms against them; that Mrs. Littleton being suspected, though she had always been adverse to the design, her house had undergone a rigorous search; but that Mr. Humphrey Littleton, not having taken any part in the insurrection, had not as yet been arrested, though it was feared he would be proved to be connected with the plot. She concluded by strongly counselling them to use the utmost caution, and to expose themselves as little as possible. They assured her she need have no apprehension on that score, and expressed great anxiety as to what would befal her when they were pone.

“I do not desire to shed blood, if it can be helped,” said Stephen Littleton; “but in a case of necessity, like the present, where life must be weighed against life, I hold it lawful to shed it. Shall we put the trooper to death?”

“Not unless your own safety requires it, good sirs,” she said. “I shall quit this cottage soon after you have left it, and obtain a safe asylum with one of my neighbours. It matters not what becomes of me. Having lost my two sons,—for I consider them as already dead,—I have nothing left to bind me to life.”

Unable to make any reply, the conspirators remained for some time silent, when, by the poor woman's advice, they withdrew to an upper chamber, and stretching themselves on a bed, sought a few hours' repose. The old woman kept watch below, and they gave her one of the petronels, with strict injunctions to blow out the trooper's brains if he

attempted to move. Nothing, however, occurred to alarm her, and at three o'clock she awakened them.

Offering the woman a handsome reward, which, however, she declined, they then set out; and shortly afterwards their hostess quitted her habitation, and withdrew to the cottage of a neighbour, where she remained concealed for some weeks, and then died of grief on learning that her sons had been slain during the assault of Holbeach by the royalists.

Recruited by the rest they had enjoyed, the conspirators pursued their course over the fields. The weather was the same as that which disheartened their confederates at Holbeach, and the rain fell so heavily that they had soon not a dry thread upon them. But being now disguised, they were not under so much apprehension of detection. Shaping their course towards Rowley Regis, in Staffordshire, which lay about five miles from Hagley, where a farmer named Pelborrow, a tenant of Humphrey Littleton, resided, and whom they thought would befriend them, they proceeded swiftly on their way; but, though well acquainted with the country, they were so bewildered and deceived by the fog, that they strayed materially out of their course, and when it grew light found themselves near Weoley Castle, and about four miles from Birmingham.

Confiding in their disguises, and in their power of sustaining the characters they assumed, they got into the high road, and approaching a farm-house, Stephen Littleton, who had tied his companion's arms behind him with his belt, represented himself as a trooper conveying a prisoner from Stourbridge to Birmingham, and in consequence of this obtained a breakfast from the farmer. After their meal was over, the host, who had eyed them suspiciously, observed to the supposed trooper,—

“You will overtake some of your comrades before you reach Egbaston, and had better lose no time in joining them. You are known to me, my masters,” he added, in a tone that could not be heard by the household; “but I will not betray you. Get you gone.”

The conspirators did not fail to act upon the suggestion, and as soon as they got out of sight, struck across the county in the direction of Rowley Regis, and arrived at the farm-house which was their destination in about an hour.

Pelborrow chanced to be in a barn adjoining his house, and alone, and on seeing them readily offered to hide them. No one had noticed their approach, and carefully concealing them amid the hay in the loft, he proceeded about his business as if nothing had happened. He could not just then procure them provisions without exciting suspicion; but when night arrived brought them a sufficient supply for the next day.

In this way they passed nearly a week, never venturing to stir forth, for they had been traced to the neighbourhood, and constant search was going on after them. Pelborrow had great difficulty in keeping his men out of the barn, and the disappearance of the provisions excited the suspicions of his female domestics, who began to think all was not right. He therefore intimated to the conspirators that they must change their quarters, and in the dead of the night, they removed to the house of another farmer named Perkes, residing on the borders of Hagley Park, to whom Pelborrow had confided the secret of their being in the neighbourhood, and who, on promise of a large reward, readily undertook to secrete them.

Perkes met them at a little distance from his house, and conducted them to a barley-mow, where he had contrived a hiding-place amid the straw for them. A woman-servant and a man were both let into the secret by Perkes, and a sum of money, given him for that purpose by the conspirators, bribed them to silence. Here they remained close prisoners, unable to stir forth, or even to change their habiliments for nearly six weeks, during which time they received constant intelligence from their protector of what was going forward, and learnt that the search for them had not relaxed. They were not without hope, however, that the worst was over, when an incident occurred that gave them serious uneasiness.

One night, Perkes, who was a stout, hale yeoman, and had formerly been warrener to Mrs. Littleton, went to catch conies, with a companion named Poynter, and returned laden with spoil. After drinking a cup or two of ale together, the pair separated, and Poynter feeling fatigued with his exertions, as well as drowsy with the liquor he had swallowed, determined to pass the night in his friend's barn, and entering it, clambered up to the loft, and laid himself in the straw. In doing this, he slipped into the hole made for the conspirators, who, aroused by his fall, instantly seized him. Terrified to death, and fancying he had fallen into the hands of gipsies or other plunderers, Poynter roared for mercy, which they were not at first disposed to show him; but the poor wretch, finding into whose hands he had fallen, besought them in such piteous terms to spare his life, affirming with the strongest oaths that he would never betray them, that they consented to spare him, on condition of his remaining with them as long as they should occupy their place of concealment.

When Perkes appeared in the morning, he was not a little surprised at finding his comrade caught in such a trap, but entirely approved of the course taken by the conspirators. Poynter, as may be supposed, was no willing captive; and being constantly pondering on the means of escape, and of obtaining the reward for the apprehension of the conspirators, at last hit upon the following expedient. While engaged in the poaching expedition with Perkes, he had received a slight wound in the leg, and the close confinement to which he was now subjected inflamed it to such a degree as to render it

highly dangerous. This he represented to the conspirators, who, however, would not suffer him to depart; but desired Perkes to bring him some ointment to dress his wound. The request was complied with, and feigning that it was necessary to approach the light to apply the salve, Poynter scrambled up the straw, apparently for that sole purpose. He did not attempt to fly for several days; but at last, when they were grown less suspicious, he slided down the other side of the loft, and made good his retreat.

The conspirators saw the error they had committed when too late. Not daring to pursue him, they remained in fearful anticipation of an arrest throughout the day. But they were not disturbed until night, when Perkes made his appearance. They told him what had happened; but he did not appear to be much alarmed.

“I do not think you need be afraid of him,” he said. “Let me have some money, and I will go in quest of him at once, and bribe him to silence.”

“Here are fifty marks,” replied Stephen Littleton. “If that is not enough, take more.”

“It will amply suffice,” replied Perkes. “I will answer for his silence.”

This assurance greatly relieved the conspirators, and they were made completely easy by the return of Perkes in less than an hour afterwards, who told them he had seen Poynter, and had given him the money, binding him by the most solemn oaths not to betray them.

“I have still better news for you, my masters,” he added. “Mrs. Littleton has set out for London to-day; and I have received orders from Mr. Humphrey Littleton to bring you to the hall at midnight.”

This last intelligence completed their satisfaction, and they awaited Perkes's return with impatience. Shortly before midnight, he came to summon them, and they set forth together. Perkes's house lay about a mile from the hall, and they soon entered the park. The night was clear and frosty,—it was now the middle of December,—and as the conspirators trod the crisp sod, and gazed at the noble but leafless trees around them, they silently returned thanks to Heaven for their restoration to freedom. Humphrey Littleton was waiting for them at the end of an avenue near the mansion, and tenderly embraced them.

Tears of joy were shed on both sides, and it seemed to Humphrey Littleton as if his brother had been restored from the grave. Dismissing Perkes with warm thanks, and promises of a further recompence, they then entered the house by a window, which had been left purposely open. Humphrey Littleton conducted them to his own chamber,

where fresh apparel was provided for them; and to poor wretches who had not been able to put off their attire for so long a period, the luxury of the change was indescribably great.

The arrival of the fugitives was kept secret from all the household except the man-cook, John Ocklie, upon whose fidelity Humphrey Littleton thought he could rely. A good supper was prepared by this man, and brought up into his master's chamber, where the conspirators were now seated before a hearth heaped with blazing logs. The conspirators needed no solicitation to fall to, and they did ample justice to the good things before them. His spirits being raised by the good cheer, Robert Winter observed to the cook, who was in attendance upon them,

“Ah! Jack, thy mistress little thinks what guests are now in her house, who have neither seen fire nor tasted a hot morsel for well-nigh two months.”

“Ay, it is a sad matter,” returned the cook, shaking his head, “and I wish I could offer your worships a flask of wine, or a cup of stout ale at the least. But the butler is in bed, and if I were to rouse him at this hour it might excite his suspicion. If you are willing, sir,” he added, to Humphrey Littleton, “I will hie to my mother's cottage in the park, and bring a jug of ale from her.”

This was agreed to, and the cook left the house. His sole object, however, was to instruct his mother to give the alarm, so that the conspirators might be arrested before morning.

On reaching her cottage, he was surprised to see a light within it, and two men there, one of whom was Poynter, and the other Mrs. Littleton's steward, Robert Hazlewood. Poynter had acquainted Hazlewood with all he knew respecting the conspirators, supposing them still in the barley-mow, and they were discussing the best means of arresting them, when the cook entered the house.

“The birds are flown,” he said, “as you will find, if you search the nest. But come to the hall with a sufficient force betimes to-morrow morning, and I will show you where to find them. I shall claim, however, my share of the reward, though I must not appear in the matter.”

Having fully arranged their plan, he procured the ale from his mother, and returned to the hall. The conspirators soon disposed of the jug, threw themselves on a couch in the room, and instantly dropping asleep, enjoyed such repose as only falls to the lot of those who have similarly suffered. And it was well they did sleep soundly, for it was the last tranquil night they ever enjoyed!

Humphrey Littleton, who, as has been stated, reposed implicit confidence in the cook, had committed the key of the chamber to him, strictly enjoining him to call them in the morning; and the fellow, feeling secure of his prey, retired to rest.

About seven o'clock, he burst suddenly into the room, and with a countenance of well-feigned alarm, which struck tenor into the breasts of the conspirators, cried—

“Master Hazlewood and the officers are below, and say they must search the house. Poynter is with them.”

“The villain has betrayed us!” cried Stephen Littleton. “Fools that we were to spare his life!”

“There is no use in lamenting your indiscretion now, sir,” replied the cook; “leave it to me, and I will yet effect your escape.”

“We place ourselves entirely in your hands,” said Stephen Littleton.

“Go down stairs, sir,” said the cook to Humphrey Littleton, “and hold Master Hazlewood in conversation for a few minutes, and I will engage to get the gentlemen safely out of the house.”

Humphrey Littleton obeyed, and descending to the steward, told him he was willing to conduct him to every room in the house.

“I am certain they are here, and shall not quit it till I find them," rejoined Hazlewood. “Ah!” he exclaimed, as if struck by a sudden thought, “you say they are not in the house. Perhaps, they are in the garden—in the summer-house? We will go and see.”

So saying, he took half-a-dozen of his men with him, leaving Poynter and the rest with Humphrey Littleton, who was perplexed and alarmed at his conduct.

Meanwhile, the cook led the two conspirators along the gallery, and from thence down a back staircase, which brought them to a small door communicating with the garden. A few seconds were lost in opening it, and when they issued forth they encountered Hazlewood and his men, who instantly arrested them. The unfortunate conspirators were conveyed under a strong guard to London, where they were committed to the Tower, to take their trial with their confederates.

ToC

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER VII.

VIVIANA'S LAST NIGHT AT ORDSALL HALL.

On the evening of the third day after quitting Dunchurch, Viviana Radcliffe and her companions arrived at Ordsall Hall. They had encountered many dangers and difficulties on the journey, and were well-nigh overcome with fatigue and anxiety. Fearful of being detained, Garnet had avoided all the larger towns in the way, and had consequently been driven greatly out of the direct course. He had assumed the disguise which he usually wore when travelling, that of a lawyer, and as he possessed great mimetic talent, he sustained the character admirably. Viviana passed for his daughter, and his servant, Nicholas Owen, who was almost as clever an actor as his master, represented his clerk, while the two attendants performed the parts of clients. At Abbots'-Bromley, where they halted for refreshment on the second day, having spent the night at a small village near Lichfield, they were detained by the landlord, who entertained some suspicions of them; but Garnet succeeded in frightening the man into allowing them to depart. They underwent another alarm of the same kind at Leek, and were for two hours locked up. But on the arrival of a magistrate, who had been sent for by the host, Garnet gave so plausible an account of himself that the party were instantly set at liberty, and arrived without further molestation at their journey's end.

Viviana's last visit to the hall had been sad enough, but it was not so sad as the present. It was a dull November evening, and the wind moaned dismally through the trees, scattering the yellow leaves on the ground. The house looked forlorn and desolate. No smoke issued from the chimneys, nor was there any external indication that it was inhabited. The drawbridge was down, and as they passed over it, the hollow trampling of their steeds upon the planks vibrated painfully upon Viviana's heart. Before dismounting, she cast a wistful look around, and surveyed the grass-grown and neglected court, where, in years gone by, she had sported; the moat on whose brink she had lingered; and the surrounding woods, which she had never looked upon, even on a dreary day like the present, and when they were robbed in some measure of their beauty, without delight. Scanning the deserted mansion from roof to foundation, she traced all its gables, angles, windows, doors, and walls, and claimed every piece of carved work, every stone as a familiar object, and as associated with other and happier hours.

“It is but the wreck of what it was,” she thought. “The spirit that animated it is fled. Grass grows in its courts—no cheerful voices echo in its chambers—no hospitality is maintained in its hall—but neglect, gloom, and despair claim it as their own. The habitation and its mistress are well matched.”

Guessing from the melancholy expression of her countenance what was passing within, and thinking it advisable to turn the current of her thoughts, Garnet assisted her to alight, and committing the care of their steeds to Owen and the others, proceeded with her to the principal entrance. Everything appeared in nearly the same state as when they had last seen it, and the only change that had taken place was for the worse. The ceilings were mapped and mildewed with damps; the once-gorgeously stained glass was shivered in the windows; the costly arras hung in tattered fragments from the walls; while the floors, which were still strewn with plaster and broken furniture, were flooded with the moisture that had found its way through the holes in the roof.

