

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

EDITOR, EVANGELICAL TRACTS, (NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> 2001)

On September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden, through his al-Qa'eda network of terrorists, used suicide fanatics to massacre almost 3,000 innocent victims in America in the name of Islam. That event will live in history as a warning to all freedom-loving people to be forever vigilant. Osama bin Laden's motive appears to be a hatred of the decadent infidels of the democratic world. Presumably he wants everyone to be a Muslim like him, and God help those who don't share that view!

On November 5, 1605, Guy Fawkes had assembled 36 barrels of gunpowder (weighing 1ton 12cwt) in a vault directly under the House of Lords, in order to blow up King James I and his Protestant government as they opened Parliament that day. If Fawkes had been successful the conspirators intended to raise an insurrection to establish one of James' sons on the throne and make Protestant England a Roman Catholic kingdom again.

The similarities between the instigators of the "Twin Towers" massacre and the "Gunpowder Plot" are worth noting. Robert Catesby was the mastermind and inspirer of that wicked plot against Protestantism in 1605, and, like bin Laden, he came from a wealthy and privileged background. Catesby had a hatred of Protestantism just as bin Laden has of Christianity. The Roman Catholic church, where it held sway, ruthlessly persecuted by fire and sword Protestant heretics throughout Europe, just as infidel Christians are persecuted in many countries where Islam rules. Catesby appointed himself as leader with the active support of Jesuit priests, so Osama bin Laden is wholly supported by the Taliban mullahs of Afghanistan. As the self appointed leader of Islamic terrorism, bin Laden is calling for a Muslim uprising from around the world, just as Catesby and Fawkes tried to get Roman Catholic monarchs in Europe to help them overthrow the King of England. Let it also be remembered that terrorism carried out for a holy war must always have the support of a world-wide creed to justify its devilish atrocities.

The following account of the Gunpowder Plot will show that what bin Laden did, with the connivance of the Taliban mullahs on September 11, Robert Catesby tried to do with the connivance of the Jesuit priests of the Roman Catholic Church.

Many extracts from primary sources of the times, as recorded by historians from the 18th century to today, have been used to relate the details and outcome of the Gunpowder Plot. The Editor has often retained their own words,

but he alone is responsible for the interpretation and comments on those facts where he thought it necessary.

## GUNPOWDER, TREASON & PLOT

The principal conspirator and sustainer of the Gunpowder Plot for blowing up King James I and the Parliament on November 5, 1605 was not the more famous Guy Fawkes, but Robert Catesby, a gentleman of family and fortune. Catesby was the son of Sir William Catesby of Lapworth, Warwick, (a prominent Roman Catholic, who refused to attend the established Church of England though it was required by law). He was born in 1573, and entered Gloucester hall, Oxford, in 1586. In 1596 he was one of those arrested on suspicion during an illness of Queen Elizabeth. In 1601 he took part in the rebellion of Essex and was wounded in the fight and imprisoned, but finally pardoned on the payment of an enormous fine. In 1602 he despatched Thomas Winter and the Jesuit Tesimond (alias Greenway) to Spain to induce Philip III to organise an invasion of England, and in 1603, after James I's accession, he was named as an accomplice in the "Priests' Plot."<sup>1</sup> Exasperated by his personal misfortunes and by the repressive measures James took to counteract the many Roman Catholic plots against him, he was now to be the chief instigator of the supreme act of terror famously known as the Gunpowder Plot.

The idea seems first to have entered his mind in May, 1603. The ruling passion of his being is seen not only in this attempt, but also in his previous support of the rash Essex on the ground that the Earl had promised liberty of conscience. When that hope failed, he had striven by intrigues at the principal Roman Catholic courts of Europe, those of France and Spain, to secure the same great end; but failing utterly, disappointment rankled in his breast, and influenced him to adopt at last the bloody and murderous project of blowing up King, Lords, and Commons at one blow.

The two foremost conspirators who first embraced Catesby's plot were Guy Fawkes and Thomas Winter. To Winter, Catesby first opened his plan. He was a gentleman of Worcestershire, but had spent much of his time abroad as a soldier of fortune in the Low Countries, and, what was of great importance to Catesby, had long acted at the court of Spain as a secret agent of the English Roman Catholics. At first he recoiled in horror from the proposal, and though subsequently he was swayed by the mastermind to his purposes, he agreed only on the condition that one more effort should be made to induce the King of Spain to mediate between James and his Roman Catholic subjects. The effort was made, failed, and left Winter as "bloody, bold, and resolute" as Catesby could have desired.

