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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER \*\*\*

# THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER

CHARLES  
S  
BENTLEY  
AND  
FRANK  
KIMBALL  
SCRIBNER



THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER  
CHARLES S BENTLEY AND F KIMBALL SCRIBNER

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## The Fifth of November

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## *A Romance of the Stuarts*

By  
**Charles S. Bentley and  
F. Kimball Scribner**

"No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close  
As the sunflower turns on her god, when he sets,  
The same look which she turn'd when he rose"  
—Thomas Moore.

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### CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
<a href="#">I. WHAT BEFELL AT THE SIGN OF THE LEOPARD.</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">II. IN THE SHADOW OF ST. PAUL.</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">III. THE HOME-COMING OF GUIDO FAWKES.</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">IV. THE SUPERIOR OF THE JESUITS.</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">V. WHY MASTER FAWKES WAS SUMMONED TO ENGLAND.</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">VI. "THE WISEST FOOL IN CHRISTENDOM."</a>	<a href="#">52</a>
<a href="#">VII. THE VISCOUNT EFFINGSTON.</a>	<a href="#">61</a>
<a href="#">VIII. IN THE GARDEN OF THE GENTLEMAN-PENSIONER.</a>	<a href="#">73</a>
<a href="#">IX. GARNET AND THE KING.</a>	<a href="#">81</a>
<a href="#">X. THE FORGING OF THE THUNDERBOLT.</a>	<a href="#">89</a>
<a href="#">XI. THE WAY OF THE WORLD.</a>	<a href="#">97</a>
<a href="#">XII. WHAT THE MOON SAW.</a>	<a href="#">108</a>
<a href="#">XIII. AT THE SIGN OF THE LEOPARD.</a>	<a href="#">119</a>
<a href="#">XIV. IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.</a>	<a href="#">130</a>
<a href="#">XV. "THOU SHALT NOT KILL."</a>	<a href="#">140</a>
<a href="#">XVI. MONTEAGLE AND SALISBURY.</a>	<a href="#">152</a>
<a href="#">XVII. SOWING THE WIND.</a>	<a href="#">158</a>
<a href="#">XVIII. THE CELLAR.</a>	<a href="#">167</a>
<a href="#">XIX. THE NOTE OF WARNING.</a>	<a href="#">178</a>
<a href="#">XX. ON THE STROKE OF ELEVEN.</a>	<a href="#">184</a>
<a href="#">XXI. THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.</a>	<a href="#">192</a>
<a href="#">XXII. FAWKES BEFORE THE KING.</a>	<a href="#">200</a>
<a href="#">XXIII. THE BANQUET.</a>	<a href="#">207</a>
<a href="#">XXIV. "IN THE KING'S NAME."</a>	<a href="#">213</a>
<a href="#">XXV. REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.</a>	<a href="#">222</a>

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### AUTHOR'S NOTE.

It has not been the intention of the authors of "The Fifth of November" to write an historical novel, though, throughout the story, they have endeavored to follow as closely as was consistent with the plot in hand, the historical facts collected by the various writers who have made the nature and workings of the "Gunpowder Plot" a special study. With one or two exceptions, the characters in the present romance have been borrowed from history, and, save in Chapters XXI

and XXII, the lines of the story have followed those traced by the hand of the historian.

In presenting to the public this "Romance of the Stuarts," indebtedness is acknowledged by the writers to Professor S. R. Gardiner's "What the Gunpowder Plot Was," and also to the history of England as set forth by Knight, Hume, Froude and Ridpath.

THE AUTHORS.

New York, February, 1898.

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# THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

[Pg 1]

## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT BEFELL AT "THE SIGN OF THE LEOPARD."

Snow had fallen through the day, and as night approached all objects were covered with a mantle of white. The noises incident to the life of a great city had long since become muffled and indistinct. The footfalls of those who traversed the streets could no longer be heard; and the only sounds which now and again broke the silence, were the voices of my lord's link-men, who, in goodly number, fully armed, carrying flaming torches whose lurid dancing light shone through the blinding snow, appeared at a distance to be a party of ancient saints come forth from their tombs to indulge in a ghostly frolic under cover of the night. The voices of the men, falling upon the snow-laden air, sounded dull and echo-less as they heralded the approach of a chair to some sharp turn or gateway. An armed escort in those days was no mark of royalty or distinction, for it was not well or safe for men to travel the streets alone after nightfall, as many a sinister face and cloaked form lurked hid in the shadow of secluded corners and dark by-ways, awaiting opportunity to cut the purse, or the throat, as need be, of the solitary wayfarer.

Numbers were no guarantee of escaping unmolested; for of late the rogues had become so bold that it was a common thing for a party of gentlemen to be attacked successfully, as the ruffians mustered in their ranks many soldiers of fortune who had served in Flanders, France and Spain, and were well versed in the play of both sword and dagger. These acts of robbery and murder were confined to no one locality, but the vagabonds who perpetrated the deeds had haunts and places of common rendezvous, and as night fell, these dens poured forth upon the town their murder-bent crews.

[Pg 2]

In one of the most narrow and crooked of streets, often lost amid the winding of greater thoroughfares, and safely hidden from the watchful eyes of the King's soldiers, was situated a tavern, patronized for the most part by those who replenished their purses when low, by running some belated traveler through the back, and taking what money he had. This tavern was famous among its patrons for its mulled ale, the like of which, they swore could not be found in all London. To those who had not partaken of this famous beverage, and knew not the inn by reputation, its business was made known by a swinging sign, upon which, very indifferently executed, was the figure of a leopard, and, further, as if the artist had not sufficient confidence in his powers of portrayal, he had printed in large and uncertain letters, "At the sign of the Leopard may be found all manner of goodly cheer and comfort." Below this evidence of what might be found within, a small and narrow doorway gave entrance to the hostelry. Inside, a larger room than the outer aspect of the place indicated, awaited the guest. A low ceiling, blackened by age, and hung with numberless spider webs, whose weavers had long since fled—driven thence by the clouds of tobacco smoke puffed from the lips of many a sturdy knave who nightly helped to fill the place. The walls of the room being paneled in some dark wood to an unusual height, the three windows, which furnished more air than light, were well up toward the ceiling. The sides of this chamber were decorated with rows of pewter pots and flagons of various shapes and sizes. The furniture consisted of half a dozen rough tables and high-backed benches ranged about the sides. The floor was freshly sanded, but rough in many places from the prominence of knots, the softer wood being worn from around them by the shuffling of numberless pairs of boots. An uncertain light proceeded from several large candles standing in brass candlesticks, but most of the illumination was due to a fire which burned briskly in a large stone fireplace at the extreme end of the room, and gave to all an aspect of warmth and good cheer.

[Pg 3]

Standing in front of the blaze was the host of the establishment, attired in the costume of his time,—a loose jacket, linen breeches and green apron. He was eyeing with a look of no small displeasure three men seated at one of the tables, two of whom, by their actions, seemed to have partaken a little too freely of the Leopard's special beverage. They wore the dress of a class, which, by their manner, was one of no great elevation. Long, soft, wide-brimmed hats adorned their heads, while tight-fitting jerkins of very much soiled leather covered their bodies. Trunks and tights of some faded material, and boots with deep falling tops, completed their costume, unless there should be added the two long bellguard rapiers lying upon the table, and to which, from appearances, the gentlemen in question owed their livelihood. The man seated opposite was thick-set and slightly under medium height; instead of the leather jerkin worn by them, his body was incased in a steel cuirass or breastplate, which, judging from the numerous dents thereon,

[Pg 4]

had turned the force of many a savage thrust and blow. The face of the man was one which had long been exposed to both sun and storm, and even pestilence had not spared it, for in many places the disfiguring finger of smallpox had left its mark. His beard was worn in the style favored by the soldiers of the Spanish, rather than the English army, for it was pointed and surmounted by a long, black and up-curling moustache, which added fierceness to an already not too kindly countenance. His sword, a long point and blade rapier of Italian pattern, still hung by his side, as if even when surrounded by this good cheer, he, from habit born of many a hard campaign, still clung to it.

"What, ho, John Tapster;" exclaimed he of the steel cuirass, banging lustily on the table with the pommel of his sword, "another six-hooped pot of thy best mulled ale, for the sour and remorseful wine of Spain which I have drunk, ill befits my stomach."

The landlord advanced reluctantly to comply, with an air which plainly showed he was divided in his mind between the doubt of a settlement to an already long unpaid score, and the fear of personal violence did he refuse the man his request. The love of a whole skin, however, triumphed, for after filling the pot with ale and plunging the mulling iron into it, which he had drawn from the fire, he set the desired drink before his guest.

"By Sir Bacchus!" said the stranger, after taking a deep draught, "'tis the only fitting liquid to put into one's body, if he wishes to strike a stout blow for the King." Then, as he finished the pot, "It seemeth well to drown the clinging dust of Spain within one's throat, in merry English ale."

[Pg 5]

The landlord did not venture to reply to these offers of conversation; he seemed loath to enter into friendly talk, when in all probability he soon would be embroiled with the man in a dispute, if not in an issue of more serious nature. However, the other, nothing daunted, and gazing on his two companions, whom he discovered wrapped in drunken slumber, snoring roundly, prodded them both with the scabbard of his sword, which action eliciting from them nothing but a grunt, and being desirous of further conversation, he again turned to him of the green apron who had resumed his watchful scrutiny from before the fire, and continued:

"Thou seemest but sparing of thy speech, Sir Host. Judge a man not always by the company he keeps; these drunken knaves whose silly pates would have been turned with milk of the morning's drawing, are no comrades of mine; 'tis only a mere chance friendship. I was not over particular in my pick of friends, being lately landed, and but too glad to take up with the first varlets speaking my own sweet English; after many months of naught but jabbering Spanish sounding in my ears 'twas well and pleasing to hear once more the brave tongue in which my first aves were taught unto me."

"Aves have not, I trow, over-troubled thee," answered the landlord in not too jovial a tone.

"Nay, nay, friend; be not quick to judge by weight of purse or hilt of sword, for a man with not over much money in his gipsire may still have that about him which would recommend him more."

"And what, pray, might that be?" inquired the other;—"a handsome face and ready tongue? They are goodly coin to win the heart of some fair maid, but naught of cakes and ale they'll buy thee when thy belly's empty."

[Pg 6]

"Nay, I will offer neither, for I have none of them. The first was but rudely handled some thirty years ago by plague, at Havre; the second's had but small practice, and its tone was spoiled by breathing the damp winds of the Flemish marshes. I leave such graces to the stay-at-homes who twist a tap—but, a truce to this witty talk, for it makes but ill friends, and I would ask of thee a favor, which will cost naught but civility, that is cheap and in the end may gain thee much." So saying, he put his hand into a small bag which hung at his side, drawing therefrom a very much soiled and crumpled paper, and advancing with it toward the host, continued: "I am but illy versed in such priestly craft; the meaning I can understand, but its full intent may have missed my stupid eyes. Canst thou decipher it for me, Sir Host?"

This direct appeal to his learning softened to some extent him of the spigot, whose curiosity as well as pride was aroused, for the man addressing him, judging from his speech, was a little above the usual class who frequented the tavern. Reaching for a candle which stood upon the mantel, that he might better see, and taking the letter with grudging fingers, said in a slightly more gracious tone after a moment's scrutiny, "It ill pleases me, that monkish writing, but print such as honest John Caxton did manufacture, I can decipher right readily." Then with knitted brow, during which the other man remained standing, looking over his shoulder in an expectant attitude, he continued: "For truth, I could at first but illy make it out; I have it now." Then read from the paper:

[Pg 7]

"To Guido Fawkes: In the Army of His Majesty, Philip of Spain: I doubt not that thou rememberest my promise, made some time since, which I have now the pleasurable opportunity to fulfill. Much it pleaseth me to offer thee a place, the duties of which will keep thee near thy daughter, and, moreover, the reward of such being not below the merit of him who, by my knowledge, most honestly gained it, and is well worthy. If it suit thee to accept the charge I have to offer, the naming of which I shall defer until we meet, detach thyself from thy present occupation, repair to London with all likely haste, and seek me at my house when soon arrived.

"Beshrew my heart, but thou art a ripe scholar, landlord, and much I marvel to see one with such goodly learning wasting time on knaves like these," cried the man, pointing to his companions at the table; "and pray," he continued, "since myself hath been introduced in name, I would know thine also, so I might thank thee the heartier."

"Giles Martin, for want of better," replied the host, "and dost thou know this Sir Thomas Winter?" he inquired after a moment, still looking at the note in his hand.

"Aye, and for a right brave gentleman, who hath done me noble service."

"For one done unto himself, I take it, from the purport of the letter?"

"A small service, not worth the mentioning," replied Fawkes. "Once in Spain, a gentleman—the self-same Sir Thomas, was sorely set upon by a surly ruffian, who, in exchange for his purse, would have given him Paradise." Then with a deprecating wave of the hand, which he dropped on the hilt of his rapier, "'twas but a weakly blow I turned, and spitted the varlet with my good sword here. Zounds," he continued with a voice full of enthusiasm, "for this petty act he did conduct my poor motherless lass out of a country where, to the men, a pretty face is as flint to powder, and brought her safe to London and her grandam."

[Pg 8]

"You saved his life; 'twas a worthy object and a worthy deed," exclaimed Martin heartily, who had been watching the speaker narrowly during his narration.

"Tut, tut; 'twas nothing; but I take it thou hast acquaintance with him," said Fawkes, turning toward the other, with a manner which denoted surprise at the landlord's outburst of appreciation, "and may direct me unto his residence, for after many years' absence I am lately come, and illy versed in London's streets which are as crooked as a blade that hath lain long in the fire."

"In truth, I do know where he lives," said Martin (then continued in a lower tone as if speaking to himself) "and further, that he's in none too good favor with the King. But as to his address: if thou wilt take the dome on St. Paul's as thy guide, which thou canst most readily see, proceed thither, and when reached, continue down the street running toward the left, a few more steps will bring thee to a house surrounded by an iron railing; it is the one thou seekest." He hesitated a moment, then continued as if good judgment had been overcome by enthusiasm—"and when thou dost behold Sir Thomas, make mention that Giles Martin (say naught of my present calling, for he knows me not by that) sends his duty, and would again at his elbow cry in the self-same voice, 'An Essex, An Essex!' Perchance," Martin added, suddenly breaking off, fearing he had been incautious before a stranger in connecting his name with an incident which had brought but little honor with it, "that is why I am now doing this," taking a soiled tankard from the table and wiping it on his apron.

[Pg 9]

"Gladly will I be the bearer of thy message, but as thou hast said, why does Sir Winter stand in ill repute?"

"It may be," answered Martin, turning his gaze upon the two men at the table, then setting down the tankard, "that he hath a quick temper and a ready tongue, swift steeds in our time to pull a man's head upon the block," and advancing toward the other concluded in a low voice full of emotion, "mayhap memory doth hold up a mirror to his eye, in which is reflected Mary's dripping head, chopped for her faith."

"Verily," cried Fawkes, in a loud tone characteristic of one not afraid of voicing opinions that lay near his heart, "would that good King James might look into the glass thou dost mention and see the promises of his youth, for naught of promise or his mother's head methinks——"

"Hist," whispered Martin, breaking in and laying his hand upon the speaker, "a truce to such treason talk; naught has it done but brought me to an ill-famed pot-house," he concluded in a thoughtful voice.

"Well, well, none of thy story will I ask; but in Spain they do illy treat a heretic," Fawkes continued, looking significantly at the fire, and pointing toward it with his outstretched arm; "a truce, as thou sayest, for I must no longer tarry. Saint Paul's bell is on the stroke of ten, and I would see Sir Winter, and (in a softer voice) my lass, to-night; for honestly, I am more than anxious to see her pretty face; first I must bid yon knaves good-bye." So saying he endeavored to rouse the companions of his cups. Not being able however to bring them to any degree of consciousness, he discontinued his exertions, and turning toward the landlord, who had been watching his efforts, said, laughingly: "'tis but little harm they'll do in sleep, and I trow they are none too good when in their seven senses, so I will leave them thus; but take thou from this the reckoning of us all, for naught of gold they have, I swear"—handing the other a purse, which, after extracting a sovereign, Martin returned to its owner.

[Pg 10]

"'Tis but a sorry night in which to travel," remarked the host, pocketing the money and proceeding to rake the fire, while his guest wrapped about himself a long, thick cloak which had hung over the back of a bench.

"Aye, 'tis cold, and steel draws unto itself the frost," responded Fawkes, as he finished his preparations for departure. "And now, Sir Host," he continued, extending his hand, "farewell, but soon, when I am once more to rights, it will do me pleasure to quaff a flagon in thy honest

company, for such is a man who knoweth Sir Thomas Winter, and," he continued, drawing closer to the other, "is no prating Protestant in these times when he who would seek a favor or gain a title must blow out the candles on his altar, and break its images. Start not at my words, for by thy very speech thou art no heretic, and I do love thee the better for it. But see," he continued as he opened the door, "the night is already mended, the snow hath ceased, the moon shows bright, and by my troth, there is my guide," and he pointed to the distant dome of St. Paul, on which a huge cross glistened in the moonlight.

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## CHAPTER II.

[Pg 11]

### IN THE SHADOW OF ST. PAUL.

In the heart of London, a musket shot distance from the great dome of St. Paul, stood a dwelling of no mean pretension occupied by one Thomas Percy, Gentleman-Pensioner, a man of goodly parts, blood relative of the Earl of Northumberland and well known as a Catholic, though, by reason of his office, there attached to him scant suspicion in the minds of the King's ministers that his faith overlapped his loyalty.

On the same night which witnessed the appearance of Guido Fawkes and his drunken companions at the "Sign of the Leopard," there were gathered together, in an upper chamber of Percy's dwelling, four gentlemen. The house was an official structure given over as a meeting place for certain of the King's commissioners, the room wherein they sat being well adapted for the discussion of such matters as it seemed inexpedient to let reach the ears of those whose business called them not within the council chamber.

A snow storm made the night exceeding chilly, so three of those who came to partake of the hospitality of the Pensioner had provided themselves with ample cloaks, which, closely wrapped about their persons, and covering the lower portions of their faces, precluded recognition, were any, by chance, to accost the wearer on the King's highway. Although few were abroad on account of the extreme cold, and those few would not have marveled that a gentleman should be closely muffled even as a secret assassin, or highwayman, or noticed that the three went not together to the outer door of the house, still each came separately, knocking thrice upon the panel, whereupon Sir Percy himself opened to him, that he might enter quickly.

[Pg 12]

Being safe within, and the room warmed by great logs which sputtered in the open fireplace, the three laid aside their cloaks, and sat uncovered in the presence of their host, who, the better to discourse with each, occupied a place at the head of the long table about which were wont to sit the commissioners of the King.

That the little gathering was not composed of churchmen, or learned doctors of the day, might have been easily guessed by their youthfulness and dress. Scarce past five and thirty, with clear cut features, well knit frames, dignity of carriage, apparel of the higher class, and the court rapier then in vogue, hanging at the side of each, designated them as gentlemen.

Having drained with nervous haste a goblet of wine which stood before him, he who was the Pensioner turned with a frowning brow to his companions:

"Gentlemen!" said he, half rising from his seat, "shall we always talk and never do anything?"

This appeal uttered in an impatient voice moved each of his guests in a manner strikingly dissimilar. One on the right sitting with back to the door, turned uneasily as though fearing that the portal stood open, and that, on the threshold, might appear a stranger, or perchance the King's officer. Another, clad in a suit of gray velvet, drummed nervously upon the table, while the third, who seemed to be the eldest of the four, frowned darkly. To him the host turned impatiently.

[Pg 13]

"Ah!" cried he, "my words have struck you illy, my Lord Catesby, that you frown so ominously!"

"Nay, Percy!" replied the other, the shadow of a smile playing about the corners of his mouth. "Thy words but recalled me to my duty. As thou sayest, we have spoken much, and I did but consider that talking would scarce pull from the throne——"

He who was attired in the gray velvet started. "Not so plainly; not so openly, my good Catesby!" he interrupted, "or as my name be Jack Wright, I——"

The language of his companion aroused the dormant energies and spirit of Catesby.