“Bear up, dear daughter,” said Garnet, observing that Viviana was greatly distressed by the sight, “and let the contemplation of this scene of havoc, instead of casting you down, inspire you with just indignation against enemies from whom it is vain to expect justice or mercy. How many Catholic mansions have been thus laid waste! How many high-born and honourable men, whose sole fault was their adherence to the religion of their fathers, and their refusal to subscribe to doctrines against which their consciences revolted, have been put to death like your father; nay, have endured a worse fate, for they have languished out their lives in prison, while their families and retainers have undergone every species of outrage! How many a descendant of a proud line, distinguished for worth, for loyalty, and for devotion, has stood, as you now stand, upon his desolate hearth—has seen misery and ruin usurp the place of comfort and happiness—and has heard the very stones beneath his feet cry out for vengeance. Accursed be our oppressors!” he added, lifting up his hands, and elevating his voice. “May their churches be thrown down—their faith crushed—their rights invaded—their children delivered to bondage—their hearths laid waste, as ours have been. May this, and worse come to pass, till the whole stock of heresy is uprooted!”

“Hold, father!” exclaimed Viviana, “even here, beholding this miserable sight, and with feelings keenly excited, I cannot join in your terrible denunciation. What I hope for—what I pray for, is toleration, not vengeance. The sufferings of our brethren will not have been in vain, if they enable our successors to worship God in their own way, and according to the dictates of their consciences. The ruthless conduct of our persecutors must be held in as much abhorrence by all good Protestants as our persecution of that sect, when we were in the ascendant, is regarded by all worthy members of our own Church. I cannot believe that by persecution we can work out the charitable precepts inculcated by our Saviour, and I am sure such a course is as adverse to the spirit of

religion as it is to that of humanity. Let us bear our sorrows with patience,—let us utter no repinings, but turn the other cheek to the smiter, and we shall find, in due time, that the hearts of our oppressors will relent, and that all the believers in the True God will be enabled to worship him in peace, though at different altars."

"Such a season will never arrive, daughter," replied Garnet, severely, "till heresy is extirpated, and the false doctrines now prevailing utterly abolished. Then, indeed, when the Church of Rome is re-established, and the old and true religion restored, universal peace will prevail. And let me correct the grievous and sinful error into which you have fallen. Our church is always at war with heresy; and if it cannot uproot it by gentle means, authorizes, nay enjoins the employment of force."

"I will not attempt to dispute with you upon points of faith, father," returned Viviana; "I am content to think and act according to my own feelings and convictions. But I will not give up the hope that in some milder and wiser age, persecution on either side will cease, and the sufferings of its victims be remembered only to soften the hearts of fanatics, of whatever creed, towards each other. Were a lesson wanting to ourselves, surely it might be found in the result that has attended your dark and criminal enterprise, and in which the disapproval of Heaven has been signally manifested."

"Not so, daughter," replied Garnet. "An action is not to be judged or justified by the event attending it, but by its own intrinsic merits. To aver the contrary were to throw a doubt upon the Holy Scriptures themselves, where we read in the Book of Judges that the eleven tribes of Israel were commanded to make war upon the tribe of Benjamin, and yet were twice defeated. We have failed. But this proves nothing against our project, which I maintain to be righteous and praiseworthy, undertaken to overthrow an heretical and excommunicated monarch, and to re-establish the true faith of the Most High throughout this land."

"I lament to find that you still persist in error, father," replied Viviana; "but you cannot by any sophistry induce me to coincide with you in opinion. I hold the attempt an offence alike against God and man, and while I rejoice at the issue that has attended it, I deplore the irreparable harm it will do to the whole body of Catholics, all of whom will be connected, by the bigoted and unthinking of the hostile party, with the atrocious design. Not only have you done our cause an injury, but you have in a measure justified our opponents' severity, and given them a plea for further persecution."

"No more of this, daughter," rejoined Garnet, impatiently, "or I shall deem it necessary to reprove you. Let us search the house, and try to find some habitable chamber in which you can pass the night."

After a long search, they discovered a room in comparatively good order, and leaving Viviana within it, Garnet descended to the lower part of the house, where he found Nicholas Owen, and the two other attendants.

“We have chanced upon a scanty supply of provender for our steeds," remarked Owen, with a doleful look; “but we are not likely to obtain a meal ourselves, unless we can feed upon rats and mice, which appear to be the sole tenants of this miserable dwelling.”

“You must go to Manchester instantly, and procure provisions,” returned Garnet. “But take heed you observe the utmost caution.”

“Fear nothing,” replied Owen, “If I am taken, your reverence will lose your supper—that is all.”

He then set out upon his errand, and Garnet proceeded to the kitchen, where, to his great surprise, he found the hearthstone still warm, and a few lighted embers upon it, while crumbs of bread, and little fragments of meat scattered about, proved that some one had taken a meal there. Startled by this discovery, he continued his search, but as fruitlessly as before; and though he called to any one who might be hidden to come forth, the summons was unanswered. One of the attendants had placed a few sticks upon the smouldering ashes, and on returning to the kitchen, it was found that they had kindled. A fire being thus obtained, some of the broken furniture was used to replenish it, and by Garnet's commands another fire was speedily lighted in Viviana's chamber. Night had now come on, and Owen not returning, Garnet became extremely uneasy, and had almost given him up, when the absentee made his appearance, with a large basket of provisions under his arm.

“I have had some difficulty in obtaining them,” he said; “and fancying I observed two persons following me, was obliged to take a circuitous route to get back. The whole town is in commotion about the plot, and it is said that the most rigorous measures are to be adopted towards all the Catholic families in the neighbourhood.”

Sighing at the latter piece of intelligence, Garnet selected such provisions as he thought would be acceptable to Viviana, and took them upstairs to her. She ate a little bread, and drank a cup of water, but refused to taste anything else, and finding it in vain to press her, Garnet returned to the kitchen, where, being much exhausted, he recruited himself with a hearty meal and a cup of wine.

Left alone, Viviana knelt down, and clasping a small crucifix to her breast, prayed long and fervently. While she was thus engaged, she heard the door open gently behind her, and turning her head, beheld an old man clothed in a tattered garb, with long white hair

flowing over his shoulders, and a beard of the same snowy hue descending upon his breast. As he advanced slowly towards her, she started to her feet, and a brighter flame arising at the moment from the fire, it illumined the intruder's wobegone features.

“Is it possible!” she exclaimed,—"can it be my father's old steward, Jerome Heydocke?”

“It is, indeed, my dear young mistress,” replied the old man, falling on his knee before her. “Heaven be praised!” he continued, seizing her hand, and bedewing it with tears; “I have seen you once again, and shall die content.”

“I never expected to behold you more, good Heydocke,” returned Viviana, raising him. “I heard you had died in prison.”

“It was so given out by the jailers, to account for my escape,” replied the old steward; “and I took care never to contradict the report by making my appearance. I will not distress you by the recital of all I have endured, but will simply state that I was confined in the prison upon Hunt's Bank, whence I escaped in the night by dropping upon the rocks, and from them into the river, where it was supposed I was drowned. Making my way into the country, I concealed myself for a time in barns and out-buildings, until, at length, I ventured back to the old house, and have dwelt in it unmolested ever since. I should have perished of want long ago, but for the kindness of Mr. Humphrey Chetham. He used to send my son regularly to me with provisions; and, now that Martin is gone to London, on business, as I understood, relating to you, he brings them to me himself. He will be here to-morrow.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Viviana. “I must see him.”

“As you please,” returned the old man. “I suppose those are your companions below. I was in my hiding-place, and hearing voices and footsteps, did not dare to venture forth till all was still. On approaching this room, which I have been in the habit of occupying lately, and peeping through the door, which was standing ajar, I perceived a female figure, and thinking it must be you, though I scarcely dared to trust the evidence of my senses, I ventured in. Oh! my dear, dear young mistress, what a joy it is to see you again! I fear you must have suffered much, for you are greatly altered.”

At this moment, Garnet entered the room. He started on seeing the old steward. But an explanation was instantly given him.

“You, then, are the person by whom the fire was recently lighted in the kitchen?” he asked.

Heydocke replied in the affirmative.

“I came to bid you farewell for the night, dear daughter,” said Garnet, “and to assure you that you may rest without fear, for we have contrived to make fast the doors. Come with me, my son,” he added to the steward, “and you shall have a comfortable meal below.”

Making a profound reverence to Viviana, the old man followed him down stairs.

Viviana continued to pace to and fro within her chamber for some time, and then, overcome with fatigue, flung herself upon the bedstead, on which a cloak had been thrown. Sleep soon closed her eyes, but it was disturbed by frightful and distressing dreams, from which she was suddenly aroused by a touch upon the arm. Starting up, she perceived the old steward by the side of her couch, with a light in his hand.

“What brings you here, Heydocke?” she demanded, with surprise and alarm.

“You have slept soundly, my dear young mistress, or you would not require to be informed,” replied the steward. “There! do you not hear it?” he added, as a loud knocking resounded from below.

Viviana listened for a moment, and then as if struck by a sudden idea, hurried down stairs. She found Garnet and the others assembled in the hall, but wholly unnerved by fright. “Hide yourselves,” she said, “and no ill shall befal you. Quick!—not a moment is to be lost!”

Having allowed them sufficient time for concealment, she demanded in a loud voice who was without?

“Friends,” was the reply.

“It is the voice of Doctor Dee,” replied Heydocke.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Viviana. “Admit him instantly.”

Heydocke obeyed, and throwing open the door, gave entrance to the Doctor, who was wrapped in his long furred gown, and carried a lantern. He was accompanied by Kelley and Humphrey Chetham.

“Your visit is singularly timed, Mr. Chetham,” said Viviana, after she had saluted the party; “but you are not the less welcome on that account. I much desired to see you, and indeed should have sent for you to-morrow. But how did you know I was here?”

“The only explanation I can offer you is this,” replied Chetham. “I was hastily summoned from my residence at Crumpsall by Kelley, who told me you were at Ordsall Hall, and that Doctor Dee was about to visit you, and desired my company. Thus summoned, I came at once.”

“A strange explanation indeed!” replied Viviana.

“Close and fasten the door,” said Dee, in an authoritative tone to Kelley, and as soon as his commands were obeyed, he took Viviana's hand, and led her to the farther end of the hall.

“My art informed me of your arrival, Viviana,” he said. “I am come to save you. You are in imminent danger.”

“I well know it,” she replied; “but I have no wish to fly from justice. I am weary of my life, and would gladly resign it.”

“I would call to your recollection, Viviana,” pursued Dee, “that I foretold the disastrous result of this plot, in which you have become unhappily involved, to Guy Fawkes, and warned him not to proceed in it. But he would not be advised, and is now a prisoner in the Tower.”

“All I wish is to go thither, and die with him,” rejoined Viviana.

“If you go thither, you will die before him,” said Dee.

“I would do so,” she replied.

“Viviana Radcliffe,” returned Dee, in a compassionate tone, “I truly grieve for you. Your attachment to this heinous traitor completely blinds you. The friendship I entertained for your mother makes me anxious to serve you—to see you happy. It is now in your power to be so. But if you take another false step, your fate is decided, and you will die an early death. I will answer for your safety—nay, what is more, I will undertake that ere long you shall again be mistress of this mansion, and have your estates restored to you.”

“You promise fairly, sir,” she replied, with a mournful smile.

“I have not yet done,” pursued Dee. “All I require for the service is, that when freed by the death of Guy Fawkes from the chain that now binds you,—for I am aware of your ill-starred union with him,—you shall bestow your hand upon Humphrey Chetham.”

“It may not be,” replied Viviana, firmly. “And if you could in truth read the secrets of the heart, you would know that mine would instantly reject the proposal.”

“Think not it originates with me, Viviana,” said Humphrey Chetham, who had approached them unobserved. “My previous experience of your character would alone have prevented me from becoming a party to any such proposal, had I known it would be made. Do not, I beseech you, sir,” he added to Dee, “clog your offer with conditions which will effectually prevent its accomplishment.”

“You are true to yourself, Mr. Chetham,” rejoined Viviana, “and will not, therefore, wonder that I continue so. Were I to assent to Doctor Dee's proposal, I should be further from happiness than I am now, even if he could make good his words, and restore me to the station I have forfeited. I have received a shock from which I shall never recover, and the only haven of repose to which I look forward is the grave.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Chetham, in a pitying tone.

“You will think I trespass too much upon your kindness,” she pursued; “but you can render me a great service, and it will be the last I shall ever require from you.”

“Name it!” cried Chetham, eagerly.

“I would beg you to escort me to London,” she rejoined: “and to deliver me to the lords of the council. I would willingly escape the indignities to which T shall be exposed if I am conveyed thither as a prisoner. Will you do this?”

“I will,” replied Chetham.

“Lest you should think I have offered more than I can perform, Viviana," said Dee, who had listened attentively to the foregoing conversation, “I will now tell you on what grounds I build my expectation of procuring your pardon. The conspiracy was first revealed by me to the Earl of Salisbury, though for his own purposes he kept it secret to the last. He owes me a heavy debt, and shall pay it in the way I propose, if you desire it.”

“I will abide by what I have done,” replied Viviana.

“You know, then, what fate awaits you?” said Dee.

“I shall not shrink from it,” she rejoined.

“It is well,” he replied. “Before I leave, I will give you another caution. Father Garnet is here. Nay, attempt not to deny it. You cannot deceive me. Besides, I desire to serve, not harm him. If he remains here till to-morrow, he will be captured. A proclamation has been issued for his arrest, as well as for that of Father Oldcorne. Deliver him this warning. And now, farewell!”

With this, he took up his lantern, and followed by Kelley, quitted the hall.

Humphrey Chetham only tarried a few moments to inform Viviana that he would return soon after daybreak with a couple of steeds for the journey. As soon as he was gone, Viviana communicated Dee's warning to Garnet, who was so alarmed by it, that he resolved not to delay his own departure a moment. Taking an affectionate leave of Viviana, and confiding her to the care of the old steward, he set out with his three attendants.

Faithful to his promise, Humphrey Chetham appeared at the appointed time. Viviana bade an eternal farewell to the old steward, who was overwhelmed with grief, and looked as if his sorrows would soon be ended, and mounting one of the steeds brought by the young merchant, they took the direction of London.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER VIII.

HENDLIP.

Garnet proceeded at a rapid pace for some miles before he acquainted his companions whither he was going. He then informed Nicholas Owen, who rode by his side, that he should make the best of his way to Hendlip House, the seat of Mr. Thomas Abingdon, near Droitwich, in Worcestershire, where he knew that Father Oldcorne and Anne Vaux had retired, and where he was certain to meet with a friendly reception and protection. Owen, who was completely in his master's confidence, agreed that no safer asylum could be found, and they pursued their journey with so much ardour, that early on the following night they arrived within a short distance of the mansion. Owen was sent forward to reconnoitre, and returned in about half an hour with Mr. Abingdon, who embraced Garnet, and told him he was truly happy in being able to offer him a retreat.

“And I think it will prove a secure one,” he added. “There are so many hiding-places in the old house, that if it is beset for a year you will scarcely be discovered. Have you heard of the fate of your confederates?”