Guy Fawkes was also a soldier of fortune. Fawkes was the son of Edward Fawkes of York, a member of a good Yorkshire family and advocate of the

archbishop of York's consistory court. He was baptized at St. Michael le Belfrey at York on April 16, 1570. His parents being Protestants, he was educated at the free school at York. Soon after his father's death his mother re-married with fatal consequences for her son. Fawkes' stepfather was connected with many Roman Catholic families, and was undoubtedly a Roman Catholic himself, and Fawkes then became a zealous adherent of the Roman Catholic faith. In 1593 he went to Flanders and enlisted in the Spanish army, assisting at the capture of Calais by the Spanish in 1596 and gaining some military reputation. Let it be remembered, that when Fawkes was tortured after the Plot had failed, there were no more heartless and vicious torturers of hundreds of thousands Protestants in the Netherlands than the Spanish Inquisition and the Spanish army. Fawkes ardently and successfully served in that army.

Fawkes' mind appears to have been chiefly remarkable for a quiet determination of purpose and coolness under fire. It may be added that the birth, manners, and appearance of Guy Fawkes were those of a gentleman. He was induced to join the plot through the instrumentality of his old friend and associate, Thomas Winter. The next two conspirators who joined were John Wright, esteemed one of the best swordsmen of his time, and Thomas Percy, a distant relation of the great house whose family name he bore, and who was the steward to the head of the house, the Earl of Northumberland. Percy was one of the most violent of the whole set. When James was about to become King of England, Percy had been sent by the English Roman Catholics to Scotland to ascertain how he was disposed to deal with them. James, knowing full well the need not to stir up the English Roman Catholics against him, said he would tolerate the Mass, albeit "in a corner." Percy and those who sent him exaggerated the significance of these words and were completely deceived as James responded harshly to the many Roman Catholic plots against him on his accession as King, and Percy in consequence thirsted for revenge. Despising the caution of his confederates, it was he who, at a meeting at Catesby's lodgings, before the Gunpowder Plot was propounded, opened the terrible subject of debate by the fiery exclamation, "Well, gentlemen, shall we always talk, and never do?"

Before opening the particulars of his scheme to the four earliest conspirators, Catesby demanded from all a solemn oath of secrecy. A few days after, they met at a lonely house in the fields, beyond St. Clement's Inn, and there the oath was accepted by each, on his knees. The oath was as follows: "You shall swear by the blessed Trinity and by the sacrament you now propose to receive, never to disclose, directly or indirectly, by a word or circumstance, the matter that shall be proposed to you to keep secret, nor desist from the execution thereof until the rest shall give you leave."

Catesby then told them his plan of blowing up the Houses of Lords and Commons by gunpowder on the first day that the King should be present to the Parliament. They all then went upstairs to another apartment, where they found a Jesuit priest, Father Gerard, who administered the sacrament. There is

no doubt that this well-travelled Jesuit priest knew exactly what was afoot and it seems incredible that some historians could even suggest he was initially ignorant as to the reason why he was brought there for that special meeting. Later events confirm beyond reasonable doubt that he was at the forefront of the conspiracy, and was there to encourage the execution of the wicked deed in the name of the Church of Rome. If the plot had succeeded the plotters had arranged for someone to be in Rome to tell the Pope about it, and no doubt, like the much later St. Bartholomew's day massacre, a Te Deum would have been sung in triumph at St. Peter's that very day.

The next three conspirators to join were Robert Winter, a brother of Thomas, and Christopher Wright, a brother of John Wright, and also Bates, Catesby's servant, who was suspected by Catesby to have discovered some inkling of what was going on, and who was therefore at once taken into the confidence of the party, in the hope of binding him to them. And he justified his master's confidence in him. These were the main conspirators, but there were others who were drawn into the same dreadful business as it progressed. Namely, Robert Keyes (or Kay), an impoverished Roman Catholic gentleman, who undertook the care of the house at Lambeth, where the combustibles were guardedly collected in small quantities at a time. Another was John Grant, a Roman Catholic gentleman of Warwickshire, who had vowed revenge by the perceived ill-treatment he had received on account of his religious views. There were also three other gentlemen, admitted solely on account of their ability to pay for and provide the supplies of horses, ammunition, &c., that were to aid the insurrection that was to burst out immediately the awful blow had been struck. For the main objective was to blow up King and Parliament and then lead a Roman Catholic uprising and place Henry, the son of James, on the throne as King. The other conspirators were Ambrose Rookwood, a long time friend of Catesby, whose chief motive for joining the conspiracy was a romantic determination to share the dangers and aims of Catesby. There was Sir Everard Digby, another close friend of the arch-conspirator. He was a young man of great wealth, and of an enthusiastic disposition, who yielded only after a severe struggle with his conscience, and love for his wife and two children. Lastly, Francis Tresham, son and heir of Sir Thomas Tresham, a gentleman who, in his own self-justifying words, had suffered "full twenty years of restless adversity and deep disgrace, only for testimony of his conscience." Had the conspirators but stopped before admitting this last conspirator, the scheme might have succeeded, and have been followed by consequences too momentous to calculate. Tresham was related to Catesby, and most importantly, he was able to furnish the immense sum of two thousand pounds to fund the enterprise, and so his character, that of a potentially unreliable man, who, materially, had most to lose, was overlooked. He was admitted, and England in consequence saved from the dire consequences that would have followed.