"Faith!" cried he, bringing his clenched hand down upon the table, "methinks the adventure with my Lord of Essex hath left thy stomach but poorly fitted for so tough a morsel as the undoing of the 'Wisest Fool in Christendom.' Even Sir Digsby, who but now turned trembling toward the doorway, hath more spirit for the undertaking. Hath not Percy touched the keynote of our ill condition? What matters it that we writhe under the despotism of James Stuart? Wherefore are the penal laws renewed? Why hath England driven from her shores those who would serve us in our churches? Where is our Mass, our altars and the images of Holy Mother Church? Would we call on France, Spain and the Holy Father to sweep from the land this band of heretics who fear

not God, nor respect the faith of five centuries of English kings? I tell thee, Sir John Wright, friend and fellow churchman though thou art, that 'tis to us—to all the Catholics in England—that the world looks for action. Will France act while we are idle? Thinkest thou Spain hath so soon forgotten the Armada, that she will consent to aid while we remain under cover? 'Tis for us to open a way whereby may enter those who stand without, seeking our deliverance. Words beyond count, like the drops of the ocean, have been uttered since James came to the throne, yet are we free? 'Tis not words, I tell thee, but action, swift, sharp and merciless, that will put down our enemies. Fearest thou the block? Did Essex, did Moore, a hundred others whose faith was their life, fear the headsman? Good Percy hath brought us to our senses and surely thou must see the truth of it."

[Pg 14]

Having thus delivered himself Catesby sank into his seat, his face white from the intensity of the fire which burned within him. His companions remained silent, so great was their astonishment at the openly expressed earnestness of Catesby. Percy was the first to regain speech.

"It ill becomes us," said he, "that a quarrel should arise in a company gathered for the discussion of so weighty a matter. Yet the words of Sir Robert Catesby are well balanced, and the time draws nigh when this same James Stuart shall know that there yet remain good Catholics in England. Sir Thomas Winter——"

"Ah! Sir Thomas Winter!" broke in Digsby, "the hour is long past and he is yet absent."

"There be some good reason," said Wright quickly. "Sir Thomas is too good a Catholic, too earnest in the undertaking which will yet free us from the heretic, to absent himself willingly. And," turning to Catesby with hand extended, "I thank thee that thou hast thus spoken so boldly; would there were more like thee to arouse the Catholics of our country."

The frown passed as a cloud from the brow of the elder conspirator.

"Forgive me!" cried he, "if my words bore too much of the flame of impatience and too little of that unity which should ever be between us. As to Sir Winter, fear nothing; even now, I warrant he is on his way hither, having perhaps been delayed by some slight adventure, for the times are troublous and after nightfall a gentleman may not walk with perfect safety through the streets of London."

[Pg 15]

As though in answer to this confidence, the speaker had scarcely finished, when there sounded through the house three muffled raps, and Percy, uttering an exclamation, hastily left the room.

"It may, indeed, be Winter," said Digsby, "or, perchance, Rookwood, although he made known to me but yesterday, that certain business demanded his presence in the country."

The sound of the opening and closing of the street door precluded a reply. There was a clatter of feet upon the stairs, and into the room came Percy, followed by two men whose forms and features were concealed by their huge cloaks.

The three at the table arose hurriedly, each with hand upon the hilt of his sword, but the words of one of the new comers changed their look of alarm into one of welcome.

"Faith!" cried he who pressed close behind Percy, "wherefore would you be so ready to draw blades at the coming of a comrade? Come! Sir Robert Catesby, and thou Wright, and Digsby, seest not that the cold hath well nigh overcome me? Wine, therefore, wine, that we may pledge each other in our venture."

So saying, Sir Thomas Winter cast aside his cloak, revealing a figure clad in doublet and hosen of somber brown, offset by slashes of cardinal, and the gilt of the sword belt which girded his hips.

[Pg 16]

"Welcome!" cried the others, crowding about him, "thou art, in truth, doubly welcome, as thy coming is so long after the appointed hour."

Endeavoring to get a better view of him who closely followed Winter, Catesby made a gesture of interrogation.

Sir Thomas laughed softly. "Ah! Good Catesby!" said he, "thou wert ever of a most careful nature. Know, then, that yonder cavalier is, in truth, one of whom I have so often spoken, Guido Fawkes; an old comrade of the wars, and whom I have brought hither that I might introduce him to so good a company, a cheerful fire and a goblet of Sir Percy's stoutest wine."

At the name of Fawkes, pronounced by Winter with an intonation which would have puzzled any one not familiar with certain matters known only to a few in England, Catesby, Wright and Digsby cast searching glances at the new comer, as though seeking to read in the impassive features of the soldier of fortune some riddle which heretofore had puzzled them. As to Fawkes, not deigning to notice the evident curiosity with which the three gentlemen greeted him, he allowed his cloak to fall upon the floor, walked to the fireplace, and stood with back to the blaze, his eyes fixed upon the face of Winter.

"Come!" said that personage, accepting the goblet which Percy tendered and passing it to Fawkes, "you are surprised that I appear among you with Master Guy at my heels. It was, indeed, a happy venture that threw us together."

"Happy, forsooth," replied Wright, "but yesterday thou didst tell us that this same bold captain was even now in Spain, though thou hadst summoned him hither."

[Pg 17]

"And so I thought him," said Winter, "fighting among the Dons that the gold pieces might jingle more merrily in his wallet. Yet he is here, and to-morrow at my own house we will confer together. What sayest thou, friend Guido?"

"Faith!" replied Fawkes, setting down the goblet which he had drained to the bottom, "'twas for that same purpose I came to London, also to see once more my daughter."

"That thou shalt," broke in Winter heartily, "and a better favored wench can scarce be found in all the kingdom."

Percy and Catesby exchanged glances. Winter continued:

"But first, perchance, 'twould be to the liking of the company that I make known the manner of so unexpected a meeting, when, thinking Friend Guido basked beneath the skies of Spain, I fell across him 'mid the snows of London."

"'Twas of little import," spake Fawkes gruffly; "a cast of fortune, the simple drawing of a blade, such as once befell when thou didst serve in Spain."

"As to that," replied Sir Winter, "these gentlemen can judge when they hear concerning it. 'Tis true, that had this same bold cavalier remained in Castile, Thomas Winter were now ready for burial."

"Then," cried Percy, "thou art doubly welcome, Master Fawkes, as perchance thou shalt learn presently."

Having refilled the goblets Winter seated himself before the fire.

"I was delayed some two hours by certain matters within my own dwelling," began he, "and it was with exceeding impatience that I hastened hither, not following the most public highways, but seeking a shorter passage through unfrequented alleys, in order to join you the sooner. [Pg 18]

"Methinks I had gone some two thousand paces, my face muffled and sword ready to hand, when suddenly there sprang upon me from the shadow of a doorway, two ruffians, who, making short shift of courtesy, demanded my purse and such valuables as were upon my person. Having slight desire for so rude a giving, I did straightway put my back against a wall, and with drawn blade contended against the two. They, being persons of fixed purpose, and withal, excellent swordsmen, had near ended the matter by thrusting me through, when most opportunely came a third man who, perceiving two against one, thrust the larger of the ruffians through the back, and would have done likewise with the other, but the fellow took to his heels and ran as though the devil pursued him.

"The adventure was quickly over, and my rescuer coolly wiping his blade upon the cloak of the dead robber did swear roundly in Spanish, for that his amusement had been of so short duration.

"Faith!" growled he looking up at me, "'tis not thus they fight in Spain; yet, having perchance rendered thee some slight service, canst thou, good sir, direct me to a certain dwelling, hard by St. Paul's, wherein may be found one Sir Thomas Winter, to seek whom I have come to London?"

"Much amazed at his words I scanned him closely, for his voice had a familiar ring in my memory.

"Zounds!" cried he, noting that I sought to read his features, 'wherefore dost thou look so hard upon me? Hath the air of Spain——' [Pg 19]

"Fawkes!" cried I, seizing him by the shoulders, "'tis truly my friend Guido!"

"Ah!" said he gruffly, 'then thou knowest me?'

"And why not?' I replied, 'having sent for thee.'

"At this his astonishment was great, yet was he pleased that he had come upon me so handily. He had, he told me, but just arrived in London, having come hither to obtain service under me, and to see once more his daughter."

"And," said Fawkes, Winter having finished, "having so quickly found one, I would seek the other. Blood is thicker than water, and I warrant me the lass is much improved both in stature and knowledge. 'Tis now close upon the morning, good gentlemen, therefore I pray thee, Sir Winter, direct me whither I shall go, being in sore haste to find her."

Winter drew Catesby aside, whereupon a whispered consultation followed, the drift of which was evidently known to Percy, Wright and Digsby, though Fawkes wondered somewhat at it. His impatience soon showed itself.

"Zounds!" cried he, striking with his clenched hand the hilt of his rapier, "I am much beholden to thee, Sir Winter, and later—but now, I pray thee, make haste, that I find my daughter."

Catesby flushed angrily, for the words of the soldier of fortune struck illy upon his haughty temper, and he would have replied, but Winter pressed his arm.

"Good Guido," said he, soothingly, "thy haste is most commendable. Go then to thy daughter, and that thou mayest not miss the way, follow closely the directions I shall give thee. Upon leaving Sir Percy's door, turn thou to the left, going down the street which leads past the gate of St. Paul's. Proceed five hundred paces, then turn about to thy left, when thou wilt see before thee a narrow [Pg 20]



street, upon the corner of which is situate a gabled dwelling, bearing upon its peak a golden arrow. Count then two score doors from the corner, and upon the three and fortieth, knock loudly; 'tis there thy daughter dwelleth."

At Winter's words all signs of impatience vanished from the soldier's manner.

"By the keys of Peter!" cried he, "I am much beholden to thy lordship. Having spoken with the lass, where may I find thee?"

"Fear not," replied Winter, "for in the evening, about the hour of nine, I will come for thee. Go thou, then, speedily."

Fawkes made haste to snatch his cloak, and having wrapped it about him, bowed to the company and, preceded by Percy, clattered down the stairs.

"Methinks he will serve us," muttered Winter; "yet, good Catesby, must we deal gently with him, for, being of an exceeding rough nature, 'twill need but an ill-timed word to turn him into gunpowder."

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## CHAPTER III.

[Pg 21]

### THE HOME-COMING OF GUIDO FAWKES.

"By my hilt!" exclaimed Fawkes, as he closed the door of the council chamber and wrapped his long cloak well about him, "'tis a merry night I've had; first, in none too clean a pot-house; then a stout thrust for good Sir Thomas,—'twas passing strange that I did once more stand twixt him and glory; and, last of all, a stoup of good old wine in the company of a most noble throng. Indeed, good Guido," he continued, as musing to himself he walked along, "thou wert made, I marry, for better things than cracking the knavish pates of yellow Dons; but guard thy touchy temper well, for even to-night thou couldst but sadly brook a small delay, and wouldst have answered my Lord Catesby's haughty look with scant courtesy. I fear thy warlike nature would poorly thrive upon a diet of quiet living. But these be times when the dogs of war are ill leashed, and need small urging to slip their fetters and bark and bite anew. I question much what the morrow holds, and would that Sir Thomas had made some mention of my employ.

"By St. George," he added after a moment, slackening his pace as if a sudden thought occurred to him, "they did seem but poorly pleased to see a strange face standing in their door, until Sir Walter stood sponsor for the same. Aye, and what names had these noble gentlemen—Catesby, Wright, Digsby, Percy! All good Catholics," he continued, a cunning smile twitching the corners of his mouth. "And, who is King? Why, James Stuart, to be sure, a most bigoted Protestant! What was it that Master Martin said about Mary's dripping head? Well, well, friend Guido, thy good sword may not be red with rust alone; wait but a little while, and thy employment may be most pleasing to thy taste, and thy conscience, also." Then he drew his cloak more closely about him and quickly proceeded on his way.

[Pg 22]

At last, following the direction given him by Winter, Fawkes arrived before a small, neat house, situated in the outskirts of the city; stopping in front to make sure it was the one for which he was in quest, he proceeded up the steps and knocked thrice. No answer followed his summons, and after several moments of waiting, which were consumed in the stamping of feet and walking up and down, for it was bitterly cold in the frosty air, he again repeated the announcement of his presence to those within, this time with better result. The sound of a casement opening, caused him to look up, and he beheld the wrinkled visage of an old woman, who, with blinking red-rimmed eyes, and night-cap on her head, stood regarding him with an air of evident disfavor, for presently she cried in a shrill, toothless voice, "Get thee gone, thou beggar, I have naught for thee." "By my soul, good mother," answered the man, laughing heartily, "thy welcome doth match the morning air in warmth. Dost not know thy son Guy?"

"By the blessed Virgin!" exclaimed she, in half-frightened tones, evidently engendered by a most wholesome respect for her son, "wait but a trice until the door be unbarred." Saying which, she hastily withdrew her head and closed the window. Immediately after, the shrill tones of her voice were heard within the house, crying: "Mistress Elinor! Mistress Elinor! hurry down and let thy sire in, for he stands without!" A moment of silence, followed by the drawing of bolts, and suddenly the door was thrown open, disclosing the figure of a girl, who, with outstretched arms, exclaimed: "My father!"

[Pg 23]

Standing bathed in the rosy light of coming day, she was in high contrast to the rough, weather-beaten man, who quickly clasped her to his breast. The pale and lightly tinted olive complexion, which showed descent from some far-off Castilian ancestor, harmonized well with the dainty but clear cut features. A shapely head, surrounded by a wealth of dark and glossy hair, carried downward from the temples and gathered into a knot behind, so as to completely cover the fragile ears, formed a fitting frame for eyes of the darkest violet, which, as they gazed up into his, showed the fondest love. A soft gray gown, half closed at the throat and fastened about the waist by a silver girdle, completed the attire of a slender but perfect figure, thrown into bold outline by her attitude.

"Forsooth," exclaimed Fawkes, as soon as he could speak for her caresses, "methinks thou at least art glad to see thy old father once again." Then, as he held her at arm's length, that he might better gaze upon the face, "indeed, thou art changed; 'tis the promise of the bud fulfilled in the blossoming flower. But let us in, for the cold air ill becomes me after the warming sun of Spain, and frost but roughly handles such tender plants as thou art."

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed she, closing the door and throwing her arms about him, "thy tender plant is naught but a sprig of hardy ivy, which hath needed these many months the sturdy oak on which to cling." Then, with a little shiver, and a laugh, as her warm body rested against the cold steel of his breastplate, "thou dost give thy ivy but a chilly hold, Sir Oak."

[Pg 24]

"Ah," said Fawkes, looking at her; "thou wert always the same dainty puss, but I trow this cold cuirass hath been warm enough even for thy nestling, as down it hath gushed the warm blood of many a valiant foe killed in close conflict. But enough of battles now, my pretty, for home once more am I, and not sorry to let such bloody deeds rest." Unfastening his cloak, sword and breastplate, he threw himself into a chair before the fire which burned brightly on the hearth.

"But where's thy good grandam?" queried he, "must she tarry to put on silks and satins in which to bid her son a welcome?"

"Nay," replied the girl with a laugh, kneeling at his side; "she, poor soul, was but half awake; for these cold days illy suit her bones, and she doth lie long in bed."

"And thou," said the man, taking her head between his hands, "art up like a lark, to bid thy father welcome. Didst expect my return?"

"Sir Winter made mention of thy coming, but set no special day for thy arrival," answered the girl, a shadow passing over her face as she looked into the blaze.

"And did he say for what I was to come?" inquired Fawkes, evidently anxious to set his mind at rest upon that subject.

"That he did not," she replied, still gazing abstractedly at the fire, "but simply said that if thou camest to England he would give thee service which would keep thee and me near to each other. And," continued she, suddenly turning toward him and taking both his hands in hers, "thou wilt not leave me again for so long a time; I have been sore lonely and oft have felt the need of thy sturdy arm on which to lean."

"That I will not, my pretty dear," said Fawkes, drawing her closely to him; "and thou didst really miss me, whom some do illy term a pock-marked ruffian?"

[Pg 25]

"Indeed, thou art no ruffian!" Elinor cried, her eyes ablaze in a moment; "and if any one so dared to call thee, I'd—"

"Well, well!" the father exclaimed, evidently surprised and looking into the flushed face, "my sweet rose hath thorns as well as blushing leaves, and would, I dare swear, strike a good blow for her sire's name. By good Sir Cupid, but I do pity the one who doth try to balk thy temper, little woman."

"And soon will come a time when thou wilt have a brave gentleman to pity," broke in a mumbling voice which made the two start and turn.

The figure of an old woman, bent by age, with face resembling an ill-fitting parchment mask placed upon a skull, advanced toward them.

"By the blessed dead, mother!" said Fawkes, arising, "thou didst turn my blood with thy prophetic voice; but hast thou not a blessing for thy son?"

"That I have, good Guido, and most glad am I to see thee back! I gave thee a rude greeting from the window, for my eyes and ears have failed of late, but I am not so blind that I cannot see two brave gentlemen tied to my lady's girdle there," she cried, with a wheezy laugh, pointing her trembling hand at the girl who stood with an arm drawn through her father's.

"What is this tale?" said Fawkes, with feigned sternness, turning toward his daughter; "hath thy pretty ways been breaking hearts already?" Then, as he observed the blushing face and downcast eyes:—"There, there, my darling; all in good time. When thy heart doth open of its own accord, thy father's ear will ever be a willing listener. By Venus," he continued in a voice full of admiration, as he gazed upon her fair figure, "I could not marvel or condemn if thou hadst fifty gallants at thy little heels, and would but admire the rogues the more for their excellent taste in beauty. But," he added, evidently wishing to turn the conversation on noting her embarrassment, "I have not broken bread for nigh onto fifteen hours; after I have taken food I will listen to thy pretty tale, and tell thee many a one such as thou once wert fond of. Dost remember how thou didst, long ago, climb upon my knee, and tugging with thy baby hands at my shaggy beard, beg for a story ere thy bedtime came?"

[Pg 26]

"That I do," exclaimed the girl, all her embarrassment gone; "but first I will set before thee what our larder affords."

So saying, and aided by the old woman, she began preparations for the morning meal. Having done ample justice to the repast quickly set before him, and having lighted a long pipe from a coal without the blaze, Fawkes again settled himself before the fire, and, after two or three long

puffs, turned toward Elinor, who was employed about the room, and said:

"Now, my pretty little housekeeper, thou hast done enough; sit thee beside thy father. It is long since he hath known the pleasure of thy sweet face and a blazing hearth, and the good grandam seems ill company, for there she nods but a drowsy greeting," added he, pointing with his pipe to the old woman, who had fallen asleep in a remote corner of the chamber.

"Dost thou remember the last time we sat so?" asked the girl, as she came and knelt beside him, placing an arm upon his shoulder; "'twas the night before I left for England; and, oh! it was a most sorry time." Then fingering the ends of her silver girdle and glancing at the old woman, who was still asleep, she began in a hesitating voice:

[Pg 27]

"Mayhap the speech of my good grandam might mislead thee into thinking me but a sorry flirt. Therefore, I would make explanation, which is most easy, and set thee right."

"I thought naught of it, daughter, for I am much too well acquainted with her mischief-working words, that are ever ready to brew a trouble. If thou hast aught to say, however, and would feel better for the telling, pray go on, and know an ever-loving heart awaits thy speech," replied Fawkes, stroking her hair.

"Then thou must know," she began abruptly, "that Sir Thomas Winter is a frequent caller at this house, and, my father, how can I tell thee for the very shame of it? He hath never spoken to that effect, but there are many thoughts ne'er proclaimed by tongue which are most loudly uttered by eye and hand, often, too, more truly eloquent are they than those framed in simple words; and by this very language yet outspoken, I know soon will come the day when there will be asked a heart ——" she broke off suddenly and buried her face in her hands—"that is not now mine to give."