“Alas! no, my son,” replied Garnet; “and I tremble to ask it.”

“It had better be told at once,” rejoined Abingdon. “Catesby, Percy, and the two Wrights, have been slain in the defence of Holbeach; while Rookwood, Grant, and Thomas Winter, all of whom were severely wounded in the siege, have been made prisoners, and are now on their way to the Tower.”

“A fearful catalogue of ills!” exclaimed Garnet.

“It is not yet complete,” pursued Abingdon. “Sir Everard Digby has been defeated, and made prisoner in an attempt to bring additional force to his friends, and Keyes has been arrested in Warwickshire.”

“These are woful tidings truly, my son,” returned Garnet. “But Heaven's will be done!”

He then dismissed his two attendants, to whom he gave a sum of money, together with the steeds, and attended by Nicholas Owen, repaired to the house with Mr. Abingdon, who admitted them through a secret door.

Hendlip House, which, unfortunately for the lovers of picturesque and storied habitations, was pulled down a few years ago, having been latterly used as a ladies' boarding-school, was a large and irregular structure, with walls of immense thickness, tall stacks of chimneys, turrets, oriel windows, and numberless projections, contrived to mask the labyrinths and secret chambers within. Erected by John Abingdon, father of the proprietor at the period of this history, and cofferer to Queen Elizabeth in the early part of the reign of that princess, it was filled with secret staircases, masked entrances, trap-doors, vaults, subterranean passages, secret recesses, and every other description of hiding-place. An immense gallery surrounded three sides of the entrance-hall, containing on each side a large chimney-piece, surmounted by a shield displaying the arms of the family—argent, a bend, gules, three eaglets displayed, or. Behind each of these chimney-pieces was a small cell, or “priest's-hole,” as it was termed, contrived in the thickness of the wall. Throughout the mansion, the chambers were so sombre, and the passages so numerous and intricate, that, in the words of one who described it from personal observation, the whole place presented “a picture of gloom, insecurity, and suspicion.” Standing on an elevated situation, it commanded the country on all sides, and could not be approached during the day-time without alarm being given to its inmates.

Thomas Abingdon, the owner of the mansion at the period in question, and the eldest son of its founder, was born at Thorpe, near Chertsey, in Surrey, in . He was educated at Oxford, and finished his studies at the Universities of Paris and Rheims. A man of considerable taste and learning, but of a plotting disposition, he became a willing tool of the Jesuits, and immediately on his return to England, connected himself with the different conspiracies set on foot for the liberation of the imprisoned Queen of Scots. For these offences he was imprisoned in the Tower for the term of six years, and only escaped death from the fact of his being the Queen's godson, coupled with the estimation in which she had held his father. On his liberation, he remained perfectly tranquil till the accession of James, when he became a secret plotter against that monarch. His concealment of the two priests, about to be related, occasioned his being again sent to the Tower, and if it had not been for the intercession of Lord Mounteagle, whose sister he had espoused, he would have been executed. He was pardoned on condition of never stirring beyond the precincts of Worcestershire, and he employed his retirement in compiling an account of the antiquities of that county, which he left behind him in manuscript, and of which Doctor Nash, its more recent historian, has largely availed himself.

With a habitation so contrived, Mr. Abingdon might fairly promise his guests a safe asylum. Conducting them along a secret passage to a chamber of which he alone possessed the key, he left Garnet within it, and taking Owen with him to another place of

concealment, returned shortly afterwards with Anne Vaux and Father Oldcorne. The two priests tenderly embraced each other, and Oldcorne poured forth his tears on his superior's shoulder. Garnet next turned to Anne Vaux, between whom and himself, as has been before mentioned, an affectionate intimacy subsisted, and found her quite overcome by her feelings. Supper was now served to Garnet by a confidential servant, and after a few hours spent in conversation with his friends, during which they discussed the disastrous issue of the affair, and the probable fate of the conspirators, they quitted him, and he retired to rest—but not before he had returned thanks to Heaven for enabling him once more to lay down his head in safety.

On the following morning, he was visited by Mrs. Abingdon, a lady of considerable personal attractions, and Anne Vaux; and when he had recovered from the fatigue of his journey, and the anxieties he had recently undergone, he experienced great delight in their society. The chamber he occupied was lighted by a small loop-hole, which enabled him to breathe the fresh air, and gaze upon the surrounding country.

In this way, nearly two months passed on, during which, though rigorous inquiries were made throughout the country, no clue was found by the searchers to lead them to Hendlip; and the concealed parties began to indulge hopes that they should escape detection altogether. Being in constant correspondence with her brother, Lord Mounteagle, though she did not trust him with the important secret of the concealment of the priests, Mrs. Abingdon ascertained all that was done in reference to the conspirators, whose trials were now approaching, and communicated the intelligence to Garnet.

On the morning of the th of January, and when long quietude had bred complete fancied security in Garnet, Anne Vaux and Mrs. Abingdon suddenly entered his chamber, and with countenances of the utmost alarm, informed him that Mr. Abingdon's confidential servant had just returned from Worcester, where his master then was, and had brought word that Topcliffe, armed with a search-warrant from the Earl of Salisbury, had just passed through that city on his way to Holt Castle, the residence of Sir Henry Bromley.

“It appears,” said Mrs. Abingdon, “that Humphrey Littleton, who has been apprehended and condemned to death at Worcester for harbouring his brother and Robert Winter, has sought to procure a remission of his sentence by betraying your retreat. In consequence of this, Topcliffe has been sent down from London, with a warrant addressed to Sir Henry Bromley, to aid him in searching Hendlip. My husband has given particular orders that you are to be removed to the most secure hiding-place without delay; and he deeply regrets that he himself cannot return till evening, for fear of exciting suspicion.”

“Take me where you please, daughter,” replied Garnet, who was thrown into great perturbation by the intelligence. “I thought myself prepared for any emergency. But I was wofully deceived.”

“Be not alarmed, father,” said Anne Vaux, in an encouraging tone. “Let them search as long as they will, they will never discover your retreat.”

“I have a strong presentiment to the contrary,” replied Garnet.

At this moment, Oldcorne made his appearance, and on learning the alarming news, was as much dismayed as his superior.

After a short consultation, and while the priests were putting aside every article necessary to be removed, Mrs. Abingdon proceeded to the gallery, and contrived on some plausible pretext to send away the whole of the domestics from this part of the house. This done, she hastily returned, and conducted the two priests to one of the large fire-places.

A raised stone about two feet high occupied the inside of the chimney, and upon it stood an immense pair of iron dogs. Obeying Mrs. Abingdon's directions, Garnet got upon the stone, and setting his foot on the large iron knob on the left, found a few projections in the masonry on the side, up which he mounted, and opening a small door, made of planks of wood, covered with bricks, and coloured black, so as not to be distinguishable from the walls of the chimney, crept into a recess contrived in the thickness of the wall. This cell was about two feet wide, and four high, and was connected with another chimney at the back, by means of three or four small holes. Around its sides ran a narrow stone shelf, just wide enough to afford an uncomfortable seat. Garnet was followed by Oldcorne, who brought with him a quantity of books, vestments, and sacred vessels used in the performance of the rites of the Church of Rome. These articles, which afterwards occasioned them much inconvenience, they did not dare to leave behind.

Having seen them safely bestowed, Mrs. Abingdon and her companion went in search of provisions, and brought them a piece of cold meat and a pasty, together with some bread, dried fruit, conserves, and a flask of wine. They did not dare to bring more, for fear of exciting the suspicion of the household. Their next care was to conduct Owen, and Oldcorne's servant, Chambers, to a similar retreat in one of the other chimneys, and to provide them with a scanty supply of provisions and a flask of wine. All this was accomplished without being noticed by any of the domestics.

As may be imagined, a most anxious day was passed by all parties. Towards evening, Sir Henry Bromley, the sheriff of the county, accompanied by Topcliffe, and attended by a

troop of soldiers, appeared at the gates of the mansion, and demanded admittance. Just at this moment, Mr. Abingdon rode up, and affecting to know nothing of the matter, saluted Sir Henry Bromley, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, and inquired his business.

“You are charged with harbouring two Jesuit priests, Fathers Garnet and Oldcorne, supposed to be connected with the late atrocious conspiracy against the King, Mr. Abingdon,” interposed Topcliffe; “and I brought a warrant from the Earl of Salisbury, which I have delivered to Sir Henry Bromley, commanding him to search your house for them.”

“I was loth to accept the office, Mr. Abingdon,” said Sir Henry Bromley, who was a handsome, middle-aged man; “but my duty to my sovereign allows me no alternative. I trust, though a Catholic, that you share my own detestation of this diabolical plot, and would not shelter any of its contrivers, or abettors.”

“You judge me rightly, Sir Henry,” replied Abingdon, who, meanwhile, had received a private signal from his confidential servant that all was safe, “I would not. I am just returned from Worcester, where I have been for the last two days. Enter my house, I pray you, and search every corner of it; and if you find a Jesuit priest concealed within it, you shall hang me at my own gate.”

“You must be misinformed, sir,” observed Sir Henry, who was completely imposed upon by Abingdon's unconcerned demeanour; “they cannot be here.”

“Trust me, they are,” returned the other, “and I should like to take him at his word.”

Giving directions to the band to environ the house, and guard all its approaches, so as to prevent any one from escaping from it, Topcliffe took half-a-dozen men with him, and instructed them how to act. They first repaired to the great dining-chamber, where, in accordance with the instructions received from the Earl of Salisbury, Topcliffe proceeded to the further end of the room, and directed his men to break down the wainscot. With some difficulty, the order was obeyed, and the entrance to a vault discovered, into which Topcliffe descended but he found nothing to repay his trouble.

Returning to the dining-chamber, he questioned Mr. Abingdon, who secretly enjoyed his disappointment, as to the use of the vault, but the latter professed entire ignorance of its existence. The searchers next proceeded to the cellar, and bored the floors with a broach to a considerable depth, to try whether there were any vaults beneath them, but they made no discovery. Meanwhile Topcliffe hurried upstairs, and examined the size of the rooms, to see whether they corresponded with those below; and wherever any difference

was observable, he caused the panels to be pulled down, and holes broken in the walls. In this way, several secret passages were discovered, one of which led to the chamber lately occupied by Garnet.

Encouraged by this discovery, the searchers continued their operations to a late hour, when they desisted for the night. On the following day they resumed their task, and Sir Henry Bromley took a general survey of the house, both externally and internally, noting the appearances outside, and seeing that they corresponded with the rooms within. The three extraordinary chimney-pieces in the gallery attracted Topcliffe's attention; but the contrivances within were so well managed, that they escaped his notice. He even got into the chimneys, and examined the walls on either side, but could detect nothing. And, lastly, he ordered large fires to be lighted within them, but the experiment proving fruitless, he turned his attention elsewhere.

Mr. Abingdon had attended him during this part of the search, and, though he preserved an unmoved exterior, he was full of apprehension, and was greatly relieved when it was abandoned. In the course of the same day, two other hiding-places were found in the thickness of the walls, but nothing was discovered within them. In order to prevent any communication with the concealed persons, Topcliffe stationed a sentinel at the door of Mr. Abingdon's chamber, and another at that of Anne Vaux.

On the third day the search was continued more rigorously than ever. Wainscots were taken down; walls broken open; the boards of the floor removed; and other secret passages, vaults, and hiding-places discovered. Some priests' vestments and articles used in the Romish service were found in one of these places, and shown to Mr. Abingdon. He at first denied all knowledge of them; but when Topcliffe brought forward the title-deeds of his property, which had been found in the same place, he was obliged to confess he had put them there himself. Still, though these discoveries had been made, the searchers were as far from their aim as ever; and Sir Henry Bromley, who began to despair of success, would have departed on the fifth day, if Topcliffe had not prevented him.

“I am certain they are here,” said the latter, “and have hit upon a plan which cannot fail to bring them forth.”

The prisoners meanwhile suffered grievously from their confinement, and hearing the searchers knocking against the walls, and even within the chimney, felt certain they should be discovered. Not being able to stand upright, or to stretch themselves within the cell, the sitting posture they were compelled to adopt became, after a time, intolerably irksome. Broths, milk, wine, and other nutritious fluids, were conveyed to them by means of a reed from the adjoining chimney; but after the fifth day this supply

was stopped, as Mrs. Abingdon and Anne Vaux were compelled by Topcliffe to remove to a different part of the house.

They now began to experience all the horrors of starvation, and debated whether they should die where they were, or yield themselves up to their enemies. Wretched as their condition was, however, it was not so bad as that of their domestics, Owen and Chambers, whose wants had not been so carefully attended to, and who were now reduced to the most deplorable state. Nor were their friends less uneasy. Aware that the captives, whom there was no means of relieving, for the searchers were constantly on the watch, could not hold out much longer, Mrs. Abingdon consulted with her husband whether it would not be better to reveal their hiding-places; but this he would not permit.

By this time, every secret chamber, vault, and passage in the place, except the actual retreats of the conspirators, had been discovered by Topcliffe, and though nothing material was found, he felt assured, from the uneasiness displayed by Mr. Abingdon and his wife, and above all by Anne Vaux, that it could not be long before his perseverance was rewarded. Though he narrowly watched the two ladies, from the first, he could never detect them in the act of conveying food to the captives; but feeling convinced that they did so, he determined to remove them to a different part of the house, and their unwillingness to obey the order confirmed his suspicions.

“We are sure of our prey now,” he observed to Sir Henry Bromley. “They must be half-starved by this time, and will speedily surrender themselves.”

“Pray Heaven they do so!” returned the other. “I am wearied to death with my long stay here.”

“Have a few hours' patience,” rejoined Topcliffe, “and you will find that your time has not been thrown away.”

And he was right. Soon after midnight, a trooper, who was watching in the gallery, beheld two spectral-looking figures approach him, and appalled by their ghastly appearance, uttered a loud cry. This brought Topcliffe, who was in the hall below, to his aid, and instantly perceiving what was the matter, he ran towards the supposed phantoms, and seized them. The poor wretches, who were no other than Owen and Chambers, and were well-nigh famished, offered no resistance, but would neither confess where they had been hidden, nor who they were. As the trooper had not seen them come forth, though he affirmed with a tremendous oath that they had issued from the floor, the walls were again sounded, but with no result.

Food being placed before the captives, they devoured it voraciously; but Topcliffe forbore to question them further that night, feeling confident that he could extract the truth from them on the morrow, either by promises or threats. He was however, mistaken. They continued as obstinate as before, and when confronted with Mr. Abingdon, denied all knowledge of him: neither would they explain how they got into the house.