What a lesson for fanaticism this Gunpowder Plot forms in whatever way it is read. None but fanatics of the worst kind could have devised such a wicked

scheme. Is there a Roman Catholic living who thinks the plans of Catesby and his conspirators could have advanced their religion by such wicked means? On the other side, is there a single Protestant who would say that the repressive laws against Popery that were passed in the days of James I, in response to earlier Roman Catholic conspiracies, were to be an end in themselves to promote the true faith of God? Look through all history and the result of such repression is the same. Force may keep down the beliefs you know to be a travesty of Christianity, but force will never promote the true faith without defiling it. On the other hand, lawful governments are justified in repressing terrorism when it conspires to overthrow them, and James I certainly had his share of Roman Catholic plots against him.

It is a question that rises to the mind, in consideration of the evil deed they planned as to whether any of the conspirators ever doubted the merits of their cause? In fact, during a lull in their operations, when, Percy having purchased a house adjoining the parliamentary buildings, they were delayed by its being taken possession of for a short time for the transaction of some public business, it so happened that at the previous Lancashire assizes, six seminary priests and Jesuits were tried, condemned, and executed for simply remaining within the realm. As though that evidence of the treatment that Roman Catholic priests were in future to expect in England were not sufficient, their flocks were told they could be liable to a similar punishment, if they heard the idolatrous mass from a Jesuit or seminary priest again. But let it never be forgotten that the Roman Catholic counter-reformation was a ruthless attempt through fire, sword and Inquisition, to return Protestants and Protestant countries to the Roman Catholic fold, outside of which, they claimed, no Christian can be saved! Espionage and assassinations, plots and conspiracies, were the order of the day, especially through the Jesuits whose sacred oath was to serve the Pope and use any means to restore Roman Catholicism. It was unadulterated Machiavellism—the end (to save heretical souls) justifies the means (no matter how wicked those means are!).

There were some among the Roman Catholics who had little sympathy with the conspiratorial movements of Catesby and Guy Fawkes. Some of these Papists appealed to the justice and good feeling of the government at those harsh sentences against their priests, and the threats made against their now priestless flocks. If their lawful appeal be successful, did it ever suggest to the plotters that they must retrace their steps. It would have made no difference to their plans as subsequent events were to prove.

The preparations for the insurrection then began in earnest. Guy Fawkes went to Flanders to endeavour to secure foreign co-operation before the blow was struck. Sir Edward Baynham went to Rome to be ready, when all was over, to explain to the Pope that the conspirators' object was the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic church in England. The other chief conspirators spent the spare interval of time in collecting horses, arms and gun-

powder—the material, in short, for equipping a Roman Catholic army for the revolt.

As the day of meeting of the Parliament approached, it was finally arranged that the mine should be fired by a slow match by Fawkes, who would then have a quarter of an hour to escape. On the same day Sir Everard Digby was to have ready a large body of Roman Catholic gentry at his seat in Warwickshire, assembled on the pretence of hunting, to form the nucleus of the insurrection. Lastly, as they wanted one of the King's sons to become, under their auspices, the future king, Percy was also on the same day to seize the Prince Henry, and bear him off, or, if he accompanied his father to the house and was killed, then the Duke of York, afterwards Charles I, was to be taken instead.

And now arose a momentous question. Most of the conspirators had close friends or relations in parliament—were these to perish as well? The agitation of this question severely troubled some of the conspirators. Tresham had two Roman Catholic brothers-in-law in the Upper House, Stourton and Mouteagle. Percy had family connections to the Earl of Northumberland. Keyes' heart bled for Lord Mordaunt, his benefactor, who had given food and shelter to his destitute wife and children; and there was one, the young Earl of Arundel, whose safety all were anxious to secure. Catesby forcefully tried to argue down these weaknesses. Most of the Roman Catholics, he was of opinion, would be absent, since they could not hope to prevent the passing of new penal laws against their religion. "But with all that," added the remorseless and determined Catesby, "rather than the project should not take effect, if they were as dear unto me as mine own son, they also must be blown up." Here is revealed the complete self-centred egoist whose will must prevail regardless of friends and relatives dying in the mayhem. This was unsettling enough to several of the conspirators, but the danger of giving any specific warning to so many persons was self-evident. Therefore it was agreed, though reluctantly by some, that no express notice was to be given, but that all should be at liberty to use such persuasion as they thought likely to be most successful, without in any way divulging what was to happen. But there was one who remained dissatisfied by this arrangement. Catesby, Thomas Winter, and Fawkes were together at White Webbs, three days after this discussion, when Tresham unexpectedly turned up and required, in passionate terms, that Mouteagle should be warned. They refused, and angry words followed. Seeing they were determined, he used his one powerful interest in the conspiracy to try to get his way. He desired the plot to be deferred as he could not yet furnish the money he had promised. Tresham then went away. There can scarcely be a doubt that Tresham had opened to Lord Mouteagle, his brother-in-law, the tremendous secret, and advised with him how that secret might best appear to come from some other quarter. It should be noted that Lord Mouteagle had engaged in Romanist plots against the government before but he had now given his allegiance to the new King.