"There, there, my pretty one, stop thy crying, for thine eyes were made for smiles and not for grief. It is naught so bad; Sir Winter is a fine gentleman and much we owe him. But thou art my daughter, and I, a poor, rough soldier; it would be an ill-assorted match; in truth, I believe that the lark should not pair with the golden finch, who would soon tire of her sweet song, because she lacked the yellow feathers of her mate. What, dost thou but cry the harder for my words? I have not, I know, the tender touch of a mother to dry thy tears, but a more willing hand to comfort cannot be found." Then he added tenderly: "If thou hast aught more to tell, open thy heart to me and I will play the woman for a while."

[Pg 28]

"Think not, then, from my tears," she suddenly exclaimed, lifting her head and confronting her father with that spirit which is often hid in a seemingly gentle nature, "that I am ashamed of him on whom my love doth fall; or, rather, of him to whom my love doth mount, for he is as far above me in worth, as I beneath him in station. But what hath equality to do with it? Is it so—that love is only right between those whose purses tip the scale alike? Nay, that would be a sacrilege, for this mortal love of ours is the one thing which lifts us from the earth. Doth God not love the most unworthy of his creatures? Would it be just to say that salvation should be meted only to those who are the Creator's equal? Who of us, then, would escape the flame? Not so," she continued, her eyes ablaze with the intensity of her emotion. "It is that very affection bestowed upon us by our God that lifts us poor mortals into fellowship with him. Love knows no laws of title, tithes or wealth, and by the very act of loving, the peasant rightly seats himself beside the king. Ah, think not, dear father," she cried, falling on her knees, "that I would lightly cast aside a wish of thine. Dwell but upon the love that thou once felt, and remember it is she, the reflection of that self-same love, who seeks thy aid."

There was silence, broken only by the sobs of the kneeling girl. Fawkes regarded his daughter with an air of evident surprise, not unmixed with anxiety in anticipation of what might follow; for every action showed she was wrought up to the highest state of excitement and earnestness. After a moment he said in a quiet voice: "I trust these hot words of thine are but the outcome of some foolish fancy, which, like the silly scorpion, will kill itself with its own violence. But thou hast not told me all; until I am fully advised, my counsel can be but scant. What name hath he? What title doth he hold? For by thy speech he must be noble?"

[Pg 29]

"Herbert Effingston," replied the girl.

"I know not that name," answered the other, after a moment's musing. "And his title?"

"Viscount Herbert Effingston, son of Lord Monteagle."

"Thou hast indeed flown high," Fawkes cried, with a sudden outburst of passion. "Because I love thee I would wish thee dead, aye, dead," he continued, fiercely, raising himself from the chair, "rather than have thee bear the hated name of Monteagle."

"But thou knowest no evil of him," cried the girl, springing to her feet. "He is good; he is true and noble; aye, and hear me, it was he who saved my life—a life thou lovest. I know what thou wouldst say, but the son is not holden for his father's sins; he is not——"

"But he is of the brood," thundered Fawkes, now thoroughly aroused; "the litter of the jackal will eat the holy dead left by its sire—'tis in their nature. Monteagle!" he repeated with fine scorn. "And marry, that would be a pretty name for thee to choose—a name that hath done more to set aside our Holy Catholic Church than all the fiends in hell. What I know is true," he exclaimed, seizing her by the arm. "Hark to what I say to thee; even I have heard, for ill fame flies with swallow's wings swiftly across the sea, and when I am done, if thou still dost love, pray to the Madonna to stop the beating of a heart that holds so unworthy a regard. Thou sayest the son

[Pg 30]

saved thy life—by what means I know not. Think you that doth make amends for all the evil done by him and his? Enough of this, and listen," he continued, mastering his anger and pacing up and down the room. "Monteagle and his son, both Catholics, and until James Stuart reached the throne, most valiant champions of their faith, have, since the scepter reached the hands of that wise fool, endeavored by all the foul means within their power, to defeat the efforts of their fellow churchmen, which, as thou knowest—and all England as well—were directed against those laws which meant the downfall of our church. Did these hell hounds come boldly out and show a lusty fight—which would, in a small degree, have recommended them? Nay, that is not the nature of the serpent. They falsely affirm themselves most strong adherents to the Pope, receive the confidences of the Papal Delegates, and by treasonable use of this knowledge of their secret mission, defeat them ere they strike a blow. Is it for truth that they are against the faith? Not so; for the hypocrites do cross themselves and bow before the Host. Is it for a principle that they act thus? Nay, for they have none. What, then, is their object? It is to gain favor with the King, and place themselves by underhanded, sneaking ways where true merit ne'er could raise them. Ah, my daughter," he cried, with a voice full of supplication, "I love thee much too well to cause thy heart a single pang. Canst thou not see it all aright? And even if for love of me thou wilt not pluck this passion from thy heart, then do it for the love thou owest God."

While her father had been speaking, the girl stood motionless, every line on her face showing plainly the conflict raging within her breast. Her eyes were dry, for there are griefs so deep and searing that they, with their fiery tongues, do lick up the springing tears before they can fall. It was not in her nature to love lightly; to her passion meant more than a mere auxiliary to her existence; simply making life brighter and happier; every action, deed or thought, however trivial and far removed from him, by some subtle influence like that which turns the magnetic needle toward the north, had been turned to bear upon this love of hers. The accusations just uttered concerning his traitorous actions with regard to her faith, influenced her but little; for her attitude toward religion resembled that of most of her kind; the pure feminine mind turns instinctively toward that which they deem great and good, believing, as a rule,—shall we say ignorantly?—in all which is said to issue from a source they cannot comprehend, and which they fear for the mystery attached to it. Man, by instinct, loves power and dominion over others. Woman substitutes for that characteristic the longing to be ruled, and in that subordination of herself seeks protection. In this girl's breast, the desire for a mystical and intangible power which promised to protect, had been, to a degree, supplanted by the knowledge that there awaited one who would clasp her in strong arms, and guard her against all the world. Therefore the words spoken a moment ago had but little weight, and played a small part in forming the resolution to which she soon gave voice. Duty was clear. This poor, lonely man, her father, who had known but little happiness, whose whole existence was summed up in two great all-absorbing passions—a fearful, passionate belief in God, and after that, his love for her,—for his sake she must make the sacrifice.

[Pg 31]

"Ah!" thought she, "sacrifice means death, and my love can never die, but I shall hide it, bury it deep within my bosom, until in time its strength shall tear my heart asunder; then I, in place of love, will be the sacrifice."

[Pg 32]

This, and more, quickly passed through her mind, but now she turned toward the man with that wonderful self-control which only can be found in woman, and said, in a quiet voice, devoid of passion and malice, for she felt none:

"If it be thy wish, I will do it for love of thee."

"My daughter!" cried he, taking the motionless figure in his arms, "thou hast saved me from a living hell. Thou wilt soon find I have brought but good counsel. Pluck this poisoned shaft from out thy heart, and if the wound hurt, soothe the smart with sweet knowledge of my love, and above all, with a sense of justice done to God. Forget, my pretty one, thy father's hasty temper; or, if remembered, let it be only as called forth by love of thee. But we shall talk no more of passions; let them go. Come now beside me, while I rest, for I am sore weary after my long journey. Sit so," he continued, reclining on a bench before the blaze, taking the white hand she offered and drawing her down to him, "that I may not lose thee again, even in my dreams."

She silently complied with his request. It would have been impossible to express what was in her mind, so paralyzed and benumbed was it by the heavy blow which had suddenly fallen. As the fingers which held hers gradually relaxed in slumber, she slowly sank upon her knees, and with outstretched arms, in a tearless voice, exclaimed: "Oh, my love, thou who art my life; since on earth I must forever be without thee, let some kindly hand give me unto death!"

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## CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 33]

### THE SUPERIOR OF THE JESUITS.

While Guy Fawkes held converse with his daughter, the five gentlemen he had left at Percy's house were soberly discussing the weighty matters which had drawn them together. The sun had already gilded the dome of St. Paul, when Winter, Catesby, Wright and Digsby made ready to take their departure. On the threshold of the chamber Catesby paused, and turning to Percy,

said: "Twill mayhap be two days ere I again come to thee, for it is my purpose to make a journey into the country, that I may gain better understanding concerning certain matters which rest heavily on my mind; therefore marvel not if for one night I be absent."

"Thou goest then to Worcester?" asked Winter.

"Aye, to Hendlip that, in its wisdom, the counsel of the Church may direct me. Having gone so far 'twere ill to draw back, yet methinks there is another whose words we must not treat lightly."

"Garnet!" burst forth Digsby.

Winter started. "Not here," he whispered quickly, "name not one whose zeal hath banished him from England. Let James once know that he is yet among us, and not a hiding place in Britain could shelter him."

And a wise precaution it was that the name of Henry Garnet should not be brought to the King's notice. Balancing the advantage of being neither Catholic nor Protestant, the accusation that he was about to favor the Papists, had so angered James, that he cast aside all pretensions of toleration to the adherents of Rome. Coming to the throne with promises of favor to the Catholic nobility, he had renewed with great severity the laws of repression, and the banishment of the Jesuits. Many of the latter had sought refuge in the houses of the more zealous Papists, and among them Henry Garnet, Superior of the Order of Jesus in England, an accomplished scholar, and a man of mild demeanor, though an uncompromising adherent to his faith. 'Twas to Garnet, that Catesby, troubled in spirit and, perhaps, uncertain of the undertaking which lay before him, had resolved to turn, that the advice of the wily Jesuit might strengthen his purpose, or check for a time, his zeal in the desperate venture which at present filled his mind.

[Pg 34]

Some two hours after leaving his companions, Catesby, mounted upon a powerful chestnut mare and wrapped closely about with a fur lined cloak, cantered slowly through the streets of London which led to the outskirts of the city facing the northwest. The storm of the previous night had ceased, and the country side lay wrapped in a mantle of white, broken here and there by the gray wall of some silent habitation from whose chimneys the first blue smoke was rising in circling clouds through the crisp morning air.

Having reached the open country, the rider set his horse into a gallop, for his destination lay many leagues away, and it was his purpose to reach it ere nightfall. Hendlip House stood near the middle of a spacious park thickly studded with trees; the structure itself was surrounded by shrubbery, and contained within its walls many secret hiding places, trap doors and double wainscotings. It had been constructed by one Thomas Abington, a devoted recusant of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the dwelling was a famous resort for those whose desire it was to conceal themselves from the authorities. 'Twas there, the Superior of the Jesuits, together with a clerk of that Order, Oldcorne by name, and Owen, a servant, had been taken by certain of the Catholic gentry, among whom were Lord Rookwood and Sir Everard Digsby.

[Pg 35]

That precaution had been observed to guard against surprise was shown by the presence of a watchman, who, on the arrival of Catesby outside the manor grounds, stepped from his lodge that he might hold converse with the new comer, and if an officer, or one attached to the Parliament, might give warning to those within the house.

Upon perceiving, however, that it was Sir Robert Catesby who came thus unexpectedly to Hendlip, the man doffed his cap, returning a civil greeting to the rider's remark upon the coldness of the weather.

"Has my Lord Rookwood passed this way?" inquired he, reining in his horse.

"He has, in truth," replied the servant, catching dexterously the silver piece tossed him. "Even now, together with Mistress Vaux, he is within the house."

"Vaux! Anne Vaux!" muttered Catesby, "there must be then some weighty matter afoot that she comes to Hendlip." And touching his horse with the spur, he galloped up the avenue which led to the main entrance of the mansion. Being well known by its inmates he was at once conducted to an upper chamber, the door of which was unbarred by Owen, who motioned him to enter.

There were three occupants of the room. Before the great fireplace, ablaze with logs, sat Henry Garnet. Scarce past middle age, the learned prelate was a striking figure, clad though he was in the simple, dark-hued garb of his Order. Beneath a brow white and smooth as a child's, shone a noble countenance, gentle almost to effeminacy, but redeemed by firm lines about the mouth, and the intensity of the steel-gray eyes. As Catesby entered, these eyes, which had been gazing abstractedly into the fire, lighted with a smile of welcome.

[Pg 36]

One of the Jesuit's companions was a personage whose dress and manner proclaimed him a noble of the period. He leaned indolently against the frame of the wide window facing the avenue, through which the horseman had come, and he it was, Lord Rookwood, who first announced to the Prelate that a visitor approached.

The third occupant of the apartment was a woman. Born and bred in luxury, the daughter of a peer of England, Anne Vaux was numbered among the most devoted followers of the Superior. Scarce six and twenty, she had passed her minority at the court of Elizabeth, and the accession of James the First had marked no change in the life of the lady-in-waiting. Anne of Denmark, pleased with the loveliness of the daughter of Lord Vaux, had retained her near her person.

Pausing on the threshold, Catesby took in the three personages at a glance, but it was to the Jesuit that he offered his first salutation, dropping on one knee as Garnet extended his hand, upon a finger of which glistened the signet ring denoting his holy office.

"Welcome, Sir Robert Catesby!" murmured the Prelate, motioning the cavalier to draw near the fire. "'Tis, indeed, a most happy circumstance which brings to Hendlip so devoted a servant to the cause of God."

"The more happy," replied Catesby, "that I find your Reverence of good cheer, and in converse with my Lord of Rookwood and Mistress Vaux."

[Pg 37]

"They are truly of much comfort to me in my solitude," said the Superior, "and with the help of God I have patience to remain in idleness, that at the time of harvest I may be ready."

Catesby cast a quick glance at Rookwood, but the imperturbable face of the latter told him nothing. It was Anne Vaux who spoke.

"'Tis but little, indeed, the followers of this most holy man can do to comfort him," she said softly, "yet it seemeth fit that such of us as may, shall make known to him that even the court of James —"

Garnet smiled. "Anne!" said he, turning his gray eyes affectionately upon her, "'tis a comfort beyond human utterance." Then to Catesby: "But thou hast ridden hard, good son?"

"That I may benefit by thy wisdom," replied Sir Robert, "for my soul is troubled."

"A confession!" cried Anne, rising quickly. "Therefore I will retire with my Lord of Rookwood."

The latter shrugged his shoulders; evidently it but poorly fitted his desire that the conversation with the Superior should be unheard by him. Catesby noted his displeasure, and signaled him to remain. Garnet comprehended the matter.

"Not so!" said he, "I warrant me, good Catesby seeketh not the confessional, but to render certain reports concerning that which hath transpired in London, and of which Lord Rookwood hath some understanding. Yet, lest our discourse weary thee, good Anne, thou mayst retire, and if it please thee, return when our conference is ended." So saying, he arose and conducted her to the door.

[Pg 38]

When alone with the two gentlemen, the Prelate looked fixedly at Catesby.

"It were fitting," said he "that Mistress Vaux, zealous though she be, know not too much concerning the temper of our following. Now tell me quickly what hath arisen to disturb thee."

Catesby walked thrice about the room, then stopped before the Jesuit and said soberly:

"That which agitates my mind is, perforce, the same matter which troubles thee—a holy father of the Church, my Lord of Rookwood, and some tens of thousands of loyal Catholics in England. 'Tis the broken promises of James—the overthrow of our religion, the——"

Garnet checked him.

"Thou speakest as a true Catholic," said he, "yet has thy grievance been long endured. There are many men whose childhood witnessed these selfsame wrongs."

"Aye!" cried Catesby, seizing the hand of the Superior, "our sufferings have, indeed, been of long duration, but we looked to the ascension of the new King to lessen evils which have pressed so hard upon us. 'Twas to James of Scotland——"

The eyes of the Jesuit blazed fiercely.

"Wretched country!" cried he, stretching out his arms, "thou hast in truth suffered long, and the blessing of Most Holy God hath gone from thee. Thy soul is troubled, Sir Robert Catesby, thou, who art free to live as suiteth thee! Thinkest thou then that I, whom the Holy Church hath appointed to teach her children, suffer nothing being thus a prisoner behind the walls of Hendlip House? If thou art vexed at thought of penalties, and cruel enactments against thy brethren, what thinkest thou of the happiness of one to whom banishment without voice or trial, such as are granted to the lowest criminal, follows from so unjust a law? What have I done, wherein lieth the crime of all the priests in England, that the hand of James is turned against us? If thou seek out the King, or question the Parliament, and ask wherefore we are driven from our churches—they will answer thee, 'Ye are Catholics.'"

[Pg 39]

During his words, spoken with the fire of an ardent spirit, the slender form of the Jesuit seemed to tower, as an enraged deity, above the persons of his two companions. But having poured out the bitterness of his soul, the meekness of the man asserted itself, and sinking into a chair he buried his face in his hands. The sight aroused Catesby to madness.

"Aye!" cried he, advancing to the Prelate's side, "I will go to James, but 'twill not be to test his arguments. One thrust and thou, with all Catholics, will be free."

Drawing out his sword he threw it at the feet of the silent Jesuit.

"Bless thou therefore this trusty blade, good Father, that it may do its work quickly. Bless it, and me, for ere night comes again 'twill have drunk the blood of the heretic!"

The recklessness of the other's purpose roused Garnet from his lethargy.

"Thou art mad, good Catesby," said he sadly; "that thou thinkest to kill the King of England. Put up thy sword! 'Tis not through the violence of one man that England will be freed. We have waited long already; pray for patience that thou mayst bear with meekness the burden which rests heavily upon thee. Thinkest thou I groan not under it?"

[Pg 40]

Catesby might have replied in anger, but the voice of Rookwood forestalled him.

"There are many gentlemen in England this day who from waiting have grown weary, and who hope no more for indulgence from the King and his Parliament. Some there may be, who, even as good Catesby, have in their minds resolved upon most desperate measures. If it be then a sin to \_\_\_"

Garnet turned upon him saying:

"A sin! A sin to slay the King of England?"

"Yet one who hath broken his promises, forsaken the religion of his mother, and who, blind to the mercy of God, doth seek to uproot this holy cause!" cried Catesby.

Whatever might have been the ultimate purpose of the Jesuit, whether as an Englishman he recoiled at the thought of the assassination of his King, or, as a Catholic, his zeal overbalanced his loyalty, he saw that it was quite time to curb the fanatical tendencies of his companions. The very life of the Catholic religion in England, his own safety, and that of his fellow priests, might be sacrificed by a premature attempt on the part of Catesby, or some of his followers, to end their wrongs by the murder of the King. With the keen perception which Garnet eminently possessed, he saw that the desired change in the religious policy of the government could only be brought about by a farther reaching blow than the removal of the person of James. Nor would a decided objection on his part to their purpose serve his ends, for it was his policy to draw about him the leading Catholic gentry of the kingdom. He therefore cast about for a middle course whereby those whose zeal had overcome their discretion might be pacified. The remembrance of Anne Vaux suggested an expedient.

[Pg 41]

"Good Catesby, and thou, Lord Rookwood," said he blandly, "your zeal in the cause hath much endeared you to me, yet, it were well to proceed with due caution in so grave a matter. Perchance King James hath it in his mind to extend to us that kind indulgence which we crave for. Ye know that the Parliament of England is composed of many who prate much about their liberties, and if James seek to aid us by dissimulation, 'twere an ill thing to cut the unripe corn."

"What then, good Father?" asked Catesby.

"Thou knowest," replied the Jesuit, "that Mistress Vaux is closely united to the Court. Maybe thou knowest, also, that there is a certain gentleman, close to the King, who would make Anne his mistress. 'Tis a truth that the wit of woman worketh much, and it comes to me that this courtier, to please Anne Vaux, might seek to discover what is in the mind of his master regarding the Catholics of England."

"'Tis a happy thought," said Rookwood, "if we be benefited."

"All is in the hands of God," replied Garnet solemnly, and rising he touched a bell which summoned Owen from the ante-chamber.

"Good Owen," said he, "bear to Lady Vaux my desire for her presence; our conference is ended."

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## CHAPTER V.

[Pg 42]

### WHY MASTER FAWKES WAS SUMMONED TO ENGLAND.

Elinor sat by the fire with a piece of embroidery in her hand. Her thoughts were evidently not upon it, for ever and anon she would lay down the work and sink into deep meditation, which ended in sighs; then, recollecting herself, the busy fingers would once more resume their task. The sound of footsteps echoing in the corridor without, caused her to turn toward the door, through which a man presently entered, who exclaimed in a petulant voice, as he ineffectually endeavored to fasten a sword belt: "Come, my daughter, lay down thy pretty work for a moment, and aid thy father to gird this cursed baldric about him, for the ends be as coy as an old maid and her lover." She arose to comply with his request, and quickly fastened the desired buckle, then inquired, on noting his attire:

"Dost thou go abroad to-night?"