Sir Henry Bromley, however, now considered himself justified in placing Mr. Abingdon and his lady under arrest, and Topcliffe redoubled his exertions to discover the hiding-place of the two priests. He examined every part of the gallery most carefully,—took down one of the chimney-pieces, (singularly enough, it was the wrong one,) but was still unable to discover their retreat.

Meanwhile, the poor wretches inside found it impossible to endure their condition longer. Anything seemed preferable to the lingering and agonizing death they were now enduring, and they resolved to delay their surrender no longer. Had they been able to hold out a few hours more, they would have escaped; for Sir Henry Bromley was so fatigued with the search, and so satisfied that nothing further would come of it, that he resolved, notwithstanding Topcliffe's efforts to dissuade him, to depart on the morrow. Of this they were ignorant, and having come to the determination to surrender, Garnet opened the entrance to the chimney, and hearing voices below, and being too feeble to get out unassisted, he called to the speakers for aid. His voice was so hollow, and had such a sepulchral sound, that those who heard it stared at each other in astonishment and affright.

“Who calls?” cried one of the troopers, after a pause.

“One of those you seek,” replied Garnet. “Come and help us forth.”

Upon hearing this, and ascertaining whence the voice came from, one of the men ran to fetch Sir Henry Bromley and Topcliffe, both of whom joyfully obeyed the summons.

“Is it possible they can be in the chimney?” cried Topcliffe. “Why, I myself have examined it twice.”

“We are here, nevertheless,” replied Garnet, who heard the remark; “and if you would take us alive, lose no time.”

The hint was not lost upon Topcliffe. Casting a triumphant look at Bromley, he seized a torch from one of his attendants, and getting into the chimney, soon perceived the entrance to the recess.

On beholding his prey, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and the two miserable captives, seeing the savage and exulting grin that lighted up his features, half repented the step they had taken. It was now, however, too late, and Garnet begged him to help them out.

“That I will readily do, father,” replied Topcliffe. “You have given us a world of trouble. But you have made ample amends for it now.”

“Had we been so minded, you would never have found us,” rejoined Garnet. “This cell would have been our sepulchre.”

“No doubt,” retorted Topcliffe, with a bitter laugh. “But a death on the scaffold is preferable to the horrors of starvation.”

Finding it impossible to remove Garnet, whose limbs were so cramped that they refused their office, he called to the troopers below to bring a ladder, which was placed in the chimney, and then, with some exertion, he succeeded in getting him down. This done, he supported him towards Sir Henry Bromley, who was standing near a small table in the gallery.

The Discovery of Garnet and Oldcorne at Hendlip
“I told you your time would not be thrown away, Sir Henry,” he observed; “here is Father Garnet. It is well you yielded yourself to-night, father,” he added, to Garnet, with his customary cynical chuckle; “for Sir Henry had resolved to depart to-morrow.”

“Indeed!” groaned Garnet. “Help me to a chair.”

While this was passing, Oldcorne was brought down by two of the troopers, and the unfortunate priests were conveyed to an adjoining chamber, where they were placed in a bed, their stiffened limbs chafed, and cordials administered to them. They were reduced, however, to such extremity of weakness, that it was not judged prudent to remove them till the third day, when they, together with their two servants, Owen and Chambers, who were as much enfeebled as themselves, were conveyed to Worcester.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER IX.

WHITEHALL.

Such was the expedition used by Humphrey Chetham and Viviana, that they accomplished the journey to London in an extraordinarily short space of time. Proceeding direct to Whitehall, Viviana placed a letter in the hands of a halberdier, and desired that it might be given without delay to the Earl of Salisbury. After some demur, the man handed it to an usher, who promised to lay it before the Earl. Some time elapsed before the result of its reception was known, when an officer, accompanied by two sergeants of the guard, made his appearance, and commanded Viviana and her companion to follow him.

Crossing a wide hall, which was filled with the various retainers of the palace, who regarded them with a sort of listless curiosity, and ascending a flight of marble steps, they traversed a long corridor, and were at length ushered into the presence of the Earl of Salisbury. He was seated at a table, covered with a multitude of papers, and was busily employed in writing a despatch, but immediately stopped on their entrance. He was not alone. His companion was a middle-aged man, attired in a suit of black velvet, with a cloak of the same material; but as he sat with his back towards the door, it was impossible to discern his features.

“You may leave us,” said Salisbury to the officer, “but remain without.”

“And be ready to enter at a moment's notice,” added his companion, without altering his position.

The officer bowed, and retired with his followers.

“Your surrender of yourself at this time, Viviana Radcliffe,” said the Earl, “weighs much in your favour; and if you are disposed freely to declare all you know of the conspiracy, it is not impossible that the King may extend his mercy towards you.”

“I do not desire it, my lord,” she replied. “In surrendering myself, I have no other aim than to satisfy the laws I have outraged. I do not seek to defend myself, but I desire to offer an explanation to your lordship. Circumstances, which it is needless to detail, drew

me into connexion with the conspirators, and I became unwillingly the depositary of their dark design."

"You were guilty of misprision of treason in not revealing it," remarked the Earl.

"I am aware of it," she rejoined; "but this, I take heaven to witness, is the extent of my criminality. I held the project in the utmost abhorrence, and used every argument I was mistress of to induce its contrivers to abandon it."

"If such were the case," demanded the Earl, "what withheld you from disclosing it?"

"I will now confess what torture could not wring from me before," she replied. "I was restrained from the disclosure by a fatal passion."

"I suspected as much," observed the Earl, with a sneer. "For whom?"

"For Guy Fawkes," returned Viviana.

"God's mercy! Guy Fawkes!" ejaculated the Earl's companion, starting to his feet. And turning as he spoke, and facing her, he disclosed heavy but not unintellectual features, now charged with an expression of the utmost astonishment. "Did you say Guy Fawkes, mistress?"

"It is the King," whispered Humphrey Chetham.

"Since I know in whose presence I stand, sire," replied Viviana, "I will answer the interrogation. Guy Fawkes was the cause of my concealing my acquaintance with the plot. And more, I will confess to your Majesty, that much as I abhor the design, if he had not been a conspirator, I should never have loved him. His sombre and enthusiastic character first gave him an interest in my eyes, which, heightened by several important services which he rendered me, soon ripened into love. Linked to his fortunes, shrouded by the same gloomy cloud that enveloped him, and bound by a chain from which I could not extricate myself, I gave him my hand. But the moment of our union was the moment of our separation. We have not met since, and shall meet no more, unless to part for ever."

"A strange history!" exclaimed James, in a tone that showed he was not unmoved by the relation.

"I beseech your Majesty to grant me one boon," cried Viviana, falling at his feet. "It is to be allowed a single interview with my husband—not for the sad gratification of

beholding him again—not for the indulgence of my private sorrows—but that I may endeavour to awaken a feeling of repentance in his breast, and be the means of saving his soul alive."

"My inclinations prompt me to grant the request, Salisbury," said the King, irresolutely. "There can be no risk in doing it—eh?"

"Not under certain restrictions, my liege," replied the Earl.

"You shall have your wish, then, mistress," said James, "and I trust your efforts may be crowned with success. Your husband is a hardy traitor—a second Jacques Clement—and we never think of him without the floor shaking beneath our feet, and a horrible smell of gunpowder assailing our nostrils. Blessed be God for our preservation! But whom have we here?" he added, turning to Humphrey Chetham. "Another conspirator come to surrender himself?"

"No, my liege," replied Chetham; "I am a loyal subject of your Majesty, and a stanch Protestant."

"If we may take your word for it, doubtless," replied the King, with an incredulous look. "But how come you in this lady's company?"

"I will hide nothing from your Majesty," replied Chetham. "Long before Viviana's unhappy acquaintance with Fawkes—for such I must ever consider it—my affections had been fixed upon her, and I fondly trusted she would not prove indifferent to my suit. Even now, sire, when all hope is dead within me, I have not been able to overcome my passion, but love her as devotedly as ever. When, therefore, she desired my escort to London to surrender herself, I could not refuse the request."

"It is the truth, my liege," added Viviana. "I owe Humphrey Chetham (for so this gentleman is named) an endless debt of gratitude; and not the least of my present distresses is the thought of the affliction I have occasioned him."

"Dismiss it from your mind, then, Viviana," rejoined Chetham. "It will not mitigate my sorrows to feel that I have added to yours."

"Your manner and looks seem to give a warranty for loyalty, young sir," said the King. "But I must have some assurance of the truth of your statement before you are set at large."

“I am your willing prisoner, my liege,” returned Chetham. “But I have a letter for the Earl of Salisbury, which may vouch perhaps for me.”

And as he spoke, he placed a letter in the Earl's hands, who broke open the seal, and hastily glanced at its contents.

“It is from Doctor Dee,” he said, “from whom, as your Majesty is aware, we have received much important information relative to this atrocious design. He answers for this young man's loyalty.”

“I am glad to hear it,” rejoined the King. “It would have been mortifying to be deceived by so honest a physiognomy.”

“Your Majesty will be pleased to attach your signature to this warrant for Viviana Radcliffe's committal to the Tower,” said Salisbury, placing a paper before him.

James complied, and the Earl summoned the guard.

“Have I your Majesty's permission to attend this unfortunate lady to the fortress?” cried Chetham, prostrating himself before the King.

James hesitated, but glancing at the Earl, and reading no objection in his looks, he assented.

Whispering some private instructions to the officer respecting Chetham, Salisbury delivered the warrant to him. Viviana and her companion were then removed to a small chamber adjoining the guard-room, where they remained for nearly an hour, at the expiration of which time the officer again appeared, and conducted them to the palace-stairs, where a large wherry awaited them, in which they embarked.

James did not remain long with his councillor, and as soon as he had retired, Salisbury summoned a confidential attendant, and told him to acquaint Lord Mounteagle, who was in an adjoining apartment, that he was now able to receive him. The attendant departed, and presently returned with the nobleman in question. As soon as they were alone, and Salisbury had satisfied himself they could not be overheard, he observed to the other,

“Since Tresham's committal to the Tower yesterday, I have received a letter from the lieutenant, stating that he breathes nothing but revenge against yourself and me, and threatens to betray us, if he is not released. It will not do to let him be examined by the

Council; for though we can throw utter discredit on his statement, it may be prejudicial to my future designs."

"True, my lord," replied Mounteagle. "But how do you propose to silence him?"

"By poison," returned Salisbury. "There is a trusty fellow in the Tower, a jailer named Ipgreve, who will administer it to him. Here is the powder," he added, unlocking a coffer, and taking out a small packet; "it was given me by its compounder, Doctor Dee. It is the same, I am assured, as the celebrated Italian poison prepared by Pope Alexander the Sixth; is without scent or taste; and destroys its victim without leaving a trace of its effects."

"I must take heed how I offend your lordship," observed Mounteagle.

"Nay," rejoined Salisbury, with a ghastly smile, "it is for traitors like Tresham, not true men like you, to fear me."

"I understand the distinction, my lord," replied the other.

"I must intrust the entire management of this affair to you," pursued Salisbury.

"To me!" exclaimed Mounteagle. "Tresham is my brother-in-law. I can take no part in his murder."

"If he lives, you are ruined," rejoined Salisbury, coldly. "You must sacrifice him or yourself. But I see you are reasonable. Take this powder, and proceed to the Tower. See Ipgreve alone, and instruct him to drug Tresham's wine with it. A hundred marks shall be his reward when the deed is done."

"My soul revolts from the deed," said Mounteagle, as he took the packet. "Is there no other way of silencing him?"

"None whatever," replied Salisbury, sternly. "His blood be upon his own head."

With this, Mounteagle took his departure.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER X.

THE PARTING OF VIVIANA AND HUMPHREY CHETHAM.

Humphrey Chetham was so oppressed by the idea of parting with Viviana, that he did not utter a single word during their transit to the Tower. Passing beneath the gloomy archway of Traitors' Gate, they mounted the fatal steps, and were conducted to the guard-room near the By-ward Tower. The officer then despatched one of the warders to inform the lieutenant of Viviana's arrival, and telling Humphrey Chetham he would allow him a few minutes to take leave of her, considerately withdrew, and left them alone together.

“Oh! Viviana!” exclaimed Chetham, unable to repress his grief, “my heart bleeds to see you here. If you repent the step you have taken, and desire freedom, say so, and I will use every effort to liberate you. I have been successful once, and may be so again.”

“I thank you for your devotion,” she replied, in a tone of profound gratitude; “but you have rendered me the last service I shall ever require of you. I deeply deplore the misery I have occasioned you, and regret my inability to requite your attachment as it deserves to be requited. My last prayers shall be for your happiness; and I trust you will meet with some being worthy of you, and who will make amends for my insensibility.”

“Be not deceived, Viviana,” replied Chetham, in a broken voice; “I shall never love again. Your image is too deeply imprinted upon my heart ever to be effaced.”

“Time may work a change,” she rejoined; “though I ought not to say so, for I feel it would work none in me. Suffer me to give you one piece of counsel. Devote yourself resolutely to the business of life, and you will speedily regain your peace of mind.”

“I will follow your instructions implicitly,” replied Chetham; “but have little hope of the result you promise me.”

“Let the effort be made,” she rejoined;—"and now promise me to quit London to-morrow. Return to your native town, employ yourself in your former occupations; and strive not to think of the past, except as a troubled dream from which you have fortunately awakened. Do not let us prolong our parting, or your resolution may waver. Farewell!”

So saying, she extended her hand towards him, and he pressed it passionately to his lips.

“Farewell, Viviana!” he cried, with a look of unutterable anguish. “May Heaven support you in your trials!”

“One of them I am now enduring,” she replied, in a broken voice. “Farewell for ever, and may all good angels bless you!”

At this moment, the officer appeared, and announcing the approach of the lieutenant, told Chetham that his time had expired. Without hazarding another look at Viviana, the young merchant tore himself away, and followed the officer out of the Tower.

Obedient to Viviana's last request, he quitted London on the following day, and acting upon her advice, devoted himself on his return to Manchester sedulously to his mercantile pursuits. His perseverance and integrity were crowned with entire success, and he became in due season the wealthiest merchant of the town. But the blighting of his early affections tinged his whole life, and gave a melancholy to his thoughts and an austerity to his manner originally foreign to them. True to his promise, he died unmarried. His long and worthy career was marked by actions of the greatest benevolence. In proportion as his means increased, his charities were extended, and he truly became “a father to the fatherless and the destitute.” To him the town of Manchester is indebted for the noble library and hospital bearing his name; and for these admirable institutions by which they so largely benefit, his memory must ever be held in veneration by its inhabitants.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUBTERRANEAN DUNGEON.