So ten days before the opening of Parliament, on October 26, Mounteagle suddenly appeared at his mansion at Haxton, which he seldom visited, ordered a supper to be prepared, and, as he was sitting at it, about seven in the evening, his page presented him a letter that he said he had just received from a tall man, whose features he could not distinguish in the dark. Mounteagle opened it, and, seeing it had neither date nor signature, tossed it to a gentleman in his service, desiring him to read it aloud. It read as follows:

*“My lord, out of the love I bear to some of your friends, I have a care for your preservation. Therefore I would advise you, as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift of your attendance of this Parliament, for God and man hath concurred to punish the wickedness of this time. And think not slightly of this advertisement, but retire yourself into your country, where you may expect the event in safety, for though there be no appearance of any stir, yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow, the Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. This counsel is not to be contemned, because it may do you good and can do you no harm, for the danger is past as soon as you have burnt the letter: and I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it, to whose holy protection I commend you.”*

The authorship of the letter points to Tresham and to the virtual certainty that he had some days before warned Mounteagle and agreed with him as to the best means of making known the plot and preventing its execution, and, at the same time, giving the conspirators time to escape.

The letter does not, it will be seen, point out the exact nature of the danger that threatened the “parliament;” though the words “a terrible blow,” and “they shall not see who hurts them,” go as near to the truth as its author dared venture in order to keep up the character assumed—that of a man who desired to save Mounteagle, but also to conceal and help to carry out the project that endangered him if he entered the House of Lords on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Mounteagle directly rode off to Whitehall, and, the King being absent—he was hunting at Royston—showed it to Cecil and several other ministers. Cecil and Suffolk were the real interpreters of the mysterious epistle, though they chose to flatter the King by ascribing the discovery—that it was meant to blow them up with gunpowder—to the “divine spirit” by which he was inspired, when they laid it before him on his return, and “thereby miraculously discovering this hidden treason.” By Cecil’s advice the “devilish practice” was not to be interrupted until the last moment. The conspirators were to be allowed “to go on to the end of their day.”

The conspirators, too, had their clear warning, if they would have taken it, and this matter should not be overlooked in any pronouncement of judgement of Tresham’s conduct. In all probability due warning to Catesby and Fawkes formed a part of his plan. Lord Mounteagle’s servant communicated to Thomas Winter the delivery of the letter to Cecil. Winter apprised Catesby, who at

once pronounced that Tresham had betrayed them. His having absented himself several days made this all the more probable. He, however, promptly attended the summons of Catesby and Winter, and it says much for his courage that he dared to hold so perilous an interview. Fixing their searching eyes on his countenance, they accused him of the letter, and were prepared, if he exhibited fear or confusion, to stab him to the heart on the spot. He was firm and steady in his denial, and they were silenced, if not entirely convinced. Tresham must have hoped that all danger was now averted both from the victims of the Plot and the conspirators. How could he suppose the Plot would go on under such changed circumstances? But he knew them not. Having succeeded in throwing aside all the ordinary feelings of humanity, they had become but so many fanatics of one obsessive idea,—and what an exciting world-shattering idea it was! If successful they would be heroes of the Roman Catholic church, and become important figures of the new government. It had become everything to Catesby who harboured these grandiose delusions. So even now, though they may have doubted the secret was no longer secret, they would go on.

They first satisfied themselves that the vault under the House of Lords had not been searched, by sending Fawkes, as yet ignorant of the incriminating letter, to examine it. He found all as he had left it and then Catesby and Winter excused themselves for having placed him in such danger without a warning. But he coolly replied, he would have gone just as readily if he had known all, and he undertook to return to the cellar once every day till the 5th of November—and he kept his word through the doubtful and anxious time that followed. Notice, though, how Catesby could so ruthlessly deceive even his fellow conspirator in order to attain his murderous ends.