"Verily, I do, if Sir Thomas doth keep his appointment. 'Tis past the hour of nine, and much I marvel that he hath not yet arrived."

"Then I will now bid thee good night," she answered, approaching and about to kiss him, when hearing one coming up the steps caused her to delay.

"There, by St. Paul, he is at last," as a knock sounded on the door. "Run, my daughter, and open to Sir Thomas."

The girl hesitated a moment as if loth to comply, then stepped into the hall and withdrew the bolt. Soon the tones of a man's voice could be heard exclaiming: "A good evening to thee, Mistress Elinor. It is but fitting that an angel should unbar the door of Paradise, for I deem the house naught else wherein thou dwellest." Kissing the reluctant hand which he held, then observing Fawkes, who had advanced to greet him, "Well, well, friend Guido; thou lookest fit for a battle royal, with thy long war rapier girded by thy side. But," he continued with a laugh, "it would ill become thee to go abroad poorly armed in my company, for we do in truth seem to invite attack when together. Did thy father tell thee, Mistress Elinor, of his adventure yesternight, which had for its intent the rescuing me again from dire straits?"

[Pg 43]

"Nay, he did not; for my father's brave deeds need not his tongue to set them forth, and he is much too modest to narrate his exploits, even though they had so worthy an object as the saving of thy life," she replied with a little courtesy.

"Marry," broke in Fawkes, "I was marveling why thou didst not come, and was thinking perchance 'twould be better to go outside and listen for the sound of a distant brawl." Then observing the small court sword which hung by the other's side, he continued, pointing toward it: "Thou art but lightly equipped. I wonder much that thou dost go so poorly prepared; but," he added, loosening his long rapier from its scabbard, "thy purse is safe to-night at least. Wilt come for a moment to the fire, and warm thyself?"

"I cannot, though much I regret that precious time forbids; if thou art ready, methinks we had best depart."

"I am ever at thy service," cried Fawkes, and turning towards his daughter, who had thrown a long cloak over his shoulders, "I'll wish thee a good repose, sweet one, for 'twill be late ere I return." Embracing her, then going toward Winter, he continued: "'Tis most pleasing to have a pretty face on which to kiss a sad good-bye, and know that loving arms await to greet a happy return."

[Pg 44]

"Aye, that it is," he responded, biting his lip and watching the two; "but we poor single men have no such bliss, and must be content to watch the happiness of others. Still, there is left me the sweet sorrow of saying good night." He extended his hand to the girl, who let hers rest for an instant within his. "Now, if thou art ready, Master Fawkes, I will follow."

The two passed out into the night, both turning, however, when half way down the path to wave a parting adieu to the fair figure standing within the door. For some little distance the men continued on in silence, each engrossed in thought. At length, Winter observing that Fawkes seemed well aware as to the direction they were taking, exclaimed with some little surprise: "Master Guido, one would think the way to my residence an old traveled road to thee, but if I recollect aright, this to my knowledge is the first time thou hast gone over it."

"Marry, but I have a guide, Sir Thomas," pointing to the dome of St. Paul's church, which reared itself dark against the star-studded sky.

"Beshrew my heart, doth some angel of heaven fly before thee?" as just at the moment Fawkes turned sharply down another street leading to their destination.

"Nay, I have not that to point the way, but a friend of thine gave me the direction. I did not think to tell thee the first night of our meeting, for we had other matters of more pointed nature to engross our thoughts," he added with a laugh, striking his sword; "and it did slip my tardy mind that I was the bearer of a message from him to thee."

[Pg 45]

"I can but illy guess who he may be; but, pray, say on, by what name went he?"

"Giles Martin; and he did wish I would convey his best respects and wishes for thy good welfare."

"By St. Peter! Where didst thou run across the man? I had deemed him long dead, for naught have I seen of him these many years."

"The truth is, Sir Winter, he wished no mention made of his present whereabouts; but I deemed thou hadst a sturdy friend in him, and," continued Fawkes, looking at the other significantly, "he did seem well informed on divers topics concerning these troubled times."

"What dost thou mean, friend Guido?" asked Winter, turning a quick glance toward Fawkes.

"I am but a plain man, and thy outspoken question invites little but a plain reply. Therefore, I'll repeat his words, which were that thou didst stand poorly with those in high places, and, further, the times were such that hot outspoken opinions on certain subjects were apt to be quickly followed by the whistle of an axe flying through the air, and that the King——"

"A truce," Winter broke in, laying his hand upon the other's arm and looking behind with some alarm as the two entered a thoroughfare, which, by the number of people passing up and down, indicated their approach to a central portion of the city; "by holy St. Dunstan, frame not thy speech in such loud words, for it might be illy construed. But here we are at our destination, and when within, thou mayst recite all that Master Martin told."

The two paused in front of an iron railing surrounding a court-yard, on which fronted a residence

[Pg 46]



of no mean pretensions. After unlocking the wicket, Winter, followed by his companion, proceeded up the walk, and passing through the main doorway, entered the house.

"This is the first time, Fawkes, that I've had the honored pleasure of thy company at mine own fireside," exclaimed Winter, when inside, throwing his fur-lined coat upon a chair. Then observing that his companion was already busily engaged in examining a trophy of swords which decorated the wall, he continued: "What, do thy warlike eyes ever seek the implements of thy trade? See, Guido, there is a suit of mail that a valiant ancestor of mine did wear at Crecy," pointing toward a stand of armor.

"Indeed," answered the other, examining it, "he must of necessity have been brave, for, I can but illy see how running could be done, even if the spirit prompted the legs, attired in this heavy harness."

"And now, if thou be ready," exclaimed Winter, evidently anxious to arrive quickly at the task of the evening, "I will conduct thee to a chamber wherein we may hold converse without fear of interruption."

The two proceeded, Winter leading the way to the end of the hall, and passing through a heavy open door, which closed behind them, entered a room well adapted to the discussion of such things as must not fall on untrusted ears. The chamber was one of spacious proportion, but on account of its massive black furniture, seemed to be of medium size. The walls were hung in some dark, unfigured tapestry, which added to the somberness of the apartment, and tended to spread over all an air of gloom. The dimness of the place was in some degree relieved by a crackling fire burning upon the hearth, and two silver candelabrams holding lighted tapers, stood upon an oaken table occupying the middle of the room. [Pg 47]

The only window in the place opened down to the floor, leading out upon a balcony overlooking the court-yard, and the interior of the chamber was hidden from those passing by heavy curtains, which now were closely drawn. A divan, several massive black oak cabinets, and three or four high-back chairs completed the furniture of the room, with the exception of a small table, on which stood a large and curiously wrought silver flagon and several tankards.

"Come Master Guy," cried Winter, filling two of the cups, "let us preface dry work with a drink of honest vintage, and then we will to our task."

"With all my heart," replied Fawkes, taking the cup and draining it at a draught.

"And now to business," exclaimed the other, seating himself by the table and motioning his companion to a place opposite. Having settled himself easily in the chair, shading his face from the light of the tapers that he might better watch the countenance of the other, he began in a quiet voice:

"I doubt not but thou didst deem it passing strange I made no reference to the nature of the employment I had to offer thee, and, mayhap," he continued, holding up his hand to silence an interruption from his listener, "there hath arisen in thy mind suspicious thoughts caused by a combination of incidents since thy arrival, which would place me as one with whom to be identified were not as safe as serving in the King's Guard. In point of fact, I refer particularly to the outspoken words of our friend Giles Martin."

"In truth," responded the other, in that quick, brusque manner belonging to his nature, "Master Martin did lay naught at thy door, but what I, or any other righteous man, might deem an honor to a house. Nay," he continued, with some vehemence, "if what he said be true, then I am overjoyed to find employment with one whose faith is his greatest crime." [Pg 48]

"What may be the purport of thy words?" inquired Winter, slowly turning a keen glance upon the speaker.

"I mean," exclaimed Fawkes, leaning over the table toward his questioner, "that I would think it no disgrace to serve, or, if need be, fall by the side of one who had the courage to openly or secretly espouse the Catholic cause in these cross-breaking days. Aye, Sir Thomas, I will speak without concealment, for I have guessed at many things, and know full well that the time must soon be ripe when all who have not craven hearts will arise in wrath, and by word of mouth, of mayhap, if need be, by a more violent measure put down those who advise the enactment of laws which have for their intent the uprooting of the Church in this our Kingdom."

"By St. Michael!" exclaimed Winter, surprised that the other should bring to the front so clearly his opinion on a subject upon which, he had feared, it would require no small amount of questioning to elicit anything, "thou dost astonish me with thine ardor; I always knew thee as a brave churchman, but never——"

"Time hath altered my views on many subjects," interrupted Fawkes. "The manners of the Spaniard are not always good, and their breath is oft odorous of garlic; but by my troth, they know full well how to treat a heretic," he added with a decisive nod of his head. "Say on, for by thy manner I judge it is thine object to sound my depth in certain matters. I know not what's afoot; but by St. Peter," continued he, striking the table a blow which made the tapers dance, "if it hath aught to do with those—even though they be kings—whose unholy hands would snuff our altar lights, thou canst count on Master Guy to twist the rack or carry faggots." [Pg 49]

During this recital Winter watched the other with keen attention. Knowing Fawkes to be a man of

indomitable will, combined with undaunted courage, and one to stop at nothing in gaining ends justified by his conscience, he had not hesitated to recommend him as a valuable adjunct to the cause dear to himself and his companions. Heavily the weight of responsibility rested upon him; it had fallen to his lot that he should be the one to sound this man, and decide as to how great or small a degree of their confidence might be given to him. One error in judgment now might be followed by the death of all their hopes, and by the thud of heads dropping into the axman's basket. Therefore he weighed the matter well before saying:

"I did not over-estimate thy zeal. There are many things I would fain tell thee, the purport of which methinks thou hast already guessed, but which at present must not, for reasons, be spoken of. If thou art willing for a time to remain in darkness, and take service as a gentleman about my household, I can almost promise that the gloom of thy ignorance on many matters may soon be dispelled by a lurid glare which shall be red enough, even to thy liking. I have told thee naught, but the very concealment of some things, to the observing, doth show plainly what is hid. Ask no more, and, for the present, content thyself with suppositions. If the conditions which I have named suit thee, then thou wilt have access to these premises at all times. Further, be my companion when I go abroad; for what is more natural in these purse-cutting days than that a gentleman should desire a lusty swordsman with him? Dost accept, and agree to all?" The last word he pronounced with great emphasis.

[Pg 50]

"Aye, to all," responded the other grimly, arising and extending his gauntlet.

"And I would further recommend," continued Winter, drumming on the table with his fingers, "that thou say but little about this meeting, even," looking narrowly at Fawkes, "to thy pretty daughter; for I have remarked there is sometimes a certain visitor at thy house who, if the report did reach his ears that two or three gentlemen of the Catholic persuasion were closeted together, might denounce the assembling as a conspiracy,—which would be most unjust—and bring the King's Guard with small courtesy. Dost follow me, friend Guido?"

"That I do; but there's naught to fear; I know your meaning. Heretics will no more darken my door."

"That is well, and I hope, truly spoken," replied Winter, nodding his head in approval, and rising from his chair with an air of relief that the business of the evening was settled. "Let us," he continued, filling up the cups, "drink success to our compact."

"Ah!" cried Fawkes, pointing to the wine as it flowed from the flagon's mouth, "A most fitting color be the draught;" then, as he raised the tankard to his lips, "A toast, Sir Thomas, I will offer thee. May we be as willing to give our blood when asked, as this good flagon to yield its red cheer to us! And now I must set out for home, and 'tis with a lighter heart than when I came. Dost thou wish my presence here to-morrow?" he inquired as they reached the door.

[Pg 51]

"Thou mayst call on the stroke of ten, or thereabouts. Until then, farewell."

The host watched the form of his guest disappear in the darkness, and shutting the door, returned with a thoughtful step to the chamber wherein they had been sitting. Filling a cup with wine and raising it on high, he exclaimed with a laugh: "Troth, Master Fawkes, I did drink to thy health awhile ago; now I will quaff a flagon to thy daughter. Here is to one, Mistress Elinor, the fairest, the sweetest wench in all England, and for one warm kiss from whose lips Sir Thomas Winter would right gladly face grim death. Marry," he mused, setting down the cup, "thou hast done, mayhap, a good stroke for the cause, in bringing this bloodhound Fawkes from out of Spain, but young Monteagle, beware; for if I be judge, the Spanish treatment of a heretic leaves but little for the burial."

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## CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 52]

### THE WISEST FOOL IN CHRISTENDOM.

The Royal Court of King James, at Whitehall, was furnished and embellished with all the luxury which love of show and the power of the owner could command. Choicest tapestries draped the walls, carpets of marvelous softness covered the floors. In the King's bedchamber stood an elaborately carved bedstead canopied with perfumed velvet cunningly wrought in silk and gold. Upon its front glittered the royal arms of England.

Reared as he had been in the plainness of Scottish simplicity, the wealth and lavish display in the English manor houses where he had rested during his journey from Edinburgh delighted and enchanted him in the highest degree. Vain, fond of indolent diversions, and prodigal in expenditures, he at once surrounded himself with the choicest products of the weavers, decorators and artisans of the Continent.

In a chamber of this palace, on the second afternoon following the meeting of Catesby with Rookwood and Anne Vaux at the hiding place of the Jesuit Superior, an interesting conversation took place between the Queen's lady-in-waiting, and one Robert Carr, a Scotchman, and favorite of the King. After James ascended the throne of England he meted out ample measure to his countrymen, likening himself to Joseph, who, being raised to power, forgot not his brethren. That

this Robert was of goodly parts, being fair of feature and elegant of limb, rendered him the more acceptable to his royal master; forsooth, there were few of the nobles in the two kingdoms but knew certain tales concerning the favorites of the King, young gallants of the period whose presence at Court added nothing to the honor of their sovereign.

[Pg 53]

Robert Carr, a person of deep perception and gifted with certain Scottish wit, pandered much to the follies and pride of his benefactor. He was also a man easily excited by beauty of face and grace of manner, and had fallen desperately in love with Mistress Vaux, to his own undoing and the jealousy of the Queen's women. It was this state of affairs which the Jesuit had reckoned upon, when, in casting about for an expedient to check the fiery zeal of Sir Robert Catesby, he had suggested that one dwell at Court who might learn what was in the mind of the King concerning certain policies. Being instructed by Garnet what course to pursue, Anne Vaux, on her return to Whitehall, made haste to summon into her presence the King's favorite. Nor did Carr need a second bidding to betake himself to the lady's chamber.

"Sweet Anne!" cried he, dropping upon his knee before the maid-in-waiting, "thou hast saved me from despair. Knowest thou 'tis eight and forty hours since thy gentle presence hath made earth to me a paradise?"

"Nay, good Robert!" replied she, demurely casting down her eyes, yet permitting the gallant to retain her hand, "Speak not of despair; thou who hast so high a place with our royal master. Amid thy pleasures the absence of Anne Vaux can be but of small moment unto thee."

Carr covered her hand with kisses.

"Whitehall without thee is a barren wilderness," cried he, "for thee would I barter faith, honor —"

Anne raised her head until her eyes met his.

[Pg 54]

"Nay, sweet gentleman!" said she, softly, "'tis not faith, nor honor I would ask of thee; 'tis——"

"Speak!" murmured Carr, overcome by his emotions. "Speak, that I may serve thee."

"'Tis but little," replied the lady, "yet would it please me much, and thou art able to converse freely with his Majesty."

"The King!" cried Carr, alarmed that the name of James should enter into his love making. "What wouldst thou with the King?"

Anne withdrew her hand. "Ah!" cried she, pushing him gently from her, "'tis so little, yet thou wouldst withhold thy courtesy. There be certain other gentlemen, my lord of——"

"Say not so," stammered the courtier, "be it the crown itself." His companion laughed merrily. "The crown!" cried she, "what would Anne Vaux with the crown of England? 'Tis but a simple question, a word with his Majesty, that I may gain a wager."

"Speak then," said Carr, "that I may hasten to obey thee."

"Thou knowest," replied Anne, "there be much serious speculation, many theories formed throughout the kingdom concerning the mind of the King regarding the penalties against the Catholics. Some there be who hold 'tis the King's wish that the ordinances, or edicts of Elizabeth, be removed utterly, while others affirm that James doth join with Parliament for their maintenance. Having been drawn into an argument with certain of my mistress' ladies, a wager was made, that ere the morrow the truth of the matter should to me be disclosed."

The look on her companion's face changed to consternation.

[Pg 55]

"Ask the King concerning so grave a matter?" cried he.

"A truce, Master Carr!" replied Anne, sharply, "it needeth small perception to discern thy temper. Thou dost ask much, yet givest little."

The King's favorite was nonplussed. To question James concerning affairs of State was no light matter, yet, in opposition to so doing stood the anger and the loss of Mistress Vaux. This thought, which he could not endure, caused him to hesitate.

"Be it so!" said the lady, coldly, "Thou hast refused so small a favor, therefore will I summon one who, methinks, hath more consideration." And she moved as though to touch the bell upon the table.

The action, indicating his dismissal, removed all scruples which had arisen in the mind of the courtier, and kneeling before her he pledged himself to at once seek an audience with the King, who, having passed the afternoon in hunting, was resting in his own apartments.

Pleased that her object had been so easily gained, Anne permitted the enraptured Scotchman to clasp her in his arms, then he rushed from the chamber hoping after a short interview with the King to return to her.

As Carr had intimated, James, wearied by several hours in the saddle, for it was his pleasure to hunt or horseback in Waltham forest and in other royal chases, had retired early to his bed chamber. He had eaten heartily, for despite his ungainly person the First of the Stuarts was a famous trenchman. Freed from his quilted clothes and mellow with strong wine, he admitted to

his presence two gentlemen who sought an audience.

The noblemen who were thus occupants of the royal chamber stood in strong contrast to the Sovereign of England. Their large and gracefully proportioned figures were made most conspicuous by the big head, rickety legs and dwarfed body of their royal master, while the calm dignity which enveloped them set forth vividly the driveling speech, and coarseness of him whom the death of the last of the Tudors had placed upon the throne.

[Pg 56]

"Ah!" cried James, perceiving the gentlemen upon the threshold, "welcome most worthy Monteagle and Viscount Effingston! Hast thou then an answer to my argument?"

The lips of the younger nobleman trembled nervously as he sought to repress a smile, but his companion advanced quickly to the royal couch upon which the King had stretched himself.

"The wisdom of your Majesty is indeed unanswerable," said he bending to kiss the hand held out to him.

James chuckled loudly.

"'Tis my pleasure to discourse on certain matters," replied he, "and my good lord of Monteagle, being well versed in the learning of the period, doth turn with relish to a well written document. It was, methinks, concerning the 'True Law of Free Monarchy.'"

"Nay, your Majesty," replied Monteagle, drawing a paper from his doublet, "'twas thy most learned discourse on tobacco."

The Viscount Effingston, who stood well behind his father, turned aside his face, that the King might not note the smile upon it. James, however, having plunged into one of his pedantic hobbies, had small perception of aught aside from the discourse in hand.

"'Twas, in truth!" cried he, "a most learned writing, bearing upon the use of an ill-savored weed. What thinkest thou, my lord?"

[Pg 57]

"'Tis indeed most ably written," replied Monteagle, "and being much impressed with the wisdom so plainly set forth, I did read it aloud to several of my gentlemen."

"And what said they, good Monteagle?"

"That your Majesty had, in truth, touched the heart of the matter," replied the peer. "Even Sir Raleigh, upon the reading of it, would, methinks, turn from the habit."

"That would he," said the King, gruffly, for the name of Raleigh was in no wise pleasing to him.

"A most excellent document!" broke in the Viscount, "my worthy father was about to beg your Majesty for further discourse on so grave a matter."

Monteagle cast a look of keen reproach at his son; 'twas not for the pleasure of discussing the "Counterblast To Tobacco," the famous literary production of the King, that he had sought this audience. James, however, was highly pleased at the young man's words.