Regarding Viviana with a smile of savage satisfaction, Sir William Waad commanded Jasper Ipgreve, who accompanied him, to convey her to one of the subterranean dungeons below the Devereux Tower.

“She cannot escape thence without your connivance,” he said; “and you shall answer to me for her safe custody with your life.”

“If she escapes again, your worship shall hang me in her stead," rejoined Ipgreve.

“My instructions from the Earl of Salisbury state that it is the King's pleasure that she be allowed a short interview with Guy Fawkes,” said the lieutenant, in a low tone. “Let her be taken to his cell to-morrow.”

The jailer bowed, and motioning the guard to follow him with Viviana, he led the way along the inner ward till he arrived at a small strong door in the wall a little to the north of the Beauchamp Tower, which he unlocked, and descended into a low cavernous-looking vault. Striking a light, and setting fire to a torch, he then led the way along a narrow gloomy passage, which brought them to a circular chamber, from which other passages diverged, and selecting one of them, threaded it till he came to the door of a cell.

“Here is your dungeon,” he said to Viviana, as he drew back the heavy bolts, and disclosed a small chamber, about four feet wide and six long, in which there was a pallet. “My dame will attend you soon.”

With this, he lighted a lamp, and departing with the guard, barred the door outside. Viviana shuddered as she surveyed the narrow dungeon in which she was placed. Roof, walls, and floor were of stone; and the aspect of the place was so dismal and tomb-like, that she felt as if she were buried alive. Some hours elapsed before Dame Ipgreve made her appearance. She was accompanied by Ruth, who burst into tears on beholding Viviana. The jailer's wife had brought a few blankets and other necessaries with her, together with a loaf of bread and a jug of water. While disposing the blankets on the couch, she never ceased upbraiding Viviana for her former flight. Poor Ruth, who was

compelled to assist her mother, endeavoured by her gestures and looks to convey to the unfortunate captive that she was as much devoted to her as ever. Their task completed, the old woman withdrew, and her daughter, casting a deeply-commiserating look at Viviana, followed her, and the door was barred without.

Determined not to yield to despondency, Viviana knelt down, and addressed herself to Heaven; and, comforted by her prayers, threw herself on the bed, and sank into a peaceful slumber. She was awakened by hearing the bolts of her cell withdrawn, and the next moment Ruth stood before her.

“I fear you have exposed yourself to great risk in thus visiting me," said Viviana, tenderly embracing her.

“I would expose myself to any risk for you, sweet lady,” replied Ruth. “But, oh! why do I see you here again? The chief support of Guy Fawkes during his sufferings has been the thought that you were at liberty.”

“I surrendered myself in the hope of beholding him again,” rejoined Viviana.

“You have given a fond, but fatal proof of your affection,” returned Ruth. “The knowledge that you are a captive will afflict him more than all the torments he has endured.”

“What torments has he endured, Ruth?” inquired Viviana with a look of anguish.

“Do not ask me to repeat them,” replied the jailer's daughter. “They are too dreadful to relate. When you behold his shattered frame and altered looks, you will comprehend what he has undergone.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Viviana, bursting into tears, “I almost fear to behold him.”

“You must prepare for a fearful shock,” returned Ruth. “And now, madam, I must take my leave. I will endeavour to see you again to-morrow, but dare not promise to do so. I should not have been able to visit you now, but that my father is engaged with Lord Mounteagle.”

“With Lord Mounteagle!” cried Viviana. “Upon what business?

“Upon a foul business,” rejoined Ruth. “No less than the destruction of Mr. Tresham, who is now a prisoner in the Tower. Lord Mounteagle came to the Well Tower this

evening, and I accidentally overheard him propose to my father to administer poison to the person I have named."

"I do not pity their victim," returned Viviana. "He is a double-dyed traitor, and will meet with the fate he deserves."

"Farewell, madam," said Ruth. "If I do not see you again, you will know that you have one friend in this fortress who deeply sympathizes with your afflictions."

So saying, she withdrew, and Viviana heard the bolts slipped gently into their sockets.

Vainly, after Ruth's visit, did she try to compose herself. Sleep fled her eyes, and she was haunted all night by the image of Fawkes, haggard and shattered by torture, as he had been described by the jailer's daughter. Day and night were the same to her, and she could only compute progress of the time by her own feelings, judging by which, she supposed it to be late in the day when she was again visited. The bolts of her cell being withdrawn, two men clad in long black gowns, and having hoods drawn over their faces, entered it. They were followed by Ipgreve; and Viviana, concluding she was about to be led to the torture, endeavoured to string herself to its endurance. Though he guessed what was passing in her breast, Jasper Ipgreve did not care to undeceive her, but motioning the hooded officials to follow him with her, quitted the cell. Seizing each a hand, the attendants led her after him along a number of intricate passages, until he stopped before the door of a cell, which he opened.

"Be brief in what you have to say," he cried, thrusting her forward. "I shall not allow you much time."

Viviana no sooner set foot in the cell than she felt in whose presence she stood. On a stool at the further end of the narrow chamber, with his head upon his breast, and a cloak wrapped around his limbs, sat Fawkes. A small iron lamp, suspended by a rusty chain from the ceiling, served to illumine his ghastly features. He lifted his eyes from the ground on her entrance, and recognising her, uttered a cry of anguish. Raising himself by a great effort, he opened his arms, and she rushed into them. For some moments, both continued silent. Grief took away their utterance; but at length, Guy Fawkes spoke.

"My cup of bitterness was not sufficiently full," he said. "This alone was wanting to make it overflow."

"I fear you will blame me," she replied, "when you learn that I have voluntarily surrendered myself."

Guy Fawkes uttered a deep groan.

“I am the cause of your doing so,” he said.

“You are so,” she replied. “But you will forgive me when you know my motive. I came here to urge you to repentance. Oh! if you hope that we shall meet again hereafter—if you hope that we shall inherit joys which will requite us for all our troubles, you will employ the brief time left you on earth in imploring forgiveness for your evil intentions.”

“Having had no evil intentions,” replied Fawkes, coldly, “I have no pardon to ask.”

“The Tempter who led you into the commission of sin under the semblance of righteousness, puts these thoughts into your heart,” replied Viviana. “You have escaped the commission of an offence which must have deprived you of the joys of heaven, and I am thankful for it. But if you remain impenitent, I shall tremble for your salvation.”

“My account will soon be settled with my Maker,” rejoined Fawkes; “and he will punish or reward me according to my deserts. I have acted according to my conscience, and can never repent that which I believe to be a righteous design.”

“But do you not now see that you were mistaken,” returned Viviana,—"do you not perceive that the sword which you raised against others has been turned against yourself,—and that the Great Power whom you serve and worship has declared himself against you?”

“You seek in vain to move me,” replied Fawkes. “I am as insensible to your arguments as to the tortures of my enemies.”

“Then Heaven have mercy upon your soul!” she rejoined.

“Look at me, Viviana,” cried Fawkes, “and behold the wreck I am. What has supported me amid my tortures—in this dungeon—in the presence of my relentless foes?—what, but the consciousness of having acted rightly? And what will support me on the scaffold except the same conviction? If you love me, do not seek to shake my faith! But it is idle to talk thus. You cannot do so. Rest satisfied we shall meet again. Everything assures me of it. Wretched as I appear in this solitary cell, I am not wholly miserable, because I am buoyed up by the certainty that my actions are approved by Heaven.”

“I will not attempt to destroy the delusion, since it is productive of happiness to you,” replied Viviana. “But if my earnest, heartfelt prayers can conduce to your salvation, they shall not be wanting.”

As she spoke, the door of the cell was opened by Jasper Ipgreve, who stepped towards her, and seized her roughly by the hand.

“Your time has expired, mistress,” he said; “you must come with me.”

“A minute longer,” implored Fawkes.

“Not a second,” replied Ipgreve.

“Shall we not meet again?” cried Viviana, distractedly.

“Ay, the day before your execution,” rejoined Ipgreve. “I have good news for you,” he added, pausing for a moment, and addressing Fawkes. “Mr. Tresham, who I told you has been brought to the Tower, has been taken suddenly and dangerously ill.”

“If the traitor perishes before me, I shall die content,” observed Fawkes.

“Then rest assured of it,” said Viviana. “The task of vengeance is already fulfilled.”

She was then forced away by Ipgreve, and delivered by him to the hooded officials outside, who hurried her back to her dungeon.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAITOR BETRAYED.

Lord Mounteagle arrived at the Tower shortly after Viviana, and repairing at once to the lieutenant's lodgings, had a brief conference with him, and informed him that he had a secret order to deliver to Jasper Ipgreve, from the Earl of Salisbury, touching the conspirators. Sir William Waad would have summoned the jailer; but Mounteagle preferred visiting him at the Well Tower, and accordingly proceeded thither.

He found Ipgreve with his wife and daughter, and telling him he desired a moment's private speech with him, the jailer dismissed them. Suspecting that the new-comer's errand related in some way to Viviana, Ruth contrived to place herself in such a situation that she could overhear what passed. A moment's scrutiny of Jasper's villanous countenance satisfied Mounteagle that the Earl of Salisbury was not mistaken in his man; and, as soon as he supposed they were alone, he unhesitatingly opened his plan to him. As he expected, Jasper exhibited no reluctance to undertake it; and, after some further discussion, it was agreed to put it in execution without delay.

“The sooner Mr. Tresham is silenced the better,” said Jasper; “for he threatens to make disclosures to the Council that will bring some noble persons,” with a significant look at Mounteagle, “into trouble.”

“Where is he confined?” demanded the other.

“In the Beauchamp Tower,” replied Ipgreve.

“I will visit him at once,” said Mounteagle; “and when I have conferred with him, will call for wine. Bring two goblets, and in that which you give to Tresham place this powder.”

Ipgreve nodded assent, and with a grim smile took the packet. Shortly after this, they quitted the Well Tower together, and passing under the archway of the Bloody Tower, crossed the green, and entered the fortification in which the traitor was confined. Tresham was treated with far greater consideration than the other conspirators, being allowed the use of the large room on the upper floor of the Beauchamp Tower, which was seldom allotted to any persons except those of the highest distinction. When they

entered, he was pacing to and fro within his chamber in great agitation; but he immediately stopped on seeing Mounteagle, and rushed towards him.

“You bring me my liberation?” he said.

“It is impossible to effect it at present,” returned the other. “But make yourself perfectly easy. Your confinement will not be of long duration.”

“I will not be trifled with,” cried Tresham, furiously. “If I am examined by the Council, look to yourselves. As I hope for salvation, the truth shall out.”

“Leave us,” said Mounteagle, with a significant look at the jailer, who quitted the chamber.

“Hark'e, Mounteagle,” said Tresham, as soon as they were alone, “I have been your tool thus far. But if you propose to lead me blindfold to the scaffold, you are greatly mistaken. You think that you have me safe within these walls; that my voice cannot be heard; and that I cannot betray you. But you are deceived—fearfully deceived, as you will find. I have your letters—the Earl of Salisbury's letters, proving that you were both aware of the plot—and that you employed me to watch its progress, and report it to you. I have also letters from Doctor Dee, the warden of Manchester, detailing his acquaintance with the conspiracy, and containing descriptions of the persons of Fawkes and Catesby, which I showed to the Earl of Salisbury.—These letters are now in my possession, and I will deliver them to the Council, if I am not released.”

“Deliver them to me, and I swear to you, you shall be set free,” said Mounteagle.

“I will not trust you,” rejoined Tresham. “Liberate me, and they are yours. But I will not rob myself of vengeance. I will confound you and the false Earl of Salisbury.”

“You wrong us both by your unjust suspicions,” said Mounteagle.

“Wrong you!” echoed Tresham, contemptuously. “Where is my promised reward? Why am I in this dungeon? Why am I treated like a traitor? If you meant me fairly, I should not be here, but like yourself at liberty, and in the enjoyment of the King's favour. But you have duped me, villain, and shall rue it. If I am led to the scaffold, it shall be in your company.”

“Compose yourself,” rejoined Mounteagle, calmly. “Appearances, I own, are against us. But circumstances render it imperatively necessary that the Earl of Salisbury should appear to act against you. You have been charged by Guy Fawkes, when under the

torture, of being a confederate in the design, and your arrest could not be avoided. I am come hither to give you a solemn assurance that no harm shall befal you, but that you shall be delivered from your thraldom in a few days—perhaps in a few hours."

"You have no further design against me," said Tresham, suspiciously.

"What motive could I have in coming hither, except to set your mind at rest?" rejoined Mounteagle.

"And I shall receive my reward?" demanded Tresham.

"You will receive your reward," returned Mounteagle, with significant emphasis. "I swear it. So make yourself easy."

"If I thought I might trust you, I should not heed my imprisonment, irksome though it be," rejoined Tresham.

"It cannot be avoided, for the reasons I have just stated," replied Mounteagle. "But come, no more despondency. All will be well with you speedily. Let us drown care in a bumper. What ho! jailer," he added, opening the door, "a cup of wine!"

In a few minutes, Ipgreve made his appearance, bearing two goblets filled with wine on a salver, one of which he presented to Mounteagle, and the other to Tresham.

"Here is to your speedy deliverance from captivity!" said Mounteagle, draining the goblet. "You will not refuse that pledge, Tresham?"

"Of a surety not," replied the other. "To my speedy deliverance!"

And he emptied the cup, while Mounteagle and the jailer exchanged significant glances.

"And now, having fully discharged my errand, I must bid you farewell," said Mounteagle.

"You will not forget your promise?" observed Tresham.

"Assuredly not," replied the other. "A week hence, and you will make no complaint against me.—Are you sure you did not give me the wrong goblet?" he added to Ipgreve, as they descended the spiral staircase.

"Quite sure, my lord," returned the jailer, with a grim smile.

Mounteagle immediately quitted the Tower, and hastening to Whitehall, sought out the Earl of Salisbury, to whom he related what he had done. The Earl complimented him on his skilful management of the matter; and congratulating each other upon having got rid of a dangerous and now useless instrument, they separated.

On the following day, Tresham was seized with a sudden illness, and making known his symptoms to Ipgreve, the chirurgeon who attended the prison was sent for, and on seeing him, pronounced him dangerously ill, though he was at a loss to explain the nature of his disorder. Every hour the sick man grew worse, and he was torn with racking pains. Connecting his sudden seizure with the visit of Lord Mounteagle, an idea of the truth flashed upon him, and he mentioned his suspicions to the chirurgeon, charging Jasper Ipgreve with being accessory to the deed. The jailer stoutly denied the accusation, and charged the prisoner in his turn with making a malicious statement to bring him into discredit.

“I will soon test the truth of his assertion,” observed the chirurgeon, taking a small flat piece of the purest gold from his doublet. “Place this in your mouth.”