On Sunday the 3rd of November, Lord Mounteagle's servant informed the conspirators of the importance attached to the letter by King James. One cannot but wonder at the torments of Tresham, from whom, no doubt, this second warning also came. He saw all the men, to whom he had so solemnly pledged his honour that he would preserve their secret and promote their object, going almost wilfully to the scaffold, in consequence of his faithlessness to them. Seeing both these warnings fail, the very same evening that the second had been given he appeared, during an interview with Thomas Winter, in great agitation and distress, and he said, too, that to his certain knowledge they were all lost men, unless they saved themselves by immediate flight. That very night, as usual, Fawkes went to keep watch in the cellar. There was time and opportunity for all to have been saved, but the moment was thrown away. Even Tresham, whom the other conspirators suspected of being in communication with their adversaries, neither sought flight nor concealment. The fiery Percy insisted on their keeping their ground to see the result of Monday, the last day before the terrible event, on the afternoon of which John Wright and Catesby were to ride off to join Sir Everard Digby at Dunchurch.



That Monday did bring with it an event that would have spoken loud to any men less determined, less infatuated than these Gunpowder conspirators. In the afternoon of the 4th the Lord Chamberlain Suffolk and Lord Mouteagle went to the House of Lords. They stayed some time in the Parliament Chamber, and then descended to the vaults and cellars, pretending that some of the King's objects were missing. Opening the door of the conspirators' vault, they saw, standing in a corner, "a very tall and desperate fellow." The Chamberlain carelessly asked him who he was. He replied, he was a servant to Mr. Percy, and stated that he was looking after his master's coals. "Your master has laid in a good stock of fuel," said Suffolk; and he and Mouteagle left the place without saying more. What next? Why, Fawkes hurried off to tell Percy, and then returned to the cellar! His reasoning to himself was, no doubt, simply this—he had undertaken to guard the cellar, and at the appointed time to fire the train. It was their duty to withdraw him if it was indispensably necessary that he should be withdrawn. They did not do so. For all he knew, they had still a hope of success, so he stayed.

All this while, what did the government really know? More, we think, than was professed from a mere perusal of the letter. Mouteagle, like Tresham, may have stipulated for secrecy as regarded any information given by him; and it is only on such an hypothesis that we can understand why the examination just mentioned should be left to so late a period. If the ministers knew all, they could afford to let the conspirators play on their game as long as possible, and they would desire to pursue that policy in order to entrap and obtain evidence against them, without using their secret sources of knowledge. But if they knew no more than the letter told them, they might have mistaken the mode of destruction intended—which might, after all, burst out upon them from some unexpected quarter and, at all events, the delay at such a critical time might give the conspirators time to escape. We have no doubt, therefore, that Mouteagle, while giving the conspirators ample opportunities to escape, passed on to the government the essentials of the plot.

Midnight came, and Fawkes thought, as all seemed quiet, he would take a look around. As he stepped out from the cellar, he was at once pinioned, and in the presence of a company of armed men, under the command of Sir Thomas Knevet, a magistrate of Westminster, he was searched, and matches and touchwood found upon him. Going into the cellar, a dark lantern was found behind the door. The party went on, removed the faggots, and the whole business in all its horrors stood revealed to them but too plainly, in the sight of the thirty-six barrels of gunpowder that were ranged along the wall. They questioned Fawkes, who was as frank as he had been audacious. He at once avowed his purpose to Sir Thomas, adding "that if he had happened to be within the house when he took him, he would not have failed to have blown him up, house and all!"—a pleasant assurance for the listeners!

Fawkes was taken to Whitehall, and into the royal bedchamber, where he was confronted with the King and Council, who did not like his appearance,

bound though he was,—for his looks darted scorn and defiance, and his voice was bold, his answers keen and cutting as a two-edged sword. To the questions put to him he answered, his name was John Johnson, he was servant to Mr. Percy. He was sorry he had not succeeded in his purpose. The King asked how he could have the heart to destroy his children and so many innocent souls that must have suffered. “Dangerous diseases require desperate remedies,” replied Fawkes, and that, no doubt, was the substance of the delusive arguments by which the infatuated men had supported themselves throughout. One of the Scottish courtiers inquiring why so many barrels of gunpowder had been collected, Fawkes insolently replied, “One of my objects was to blow Scotsmen back into Scotland.” He was pressed to name his accomplices, but answered with contempt that he could not make up his mind to accuse any. In subsequent examinations he was tried by temptations, as well as threats, to betray his accomplices, but remained unalterably firm in his refusal. His self confidence also continued as striking as ever. When told it was useless to deny their names, as their flight had discovered them, “If that be so,” was his reply, “it would be superfluous for me to declare them, seeing by that circumstance they have named themselves.” He readily confessed all his own guilt—said he was ready to die but rather wished ten thousand deaths than to accuse his friends. Whilst in that frame of mind, on the 8th of November, he signed his deposition with a bold and steady hand. What passed during the next two days is shrouded in darkness; but it is easy to guess at the nature of its fearful mysteries. The “gentler tortures” were to be first used unto him, “*et sic per gradus, ad ima tenditur* [And thus by degrees we may proceed to extremities]; and so God speed you in your good work.” Such were the instructions issued by James to the keepers of Fawkes. How the mandate was obeyed may be best understood from an examination of the signature on the 10th instant, of the same man who had signed so boldly on the 8th. The contrast suggests horrors too appalling for the imagination to dwell upon. Fawkes’s tormentors appear to have soon succeeded in breaking his will and he confessed to all that had passed.