"Good Monteagle!" cried he, "thy son is a worthy gentleman, and methinks our reign will see him a most favored peer. Instruct him, that he fall not into certain habits as to bells and candlesticks, nor give ear too seriously to the teachings of them who would embroil our kingdom."

At this moment Robert Carr, hastening to the royal bed chamber, in order to obey the wishes of Mistress Vaux, entered the ante-room and hearing his master in converse with others, paused noiselessly behind the curtains.

"Faith!" continued James, receiving no reply from Monteagle or his son, "it is rumored that thou also hath dealt somewhat closely with these disturbers of the kingdom."

[Pg 58]

Alarmed at the character of the conversation assumed by the King, the nobleman would have checked it by well timed flattery, but James was not to be turned from his purpose.

"It doth much annoy me," prated he, "that certain reports are spread abroad making it seem my desire, against the wishes of our good Parliament, to remit certain fines——"

Carr, whose ear was pressed close against the curtain, rubbed his hands together in exultation that there was like to be, without discomfort to himself, something ready for the ear of the Queen's waiting woman.

"And divers statutes against those who would bring back the Jesuits," continued James, plucking impatiently the fringe of his couch cover.

"Your Majesty is, in truth, the spring of justice," said Monteagle, soberly, "and it ill befits thy subjects, be they Puritans or Catholics, to——"

A wave of passion swept across the royal face.

"Puritans and Catholics!" cried he, sitting upright. "Zounds! What then? Am I not king? Wherefore should I tolerate in this good kingdom those who teach treason in their churches?"

Monteagle's position was truly equivocal. The son of a Protestant peer, through his marriage, early in life, with the daughter of a Catholic, he became involved in certain Papistic plots, and

listened to the teachings of the missionary priests. James had made him the recipient of many court favors, for the maintenance of which, Monteagle, balancing the advantages of his position against the loss which might accrue to him were he to boldly adhere to his religion, had become lukewarm in the faith of the Catholics, and this had brought him into disrepute with his old associates.

[Pg 59]

"'Tis a grave matter that there be any in England whose faith takes precedence of their loyalty," said he, the King ceasing his harangue through lack of breath.

"Thou sayest rightly!" cried he, "nor will I abate one jot or tittle from that I have set before me. As it is atheism and blasphemy to dispute what is in God's power, so it is presumption and high contempt for a subject to question a king's will; nor should a king abate even the breadth of a hair from that right which his prerogative gives unto him."

The Viscount Effingston pulled his father's sleeve.

"We had best retire," he whispered, "the wine hath mounted to the head of yonder fool, and, perchance, he may see in thee a Raleigh or a Cobham."

The King was, indeed, weary of the interview. The exertion of the afternoon, the heated room, the wine and the ill temper into which he had fallen, deprived him of his usual wit, leaving him only boorish and irritable.

"My lord Monteagle," said he, peevishly, "it pleases me that you retire, for a certain languor of the body rendereth our discourse unprofitable."

The words of his son had startled the nobleman from his usual composure, and receiving the King's permission to retire, he made haste to kiss the royal hand, well pleased that the audience was ended, although certain favors which he desired to ask of his Majesty remained unspoken.

"Faith!" said the favorite, as the two peers passed his hiding place, "I have, indeed, had a most fortunate escape, for James is in poor condition to discuss even with Robert Carr, that which sent him hither."

[Pg 60]

Then, as the King's valets crowded into the chamber, summoned by the furious ringing of their master's bell, he looked for an instant upon the half-drunken monarch, dropped the curtain and hastened down the corridor that he might relate to Mistress Vaux that which he had overheard.

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## CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 61]

### THE VISCOUNT EFFINGSTON.

Rare and luxurious were the furnishings of a room in which we find Lord Monteagle and his son. Wealth and artistic hands had combined to bring all its sumptuousness into a rich and harmonious completeness. The elder, who had just entered, walked with troubled brow toward the window. The other, tall and strong, with features of fine proportion and graceful contour, clad in a style denoting the aristocrat and man of fashion, sat at a desk engaged in writing. For a time the only sound breaking the silence was the sharp scratching of a goosequill as it traveled over the paper. At last, having finished, and observing the other for the first time, he remarked, as he folded the sheet:

"My lord, hast thou so soon returned from the audience? Did aught transpire to ruffle thy temper? Or, mayhap," he continued with a laugh, "His Majesty did read thee an essay on How to Take Snuff Without a Nose, or some other learned subject dear to his heart."

"Not so, my son," Monteagle replied with gravity; "but I have heard again rumors which set but ill upon my mind. 'Tis the talk of the ante-chamber, and the first words which did greet my ear on entering came from that silly, chattering coxcomb, Robert Carr, who, advancing, enquired in a low voice, but which at the same time filled the room, whether my daughter-in-law would be the new lady in waiting upon the Queen. These many days the talk that hath been afoot connects thy name with one whose ancestral lineage will not bear scrutiny, and, for truth, much this gossip hath troubled me."

[Pg 62]

Effingston reddened, and turned in his chair toward the speaker, suppressing an angry retort which sprang to his lips: "My lord, dost thou believe all that Dame Rumor whispereth?"

"No, verily, being too long connected with affairs of State, but, in my anxiety, I made inquiry, and much it paineth me to find these same reports seem to have foundation. I do not demand but beg an explanation from thy lips, to hear if that be true which reached my ear."

"Your lordship knows," returned the other with an inclination of the head, "that thy request is to me a command; therefore, I tell thee frankly that what thou heard this morning is to an extent well founded. Thou canst be sparing of thy fears," he continued as the other was about to interrupt, "and ever be assured, respect for Lord Monteagle, my father, and pride, the inheritance of the noble born, will deter Viscount Effingston from actions which his conscience might perchance approve. I will not disgrace thee or thy name," he concluded, with a touch of

haughtiness in his tone.

"I have not yet accused thee of bringing discredit upon our house, and devoutly hope my fears are but absurd, born of that doubt which seemeth to be resident in the minds of men one for the other. By my troth, we can seldom point with certainty in these days to one of our fellow creatures, and say truly, I know him to be good and free from treason. It would, I swear," he continued, with a sigh, "little surprise me, to hear the Archbishop of Canterbury had been seen to hold his crosier for a pretty wench to leap across, that he might the better gaze upon her ankles. Thou art a man grown; therefore, I can but counsel. But this I know: love for one below thy station, though she have all purity and moral excellence, seldom ends in marriage; if by chance it doth bring thee to the altar, repentance with its dismal train follows far too often, even ere the echo of the chimes hath died away."

[Pg 63]

"Thy counsel did, and ever shall stand high in my regard," replied Effingston. "But thy fears are groundless. I do admit that she to whom thou dost refer is not of highest birth; still, her ancestors helped to keep the crown upon a king's head, and methinks, deserve more credit for acting thus without reward than though they bore the title of a Duke or Prince. As thou hast asked, and with perfect justice, I will tell the story from its beginning. Thou might misjudge if thy mind held its present suspicion, and it would lead to setting aside of confidences which, it hath been my happiness to feel, did ever exist between us."

"Thou sayest well," replied the other, with affection. "I have always looked upon thee as my sword arm, to carry out by thy young strength the deeds which time hath left me ill conditioned to perform."

"Thou remembrest," began Effingston, "the night three months since, I rode to Chartsey Manor, with intent to sound Lord Cecil regarding his attitude on issues then before Parliament. It was midnight ere I left, and well on toward the stroke of two when I arrived in the outskirts of London. Proceeding slowly on my way, drinking in deeply the beauties of the night, suddenly there sounded upon my startled ear a woman's scream, which quickly ceased, as if she who uttered it had been rudely seized about the throat. I reined up my horse and listened. Distinctly could I hear, not two hundred paces from me, the sound of scuffling feet and an outburst of drunken laughter, ending in a round of fiendish cursing. 'Hold,' cried I, 'wait until I can loose my sword and lend thee aid.' Saying which, I hastily dismounted, throwing the bridle of my horse over a bush hard by, and hurried in the direction of the tumult. On turning a corner, there came upon my sight a scene which made my blood boil and lent new speed to my legs. Two ruffians had set upon a woman, and while one held back her chin and shoulders, the other was endeavoring to imprint a kiss upon the upturned face, the rogue being hindered in his purpose by the girl, who, holding in her hand a small dagger, lunged right boldly with it. 'Avaunt ye, knaves,' I cried, running, sword in hand. Before, however, I could reach the struggling group she had struck the man in front of her, causing him for a moment to desist, when, with a sudden accession of strength, breaking away from the one who held her, she set her back against the wall, confronting the two assailants with the look and spirit of a tigress. The men, now for the first time perceiving me, having been too deep in liquor and their employment to hear my shout, took to their heels, but not until I had spoiled the sword arm of one and left my mark upon the other. Turning toward the girl who stood by the wall, I discovered the momentary spirit had left her, for again she was the weak woman and would have fallen fainting to the ground, had I not given her support. She soon revived, and having received her thanks, prettily given, I inquired how it fell out she had been so rudely set upon; in reply to which she told me of her grandam being taken ill, and in need of a leech, and how she had gone forth to fetch him, and was attacked, when returning from her errand. On begging that she would permit me to see her safely home, my offer was accepted with thanks. When arrived at our destination she asked if I would not on the next day return, that she might more fully express her gratitude. Thou knowest, my father, how love grows in the heart. At first my feeling was one of curiosity; but it soon changed to admiration for the fair girl, and, at last it ripened into love, as I learned to know the soul which rested in her beautiful form. This is my simple story, and I have naught more to tell."

[Pg 64]

[Pg 65]

"My son," replied the other, who had listened with eager attention to the narrative, "there's naught, so far, that I condemn, and I applaud thee for thy chivalry, but I had higher hopes for thee than a marriage with a commoner. Thou hast, however, omitted to tell me her name," he added, in a voice betokening anxiety.

"Her name is Elinor Fawkes, the daughter of an officer, English by birth, now serving in the army of Spain."

"Elinor Fawkes," repeated the father, with a start and looking toward Effingston. "'Tis as I feared. Is this, then, the creature on whom thou wouldst bestow thy name? Have thine ears been out of sorts, never to have heard the rumor which connects her in none too savory a manner with the adventurer Sir Thomas Winter? It is common talk, for I will speak plainly to thee, that she is his mistress."

"In thy throat thou liest," the other cried, leaping to his feet, white to the lips with sudden passion; "recall those words, or by St. Paul, I'll strike thee to my feet, forgetting the loins which begat me! She hath fully told me of, and set aside, the lie which coupleth her with Sir Thomas Winter."

"Aye, she hath explained to thee readily enough, I trow," exclaimed the other, roused to anger. "Lives there the woman who could not make excuses if but a moment were granted her? I shall

[Pg 66]

not chide thee for thy hasty words; time will bring them to thy memory with remorse. But listen unto reason, and——"

"I'll hear no more," Effingston cried, in a voice full of passion.

"Stop," said Monteagle, in a commanding voice, holding up his hand, "thou shalt hear! Doth the leech withhold the lance when a patient groans? No, my son; I'll introduce thee to plain facts, and try to cure, even though my duty be a hard one."

Effingston sank into his chair, his temper cooled to a degree by his father's manner, and listened with compressed lips and knitted brow to what followed.

"As I have already told thee," began Lord Monteagle, "I suspected that it was she who had ensnared thee. I set inquiries afoot, and in justice to the girl, with a twofold object—first, to establish her innocence, if she were true; secondly, to save thy name and happiness, if she proved guilty. But," he went on, advancing toward his son and laying a hand upon his shoulder, "the second object of my quest was the one fulfilled. The proof came by the hand of God. Yesternight, leaving the house of Lord Brighton, where I had dined, and wishing to return with all speed, I requested the bearers of my chair to take the shortest way home. Gazing out of the window, I noted that we were in the locality of the house wherein she (who had for the past few days most unhappily filled my mind) was reported to reside, and desiring to look upon the spot, commanded my men to rest there. Suddenly I descried a man muffled in a cloak, proceeding up the street, who, as he approached, proved to my astonishment to be none other than Sir Thomas Winter. Quickly he ascended the steps and knocked at the house opposite the place where I chanced to be. After a moment the door opened and the figure of a girl stood on the threshold. Beholding her, Winter exclaimed: 'A good evening to thee, Mistress Fawkes,' the rest of the greeting being lost to me as the door closed. I was astonished at having so quickly set before me the two whose names had been in my mind. After a few moments the door again opened suddenly, this time I think by accident, revealing the figure of him who had just entered, still clad in his cloak, clasping in his arms and kissing the woman who admitted him. I could not hear what passed, for at the time the wind blew high, drowning their voices. But I had seen enough, and cried to the bearers to take up the chair and proceed. That, my son, is what I have seen, not learned by mere hearsay. Would that I could have spared thee the telling, but 'tis for thy welfare I have narrated it."

[Pg 67]

Effingston, during the narrative, had remained motionless, his features drawn and colorless. Fully realizing that his father would not have maliciously manufactured this evidence against the girl, his mind could conceive no extenuating circumstance to clear it away. That she had deceived him was not beyond the consent of reason. He was a man of the world and of the time, well aware of possible duplicity, and further, that the age offered numerous examples of women with one hand on the cradle while the other guided an axe toward some head which for a cause must fall, or fanatically sacrificing all, even honor, to gain the coveted support of a courtier in some undertaking. The scandal which had been breathed about her, to do him justice, he did not give ear to, believing implicitly the story told by Elinor, explaining her associations with Winter. But was not this man a champion of the cause which he had helped to defeat? Was it impossible that she had played her lover as a dupe to further a scheme? This was entirely plausible, but he could not bring his mind to believe it. And why? For the same old, old reason which has cost men their lives and honor, kings their crowns—because he loved her. When his father had finished, he said, in a quiet voice, extending his hand:

[Pg 68]

"I thank thee; thy motive is of the best; and I most humbly beg thy pardon for my hasty words, prompted by anger only."

"What course dost thou now intend to pursue?" inquired Monteagle uneasily, for the quiet, passionless manner of his son made him apprehensive.

"What thou or any other man would do—give the woman a chance to defend herself."

"Aye, I thought as much," the other replied with an air of angered impatience. "She will, with her arms about thy neck, explain fast enough, and to thy satisfaction."

"Dost thou forget," the son inquired, "that I am a Monteagle, and have implanted in me that pride and temper which can illy condone, even in those they love, deceit and falsity? Have no fears for me," he added, advancing with a determined step toward the door.

"Where art thou going, my son?" asked the other in an alarmed tone.

"To face this woman with the accusations thou hast just uttered against her."

"Stay; go not in thine anger, for some mischief may be wrought. Wait until thy temper cools; see her not again, but write."

[Pg 69]

"I am not a killer of unarmed adversaries," retorted Effingston; "again, I repeat, have no fear for me."

"Well, well; God's will be done; it may be for the best," the other said with a sigh, turning away his head.

The son hesitated for a moment; then quickly kneeling before his father and taking his hand, exclaimed: "I humbly ask thee to forget my hot words, and again I crave thy pardon for the same."

They were spoken in wrath, on hearing the image of my love fall crashing to the earth."

Then springing to his feet, before Monteagle had opportunity to reply, he hurriedly left the room.

Once on the street, Effingston strode without pause in the direction of Elinor's house. What a difference in his feelings now, contrasted with what they had been when he had traversed that way before. He had outlined his course of action,—to simply tell her what his father had seen, and demand an explanation. If she were guilty, even his love and her woman's wit could not, he thought, hide the fact from his eyes; and if it all were true and he had been duped, what then?

He prayed that pride would come to his aid and steel his nerves, and prompt his tongue to speak. With these thoughts in his mind, and looking neither to the right nor left, he hurried on his way to her dwelling. How changed each familiar object seemed to him. As he knocked at the door and listened, a footstep sounded in the hall. Ah, how many times had his heart leaped at the same sound. The door opened, and she who was all the world to him stood on the threshold;—she whom he must soon accuse of hideous duplicity. How very beautiful she looked. On seeing Effingston, Elinor uttered a low, startled cry. He noted the action, for love, when coupled with suspicion (and the two can live together) is not blind, but terribly vigilant.

[Pg 70]

"Elinor, I must speak with thee, and alone," he exclaimed.

The girl regarded him with a half frightened look. She had been all day engaged in a bitter fight with self, and knew not how to tell him they must part forever. Now he stood before her. She realized to some extent what the agony of the separation which must soon come would be to her, and knowing full well the depth of his love, measured his sufferings by her own. Wild thoughts had passed through her mind of doing something which would turn that love to hate, and she felt she could better bear that than know he lived and suffered. But now as she looked upon him both will and fortitude fast weakened. Again she was the simple loving woman.

"Wilt thou enter?" she asked in a constrained voice, scarce knowing what she said.

He crossed the threshold and passed into the little room which held for him the most tender recollections.

"Elinor, I have come——" he began; then, gazing at the beautiful face before him, he advanced toward her with outstretched arms—all resolution gone; "O my darling, I have wronged thee—thou canst tell, I know, and explain all."

She shrank from his touch, fearing lest her little firmness should take flight.

"Why dost thou shrink from me?" cried he, swept by a sudden fear which made his lips dry and his cheeks burn. "O my God, can it then be thou dost know the purport of my question?"

"I know not what thou meanest," she stammered, astonished at his words, even amidst her sufferings; "if thou hast aught to ask, pray say on."

[Pg 71]

He watched the trembling figure for a moment, interpreting her emotion as detected guilt, and the demon of jealousy, which, strange to say, is often led forth by love, burst out, prompting him to speak words which after uttering, he would have given worlds to unsay.

"Then, know," he cried, "that I have discovered thy methods, and that I have been duped and dragged on to further some hellish scheme of thine and his. I've swallowed thy pretty words and thought them sweet. Now I know all; 'twas but last night thou wert in his arms, and rightly thou belongest there; the report is true, thou art none other than the mistress of Sir Thomas Winter. Aye, tremble in thy guilt, thou Magdalene; thou canst not deny it."

As he uttered the accusation, she raised her arm as if to ward off some sudden blow, then let it fall at her side, standing speechless, benumbed and horrified at the terrible words he had hurled at her. The disgrace and the infamy of them she did not at once grasp, but gradually her mind began to comprehend all that he had said. The room swam about her, and she caught at a chair for support, vainly trying to make some reply. Again he repeated: "Thou canst not deny it; guilt is written in thine every action."

As she aroused herself there flashed upon her mind the act of two short days ago, when she had fallen upon her knees and prayed God that this man before her might be spared the cruel pangs of that separation which must inevitably come. And had not that prayer been answered? Had not he just uttered accusations, which, if not denied, would end his love for her—now and forever? Believing her to be vile and infamous, pride and manhood would soon come to his aid. But what did the acknowledgment mean to her? His utter contempt; he would always believe that he had been her dupe—hers, who would gladly give her very life for him. But what mattered it? Thinking this to be true, he will soon, manlike, dismiss her from his thoughts, and give his love to another, who, pray God, may make his life all happiness and gladness. She turned her eyes toward the wall on which hung the image of Christ nailed to a cross. Could she not crucify herself, for this love of hers? Slowly the resolution formed. Again he repeated: "Canst thou deny it?" And she answered: "Thou sayest it!"

[Pg 72]

"It is true?" he cried.

Again she answered: "Thou sayest it."

"O great God," he exclaimed, putting his hands to his head, "can this be real? Can this be the end



of all our hopes? Is the world so bad and woman so low?"

She uttered not a word, but stood motionless.

"Vile deceiver!" he cried, turning to her as he staggered toward the door, "if it be happiness to know that thine infamy hath ruined my life, know it, then, and be glad."

She heard the portal close. He had gone from her forever. Then the full and terrible import of that which she had acknowledged herself to be overwhelmed her, and with a cry she fell unconscious to the floor.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 73]

### IN THE GARDEN OF THE GENTLEMAN-PENSIONER.

Upon reaching the open air, Effingston paused for a moment that the shock occasioned by the admission of Elinor might in some degree pass from him. He had gone to her prepared for tears, protests and womanly anger, and despite the suspicion which had seized his heart, it had not been in his nature to believe the words of his father would so soon find confirmation. He felt, indeed, as one about to lay his head upon the block,—that he must cry out, yet his heart was clutched as by a giant hand, benumbing all his faculties so that pain and lethargy paralyzed his will.