Tresham obeyed, and Ipgreve watched the experiment with gloomy curiosity.

“You are a dead man,” said the chirurgeon to Tresham, as he drew forth the piece of gold, and perceived that it was slightly tarnished. “Poison has been administered to you.”

“Is there no remedy—no counter-poison?” demanded Tresham, eagerly.

The chirurgeon shook his head.

“Then let the lieutenant be summoned,” said Tresham; “I have an important confession to make to him. I charge this man,” pointing to the jailer, “with giving poisoned wine to me. Do you hear what I say to you?”

“I do,” replied the chirurgeon.

“But he will never reveal it,” said Ipgreve, with great unconcern. “I have a warrant from the Earl of Salisbury for what I have done.”

“What!” cried Tresham, “can murder be committed here with impunity?”

“You have to thank your own indiscretion for what has happened," rejoined Ipgreve. “Had you kept a close tongue in your head, you would have been safe.”

“Can nothing be done to save me?” cried the miserable man, with an imploring look at the chirurgeon.

“Nothing whatever,” replied the person appealed to. “I would advise you to recommend your soul to God.”

“Will you not inform the lieutenant that I desire to speak with him?" demanded Tresham.

The chirurgeon glanced at Ipgreve, and receiving a sign from him, gave a promise to that effect.

They then quitted the cell together, leaving Tresham in a state of indescribable agony both of mind and body. Half an hour afterwards, the chirurgeon returned, and informed him that the lieutenant refused to visit him, or to hear his confession, and wholly discredited the fact of his being poisoned.

“I will take charge of your papers, if you choose to commit them to me," he said, “and will lay them before the Council.”

“No,” replied Tresham; “while life remains to me I will never part with them.”

“I have brought you a mixture which, though it cannot heal you, will, at least, allay your sufferings,” said the chirurgeon.

“I will not take it,” groaned Tresham. “I distrust you as much as the others.”

“I will leave it with you, at all events,” rejoined the chirurgeon, setting down the phial.

The noise of the bolts shot into their sockets sounded to Tresham as if his tomb were closed upon him, and he uttered a cry of anguish. He would have laid violent hands upon himself, and accelerated his own end, but he wanted courage to do so, and continued to pace backwards and forwards across his chamber as long as his strength lasted. He was about to throw himself on the couch, from which he never expected to rise again, when his eyes fell upon the phial. “What if it should be poison!” he said, “it will end my sufferings the sooner.”

And placing it to his lips, he swallowed its contents. As the chirurgeon had foretold, it alleviated his sufferings, and throwing himself on the bed he sank into a troubled slumber, during which he dreamed that Catesby appeared to him with a vengeful countenance, and tried to drag him into a fathomless abyss that yawned beneath their feet. Shrieking with agony, he awoke, and found two persons standing by his couch. One of them was the jailer, and the other appeared, from his garb, to be a priest; but a hood was drawn over his head so as to conceal his features.

“Are you come to witness my dying pangs, or to finish me?” demanded Tresham of the jailer.

“I am come for neither purpose,” replied Ipgreve; “I pity your condition, and have brought you a priest of your own faith, who, like yourself, is a prisoner in the Tower. I will leave him with you, but he cannot remain long, so make the most of your time.” And with these words, he retired.

When he was gone, the supposed priest, who spoke in feeble and faltering accents, desired to hear Tresham's confession, and having listened to it, gave him absolution. The wretched man then drew from his bosom a small packet, and offered it to the confessor, who eagerly received it.

“This contains the letters of the Earl of Salisbury and Lord Mounteagle, which I have just mentioned,” he said. “I pray you lay them before the Privy Council.”

“I will not fail to do so,” replied the confessor.

And reciting the prayer for one in extremis over the dying man, he departed.

“I have obtained the letters from him,” said Mounteagle, throwing back his hood as he quitted the chamber, and addressing the jailer. “And now you need give yourself no further concern about him, he will be dead before morning.”

Jasper Ipgreve locked the door upon the prisoner, and proceeded to the Well Tower. When he returned, he found Mounteagle's words had come to pass. Tresham was lying on the floor quite dead—his collapsed frame and distorted countenance showing the agonies in which he must have expired.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRIAL.

The trial of the conspirators, which had been delayed in order that full evidence might be procured against them, was, at length, appointed to take place in Westminster Hall, on Monday, the th of January, . Early on the morning of this day, the eight surviving confederates (Garnet and Oldcorne being at this time secreted at Hendlip) were conveyed in two large covered wherries from the fortress to the place of trial. In spite of the severity of the weather,—it was snowing heavily, and the river was covered with sheets of ice,—they were attended by a vast number of boats filled with persons anxious to obtain a sight of them. Such was the abhorrence in which the actors in the conspiracy were held by the populace, that, not content with menaces and execrations, many of these persons hurled missiles against the wherries, and would have proceeded to further violence if they had not been restrained by the pikemen. When the prisoners landed, a tremendous and fearful shout was raised by the mob stationed at the head of the stairs, and it required the utmost efforts of the guard to protect them from injury. Two lines of soldiers, with calivers on their shoulders, were drawn out from the banks of the river to the entrance of the Hall, and between them the conspirators marched.

The melancholy procession was headed by Sir William Waad, who was followed by an officer of the guard and six halberdiers. Then came the executioner, carrying the gleaming implement of death with its edge turned from the prisoners. He was followed by Sir Everard Digby, whose noble figure and handsome countenance excited much sympathy among the beholders, and Ambrose Rookwood. Next came the two Winters, both of whom appeared greatly dejected. Next, John Grant and Robert Bates,—Catesby's servant, who had been captured at Holbeach. And lastly, Keyes and Fawkes.

Bitterly and justly incensed as were the multitude against the conspirators, their feelings underwent some change as they beheld the haggard countenance and shattered frame of Guy Fawkes. It was soon understood that he was the individual who had been found in the vault near the Parliament House, with the touchwood and matches in his belt ready to fire the train; and the greatest curiosity was exhibited to see him.

Just as the foremost of the conspirators reached the entrance of the Hall, a terrific yell, resembling nothing human, except the roar of a thousand tigers thirsting for blood, was uttered by the mob, and a tremendous but ineffectual attempt was made to break

through the lines of the guard. Never before had so large an assemblage been collected on the spot. The whole of the space extending on one hand from Westminster Hall to the gates of Whitehall, and on the other to the Abbey, was filled with spectators; and every roof, window, and buttress was occupied. Nor was the interior of the Hall less crowded. Not an inch of room was unoccupied; and it was afterwards complained in Parliament, that the members of the house had been so pressed and incommoded, that they could not hear what was said at the arraignment.

The conspirators were first conveyed to the court of the Star-Chamber, where they remained till the Lords Commissioners had arrived, and taken their seats. The commissioners were the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral of England; the Earl of Suffolk, Steward of the Household; the Earl of Worcester, Master of the Horse; the Earl of Devonshire, Master of the Ordnance; the Earl of Northampton, Warden of the Cinque-Ports; the Earl of Salisbury, Principal Secretary of State; Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice; Sir Thomas Fleming, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer; and Sir Thomas Walmisley and Sir Peter Warburton, Knights, and both Justices of the Common Pleas.

Summoned by an usher, the conspirators were conducted to a platform covered with black cloth, which had been erected at the lower end of the Hall. A murmur of indignation, vainly sought to be repressed by the grave looks of the Commissioners, burst from the immense assemblage, as they one by one ascended the steps of the platform. Guy Fawkes was the last to mount, and his appearance was followed by a deep groan. Supporting himself against the rail of the scaffold, he surveyed the assemblage with a stern and undaunted look. As he gazed around, he could not help marvelling at the vast multitude before him. The whole of the peers and all the members of the House of Commons were present, while in a box on the left, though screened by a lattice, sat the Queen and Prince Henry; and in another on the right, and protected in the same way, the King and his courtiers.

Silence being peremptorily commanded, the indictment was read, wherein the prisoners were charged with conspiring to blow up the King and the peers with gunpowder, and with attempting to incite the Papists, and other persons, to open rebellion; to which all the conspirators, to the no small surprise of those who heard them, and were aware that they had subscribed their confessions, pleaded not guilty.

“How, sir!” cried the Lord Chief Justice, in a stern tone to Fawkes. “With what face can you pretend to deny the indictment, when you were actually taken in the cellar with the powder, and have already confessed your treasonable intentions?”

“I do not mean to deny what I have confessed, my lord,” replied Fawkes. “But this indictment contains many matters which I neither can nor will countenance by assent or silence. And I therefore deny it.”

“It is well,” replied the Lord Chief Justice. “Let the trial proceed.”

The indictment being opened by Sir Edward Philips, sergeant-at-law, he was followed by Sir Edward Coke, the attorney-general, who in an eloquent and elaborate speech, which produced an extraordinary effect upon the assemblage, expatiated upon the monstrous nature of the plot, which he characterised as “the greatest treason that ever was plotted in England, and against the greatest king that ever reigned in England;" and after narrating the origin and progress of the conspiracy, concluded by desiring that the confessions of the prisoners should be openly read. This done, the jury were ordered by the Lord Chief Justice to retire, and the injunction being obeyed, they almost instantly returned with a verdict of guilty.

A deep, dread silence then prevailed throughout the Hall, and every eye was bent upon the conspirators, all of whom maintained a composed demeanour. They were then questioned by the Lord Chief Justice whether they had anything to say why judgment of death should not be pronounced against them.

“All I have to crave of your lordships,” said Thomas Winter, “is, that being the chief offender of the two, I may die for my brother and myself.”

“And I ask only that my brother's request may not be granted,” said Robert Winter. “If he is condemned, I do not desire to live.”

“I have nothing to solicit—not even pardon,” said Keyes, carelessly. “My fortunes were always desperate, and are better now than they have ever been.”

“I desire mercy,” said Rookwood, “not from any fear of death, but because so shameful an ending will leave a perpetual stain upon my name and blood. I humbly submit myself to the King, and pray him to imitate our Supreme Judge, who sometimes punishes corporally, but not mortally.”

“I have been guilty of a conspiracy, intended but never effected,” said John Grant, “and solicit forgiveness on that plea.”

“My crime has been fidelity to my master,” said Bates. “If the King will let me live, I will serve him as faithfully as I did Mr. Catesby.”

“I would not utter a word,” said Fawkes, looking sternly round; “if I did not fear my silence might be misinterpreted. I would not accept a pardon if it were offered me. I regard the project as a glorious one, and only lament its failure.”

“Silence the vile traitor,” said the Earl of Salisbury, rising.

And as he spoke two halberdiers sprang up the steps of the scaffold, and placing themselves on either side of Fawkes, prepared to gag him.

“I have done,” he said, contemptuously regarding them.

“I have nothing to say save this,” said Sir Everard Digby, bowing to the judges. “If any of your lordships will tell me you forgive me, I shall go more cheerfully to the scaffold.”

“Heaven forgive you, Sir Everard,” said the Earl of Nottingham, returning his reverence, “as we do.”

“I humbly thank your lordship,” replied Digby.

Sentence was then passed upon the prisoners by Lord Chief Justice Popham, and they were removed from the platform.

As they issued from the Hall, and it became known to the assemblage without that they were condemned, a shout of fierce exultation rent the air, and they were so violently assailed on all sides, that they had great difficulty in reaching the wherries. The guard, however, succeeded, at length, in accomplishing their embarkation, and they were conveyed back in safety to the Tower.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST MEETING OF FAWKES AND VIVIANA.

Up to this time, Viviana had not been allowed another interview with Guy Fawkes. She was twice interrogated by the Privy-Council, but having confessed all she knew of the conspiracy, excepting what might implicate Garnet and Oldcorne, neither of whom she was aware had been apprehended, she was not again subjected to the torture. Her health, however, rapidly sank under her confinement, and she was soon reduced to such an extreme state of debility that she could not leave her bed. The chirurgeon having been called in by Dame Ipgreve to attend her, reported her condition to Sir William Waad, who directed that every means should be adopted for her restoration, and that Ruth Ipgreve should remain in constant attendance upon her.

Ascertaining all particulars relative to Guy Fawkes from the jailer's daughter, it was a sad satisfaction to Viviana to learn that he spent his whole time in devotion, and appeared completely resigned to his fate. It had been the Earl of Salisbury's purpose to bring Viviana to trial at the same time as the rest of the conspirators, but the chirurgeon reporting that her removal at this juncture would be attended with fatal consequences, he was compelled to defer it.

When the result of the trial was made known to Viviana by Ruth, though she had anticipated the condemnation of Guy Fawkes, she swooned away, and on her recovery, observed to Ruth, who was greatly alarmed at her looks, “I feel I am going fast. I should wish to see my husband once more before I die.”

“I fear it is impossible, madam,” replied Ruth; “but I will try to accomplish it.”

“Do so,” rejoined Viviana; “and my blessing shall rest ever on your head.”

“Have you any valuable?” inquired Ruth. “My heart bleeds to make the demand at such a moment. But it is the only way to produce an effect on the avaricious nature of my father.”

“I have nothing but this golden crucifix,” said Viviana; “and I meant to give it to you.”

“It will be better employed in this way,” rejoined Ruth, taking it from her.

Quitting the cell, she hurried to the Well Tower, and found her father, who had just returned from locking up the conspirators in their different dungeons, sitting down to his evening meal.

“What is the matter with the wench?” he cried, staring at her. “You look quite distracted. Is Viviana Radcliffe dead?”

“No; but she is dying,” replied Ruth.

“If that is the case I must go to her directly,” observed Dame Ipgreve. “She may have some valuable about her which I must secure.”

“You will be disappointed, mother,” rejoined Ruth, with a look of irrepressible disgust. “She has nothing valuable left but this golden crucifix, which she has sent to my father, on condition of his allowing Guy Fawkes to see her before she dies.”

“Give it me, wench,” cried Jasper Ipgreve; “and let her die in peace.”

“She will not die in peace unless she sees him,” replied Ruth. “Nor shall you have it, if you do not comply with her request.”

“How!” exclaimed her father, “do you dare——”

“Think not to terrify me, father,” interrupted Ruth; “I am resolute in this. Hear me,” she cried, seizing his arm, and fixing a look upon him that seemed to pierce his soul,—"hear me,” she said, in a tone so low as to be inaudible to her mother; “she shall see him, or I will denounce you as the murderer of Tresham. Now will you comply?”

“Give me the cross,” said Ipgreve.

“Not till you have earned it,” replied his daughter.

“Well, well,” he rejoined; “if it must be, it must. But I may get into trouble in the matter. I must consult Master Forsett, the gentleman jailer, who has the charge of Guy Fawkes, before I dare take him to her cell.”