Percy and Christopher Wright rode off. But of the utmost significance was that Catesby and John Wright rode off immediately to the gathering at Dunchurch. Rookwood and Keyes, being little known in London, waited to see what turn affairs might take. In the morning, going abroad they saw horror and amazement on every countenance, and then they knew that all was over. Keyes fled at once. Rookwood—the last to linger—waited till noon, to gain more intelligence, then mounted and in little more than six hours rode a distance of eighty miles. His route lay at first over Highgate Hill and Finchley Common, and he was crossing the latter when he overtook Keyes, and they rode side by side as far as Turvey in Bedfordshire, where Keyes parted from him. Rookwood dashed on to Brickhill, and there overtook Catesby and John Wright. The three soon after overtook Percy and Christopher Wright, and all five swept along over hill and down as fast as some of the fleetest horses in

England could bear them. Two or three of the party even threw their cloaks into the hedge to ride the lighter. Escape was easy at one of the sea-ports. But in their delusion they still hoped for the best. The second part of their plan might succeed, though the first had failed. The entire Roman Catholic party in England might yet come to their rescue and overthrow James I.

In the mean time, Sir Everard Digby, having assembled his party at Dunchurch on the 5th of November, rode off to Ashby Ledgers, to hear what was the result of the plot. That evening, the five fugitives from London, covered with sweat and half dead with fatigue, appeared before the house of Lady Catesby, and burst into an apartment where a party of expectant Roman Catholics (including Winter and Digby) were sitting down to supper. When Rookwood and the rest had told their tidings, a rapid consultation was held, and bold and vigorous measures at once decided on. The note of war was to be sounded through the land. The Roman Catholics resident on the route to Wales were to be summoned instantly to join them. But, at starting, all Sir Everard's guests at Dunchurch forsook the cause on hearing what the plot had been, and especially that it had failed. They stole away privily in the night in fear for what they had been unwittingly drawn into, leaving none to aid, except a few servants and retainers. The conspirators were, however, no longer able to retrace their steps. Deserted as they were, like drowning men clutching at straws, they still resolved to raise the country to arms.

Riding through Warwick, they carried off some cavalry horses from a stable, leaving their own tired ones in their place. At Grant's house of Norbrook a few servants joined them. On the third night after leaving London they reached Holbeach, on the borders of Staffordshire, and rested at a house belonging to one Stephen Littleton. Every rational hope was by this time cut-off—"Not one man," as Sir Everard Digby afterwards observed, "came to take our part, though we had expected so many," and in despair he forsook his companions, with the professed intention of hastening some expected help. Scarcely had he left, before some gunpowder placed before the fire to dry exploded, and seriously injured three or four of the conspirators, among whom was Catesby. Remember it was Catesby who said he would even blow up his own flesh and blood in parliament to gain the kingdom for Rome! No wonder they began at last to lose their confidence in their cause. Rookwood and others, "perceiving God to be against them, prayed before the picture of "Our Lady", and confessed that the act was so bloody, as they desired God to forgive them." Presently the house was surrounded by the whole army of the county, with Sir Richard Walsh, the sheriff, at their head. The conspirators had now the stark choice: either surrender to certain torture and death as traitors, or to go down fighting like men. Better a quick death than the torture chamber. They were called upon to surrender, but they rejected it. One body of the troops set fire to the house, whilst another made an attack upon the gates. The doomed men presented themselves, sword in hand, to the assailants. One of them, Thomas Winter, was disabled by a shot in the arm. Catesby cried out to

his helpless friend, "Stand by me, Tom, and we will die together." And as he spoke, so it was. While standing back to back two bullets shot from the same musket fatally wound both of them. Catesby was just able to crawl into the house on his hands and knees, seize the image of the Virgin Mary that stood in the vestibule, clasp it fervently, and died. The two brothers, John and Christopher Wright, and Percy experienced the same end, though Percy lingered until the next day. All the other conspirators were taken into custody either here or elsewhere, and the executioner finished what the provincial sheriff had begun.