As he groped half blindly for the railing which flanked the narrow steps, the figure of a man confronted him, who, as he perceived the Viscount Effingston standing upon the threshold of Mistress Fawkes' dwelling, drew back quickly, his face dark with anger. 'Twas Sir Thomas Winter.

In that instant all the calmness of the young nobleman returned to him. The sight of Winter, in whom he saw the bitter enemy of his house, and whom he now hated for a double reason, turned his pain into contempt for her who had so illy used him. Pride came to his aid, and he would have passed the other haughtily; but it was in no wise the purpose of Sir Thomas that the meeting should have so peaceful an ending.

Rumor had reached him that the Viscount Effingston was too frequent a visitor at the house of one for whom he fostered, if not love, at least a fierce passion, and the presence of his rival, at the very door of the humble dwelling, aroused him to fury. With an angry frown distorting his features he advanced toward the spot where stood the Viscount, who, perceiving he had to deal with one in whom temper had overcome prudence, laid his hand upon the hilt of his rapier. It was not the purpose of Winter, however, to come to blows thus openly with one who was known to be in favor with the King. He therefore contented himself with obstructing the way in so insolent a manner, and with such malice in his eyes, that it sent the blood to the cheeks of Effingston, and he returned the gaze unflinchingly, saying quietly:

[Pg 74]

"Come, if Sir Thomas Winter hath in mind aught to say to me, let it be done quickly, that I may go upon my way." At the same time he moved as though to pass.

"Nay! My Lord of Effingston!" replied Winter turning his eyes upon the hand which rested on the jeweled sword hilt. "Fear not that in a street of London I would draw sword against thee, traitor though thou art. Thy royal master——"

"Traitor!" cried Effingston, the red of his cheeks changing to the paleness of anger. "Traitor, sayest thou, Sir Winter?"

"Aye!" replied Winter. "All London knoweth."

The Viscount controlled himself by an effort.

"Thy purpose is clear to me," said he coldly, "thou wouldst force a quarrel; so be it. Traitor, sayest thou? Perchance, thy mirror hath shown one to thee so frequently that the word is ever on thy tongue."

"As to mirrors," replied Winter, "those in the King's chamber have revealed to thee their ways, then. Thinkest thou nothing is known concerning the purpose of my Lord Monteagle in instructing thee as to Puritanism."

[Pg 75]

Effingston bit his lip. "'Tis befitting thy manhood, Sir Winter, having bribed a dastardly servant to give false testimony of what was listened to from behind a curtain, that thou shouldst insult one whose cloak buckle thou art unworthy to loosen. 'Twas a fair representation of thy character, a good showing of thy principles. If it be in thy mind to prate further, get thee into the market place, where, mounted upon an ass, thou mayst draw around thee certain of the populace whose wont it is to gather for such discourse."

This was spoken with a mock gallantry which the Viscount could well assume, and deprived the other for a moment of utterance. Overcome by anger, and surprised that the insults heaped upon the Viscount were met with contempt, he forgot himself so far as to bring the name of Mistress

Fawkes into the quarrel.

"Thou dost but jest with me," he cried, taking a step nearer his rival; "perchance, having come from the arms of thy mistress, thy wits are so dulled that——"

The reply of Effingston was sudden and unexpected. Resolved to avoid an open quarrel with one whom he considered beneath him, he had sought to return words, only, to the other's insults, but the reference to one whom he had held most dear, fired his brain. Scarce had Winter uttered the base accusation when the young nobleman snatched off his heavy gauntlet and with it struck him across the face; so great was the force of the blow that the other staggered, lost his footing on the slippery street, and fell at the feet of his enemy.

Having thus given expression to his anger, Effingston calmly replaced the glove, and with hand upon hilt, awaited the arising of his companion. [Pg 76]

Stunned for the moment by so sturdy a buffet, Winter remained motionless for a little space, but soon regained his feet, and, with garments soiled and earth stained, with blood upon his face, drew his sword and made as though he would thrust the Viscount through.

Effingston drew also, and more serious results would have followed had not one in the crowd which had gathered to watch the ending of the quarrel, cried that the King's soldiers were approaching.

Sobered by the danger which threatened him, for the arrest of a Catholic with sword in hand was like to bring evil consequence, Winter made haste to sheathe his blade, which example the Viscount quickly followed. However, it was a false alarm, and raised only for the pleasure of seeing two fine gentlemen thrown into confusion. The crowd, catching the spirit of the varlet, straightway raised a tumult, showering the nobles with sundry jibes and insulting remarks, considering it rare sport to have at their mercy those of high degree.

The commotion turned for a moment the mind of Winter from his first grievance, and he bethought himself of the sorry figure he must show with dress awry, face soiled and blood-stained, and, worse than all, insulted dignity. Therefore he made haste to leave a company so unappreciative, and destitute of sympathy. To Effingston, the thought that against his better judgment he had been drawn into a public brawl, caused his face to glow with passion, and his desire to leave the locality was not less than that of the other. The lookers on, finding their sport ended, did not follow, but took themselves to other ways, and the two gentlemen, who had hurried blindly, without attention or knowledge as to direction, soon found themselves in a quiet street somewhat remote from the neighborhood which had witnessed Sir Thomas Winter's discomfiture. [Pg 77]

"My Lord of Effingston!" cried he, as he gathered together his disturbed senses, noting the presence of his companion. "Thou hast grievously insulted me, therefore——"

"When thou wilt!" the Viscount interrupted. "My sword is ever at thy service."

"'Tis well!" said Winter, drawing his cloak about him; "one hour from now in the garden of Thomas Percy, whom, methinks, is known to thee. Yet if thou dost fear——"

Effingston shrugged his shoulders. "In Sir Percy's garden," repeated he haughtily, and turning upon his heel left Sir Thomas in the roadway.

The garden of the official dwelling occupied by the Gentleman-Pensioner consisted of perhaps a quarter of an acre of sward, fringed by a sorry row of leafless trees, and surrounded by a high wall, beyond the top of which shone the metal gables of half a score of straight-backed dwellings. 'Twas no uncommon thing for the parties to a dispute to settle the same by force of arms, but they carried on the affair with all secrecy, lest the report thereof reach the ears of those in authority, as it was contrary to the King's wish that a private quarrel should end in the killing of an English gentleman. Such being the fact, those gardens which adjoined the houses of certain nobles, and by reason of their privacy precluded the presence of prying eyes, were oft turned into duelling grounds, and the square of sward flanking the dwelling of Thomas Percy was well adapted for a contest in which the evenness of the ground, as well as others matters, was of much consequence to the combatants. [Pg 78]

To this garden the Viscount Effingston, accompanied by Sir Francis Tillinghurst and another, who bore beneath his cloak a case of instruments, presented himself at the hour appointed for his meeting with Sir Thomas Winter. Having gained admittance by a gate set in the wall, the three found awaiting them, Sir Thomas, my Lord of Rookwood, the Gentleman-Pensioner and a surgeon summoned by the latter to look to the welfare of the challenger.

As the gate clicked behind the Viscount and his companions, Lord Rookwood, who was in close converse with the others at the further side of the garden, advanced haughtily, bowing to Sir Francis, whom he perceived represented the interests of the young nobleman. The two, withdrawing from the others, made haste to arrange the preliminaries of the meeting.

"Thy promptness is most commendable," said Rookwood, casting a look upward at the cold gray of the sky, "and 'twere well that our principals do quickly that which has brought them hither. Methinks a storm is brewing, and a fall of snow might end the matter illy."

A few white flakes upon his doublet bore witness to the correctness of his prophecy. Sir Francis

bowed assent.

"Thou canst perceive," continued Rookwood, pointing to the strip of sward, "that good Thomas Percy has had a care to have no element of fairness lacking. Hast any objection to the spot chosen?"

"I can see no catch or fault in it," replied Tillinghurst, casting his eyes over the ground, "the light is good, and there seemeth to be no advantage in position."

"'Tis well!" said Rookwood, "wilt measure swords that the contest be in all fairness?"

Tillinghurst complied, and the principals, casting aside their cloaks, stepped forward to the strip of sward prepared for them. [Pg 79]

The demeanor of the Viscount was serious; he well knew that in Sir Thomas Winter he had no unskilled swordsman, but a man of much experience, with wrist of steel, and a trick of fence acquired by long practice in foreign service. The face of Winter was darkened by a frown in which was blended a shadow of anxiety. The Lord of Monteagle was a famous swordsman, and it might well be that the son had learned from a good master.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" cried Rookwood drawing his rapier, as also did Sir Francis, that they might interfere should need arise.

The principals saluted, stood at guard, and awaited the signal; when it was given, their blades crossed with a clash which rang out sharp and clear on the cold winter air.

The hate and jealousy with which Winter regarded his young rival were intensified by the tingling blow dealt him an hour before, and from which he still suffered,—and as he was confident beyond doubt of his skill as a swordsman, he attacked with a fury which pressed his younger adversary back toward the wall, and those witnessing the contest thought to see Effingston speedily thrust through.

The Viscount was, however, too adroit a fencer to yield readily to such a fate. Careful, at first, only to defend himself, he met each thrust and pass with a parry which deepened the frown on Winter's brow, and having retreated to the edge of the duelling ground, he there held his position despite the fierceness of the onslaught.

Suddenly Winter's blade darted serpent-like beneath the guard of his adversary. A red stain appeared on Effingston's shoulder, and the seconds interposed their swords. [Pg 80]

The Viscount waved them back, as also he did the surgeon, who hastened to perform his office.

"'Tis a touch only," said he hoarsely, breathing heavily, "on guard, sir, that we may finish quickly."

And now their positions were reversed. Instead of acting on the defensive, Effingston in turn became the assailant, regaining his lost ground, and forcing Sir Thomas back, step by step.

Maddened at thus losing vantage ground Winter's calmness failed him; he made a sudden thrust forward, and it being parried, lost his footing, the blade of his rapier ringing against the hilt of the other ere he could regain guard.

A cry arose to the lips of Rookwood, for he thought the other would show no mercy; but before he could utter a sound, Effingston, with a quick turn of the wrist, sent the opposing sword ringing to the ground, leaving his enemy weaponless before him.

For an instant Winter recoiled as if in fear of the thrust which he was now powerless to avert. A scornful smile passed over the pale features of the victor.

"'Tis thus I would deal with such as thou," said he haughtily, and, pushing his sword into its scabbard, he took up Sir Thomas' rapier, and breaking it across his knee, tossed the pieces contemptuously aside.

"Come!" said he as his second threw a cloak about him. "Our matters are ended." Then saluting with grave courtesy the four Catholic gentlemen, he left the garden, followed by his companions.

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## CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 81]

### GARNET AND THE KING.

Toward the decline of the tenth day following the meeting of Viscount Effingston and Sir Thomas Winter in the garden of the Gentleman-Pensioner, four men might have been seen riding through one of the stretches of woodland used by the King as a hunting ground and known as the forest of Waltham. Although light still lingered, a gloom was gathering over the countryside, and within the precincts of the forest the first shades of evening warned the horsemen that ere many hours the cheerless twilight which prevailed in England at that period of the year, would find them outside the gates of London.

Of the four, three were gentlemen; the other seemed to be more a soldier than a cavalier. The trappings of his horse were less rich than those of his companions, the texture of his cloak was of poorer quality, and he bestrode the saddle after the manner of one inured to rough riding, when business took precedence of pleasure, a custom not commonly followed among the gentry of the kingdom. His companions were so muffled in their cloaks as to hide both dress and features. Each wore at his side a long rapier, and from their holsters appeared the metal-marked butts of pistols, ready to hand should sudden danger assail them.

After passing through the outskirts of the forest bordering on the north, the horses were urged into a gallop, the sharp ring of their hoofs on the frost-hardened road echoing dully among the trees on either side. As they entered the thickest part of the wood, one, riding in the rear, turned to his companion.

[Pg 82]

"Thou seest," said he, pointing with his whip toward the forest on the left, "that our lord, the King, hath reserved for his own pleasure a goodly bit of woodland within which none may venture with hounds or hunting horns."

"Such a rumor hath come to me," replied the other, "also that any venturing within the royal chase will be dealt with most vigorously."

His companion laughed harshly. "Of that," said he, "I was myself a witness, for 'twas but ten days back when one Charles Burrows, a most worthy commoner, and a staunch Catholic, was brought before the magistrates for having shot a hare which crossed his path."

"I'faith!" muttered the other, "'Tis then the purpose of the King to carry his oppression even beyond our altars. It seemeth to me a most fitting thing, Sir Thomas, that the kingdom be rid of such a tyrant."

"Bravely spoken, Master Fawkes," replied Winter, "and thou wilt be ready should occasion arise, to protest against our wrongs! But what now is the trouble with worthy Catesby, and his Reverence?"

The exclamation was called forth by the action of the two horsemen who were leading the little cavalcade. They had pulled up their steeds and appeared to be listening intently, though to the ears of their companions, who had dropped some ten score paces behind, no sound save the moaning of the wind could be heard. But as they also drew rein, and the click of their horses' hoofs ceased, the faint echo of a horn was borne through the wintry air.

Drawing together, the four strained their ears to note the direction whence it came; across the face of one rider stole a shadow of anxiety. Sir Thomas Winter noted it.

[Pg 83]

"I warrant," said he, "that none is abroad who will in any manner trouble us. 'Tis some hunting party returning from the chase, and riding toward the highway. What thinkest thou, good Catesby?"

"Thou mayst have conjectured aright," replied Catesby; "yet, 'twould be a wise precaution to remain silent, if any seeking to know our business did beset us. Mayhap even a purple cloak and doublet would scarce hide from them that the Superior of the——"

Garnet, for the fourth horseman was the leader of the English Jesuits, raised his head proudly.

"A truce, gentlemen!" said he, "'Tis not meet that, having ventured forth disguised, I play the coward at the simple sounding of a horn. Let us ride forward as befitteth four peaceable English gentlemen. The King's highway is free to all who choose to pass thereon, even though the forest bordering it be reserved for those who have gained the smile of James."

"And," said Fawkes, "'tis not the wont of a hunting party to play highwaymen, the less so that the King, perchance, rideth with it."

"The King!" cried Winter and Catesby, in a breath.

"Aye!" replied Fawkes bluntly. "Have ye not told me that the royal wood of Waltham is reserved for the hunting of his Majesty?"

His companions exchanged quick glances. "Then, we had best hide ourselves," cried Winter, "James hath a prying disposition."

"Methinks," said Garnet, raising his hand to enforce silence, "that but one horn sounded. If, as thou sayest, it be a hunting party, the wood would echo with a score of blasts. Shall we run from one man?"

[Pg 84]

Fawkes loosened his sword in its scabbard. "I have this," said he, "to back our presence in the forest, and are ye weaponless?"

The bluff words of the soldier of fortune put to shame the fears of the two noblemen, yet they hesitated. Should they be suspected, it would not be a light matter to evade certain questions which might be asked, and if taken to London captives, the disguise of the Jesuit would be penetrated.

Meanwhile the sound of the horn grew louder, and while wavering in their decision, a voice, faint and indistinct, was heard shouting afar off. Fawkes listened attentively.

"'Tis a cry for succor," said he suddenly, "someone hath lost his way and seeks the highroad."

"Then," said Garnet calmly, "we will remain, for he is approaching."

Perhaps five minutes had elapsed when the blast of the horn sounded as if in their very ears; and from the forest, only a dozen rods beyond them, dashed a man mounted on a bay horse. Having reached the open road he pulled up his beast and looked helplessly in an opposite direction from the four riders. Suddenly Winter started and changed color, his face turning from red to white, and back to red again.

"'Tis the King!" he whispered hoarsely, clutching the arm of Catesby, who sat beside him.

It was, in truth, James of England, unattended, his dress awry and torn by thorns and brambles, with bloodless lips and terror-stricken countenance, who sat helplessly in the saddle in the presence of his bitterest enemies.

[Pg 85]

As this realization dawned on Catesby's mind, he uttered an exclamation, and reached for the pistol which protruded from his holster.

"'Tis the judgment of God," he muttered; "to-night England will be without a king."

The firm grasp of the Jesuit upon his arm checked his murderous purpose.

"Stop!" whispered Garnet sternly, "wouldst ruin the cause which thou hast sworn to befriend? Draw your cloaks about your faces and leave the King to me."

Ere they could recover from their astonishment he had ridden forward to the spot where James sat bewildered, noting not the presence of those behind him.

At the sound of hoofs he turned quickly, laying a trembling hand upon the hilt of a hunting knife which hung at his belt. The demeanor of the approaching stranger gave him courage. Garnet did not remove from his head the plumed hat, as was befitting the presence of royalty, but there was in his face a kindness which proclaimed his errand a peaceful one.

"Good sir," said he, speaking in French, "thy manner shows some bewilderment, and, may be, the blasts of the horn which reached me were tokens of it."

James trembled violently, for at heart he was an arrant coward, and the being met by a stranger, alone, close to nightfall and in the forest, filled him with the greatest terror. The words of the other somewhat reassured him.

"Brave gentleman!" cried he, still grasping the handle of the knife, "thou art a man of honor, and by thy speech a Frenchman, therefore thou wilt aid me."

[Pg 86]

"Thou hast spoken truly," replied the Jesuit. "Hast lost thy way?"

Relieved of apprehension for his personal safety, the King gave vent to his ill temper.

"That I have," cried he, striking his knee angrily, "and in the King's own forest. There are those who shall pay dearly, who shall rue this hour," he continued passionately. "'Twas a plot to humiliate me."

"Good sir," replied Garnet, noting that James proposed to conceal his identity. "Of whom speakest thou?"

"Of the rogues who accompanied me hither," stormed the son of Mary, Queen of Scots; "I followed a stag, and having outridden them they have thus deserted me; 'tis a thing beyond human comprehension."

"And this," thought Garnet, "this is the King of England, who has pulled down our altars, driven out our religion and banished us." Despite all efforts his brow darkened.

But the ill temper of James subsided as quickly as it had arisen, leaving him for the time only a man who sought succor, and so made known his condition.

It chanced that riding in the forest, taking the lead of those who accompanied him, he followed the tracks of a stag and became separated from his companions; whereupon, being confused and terrified, he soon lost his way.

Garnet listened patiently, and made no sign that could lead the King to suspect that his personality was known, then pointed to his companions, who were sitting motionless upon their horses, with muffled faces, awaiting the result of the Jesuit's unexpected action.

"Good sir," said he, "it will give me pleasure to conduct thee to the outskirts of the forest, after which, the road being plain, thou canst easily find thy way to the gates of London. Yonder servants of mine will ride behind us."

[Pg 87]

James gladly accepted the other's offer, nor did it please him that the supposed Frenchman should learn he was assisting the sovereign of England. Pride and distrust governed him. Pride, lest a foreigner should bear away the tale of a king's discomfiture; distrust, lest, holding in his power so important a personage, the stranger might take advantage thereof for his own benefit. But it was not in the mind of Garnet to reveal his knowledge; so, side by side they rode in silence—the Jesuit and the King—for the space of an hour, until, upon reaching the vicinity of London,

whose lights twinkled in the distance, they separated, James galloping madly on, his companion awaiting the approach of Winter, Fawkes and Catesby.

There was much amazement and some anger in the minds of the two noblemen, that the priest had acted in so unaccountable a manner. Desirous of learning his motive for befriending one whom he professed to hate, they questioned him upon the subject. To all, Garnet replied briefly, bidding them wait a more befitting time, as it was his purpose, on reaching London to attend a meeting at the house of Sir Thomas Percy. Therefore they rode on in silence, the great clock in the tower of St. Paul's chiming the hour of eight as they passed into the city.

At the corner of the street leading to the Gentleman-Pensioner's door a horseman confronted them whom they recognized as Percy himself. He had been waiting for them in an angle of the wall to say that certain officials having gathered at his house for the discussion of public business it would be unsafe to proceed thither.