“Consult whom you please,” rejoined Ruth, impatiently; “but lose no time, or you will be too late.”

Muttering imprecations on his daughter, Ipgreve left the Well Tower, and Ruth hurried back to Viviana, whom she found anxiously expecting her, and related to her what she had done.

“Oh, that I may hold out till he comes!” cried Viviana; “but my strength is failing fast.”

Ruth endeavoured to comfort her; but she was unequal to the effort, and bursting into tears, knelt down, and wept upon the pillow beside her. Half an hour had now elapsed. It seemed an age to the poor sufferers, and still the jailer came not, and even Ruth had given up all hope, when a heavy tread was heard in the passage; the door was opened; and Guy Fawkes appeared, attended by Ipgreve and Forsett.

“We will not interrupt your parting,” said Forsett, who seemed to have a touch of humanity in his composition. And beckoning to Ruth to follow him, he quitted the cell with Ipgreve.

Guy Fawkes, meanwhile, had approached the couch, and gazed with an expression of intense anguish at Viviana. She returned his glance with a look of the utmost affection, and clasped his hand between her thin fingers.

“I am now standing on the brink of eternity,” she said in a solemn tone, “and I entreat you earnestly, as you hope to insure our meeting hereafter, to employ the few days left you in sincere and hearty repentance. You have sinned—sinned deeply, but not beyond the power of redemption. Let me feel that I have saved you, and my last moments will be happy. Oh! by the love I have borne you—by the pangs I have endured for you—by the death I am now dying for you—let me implore you not to lose one moment, but to supplicate a merciful Providence to pardon your offence.”

Death of Viviana

“I will—I will,” rejoined Fawkes, in broken accents. “You have opened my eyes to my error, and I sincerely repent it.”

“Saved! saved!” cried Viviana, raising herself in the bed. Opening her arms, she strained him to her bosom; and for a few moments they mingled their tears together.

“And now,” she said, sinking backwards, “kneel by me—pray for forgiveness—pray audibly, and I will join in your prayer.”

Guy Fawkes knelt by the bedside, and addressed the most earnest supplications to Heaven for forgiveness. For a while he heard Viviana's gentle accents accompany him. They grew fainter and fainter, until at last they totally ceased. Filled with a dreadful

apprehension, he sprang to his feet. An angelic smile illumined her countenance; her gaze was fixed on him for one moment—it then grew dim and dimmer, until it was extinguished.

Guy Fawkes uttered a cry of the wildest despair, and fell to the ground. Alarmed by the sound, Forsett and Ipgreve, who were standing outside, rushed into the cell, and instantly raised him. But he was now in a state of distraction, and for the moment seemed endowed with all his former strength. Striving to break from them, he cried, in a tone of the most piercing anguish, “You shall not tear me from her! I will die with her! Let me go, I say, or I will dash out my brains against these flinty walls, and balk you of your prey.”

But his struggles were in vain. They held him fast, and calling for further assistance, conveyed him to his cell, where, fearing he might do some violence to himself, they placed him in irons.

Ruth entered the cell as soon as Fawkes and the others had quitted it, and performed the last sad offices for the departed. Alternately praying and weeping, she watched by the body during the whole of the night. On the following day, the remains of the unfortunate Viviana were interred in the chapel of Saint Peter on the Green, and the sole mourner was the jailer's daughter.

“Peace be with her!” cried Ruth, as she turned away from the grave. “Her sorrows at last are over.”

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XV.

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

Guy Fawkes was for some time wholly inconsolable. His stoical nature seemed completely subdued, and he wept like an infant. By degrees, however, the violence of his grief abated, and calling to mind the last injunctions of her whose loss he mourned, he addressed himself to prayer, and acknowledging his guilt, besought her intercession with Heaven for his forgiveness.

It will not seem strange, when his superstitious character is taken into consideration, that he should fancy he received an immediate proof that his prayers were heard. To his excited imagination it appeared that a soft unearthly strain of music floated in the air over his head; that an odour like that of Paradise filled his cell; while an invisible finger touched his brow. While in this entranced state, he was utterly insensible to his present miserable situation, and he seemed to have a foretaste of celestial happiness. He did not, however, desist from prayer, but continued his supplications throughout the day.

On that night, he was visited by the lieutenant, who announced to him that the execution of four of the conspirators was fixed for Thursday (it was then Tuesday), while his own and that of the three others would not take place till the following day.

“As you are the greatest traitor of all, your execution will be reserved to the last,” pursued Waad. “No part of the sentence will be omitted. You will be dragged to Old Palace Yard, over against the scene of your intended bloody and damnable action, at a horse's tail, and will be there turned off the gallows, and hanged, but not till you are dead. You will then be embowelled; your vile heart, which conceived this atrocious design, will be torn beating from your breast; and your quarters will be placed on the palace gates as an abhorrent spectacle in the eyes of men, and a terrible proof of the King's just vengeance.”

Guy Fawkes heard the recapitulation of his dreadful sentence unmoved.

“The sole mercy I would have craved of his Majesty would have been permission to die first!” he said. “But Heaven's will be done! I deserve my doom.”

“What! is your stubborn nature at length subdued?” cried the lieutenant in surprise. “Do you repent of your offence?”

“Deeply and heartily,” returned Fawkes.

“Make the sole amends in your power for it, then, and disclose the names of all who have been connected with the atrocious design,” rejoined Waad.

“I confess myself guilty,” replied Fawkes, humbly. “But I accuse no others.”

“Then you die impenitent,” rejoined the lieutenant, “and cannot hope for mercy hereafter.”

Guy Fawkes made no answer, but bowed his head upon his breast, and the lieutenant, darting a malignant look at him, quitted the cell.

On the following day, the whole of the conspirators were taken to St. John's chapel, in the White Tower, where a discourse was pronounced to them by Doctor Overall, Dean of St. Paul's, who enlarged upon the enormity of their offence, and exhorted them to repentance. The discourse over, they were about to be removed, when two ladies, clad in mourning habits, entered the chapel. These were Lady Digby and Mrs. Rookwood, and they immediately flew to their husbands. The rest of the conspirators walked away, and averted their gaze from the painful scene. After an ineffectual attempt to speak, Lady Digby swooned away, and was committed by her husband, while in a state of insensibility, to the care of an attendant. Mrs. Rookwood, however, who was a woman of high spirit, and great personal attractions, though the latter were now wasted by affliction, maintained her composure, and encouraging her husband to bear up manfully against his situation, tenderly embraced him, and withdrew. The conspirators were then taken back to their cells.

At an early hour on the following morning the four miserable persons intended for death, namely, Sir Everard Digby, the elder Winter, John Grant, and Bates, were conducted to the Beauchamp Tower. Bates would have stood aloof from his superiors; but Sir Everard Digby took him kindly by the hand, and drew him towards them.

“No distinctions must be observed now,” he said. “We ought to beg pardon of thee, my poor fellow, for bringing thee into this strait.”

“Think not of me, worshipful sir,” replied Bates. “I loved Mr. Catesby so well, that I would have laid down my life for him at any time; and I now die cheerfully in his cause.”

“Mr. Lieutenant,” said Robert Winter to Sir William Waad, who stood near them with Forsett and Ipgreve, “I pray you commend me to my brother. Tell him I die in entire love of him, and if it is possible for the departed to watch over the living, I will be with him at his last hour.”

At this moment, a trampling of horses was heard on the green, and the lieutenant proceeding to the grated window, saw four mounted troopers, each having a sledge and hurdle attached by ropes to his steed, drawn up before the door. While he was gazing at them, an officer entered the room, and informed him that all was in readiness. Sir William Waad then motioned the prisoners to follow him, and they descended the spiral staircase.

The green was thronged with horse and foot soldiers, and as the conspirators issued from the arched door of the fortification, the bell of Saint Peter's chapel began to toll. Sir Everard Digby was first bound to a hurdle, with his face towards the horse, and the others were quickly secured in the same manner. The melancholy cavalcade was then put in motion. A troop of horse-soldiers in their full accoutrements, and with calivers upon their shoulders, rode first; then came a band of halberdiers on foot; then the masked executioner mounted on a led horse, then the four prisoners on the hurdles, one after the other; then the lieutenant on horseback; while another band of horse-soldiers, equipped like the first, brought up the rear. They were met by the Recorder of London, Sir Henry Montague, and the sheriffs, at the gate of the Middle Tower, to the latter of whom the lieutenant, according to custom, delivered up the bodies of the prisoners. After a short delay, the train again set forward, and emerging from the Bulwark Gate, proceeded through an enormous concourse of spectators towards Tower-street.

Aware that a vast crowd would be assembled in the city, and apprehensive of some popular tumult, the Lord Mayor had issued precepts to the aldermen of every ward, commanding them “to cause one able and sufficient person, with a halbert in his hand, to stand at the door of every dwelling-house in the open street in the way that the traitors were to be drawn towards the place of execution, there to remain from seven in the morning until the return of the sheriffs.” But these were not the whole of the arrangements made to preserve order. The cavalcade, it was fixed, was to proceed along Tower-street, Gracechurch street, Lombard-street, Cheapside, and so on to the west end of Saint Paul's cathedral, where the scaffold was erected. Along the whole road, on either side, a line of halberdiers was drawn up, while barriers were erected against the cross streets. Nor were these precautions needless. Such a vast concourse was collected, that nothing but the presence of a strong armed force could have prevented confusion and disorder. The roofs of all the houses, the towers of the churches, the steps of the crosses were covered with spectators, who groaned and hooted as the conspirators passed by.

The scaffold, as has just been stated, was erected in front of the great western entrance of the cathedral. The mighty valves of the sacred structure were thrown open, and disclosed its columned aisles crowded with spectators, as was its roof and central tower. The great bell, which had begun to toll when the melancholy procession came in sight, continued to pour forth its lugubrious sounds during the whole of the ceremonial. The rolling of muffled drums was likewise heard above the tumultuous murmurs of the impatient multitude. The whole area from the cathedral to Ludgate-hill was filled with spectators, but an open space was kept clear in front of the scaffold, in which the prisoners were one by one unbound from the hurdles.

During this awful pause, they had sufficient time to note the whole of the dreadful preparations. At a little distance from them was a large fire, on which boiled a caldron of pitch, destined to receive their dismembered limbs. A tall gallows, approached by a double ladder, sprung from the scaffold, on which the hangman was already mounted with the rope in his hand. At the foot of the ladder was the quartering-block, near which stood the masked executioner with a chopper in his hand, and two large sharp knives in his girdle. His arms were bared to the shoulder; and a leathern apron, soiled by gory stains, and tied round his waist, completed his butcherly appearance. Straw was scattered upon the scaffold near the block.

Sir Everard Digby was the first to receive the fatal summons. He mounted with a firm footstep, and his youth, his noble aspect, and undaunted demeanour, awakened, as before, the sympathy of the beholders. Looking round, he thus addressed the assemblage:—

“Good people, I am here about to die, ye well know for what cause. Throughout the matter, I have acted according to the dictates of my conscience. They have led me to undertake this enterprise, which, in respect of my religion, I hold to be no offence, but in respect of the law a heinous offence, and I therefore ask forgiveness of God, of the King, and of the whole realm.”

Crossing himself devoutly, he then knelt down, and recited his prayers in Latin, after which he arose, and again looking round, said in an earnest voice,

“I desire the prayers of all good Catholics, and of none other.”

“Then none will pray for you,” replied several voices from the crowd.

Heedless of the retort, Sir Everard surrendered himself to the executioner's assistant, who divested him of his cloak and doublet, and unfastened his collar. In this state, he mounted the ladder, and the hangman fulfilled his office.

Robert Winter was next summoned, and ascended the scaffold with great firmness. Everything proclaimed the terrible tragedy that had just been enacted. The straw was sprinkled with blood, so was the block, so were the long knives of the executioner, whose hands and arms were dyed with the same crimson stain; while in one corner of the scaffold stood a basket, containing the dismembered limbs of the late unfortunate sufferer. But these dreadful sights produced no effect on Robert Winter. Declining to address the assemblage, he at once surrendered himself to the assistant, and shared the fate of his friend.

Grant was the next to follow. Undismayed as his predecessor, he looked round with a cheerful countenance, and said,—

“I am about to suffer the death of a traitor, and am content to die so. But I am satisfied that our project was so far from being sinful, that I rely entirely on my merits in bearing a part in it, as an abundant satisfaction and expiation for all the sins I have at other times of my life committed.”

This speech was received by a terrific yell from the multitude. Wholly unmoved, however, Grant uttered a few prayers, and then crossing himself, mounted the ladder and was quickly despatched. The bloody business was completed by the slaughter of Bates, who died as resolutely as the others.

These executions, being conducted with the utmost deliberation, occupied nearly an hour. The crowd then separated to talk over the sight they had witnessed, and to keep holiday during the remainder of the day; rejoicing that an equally-exciting spectacle was in store for them on the morrow.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD PALACE YARD.

Guy Fawkes's tranquillity of mind did not desert him to the last. On the contrary, as his term of life drew near its close, he became more cheerful and resigned; his sole anxiety being that all should be speedily terminated. When Ipgreve took leave of him for the night, he threw himself on his couch and soon fell into a gentle slumber. His dreams were soothing, and he fancied that Viviana appeared to him clad in robes of snowy whiteness, and regarding him with a smiling countenance, promised that the gates of eternal happiness would be opened to him on the morrow.

Awaking about four o'clock, he passed the interval between that time and his summons by the jailer in earnest prayer. At six o'clock, Ipgreve made his appearance. He was accompanied by his daughter, who had prevailed on him to allow her to take leave of the prisoner. She acquainted Fawkes with all particulars of the interment of Viviana, to which he listened with tearful interest.

“Would my remains might be laid beside her!” he said. “But fate forbids it!”

“Truly, does it,” observed Ipgreve, gruffly; “unless you would have her body removed to the spikes of Whitehall gates.”

Disregarding this brutal speech, which called a blush of shame to the cheeks of Ruth, Fawkes affectionately pressed her hand, and said,

“Do not forget me in your prayers, and sometimes visit the grave of Viviana.”

“Doubt it not,” she replied, in accents half suffocated by grief.

Fawkes then bade her farewell, and followed the jailer through various intricate passages, which brought them to a door opening upon one of the lower chambers of the Beauchamp Tower. Unlocking it, Ipgreve led the way up the circular staircase, and ushered his companion into the large chamber where Rookwood, Keyes, and Thomas Winter were already assembled.

The morning was clear, but frosty, and bitterly cold; and when the lieutenant appeared, Rookwood besought him to allow them a fire as their last earthly indulgence. The request was peremptorily refused. A cup of hot spiced wine was, however, offered them, and accepted by all except Fawkes.