The place of execution for the conspirators was the west end of St. Paul's churchyard. The fate of Tresham is remarkable. Before the day of trial he died in the Tower, not without exciting suspicions among the people of England who were of his own creed that he had been foully dealt with. There were others who suggested he committed suicide for the horrors he brought to his fellow conspirators by his treachery. The former was undoubtedly nearer the truth.

Comprehensive as was this destruction of the men who had themselves aimed to destroy on such a gigantic scale, the affair—and the excitement caused by it—was not yet at an end. It was supposed that the Jesuits, who had been only recently introduced into England, were privy to the plot. Henry Garnet was then the Superior of the Order. The great lawyer Coke, when Garnet was tried, eulogized his fine natural gifts, and said he was "by birth a gentleman, by education a scholar, by art learned, and a good linguist." But take note of this—For several years he had followed various occupations in the neighbourhood of London in order to disguise the real one. He had been concerned in the treasonable intrigues with the king of Spain just before Elizabeth's death, and was suspected of other seditions, but had purchased a general pardon at James's accession. He continued, however, to associate with disaffected Roman Catholics, including many of the nobility. The regard in which they held him was carried to the extremest enthusiasm. Lady Anne Vaux, for instance, after her father's death, followed his fortunes with romantic devotion. Such a person representing such an Order, capable of the most profound craft, and actuated by a restless spirit of intrigue and ardent fanaticism, was certainly to be feared by a Protestant government that was oppressing the Roman Catholics who conspired against them. It is very difficult to fathom the real extent of the Jesuits' connection with the plot, but there is no doubt that many of the Order in England and on the Continent were aware of it. As to Garnet himself, it is certain that very shortly before the plot was discovered he was with a company of persons, most actively engaged in it, on a pilgrimage to St. Winifred's Well, in Flintshire; and at the very time when Fawkes was preparing to fire the deadly train under the Parliament House, Garnet was in the neighbourhood of the general rendezvous of the conspirators at Coughton. A proclamation of attainder against Garnet, Greenway, Gerard, Oldcorne, and three other Jesuits having been issued, Greenway and Gerard fled to the Continent. What had become of Oldcorne and Garnet no one could or would tell.

About that time Humphrey Littleton, being condemned to death at Worcester for only harbouring two of the conspirators, told the sheriff of Worcester, in order to save his life, that some of the priests mentioned in the royal proclamation were at Hendlip Hall, near Worcester. Sir Henry Bromley with a sufficient force was sent to make search. He first surrounded the mansion; but as Mr. Abingdon, the owner (a brother-in-law of Lord Mounteagle), was absent, there was of course little or no resistance, and he took possession and commenced a rigorous scrutiny. Mr. Abingdon soon returned, and, regarding the safety of his own life to depend on the safety of the lives of his friends, Oldcorne being his domestic priest, denied solemnly on oath that any such persons were hidden there, and offered to die, at his own gate, if any such should be found in his house or the shire. Sir Henry, however, pursued his dogged scrutiny, for the intricacy of the building kept his suspicions alive. It was full of the most extraordinary hiding-places. No less than eleven secret “conveyances” came to light; “all of them having books, masoning stuff, and popish trumpery in them, except two that had apparently been discovered before, and so were distrusted.” A manuscript in the British Museum details the singular discoveries made in the course of the protracted search, which was unattended by any decided result until the fourth day, “when, from behind the wainscot in the galleries” came out of their own accord two persons, who proved to be Garnet’s confidential servant Owen, and Chambers. It was directly believed that their superiors were hidden in some other part of the building, and four days more were spent in minute examination of the edifice. But after all, the Jesuits might have remained secure, had they not been driven forth, like Owen and Chambers (who had had but one apple between them for several days), by want of food. They came out of a chimney—from a secret entrance curiously covered over with brickwork, and made fast to planks of wood, and coloured black like the other parts of the chimney. The place of concealment within seems to have been supplied with light and air from a funnel that appeared externally as a chimney. Such nourishment as caudles, broths, and warm drinks had been attempted to be conveyed to the Jesuits through a quill or reed passed through a hole into the chimney of a gentle woman’s chamber. This curious old mansion seems to have been built in great part for the express purpose of concealing distressed Roman Catholics. It was pulled down in the 19th century.