"Then is the night lost," said Catesby impatiently, "for, although the Holy Father be provided with a hiding place within the city, and will, perchance, remain among us for the space of two days, much weighty business besides long disputations, require his attention. Thou shouldst have seen to it, Master Percy, that thy house was free from the hirelings of the King." Percy would have replied in anger, but Sir Thomas Winter interrupted:

[Pg 88]

"Friend Guido, thou hast a dwelling in a quiet portion of the town, where perchance we might sit together for the discussion of such things as now concern us."

Fawkes, who had scarcely spoken since meeting with the King in the forest, acquiesced in this proposition, although the thought of his daughter, the smallness of his house, and the nature of the conference caused some conflict in his mind. Yet, having resolved to serve the cause which he held so dear, his scruples speedily vanished, the more so that 'twas Sir Thomas Winter who requested the favor.

This matter being so quickly decided, Fawkes became the guide of the party, and turning into a narrow street which ended in a lane running behind his house, straightway brought his companions to their destination.

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## CHAPTER X.

[Pg 89]

### THE FORGING OF THE THUNDERBOLT.

Upon reaching the gate which opened from the garden of his dwelling into the lane, Fawkes signaled his four companions to secure their horses and follow him. Having complied, he led them through the garden, unlocked the door and bade them enter.

"Faith!" whispered Catesby, pressing Garnet's elbow, "friend Guido doth seem over cautious in leading us about so secretly."

"Not so!" replied the Jesuit, "'tis a gift born of much experience in a country where the careless rattle of a scabbard may lead to most serious results. But it is in my mind as in thine, that being peaceful gentlemen who have rendered some slight service to his Majesty the King, we might act with more boldness; yet caution is a jewel which, once attained, should not be lightly cast aside, and Master Fawkes doth cling to it."

The voice of the soldier of fortune bidding them come on precluded the reply which arose to Catesby's lips, and crossing a narrow hall the horsemen entered a room whose cheerful brightness contrasted pleasantly with the darkness of the passage into which they had been ushered.

After assisting his guests to remove their mantles, Fawkes placed before them cups and wine, added a fresh fagot to the fire, and turned to Sir Thomas Winter.

"My lord!" said he, "I pray thee attend to the comfort of these gentlemen till I return. 'Tis my custom to inspect the house before retiring, lest any be astir, and to-night I deem it doubly prudent."

[Pg 90]

"And who hast thou in the house, good Guido?" asked Garnet blandly; "no one, I trust, who will interrupt our conversation?"

Fawkes laughed softly. "None are within," replied he, "except my old mother, who, were she to stand beside yon fireplace, would scarce note the meaning of our discourse; and my daughter, a loyal Catholic, yet, being a maid, and gifted with a woman's curiosity, it might be her pleasure to seek the meaning of so rare a gathering beneath my roof."

Garnet nodded approvingly. That he had come to London in disguise had filled him with some apprehension, and the cautiousness of his host quieted his fears.

"Thy cavalier is indeed a man of much promise," said he to Winter, after the soldier left the room, "and I warrant that none will venture to disturb us. Hast sounded him thoroughly upon religious

matters?"

"Thou shalt see," replied Sir Thomas. "If the zeal of each Catholic in England reached but to the half of his loyalty to the holy cause, there would scarce be need that a father of the Church don plumed hat and rapier."

Fawkes, in the meantime, had betaken himself to the upper floor of the house, where was situate his daughter's chamber. There was no fear in his mind that his aged mother would note the arrival of his guests, for 'twas her custom to retire at sundown by reason of infirmities; but about his daughter there arose some apprehension. He felt sure that no words which, by chance, might reach her ear would be carried further, yet, 'twas against his wish that anything should add to her disquietude.

Coming to the door of her room, which was directly above that occupied by the four friends, he listened intently, and hearing no sound within, softly turned the knob and peered into the apartment. The light of the full moon shining through the window, revealed to him the interior bathed in a mellow radiance. No sound greeted his ear save the crackling of the fagots in the huge fireplace below, and the faint murmur of the voices of his guests. He paused,—a hundred conflicting emotions filling his breast. The sight of the curtained bed standing in an angle of the wall drew his attention. He pushed the door yet further open, and holding his scabbard that its rattle might not disturb the sleeper, slipped across the threshold and approaching noiselessly, parted the hangings and looked down.

[Pg 91]

The maid was lying with her face turned full upon him, her cheek resting upon one white, rounded arm. In the weird moonlight her pale beauty startled him, and almost unconsciously, he stretched forth his hand to touch her. His fingers, resting lightly upon the counterpane, came in contact with something cold; it caused a shudder to pass through him, a nameless terror, and for an instant he forgot the four men waiting in the room below. Bending lower, his eyes rested upon the object which had so startled him. 'Twas a silver crucifix which had fallen from the sleeper's fingers, and lay upon her breast. At the sight great emotion and agitation swept through his heart, rough soldier though he was; for the moment he was well nigh overpowered. The silence of the chamber, the white face so near his own, and the emblem of his faith placed unconsciously upon the breast of the beloved one who lay there, filled him with superstitious awe. 'Twas thus the dead slept, ere they were carried to the grave.

[Pg 92]

A movement of the white arm broke the influence of the spell. The girl turned uneasily, a few incoherent words escaping her lips. Fawkes drew back noiselessly. "She sleeps!" he muttered, and passing from the room, closed the door softly, and descended to those who awaited him below.

Scarce had his footsteps ceased to echo on the stairs, when Elinor awoke. Though wrapped in deep slumber, that inexplicable mystery, a consciousness that she was not alone, startled her. Sitting upright, her eyes fell upon an object lying at the side of the bed; a doe-skin gauntlet which she recognized as belonging to her father.

Surprised that he should thus have entered her chamber, a feeling of alarm possessed her. The crackling of the fire in the room below, the tell-tale glove upon the floor, and the faint murmur which she felt assured must be the voices of men engaged in earnest conversation, aroused her apprehension as well as her curiosity, and it seemed no ill thing that she should discover the meaning of so unusual an occurrence, for their dwelling was situated in a quiet part of London and 'twas not the wont of any to visit it at such an hour. Then, the thought came to her that perhaps certain companions of her father, rough soldiers like himself, had come together to partake of his hospitality. Calmed for the moment, she would have sought sleep again, had not a sentence, uttered with clear distinctness, reached her ear.

"Ah, good Master Fawkes! Thou hast found all quiet, and thy household sleeping soundly?"

The intonation of the question startled her. Why should her father seek to learn whether she slept or not? Surely in the meeting of a few boon companions over a flask of wine, such precaution was not necessary. Not delaying for further meditation, she slipped out of bed, and crept noiselessly to that side of the room against which arose the huge brick chimney above the fireplace below. Through the space between the flooring and the masonry, a glare of light came up to her as well as the voices of those beneath. Crouching against the warm bricks she listened, unmindful of the cold and her equivocal position.

[Pg 93]

The assurance which Fawkes gave to his companions that the house was quiet, and none would interrupt them, removed the reserve which each had hitherto felt. Time was indeed precious, for Garnet desired to return ere daybreak to his hiding place, lest any should perceive that, lying beneath the doublet of a cavalier, was the insignia of a churchman, a discovery upon which great misfortune might follow. 'Twas with scant preliminaries, therefore, that Catesby, ever foremost in zeal, boldness and assurance, addressed his companions.

"Methinks," said he, turning to the Jesuit, "that in thy wisdom thou must have perceived something to our benefit in saving James of Scotland from my bullet. Yet, to me it did appear that the Lord gave him into our power."

A shadow of impatience darkened the priest's brow, but in an instant his features resumed their accustomed mildness.

"My son!" he replied, "it would have been an ill thing to slay our master after the manner of paid assassins. 'Twas in thy heart to kill the King; what then?"

Catesby bit his lip. That there lay some weighty reason in the mind of the Superior for his unexpected friendliness to James, he comprehended, but his spirit, unused to restraint, and darkened by adversity, illy brooked opposition.

[Pg 94]

"What then?" replied he, in answer to Garnet's question. "'Twould have rid the kingdom of a tyrant, and our faith of its bitterest enemy."

The Jesuit smiled sadly. "As thou hast spoken," said he, "the King would be dead, and trouble us no more, but what of the Parliament? Is it then James alone who distresses us?"

"Methinks," broke in Percy, "that our worthy father hath put it to us wisely. Did the Scot lose his life, another would arise in his place, and the suspicions of the authorities awakened, there would be no peace in England for a Catholic."

"'Tis even so," said Garnet; "the killing of one man, though he be the King, can scarce better our situation. What then, thou wouldst ask, shall be done to lighten our condition? We must lull into a feeling of security those who press hard upon us, that, when the sky seems clearest the bolt may fall and the stroke be the more scathing. Brave Guido here will tell thee that in that country where plots are thickest, 'tis false security which most often leads the victim to destruction. It may be, and doubtless is in the King's mind, and also in that of his Parliament, that the quietness of the Catholics for so long a time indicates continued subserviency, and not a gathering of forces to strike against their tyranny. In certain lands there are desert places where travelers have perished because the storm king hid his face until the hour for overwhelming destruction sounded. Thinkest thou that had the murmur of his coming reached their ears they would not have taken warning and sought a place of safety? 'Tis so in England. Had the King been shot, the news would have stirred the kingdom from Berwick unto Dover. What then of our plans and secret plottings, when each man who worshiped at our altars appeared a traitor? It hath always been my firm conviction and unvarying counsel that any blow must be far reaching; not James alone, but others besides must fall, to give us any vantage ground."

[Pg 95]

A moment of silence followed Garnet's words. Percy first replied: "'Tis a storm of extreme fury and sudden change of wind which overcomes a vessel. Who then will bring about the hurricane which shall wreck the ship of State?"

During the Jesuit's address Sir Thomas Winter sat immovable, his eyes fixed upon the fire and his brow contracted in deep thought. As Percy finished he turned suddenly to Fawkes.

"Friend Guido," said he smoothly, "thou art a man of many resources; perchance in Spain thou hast learned something a suggestion of which will now aid us. Thou perceiveth our condition."

Fawkes turned his gaze moodily upon the embers. Half unconsciously his fingers had been toying with a powder flask lying on the table before him, and a small portion of its contents had fallen into his palm. He tossed the black grains into the fire, where they flashed for an instant, sending a pungent ball of white smoke into the room. 'Twas as though the craftiness of Satan had shown to him the embryo of the hurricane.

"In Spain," replied he grimly, "there are many ways to overthrow a tyrant; in England, as the Holy Father saith, 'twill need more caution. Once upon a time the captain of a fighting vessel, fearing to fall into the hands of those who would destroy his ship and put the crew to torture, himself applied the fire to the magazine, it being filled with powder, and ten score men perished in a twinkling."

[Pg 96]

His companions were startled, for the meaning of his words was clear to them. As by a flash of light a way seemed to open which, if followed, would lead to the fulfillment of their purpose. Catesby leaned forward.

"But if it fail, friend Guido?" he whispered hoarsely. "What then?"

"Then!" cried Fawkes, turning to the Jesuit, "I will kill the King,—if need be even without help! For what then would remain to us?"

Garnet replied nothing. The words of the soldier of fortune startled him. Instantly he saw the meaning of the plan which Fawkes had formed;—a plan which, if once entered upon, would be carried out by him with all the zeal of a fanatic. The fiendishness of it, while it roused his admiration of the man's ingenuity, made him shudder; for 'twas not thus men struck in England.

"Come!" said he rising, "'tis close upon midnight, and the ride was wearisome. Thy words have taken strong hold upon me, good Guido, and I need a season of prayer and meditation to gain better understanding in this matter. My cloak, therefore, that I may leave thee."

Obedient to his wishes the others hastened their preparations for departure, and in silence Fawkes led them through the passage to the door by which they had entered his dwelling.



## THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

On hearing the sounds which indicated the departure of those in the room beneath, Elinor arose from her cramped position and noiselessly crept to the window. In the moonlit garden she could distinguish the figures of four men going in the direction of the lane at the back of the house. One she recognized as Sir Thomas Winter; the others were unknown to her. But in a moment she heard her father's voice as he uttered a warning to the horsemen: "Mind the ditch, Lord Percy! Sir Catesby, keep well to the left!"

Then Fawkes closed the door, and she could hear his movements as he went about extinguishing the lights. His footsteps sounded on the stairs. If by chance he came into the chamber and found her awake and up, what then? He would readily surmise how much it had been possible for her to hear. Once in his anger, she remembered, he had valued her life but cheaply;—within two short hours Elinor had learned to look upon her father with terror, almost with dread; those words of his rang in her ears: "I will kill the King if need be, even without help!"

The footsteps approached her room. What was she to do? It was too late to gain the bed and feign slumber, for the creaking of a loose board would certainly attract his attention. She hoped the door was secured, but had no recollection of locking it. At last he had gained the passage; now he was before her room and placed his hand upon the latch; it was not locked, for the door opened. The man peered in through the crevice and gazed in her direction. How her heart throbbed, shaking her whole body, and sending the blood through her veins with a sound which she feared he would hear. She thanked God that the moon shone directly through the window and her position was well out of its rays. He evidently did not see the girl, for after a scrutiny of the bed, which stood well in the shadow, and a muttered, "Safe, safe enough; all safe," he closed the door and passed down the corridor.

[Pg 98]

Elinor for a moment stood listening to the retreating footsteps; then sank into a chair, exhausted by the strain of the last few moments, and tried to gather her scattered thoughts. With woman's intuition she quickly grasped the enormity of all she had overheard, comprehending that high treason and wholesale murder had been planned; but the hardest truth for her to realize was that her father, whom she had always trusted and looked upon as the embodiment of honor and uprightness, was the foremost to suggest and even offer to carry out the fearful deed. "I will kill the King, if need be, even without help:" the awful sentence seemed to be repeated over and over again by the rustling night wind. Her first impulse was to save him from the consequences of such an act. Were not the names of Moore and Essex familiar to her? And what was their fate for even a suspected treason? Her hysterical imagination placed vividly before her the head of the father she loved, lying bleeding in that patch of moonlight on the floor.

But what could she do in her weakness? Go to her father and beseech him that, for love of her, he would take no part in this terrible crime? That would accomplish nothing, for she knew him to be one whom naught could turn from a deed he once undertook and looked upon as justified. And now the most passionate fanaticism had seized him—fanaticism of the most dangerous kind, born of wrongs done to his faith. To whom could she turn for aid? She knew but one who, perhaps, had some influence over Fawkes' stubborn mind. However, was not this very one as deep in the treason as her father? Winter! The name caused a shudder, bringing to mind that terrible morning ten days past. Winter! She must then seek help from him; her hopes clung only to a straw; nevertheless she would go and beg, if need be, even upon bended knee, that he would persuade her father to relinquish this terrible purpose. Yes, now was the time to act, for she feared in her indefinite terror that the morrow might be too late.

[Pg 99]

Quickly seizing a cloak and throwing it about her, Elinor crept toward the door and listened. The place was dark, and quiet as the grave. Swiftly she descended the stairs, then groped her way to the door and tried to withdraw the bolts. Would they never yield to her efforts? At last they slipped with a sound which echoed through the house. The girl paused, expecting to hear her father's voice, but the silence was unbroken. In a moment she was out in the moonlit street. How quiet and serene everything appeared. How in contrast to the tumult of her feelings. As she stood, the great bell of St. Paul's boomingly tolled out the hour—twelve o'clock.

"He must," she whispered to herself, "he must be home ere now, but what will he think of my coming to him at this time?" She tried to thrust this thought aside, and to gain repose of mind by walking more swiftly.

Arrived before Winter's residence, and trying the wicket at the entrance she found it yielded to her touch. The girl beheld a stream of light coming from between the curtains of a window on the second floor. The master of the house was then within. Quickly Elinor passed up the walk and stood before the door. As she raised the knocker her resolution almost gave way. What was she about to tell Winter. That she, a girl, was possessed of this terrible secret!

[Pg 100]

Suddenly came to her memory the dreadful words connecting this man's name with hers. She thought of the few times when they had been together; how eager he had seemed to be near her; with what a trembling clasp he had carried her fingers to his lips and imprinted upon them kisses which burned themselves into the very flesh. And now she was about to face him in the dead of night—and alone! Her fingers relaxed their hold. "Courage, courage," she murmured; and quickly laying hold of the knocker again, she smote thrice upon the panel and listened. There soon fell upon her ear the sound of some one coming in answer to her summons. The door opened and a sleepy servant stood regarding her with an air of no small astonishment.

"Is thy master at home?" she inquired, in a voice which, in spite of her efforts, trembled.

"That he is, young miss, but what wouldst thou with him at this late hour? He hath but just returned from a journey, and is sore weary. Canst thou not wait until the morning?"

"I must see him at once; 'tis on the most urgent business."

The hour, coupled with the fairness of the visitor, seemed to fill the servant with surprise, for he stood a moment looking at her, then replied:

[Pg 101]

"If thou wilt step inside, mistress, I'll inform Sir Winter that there be someone who wishes to hold converse with him, and perchance," he added with a meaning smile, "he'll not be so badly put out after all. What name shall I bear to him? It may be one," he continued significantly, "which would soon draw any bolt Sir Thomas might have shot."

"No name is necessary," she answered, looking at the man and pointing with her finger. "I seek thy master and come not to parley with his menial. Go! Say a lady would speak with him."

The servant read in the girl's eye a look which seemed to brook neither delay nor familiarity, for he turned and went along the passage and up the stairway.

As Elinor waited, the utter hopelessness of her mission broke full upon her, but it was now too late to draw back from her hasty act; the voice of Winter could be heard exclaiming with a laugh:

"What, a lady to see me at this hour? Troth, I am fatigued, but never so weary that I cannot look upon a fair face. Admit her."

A door opened and closed; the servant reappeared and beckoned her. "Sir Thomas will see thee; 'tis the third portal from the landing," he said, pointing up the stairs leading to the floor above.

As Elinor followed the directions given, she endeavored to frame some fitting sentence with which to begin her interview, but her agitation was too great; she could think of none. Arriving before the door she tapped with her fingers upon the panel.

"Enter, my pretty one," cried a voice. "Thou hast already been announced."

She stepped within the chamber. Winter sat with his back toward the entrance facing a table upon which stood a flagon of wine. As the door closed he turned, and to her horror Elinor saw that he was flushed with strong drink.

[Pg 102]

"What? Elinor?" exclaimed Winter, in astonishment, rising from the chair with such haste that it was overturned and fell with a clatter to the floor. "I crave thy pardon, Mistress Fawkes," he continued with a bow, mastering his surprise. "Thy sudden entrance caused my tongue to utter the name that ever dwells within my heart. Pray tell me to what happy circumstance am I indebted for the honor of this visit? I would know the same that I may render homage to it."

Elinor stood speechless, filled with abhorrence and dread. All her bravery could scarce keep her from flying out of the room. She endeavored to fix her mind on the purpose which had brought her here, and so find courage. At last desperation gave her voice and she began hurriedly:

"I know that thou and others were at my father's house this night. I was not asleep as ye all supposed, and have come to beg, to beseech, pray, that my father be released from this terrible treason which hath been talked of. Thou wert the only one to whom I could turn for aid—I trust to thy goodness, to thy noble nature;—for the love of God tell me not that I come in vain. See—see," she cried hysterically, her self control gone and falling upon her knees. "I kneel before thee to crave this boon."

At her first words Winter started as if a pike had been thrust into his side. On his face was written blank astonishment, which expression, as she proceeded, gave way to one of abject fear. It would have been difficult to say which of the two was the more agitated. He dashed a hand to his brow as if to drive away the fumes of liquor which had mounted to his brain; looked at the kneeling figure; gazed on the tapers burning upon the table; and tried to form some words of reply. At last, with an effort at composure, and endeavoring to force a laugh past his dry lips, he said:

[Pg 103]

"What silly tale is this thou utterest. I have not been—"

"Nay," the girl broke in wildly, "'tis useless for thee to say so. My eyes and ears did not deceive me. Would to heaven they had and it were only some mad dream which fills my brain."