At the same hour as on the previous day, the hurdles were brought to the entrance of the fortification, and the prisoners bound to them. The recorder and sheriffs met them at the Middle Tower, as they had done the other conspirators, and the cavalcade set forth. The crowd was even greater than on the former occasion; and it required the utmost exertion on the part of the guard to maintain order. Some little delay occurred at Ludgate; and during this brief halt, Rookwood heard a cry, and looking up, perceived his wife at the upper window of one of the habitations, waving her handkerchief to him, and cheering him by her gestures. He endeavoured to answer her by signs; but his hands were fast bound, and the next moment, the cavalcade moved on.

At Temple Bar another halt occurred; and as the train moved slowly forward, an immense crowd, like a swollen stream, swept after it. The two gates at Whitehall, then barring the road to Westminster, were opened as the train approached, and a certain portion of the concourse allowed to pass through. The scaffold, which had been removed from Saint Paul's, was erected in the middle of Old Palace Yard, in front of the House of Lords. Around it were circled a band of halberdiers, outside whom stood a dense throng. The buttresses and pinnacles of the Abbey were covered with spectators; so was the roof of the Parliament House, and the gallery over the entrance.

The bell of the Abbey began to toll as the train passed through the gates of Whitehall, and its deep booming filled the air. Just as the conspirators were released from the hurdles, Topcliffe, who had evidently from his disordered attire arrived from a long journey, rode up, and dismounted.

“I am just in time,” he cried, with an exulting glance at the conspirators; “this is not the last execution I shall witness. Fathers Garnet and Oldcorne are prisoners, and on their way to London. I was a long time in unearthing the priestly foxes, but I succeeded at last.”

At this moment an officer approached, and summoned Thomas Winter to mount the scaffold. He obeyed, and exhibited no symptom of quailing, except that his complexion suddenly turned to a livid colour. Being told of this by the lieutenant, he tried to account for it by saying that he thought he saw his brother precede him up the steps. He made a brief address, protesting he died a true Catholic, and in that faith, notwithstanding his offences, hoped to be saved.

Rookwood followed him, and indulged in a somewhat longer oration. “I confess my offence to God,” he said, “in seeking to shed blood, and implore his mercy. I likewise confess my offence to the King, of whose majesty I humbly ask forgiveness; and I further confess my offence to the whole state, of whom in general I entreat pardon. May the Almighty bless the King, the Queen, and all their royal progeny, and grant them a long and happy reign! May He turn their hearts to the Catholic faith, so that heresy may be wholly extirpated from the kingdom!”

The first part of this speech was well received by the assemblage, but the latter was drowned in groans and hootings, amid which Rookwood was launched into eternity.

Keyes came next, and eyeing the assemblage disdainfully, went up the ladder, and threw himself off with such force that he broke the rope, and was instantly despatched by the executioner and his assistants.

Guy Fawkes now alone remained, and he slowly mounted the scaffold. His foot slipped on the blood-stained boards, and he would have fallen, if Topcliffe, who stood near him, had not caught his hand. A deep silence prevailed as he looked around, and uttered the following words in a clear and distinct voice:—

“I ask forgiveness of the King and the state for my criminal intention, and trust that my death will wash out my offence.”

He then crossed himself and knelt down to pray, after which his cloak and doublet were removed by the executioner's assistant and placed with those of the other conspirators. He made an effort to mount the ladder, but his stiffened limbs refused their office.

“Your courage fails you,” sneered Topcliffe, laying his hand upon his shoulder.

“My strength does,” replied Fawkes, sternly regarding him. “Help me up the ladder, and you shall see whether I am afraid to die.”

Seeing how matters stood, the executioner who stood by, leaning upon his chopper, tendered him his blood-stained hand. But Fawkes rejected it with disgust, and exerting all his strength, forced himself up the ladder.

As the hangman adjusted the rope, he observed a singular smile illumine the features of his victim.

“You seem happy,” he said.

“I am so,” replied Fawkes, earnestly,—"I see the form of her I loved beckoning me to unfading happiness.”

With this, he stretched out his arms and sprang from the ladder. Before his frame was exposed to the executioner's knife, life was totally extinct.

Guy Fawkes Volume III by William Harrison Ainsworth

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST EXECUTION.

Little more remains to be told, and that little is of an equally painful nature with the tragical events just related.

Fathers Garnet and Oldcorne, together with Mr. Abingdon and their servants, arrived in London on the th of February, about a fortnight after the execution of the other conspirators. They were first taken to the Gate-house at Westminster, and were examined on the following day by the Earl of Salisbury and the Privy-Council at the Star-Chamber. Nothing could be elicited from them, and Garnet answered the Earl's interrogatories with infinite subtlety and address. The examination over, they were ordered to be removed to the Tower.

Topcliffe accompanied them to the stairs. As they proceeded thither, he called Garnet's attention to a ghastly object stuck on a spike over the palace gates.

“Do you recognise those features?” he asked.

“No,” replied Garnet, shudderingly averting his gaze.

“I am surprised to hear it,” rejoined Topcliffe, “for they were once well known to you. It is the head of Guy Fawkes. Of all the conspirators,” he added, with a bitter laugh, “he was the only one who died truly penitent. It is reported that this happy change was wrought in him by Viviana Radcliffe.”

“Heaven have mercy upon his soul!” muttered Garnet.

“I will tell you a strange tale about Catesby,” pursued Topcliffe. “He was buried in the garden at Holbeach with Percy, but an order was sent down by the Earl of Salisbury to have their bodies disinterred and quartered. When Catesby's head was severed from the trunk, to be set on the gates of Warwick, fresh blood spouted forth, as if life were in the veins.”

“You do not expect me to believe this idle story?” said Garnet, incredulously.

“Believe it or not, as you please,” returned Topcliffe, angrily.

On arriving at the fortress, Garnet was lodged in the large chamber of the Beauchamp Tower, and allowed the attendance of his servant, Nicholas Owen, while Oldcorne was equally well accommodated in the Constable Tower. This leniency was the result of the policy of the Earl of Salisbury, who hoped to obtain disclosures from the two Jesuit priests which would enable him to strike the decisive blow he meditated against the Papists. But he was unsuccessful. They refused to make any confessions which would criminate themselves, or implicate others; and as none of the conspirators, not even Tresham, had admitted their connexion with the plot, it was difficult to find proof against them. Garnet underwent daily examinations from the Earl of Salisbury and the commissioners, but he baffled all their inquiries.

“If we cannot wring the truth from you by fair means, Mr. Garnet,” said Salisbury, “we must have recourse to torture.”

“Minare ista pueris,” replied Garnet, contemptuously.

“Leave these two priests to me, my lord,” observed Sir William Waad, who was present at the examination, which took place at the council-chamber in his lodgings,—"leave them to me,” he said in a low voice to the Earl, “and I will engage to procure a full confession from their own lips, without resorting to torture.”

“You will render the state an important service by doing so,” replied Salisbury, in the same tone. “I place the matter entirely in your hands.”

The lieutenant set to work without loss of time. By his directions, Garnet and Oldcorne were removed from their present places of confinement to two subterranean cells immediately adjoining each other, but between which a secret recess, contrived in the thickness of the wall, and built for the purpose it was subsequently put to, existed. Two days after they had been so immured, Ipgreve, who had received his instructions, loitered for a moment in Oldcorne's cell, and with affected hesitation informed him that for a trifling reward he would enable him to hold unreserved communication with his fellow-prisoner.

Oldcorne eagerly caught at the bait, but required to be satisfied that the jailer could make good his words. Ipgreve immediately proceeded to the side of the cell, and holding a lamp to the wall, showed him a small iron knob.

“Touch this spring,” he said, “and a stone will fall from its place, and enable you to converse with Father Garnet, who is in the next cell. But you must take care to replace the stone when any one approaches.”

Promising to observe the utmost caution, and totally unsuspicious of the deceit practised upon him, Oldcorne gave Ipgreve the reward, and as soon as he was gone, touched the spring, and found it act precisely as the jailer had stated.

Garnet was greatly surprised to hear the other's voice, and on learning how the communication was managed was at first suspicious of some stratagem, but by degrees his fears wore off, and he became unreserved in his discourse with his companion, discussing the fate of the conspirators, their own share in the plot, the probability of their acquittal, and the best means of baffling their examiners. All these interlocutions were overheard and taken down by the lieutenant and two other witnesses, Forsett and Lockerson, private secretary to the Earl of Salisbury, who were concealed in the recess. Having obtained all the information he desired, Sir William Waad laid his notes before the Council, and their own confessions being read to the priests, they were both greatly confused, though neither would admit their authenticity.

Meanwhile, their two servants, Owen and Chambers, had been repeatedly examined, and refusing to confess, were at last suspended from a beam by the thumbs. But this producing no result, they were told that on the following day they would be placed on the rack. Chambers then offered to make a full confession, but Owen, continuing obstinate, was conveyed back to his cell. Ipgreve brought him his food as usual in the evening, and on this occasion, it consisted of broth, and a small allowance of meat. It was the custom of the jailer to bring with him a small blunt-pointed knife, with which he allowed the prisoner to cut his victuals. Having got possession of the knife, Owen tasted the broth, and complaining that it was quite cold, he implored the jailer to get it warmed for him, as he felt extremely unwell. Somewhat moved by his entreaties, and more by his appearance, Ipgreve complied. On his return, he found the unfortunate man lying in one corner of the cell, partially covered by a heap of straw which ordinarily formed his bed.

“Here is your broth,” he said. “Take it while it is hot. I shall give myself no further trouble about you.”

“It will not be needed,” gasped Owen.

Alarmed by the sound of his voice, Ipgreve held the light towards him, and perceived that his face was pale as death. At the same time, he remarked that the floor was covered with blood. Instantly divining the truth, the jailer rushed towards the wretched man,

and dragging away the blood-stained straw, found he had inflicted a frightful wound upon himself with the knife which he still held in his grasp.

“Fool that I was, to trust you with the weapon!” cried Ipgreve. “But who would have thought it could inflict a mortal wound?”

“Any weapon will serve him who is resolved to die,” rejoined Owen. “You cannot put me on the rack now.” And with a ghastly expression of triumph, he expired.

Soon after this, Oldcorne and Abingdon were sent down to Worcester, where the former was tried and executed. Stephen Littleton suffered death at the same time.

On Friday, the rd of March, full proofs being obtained against him, Garnet was arraigned of high treason at Guildhall. The trial, which excited extraordinary interest, was attended by the King, by the most distinguished personages, male and female, of his court, and by all the foreign ambassadors. Garnet conducted himself throughout his arraignment, which lasted for thirteen hours, with the same courage and address which he had displayed on his examinations before the commissioners. But his subtlety availed him little. He was found guilty and condemned.

The execution of the sentence was for some time deferred, it being hoped that a complete admission of his guilt would be obtained from him, together with disclosures relative to the designs of the Jesuit party. With this view, the examinations were still continued, but the rigour with which he had been latterly treated was relaxed. A few days before his execution, he was visited by several eminent Protestant Divines,—Doctor Montague, Dean of the Chapel Royal; Doctor Neile, Dean of Westminster; and Doctor Overall, Dean of Saint Paul's; with whom he had a long disputation on points of faith and other spiritual matters.

At the close of this discussion, Doctor Overall remarked, “I suppose you expect, Mr. Garnet, that after your death, the Church of Rome will declare you a martyr?”

“I a martyr!” exclaimed Garnet, sorrowfully. “O what a martyr I should be! If, indeed, I were really about to suffer death for the Catholic religion, and had never known of this project, except by means of sacramental confession, I might perhaps be accounted worthy the honour of martyrdom, and might deservedly be glorified in the opinion of our church. As it is, I acknowledge myself to have sinned in this respect, and deny not the justice of the sentence passed upon me.”

Satisfied, at length, that no further disclosures could be obtained from him, the King signed the warrant for his execution on the nd of May.

The scaffold was erected at the west end of Saint Paul's Cathedral, on the spot where Digby and the other conspirators had suffered. A vast assemblage was collected as on the former occasion, and similar precautions were taken to prevent tumult and disturbance. The unfortunate man's torture was cruelly and unnecessarily prolonged by a series of questions proposed to him on the scaffold by Doctor Overall and the Dean of Westminster, all of which he answered very collectedly and clearly. He maintained his fortitude to the last. When fully prepared, he mounted the ladder, and thus addressed the assemblage:—

“I commend myself to all good Catholics. I grieve that I have offended the King by not revealing the design entertained against him, and that I did not use more diligence in preventing the execution of the plot. I commend myself most humbly to the lords of his Majesty's council, and entreat them not to judge too hardly by me. I beseech all men that Catholics may not fare the worse for my sake, and I exhort all Catholics to take care not to mix themselves with seditious or traitorous designs against the King's Majesty, whom God preserve!”

Making the sign of the cross upon his forehead and breast, he continued:

“In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritûs Sancti! Jesus Maria! Maria, mater gratiæ! mater misericordiæ! Tu me ab hoste protege, et horâ mortis suscipe! In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, quia tu redimisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis." Again crossing himself, he added,—”Per crucis hoc signum fugiat procul omne malignum! Infige crucem tuam, Domine, in corde meo!"

And with this last pathetic ejaculation he threw himself from the ladder.

Garnet obtained, after death, the distinction he had disclaimed while living. He was enrolled, together with Oldcorne, among the list of Catholic martyrs. Several miracles are affirmed by the Jesuits to have been performed in his behalf. Father More relates that on the lawn at Hendlip, where he and Oldcorne last set foot, “a new and hitherto unknown species of grass sprang up into the exact shape of an imperial crown, and remained for a long time without being trodden down by the feet of passengers, or eaten up by the cattle.” It was further asserted that a spring of oil burst forth at the west end of Saint Paul's Cathedral on the precise spot where he suffered. But the most singular prodigy is that recounted by Endæmon Joannes, who affirms that in a straw which had been sprinkled with Garnet's blood, a human countenance, strangely resembling that of the martyr, was discovered. This legend of the Miraculous Straw, having received many embellishments and improvements as it travelled abroad, obtained universal credence, and was conceived to fully establish Garnet's innocence.

Anne Vaux, the Jesuit's devoted friend, retired with her sister, Mrs. Brooksby, to a nunnery in Flanders, where she ended her days.

So terminated the memorable and never-to-be-forgotten Gunpowder Treason, for deliverance from which our church still offers thanksgivings, and in remembrance of which, on the anniversary of its discovery, fagots are collected and bonfires lighted to consume the effigy of the arch-conspirator, Guy Fawkes.

THE END


Freeditorial