It was a striking evidence of the respect felt for Garnet even by his enemies, that they did not put him upon the rack. But whatever unusual mercy they exhibited towards him, was more than compensated for by their infamous treatment of his unfortunate companions. We need but give one example. Nicholas Owen, Garnet’s confidential servant, whose fidelity to his master formed his only crime, refused to give evidence against him. The ruthless barbarity of the State engines was employed to force him. He was suspended by his thumbs from a beam, and endured the torture without flinching in his constancy; but being told to expect the rack on the following day, he in the interval com-

plained of illness; and before he was to be again tormented, as he sat down to dinner, on a chair that his keeper had the humanity to bring him, he besought the man to make his broth hotter on a fire in an adjoining room. The keeper complying found him, when he came back with the broth, lying on the floor with straw pulled over him, his countenance pale and ghastly. The poor fellow, to avoid the coming agony, and keep unsullied his fidelity, had actually rent open his body with a blunt dinner knife, and so he died.

Since force would not succeed, there was another tried and much-esteemed agency—fraud, to experiment with the keepers of the Tower were equally adepts at both. Garnet's keeper pretended to venerate him as a martyr, and offered to convey letters to his friends. He conveyed them in reality to the council. The Jesuits, however, were not to be caught in so commonplace a trap as this. Then Oldcorne was put in an adjoining cell, and the keeper showed a concealed door through which they could converse, but recommended extreme caution. This time the Jesuits were snared. They spoke of how they should arrange their defence. Garnet said he must needs confess that he had been at White-Webbs in Enfield Chase with the conspirators, but he would maintain he had not been there since Bartholomew-tide: adding, "And in truth I am well persuaded that I shall wind myself out of this matter." Other things Garnet said connecting him with the conspirators, little conscious that all the while Cecil's secretary and a magistrate were taking notes of every unguarded word. It was chiefly on the oaths of these "spies set on purpose" that Oldcorne and Garnet were put to death. They boldly denied the "spies" testimony, till the rack extorted confession from Oldcorne, who was executed with a brother priest, Strange, and several other persons. The Roman Catholics and the authorities concerned reported Garnet's statements in the Tower contradictorily. When shown Oldcorne's examination, he said his friend might accuse himself falsely, but he would not do so. Then, say the Roman Catholics, he was led to the rack, and made sundry admissions to escape torture. The authorities say he made these admissions freely when he saw it was useless to persist in denial. The admissions, however gained, sound like the truth, though not perhaps the whole truth. When Fawkes went to Flanders, Garnet had recommended him to Baldwin the Jesuit. Catesby at one time asked him in general terms if a design meant to promote the Roman Catholic faith were lawful, in which it would be necessary to destroy a few Roman Catholic friends together with a great many heretical enemies. Garnet answered, "In case the object were clearly good, and could be effected by no other means, it might be lawful among many heretics to destroy some innocents." It is impossible to have any sympathy with the "martyred" Jesuit for subscribing to such a devilish doctrine. Garnet also admitted that he had long been accessory to the plot, which had been disclosed to him by Greenway, who had learned it under the sacred seal of confession from Catesby and Thomas Winter, but, added Garnet, he had done his best to dissuade the conspirators from their design. Garnet's trial took place in Guildhall. James was present in one corner—the Lady Arabella Stuart in another. Coke

spoke forcibly for hours. Garnet could evidently have done the same, but was not permitted. His defence essentially was this:—The laws of the church did not permit him to reveal any secret obtained in the confessional; but that what he could do he had done, namely, he strove to prevent the execution of the plot.

From that defence, and beyond the admissions already specified, he could not be moved. But they were enough in the opinion of the jury—or rather in the opinion of the government, for political juries in those days had no opinions, that Garnet was found guilty, condemned, and executed.

There is now a footnote to this episode that must be quoted. For immediately after this dreadful incident “the Jesuit’s ashes sprung up a new wonder—a *professed miracle*. The first who announced it to the world was one Wilkinson, a tailor, who said that, as he stood near the place of Garnet’s execution, there was cast towards him, “how, he knew not” an ear of straw that had been put in a basket with the martyr’s head and quarters. This sacred straw he afterwards delivered to a lady of particular Roman Catholic devotion, who enclosed it in a bottle, which being rather shorter than the straw, it became slightly bent. A few days afterwards, showing the bottle to a certain noble person, that person, looking attentively, and said “I can see nothing in it but a man’s face.” The woman and Wilkinson, in astonishment, then examined the ear of straw again and again themselves, and distinctly perceived a human face. The fame of the miracle rapidly spread both in England and on the Continent. The face improved with keeping. It expanded and grew sublime. A crown of sun-like rays encircled it. A cross appeared on the forehead. An anchor came out of the ears at the sides. Seldom is it found in the privy councils of that period so sensible a response to this grotesque miracle—universal contempt!”

## FOOTNOTE

1 “Priests’ Plot” in 1603 against James I at his accession. William Watson and William Clarke, two Roman Catholic priests, conspired with others to kidnap the King’s person and then extort concessions from him in favour of Roman Catholics. They were given away by a fellow priest and executed.