"Then—then—thou hast played the spy," hissed Winter, in sudden anger born of drink and fear. "Dost know to what thou hast listened? Has aught of it passed thy lips? Speak!" he cried furiously, seizing the girl's arm and glaring at her in drunken rage. "Nay; then thou didst not, and 'tis well; for if thy lips had breathed one word these hands of mine would choke from out thy body its sweet breath." He relinquished his hold, and turning toward the table hurriedly drained a cup of wine.

Elinor, spellbound with terror at his outburst of fury, stood rooted to the spot. She realized the madness of her words, seeing plainly that the man's condition was one which made both prayers and entreaties useless. Again he filled a cup and dashed it off. What his state would be in a few moments she dared not think. His back was toward her; now was her chance to escape! Slowly the girl edged her way toward the entrance. At last she reached it; her hand groped behind the

A laugh greeted her from the table. "What, surely, Mistress Fawkes—nay, by my troth, Mistress Fawkes it shall be no more, for 'tis too cold a title; therefore, Pretty Elinor—wouldst leave me, and thy errand but half done? I swear thy words did at first affright; but see, this good wine," he continued, advancing toward her unsteadily, "hath taught me wisdom, and this I know, our secret once hid in thy fair breast, could ne'er be driven forth, even if thou wished, as 'tis too warm a resting place for it to relinquish. Why dost thou shrink from me? Dost know," he added, a fierce gleam coming into his eyes, "I would try to pluck great Saturn from the heavens if thou wished to gird about thy waist his rings? Aye, and would give my soul for a kiss from thy warm lips, thinking my soul well sold. Elinor!" he exclaimed, in a husky voice, "hast thou never read my passion for thee? 'Tis written——"

"Then!" cried the girl, "think upon that love and for God's sake let me hence."

"What? Is my love so beggarly a thing that the only answer deigned to its utterance is a scurvy request to get beyond its hearing? Nay, I have looked upon thy frozen greetings long enough, and they, I tell thee, have poorly matched my ardor. Listen! Thou dost wish to go?" he questioned, placing himself before the door and holding to the curtains for support. "Well, I will ask but cheap recompense for the loss of thy fair company. 'Tis a kiss from thy red lips; what sayest thou?"

"And thou dost call thyself a gentleman!" exclaimed Elinor looking at him with scorn, her fear in a measure giving place to indignation at the insolent and shameless words. "Let me depart, I say—nay, I command thee."

"Ha! ha! Thou, I think, art carrying thyself loftily. 'Command!'" he repeated with a laugh. "Nay, marry! Here thou wilt stay until them thinkest thy going worth the price. And while thou dost meditate upon it I will drink to thy health." He staggered toward the table and refilled the cup. [Pg 105]

Elinor glanced about the room seeking some possible avenue of escape. Her eyes rested upon the portieres in front of the window; she moved toward them, but as her dress rustled Winter turned at the sound.

"Aye, walk the room, my pretty one; thou wilt find thy cage well barred. But enough of this," he continued, approaching her, "we do but delay. Thou didst ask thy father's release from his compact. Well, he shall be set free, but thou must recompense—not in coin, not in some heavy muttered penance, but by thy beauty." He caught the girl in his arms and whispered in her ear. Then the indignities which had been heaped upon her gave strength to her arm. No sooner had his drunken tongue uttered the sentence than she smote with all her might the face gazing into hers. The blow for a moment staggered the man and he released his hold; in that instant of freedom Elinor sprang toward the window, dashing the curtains aside.

"Stand back!" she cried, as he made a step toward her, his face purple with rage, "and for thy wicked words ask forgiveness from heaven ere it blast thee. Where is thy religion, where thy manhood, thou beast? Aye, beast is too good a term for such as thee, for they respect the sex—even the stag will not goad the doe. I fear thee not; move from where thou art and by the God who heard thy wicked words I'll cry thy infamy and treason in a voice which shall 'rouse all London, and wake the sleepy headsman to grind the axe. Now, I fear thee not!" [Pg 106]

For a moment Winter paused, looking at the girl. Then his quick wit, no longer dulled by the wine which had blinded him to the consequences of the words he had uttered, came to his aid, and he replied:

"What? And lay thy father's head, as well as mine, upon the block?"

The curtain dropped from the girl's hand; she staggered, catching it for support; then quickly recovered herself and with determination flashing from her eyes exclaimed: "Nay, then, I will not cry thy treason; my tongue is mute. But stir one foot and I leap from off the balcony, gladly embracing the cold stones beneath, rather than suffer a touch from thy guilty hands."

"Come! Come!" said Winter, baffled by her words and spirit; "I'll not harm thee. I was but heated by the wine. Thou mayst depart in peace."

"I put no faith in thy words," said Elinor, still standing by the casement, "for thou hast taught me how far one who calls himself a man may be trusted. Go thou and unbar the door," pointing imperiously with her hand; "then take thyself to the further end of the chamber and there stand."

Winter hesitated, but even his dulled faculties recognized the superiority of the girl's position, and he sullenly complied with her request. Not until he had retired to the extreme end of the room did Elinor leave her place. Then, she quickly fled into the corridor. Winter remained for a moment where he was and, mad with drunken rage when the closing of the outer door announced the escape of his victim, exclaimed: "Aye, thou hast outwitted me for a moment; but thy victory is not for long. I shall hold the laurel and also thee before daybreak." Then, staggering into the hall, he shouted: "Richard! Richard!" [Pg 107]

A man appeared at the bottom of the stairs. "Come! Stir thy scurvy legs; didst see the woman who this moment left me? Follow, and when at a place thou deemest fit, throw this heavy mantle about her, and bring her to me. She will struggle, I trow; but thou knowest the remedy. Tarry not; go swiftly, or she will escape."

At last Elinor was in the street, and, dazed for a moment by her sudden release from the peril in which she had just stood, with a terrified look over her shoulder—half fearing to see a staggering figure in pursuit, she fled in the direction of her home. But what form is this which glides from out the gate, and catching sight of the girl hurries in the direction she has taken? Like some evil phantom it moves, noiselessly and swiftly, ever keeping well in the shadows.

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## CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 108]

### WHAT THE MOON SAW.

But what of Fawkes? Did any gloomy thoughts disturb his rest? Did the shadow of the axe or gibbet fall athwart his dreams? If not, why turns he so uneasily in his slumber and at last awakes?

"Sleep sets ill upon me," he mutters, drawing a hand across his brow. In a moment he arose, hastily dressed himself, walked toward the window, opened it and gazed upon the night. Does some subtle bond of sympathy exist between him and the girl who is now in peril of death—or worse? It would seem so, for standing beside the casement, he exclaims:

"Am I a sickly child, or puny infant, that I awake, frightened by silly visions which war with sleep, and murder it ere 'tis fairly born? Troth!" he continued, with knitted brows, "'twas strange my fancy painted such a picture."

He stood for a moment wrapped in thought, then added, shaking his head as though unable to thrust aside the memories which troubled him:

"By the blessed Virgin! a most vivid dream. How she held her arms out to me, yet her lips were mute. Aye, and the eyes—the dumb horror written in them, as if beholding a specter which blanched the face and fettered the limbs. I believe," he added with a sudden resolution, "'tis a woman's trick, but I would fain see her face ere I rest again."

He stepped out into the corridor, proceeded in the direction of his daughter's room, and softly entering, advanced toward the bed. [Pg 109]

"Not here!" exclaimed he, beholding the empty couch. "Nay, thou canst not frighten me," he continued with a forced laugh, gazing about. "Come, show thyself; 'twas a merry jest, but let's have it done."

He paused; still no answer to his summons. "Elinor," he again called, a shadow of anxiety in his tone. "What means it that she is nowhere within hearing?"

He quickly retraced his steps, passed down the stairs and tried the hall door. It was unbarred, and opened to his touch.

"By heaven!" he exclaimed, "I could swear I shot those bolts before going to rest, and now they are drawn."

He stood anxiously looking out upon the star-lit night. His eyes wandered to the doorstep, and discerned upon its covering of frost the imprint of a small foot.

He stooped to examine the impression and hurriedly arose. "She has indeed left the house," he cried. "What can have taken the maiden out of doors at this hour of the night?—some secret tryst? Nay, I do but jest; she's not the kind to go a-courting after the moon is up. Mayhap," he continued, meditating a moment, "a neighbor was stricken ill and they have summoned Elinor to lend her gentle aid. Marry," added he in a relieved tone, on finding a plausible excuse for his daughter's absence, "I do recollect Master Carew's woman was soon expected to add one more trouble to her husband's household. It is most likely that she went there. 'Tis a dark way to travel, and I will give her a surprise. While thinking a lonely walk lies before her, Elinor will find an old but devoted cavalier to keep her company. First," added he with a laugh, "I'll fetch my blade; for 'twould ill befit a gallant in quest of beauty to go unarmed." [Pg 110]

So saying, he disappeared, and presently returned attired in a heavy mantle, and a long rapier girded to his side.

The moon was high, and its light, which whitened the gables of the houses, diffused a bright glimmer below, sufficient to enable Fawkes to proceed quickly upon his way. Frost had set in, and a keen wind blew; so he was glad to hurry on at a goodly pace. As the streets were quite deserted at this early hour of the morning, or haunted only by those whose business—whether for good or evil—forced them out of doors, he met no one and saw no lights. The man's mind was evidently filled with pleasant thoughts, for ever and anon a smile would flit across his face, as though he dwelt upon the surprised look of his daughter when she would behold him. These agreeable anticipations, which had taken the place for the moment of the sterner purposes which had of late engrossed him, were only thrust out by something which happened just then and brought him abruptly to himself.

It was the appearance of a woman, who suddenly issued from an alley a score of yards in front of

him, and with a quick glance over her shoulder, disappeared down another turn in the road. The movements of this apparition caused Fawkes to pause, when suddenly a second figure, this time a man, came into view and hurried in the direction taken by the girl. "By my hilt," whispered Fawkes, peering cautiously out of the shadow in which he stood, "that rogue had a most suspicious air about him; an honest man walks with more noise; but, by my soul! if there is not a third!"

The object which had called forth the last remark was still another figure, which came from the same quarter, and proceeded in the direction taken by the first two. "What queer business is now afoot?" Fawkes exclaimed, gazing after the retreating forms. "Mayhap ere long a trusty blade will not be amiss. I can well afford a few moments to see that all be fair."

[Pg 111]

So saying, and loosening his sword in its scabbard to make sure it was free if suddenly needed, he swiftly passed in the direction taken by the retreating figures. A few steps brought him to the head of the street down which the three had disappeared. By the light of the moon Fawkes distinctly saw the shadowy forms, and halting where he stood, watched their movements.

The girl was well in advance; the second person, hurrying after. The last of the two crossed to the opposite side of the way and walked well in the shadow cast by the gables of the houses. The girl cast a glance over her shoulder as if feeling the presence of one in pursuit, but evidently finding herself quite alone, slackened her pace to take breath. Now, the one nearest her made a strange move, if so be he were bent upon an honest mission; for as soon as the woman reduced her gait to a walk, the man loosened the long cloak hanging about his shoulders, and seizing it in both hands, moved swiftly and noiselessly in her direction. Aye, loose thy sword in its sheath, thou, standing in the shadow; for if there be in thee muscle for a fight, soon will the clash of steel ring out upon the frosty air.

The man was now up with the girl, who, on hearing footsteps, turned and uttered a scream. Once only does she raise the cry, for before she can a second time call out, the cloak is thrown over her head, a rough hand is at her throat, and she feels the pressure of a rope as it is deftly whipped about her. There was a momentary struggle; but it soon ceased, for the woman fainted, and was at the mercy of him who had trapped her. Is thy sword caught and useless? thy arm paralyzed? or what causes thee to stand unnerved and trembling? Was it the scream that rang out upon the midnight air? Had it the sound of a voice dear to thee even now?

[Pg 112]

The man lifted the light figure of the girl within his arms and hurried away. Aye, Effingston, heaven-sent was the sorrow which drove thee forth to seek solace from the night and stars; but, come, now is thy time!

Fear not for him—he has recovered himself—and, snatching his rapier from its sheath, with one or two quick bounds is up with the man, crying: "By the God above thee, release the woman ere I crush thy head, thou adder!"

The one thus addressed turned, and seeing the determined face at his elbow, paused, but retained his grasp upon the girl.

"Release her!" exclaimed Effingston, raising his sword, "ere I spit thee." The man allowed his burden to slip to the ground, the cloak fell from about her figure, and Elinor lay at the feet of him she loved.

"Thou art quick with thy command, Master," replied the other, coolly drawing his rapier. "Methinks thou hadst better attend to love affairs of thine own, rather than meddle in that with which thou hast no concern. Put up thy blade, I say, and go about thy business, ere I teach thee a trick or two which will let more ardor out of thy body than a three days' diet of beef can replace."

"Thou knave!" Effingston exclaimed, casting a quick glance at the motionless figure upon the ground, and pointing toward it with his rapier. "Dost call thyself a man, to steal behind and deal foul blows? Verily, thou craven dog, 'tis written in thy countenance, and he who runs may read, that thou hast not the courage even to look a woman in the eye, much less to face a man in honest fight."

[Pg 113]

"I'll hear no more of thy speech," cried the now angry man, leaping meanwhile to the middle of the road; "soon will I put holes in thy genteel carcass which will leave thy vitals cold for some time to come. Up with thy sword, if thy bravery be not all talk." He unfastened his leather jerkin and stood awaiting Effingston, who loosened the clasp of his mantle.

"By my troth," exclaimed Fawkes, who still retained his post of vantage; "I swear 'tis not my place to interfere; likely it will be a lusty fight, for both seem to have the proper spirit, and hold the weapon as those accustomed to the steel. Marry! it must be difficult to see the eyes in this light, but the point will be more readily kept track of."

The combatants crossed swords and stood at guard.

"If thou hast any friend to claim thy body, better write his name," said the man in the leather jerkin, as Effingston's blade touched his lightly, emitting a grating sound.

The only answer was a swift lunge, dexterously parried.

Not three blows were exchanged before Effingston realized that the man before him not only possessed the skill of one long used to sword play, but, further, combined with it the coolness and

the keen eye of an old duelist. Moreover, the neutral tint of his adversary's dress offered but a poor mark by which to gauge his thrust, while his own costume, being ornamented with silver, gave his antagonist most effective guidance whereby to aim his strokes.

[Pg 114]

The other, also, came to the conclusion that no mere novice stood before him, for Effingston had turned every thrust with an ease which surprised him; and several times his sword had crept so closely to the leather jerkin that three or four brown furrows had appeared upon it.

"Enough of this child's play," Effingston's antagonist hissed between his teeth, making another furious lunge. The impetus given to the thrust would have sent the blade to the hilt into the other's body had it come in contact with it, but Effingston met the blow in a way least expected, making use of a trick but little known in England at that time, for as quickly as the sword flew forward he stepped lightly aside, at the same time advancing his own weapon. The hilts came together with a crash; the guard of one was entangled in the bell of the other, and the two rapiers remained firmly interlocked. The men now stood so closely that their breasts touched, the breath issuing from their parted lips mingling in clouds. Suddenly, almost simultaneously, as if one read the intent in the other's eye, each slowly moved his left arm to his side, seeking the dagger he knew hung there. Again, on the same instant, the knives flashed forth; the men sprang quickly apart; the two rapiers went spinning on the roadway, and with a clatter, became disentangled as they fell. No time for breath; each knows it is to the death, and plenty of rest awaits one or both, perchance, in a few moments. The men leaped toward each other; a confused struggle ensued. Fawkes from his post could illy make out who had the advantage. Suddenly, Effingston's foot slipped, he was almost upon his knees—the man was upon him, one hand gripped his shoulder, forcing him to the ground, the other held the knife lifted high to add force to the blow; but that coveted strength cost him his life, for before the hand could descend, Effingston quickly raised his dagger, and drove it with all his might up to the guard in the neck left unprotected by his adversary's movement. The man clutched at the figure before him, the blade flew from his grasp and he dropped with a bubbling cry to the earth, the blood spurting from him as he fell.

[Pg 115]

"Marry!" exclaimed Fawkes, who through all the contest had been craning his neck and breathing hard with excitement, "that was a brave device but not one which I should care to try myself. By the Apostle Paul!" added he in surprise on hearing the bell of a distant church strike the hour, "it is three o'clock, and here am I watching two gentlemen, whose faces I cannot even see, settle a little difficulty about a woman. But 'twas a lusty fight, and for the moment made me forget the errand which called me forth." Saying which and with another glance down the road, he started upon his way.

The victor stood regarding his foe, who made one or two convulsive movements as if to arise, but fell back with the blood spouting from the wound and out his mouth. One more struggling effort he makes, but 'tis the last; with a violent convulsion of his whole body the man in the leather jerkin sinks to the earth to rise no more.

Effingston turned to the second figure lying upon the roadway, and as he gazed upon her, there was expressed on his countenance a certain degree of contempt, but, withal, a love which pride and resolution could not quite kill. As she lies there, the white face touched by the light of the moon, it is like looking upon the dead.

"O God," he whispered, as he suddenly knelt beside her, taking one of the white hands within his own, "would that she had died before—before——" He slowly raised the girl in his arms; then convulsively pressed the light figure to him, and letting his head sink upon her breast, sobbed as only a strong man can.

[Pg 116]

Again there was silence, broken only by the rattle of ice-covered twigs swept from the trees by the restless night wind. After a moment he regained composure and fell to chafing her hands.

A slight motion showed him the girl was slowly recovering from her long swoon. Gradually consciousness returned, and lifting her head from the cloak he had placed beneath it, she looked about in a confused way as though unable to make out her surroundings. Soon her gaze rested upon Effingston, who had drawn a little apart. Raising herself, she tottered toward him, and would have fallen had he not put an arm out to prevent her.

"What could have made thee treat me so?" she whispered, passing a hand across her face, as if endeavoring to brush away that which hindered her thoughts. "Have I not suffered enough?" she continued, piteously.

"I was not thy assailant," answered Effingston, motioning to the figure on the road; "there he lieth; thou canst go thy way in peace."

The girl glanced in the direction and shuddered. "And how came this about?" she questioned, in a dreamy tone, casting a frightened look at the thing in the path. "Oh, now I do recollect me," added she, softly, as though to herself, seemingly oblivious of her surroundings. "I had left Sir Winter, and deeming myself quite safe, was hurrying home, when—for truth, I can remember no more until I found thee near me." She ceased and looked up into his face with an innocent smile. Evidently the terrible strain to which her mind had been subjected effaced from it all previous impressions, or left only an indistinct recollection of what had transpired. "It was brave of thee," she murmured, in the same dreamy tone, placing her hand upon his arm.

[Pg 117]

At the name of Winter, Effingston drew back. Had she not by those unguarded words confirmed

her guilt? All his pride and anger returned. The resolutions which had but a moment since departed, banished by that helpless figure in the moonlight, now came again with greater strength. Of what weakness, he asked himself, had he been guilty? Of kissing the lips not yet cold from the caresses of him who had defiled them.

"Very—brave—in—thee," the girl repeated, in a dull monotone.

Effingston glanced at her, but that piteously bewildered face cannot move him, and he coldly answered:

"'Tis the duty of every gentleman to protect the life of a woman, even though her shame be public talk."

Evidently the girl had not heard, or at least the words made no impression upon her brain, for she nestled closely to him like a frightened child seeking protection.

"Come," he whispered. She obeyed without a word. They passed upon their way in silence and at last reached her dwelling. Effingston opened the door which stood unbarred, and assisted her to enter. He turned to go, not trusting himself to speak.

"Thou wert not always accustomed to leave me thus," exclaimed the girl, in a voice destitute of expression. "See," she continued, "I will kiss thee even without thy asking," and before the man realized her intent, she threw her arms about him and pressed her lips to his. "They are cold," she murmured, with a shiver. "But the night is chilly—look! now the east is streaked with red." Turning, she pointed to the sky, dyed with the crimson light of coming day. The ruddy glow crept up, touching the girl and turning the snow at her feet to the color of the rose.

[Pg 118]

"Come to me, dear heart," she whispered, holding out her arms; "take me to thee, that on thy breast I may find a sweet and dreamless sleep."

The sun arose; but upon no sadder sight than this man, who plodded wearily homeward—warring forces within, and a desert all about. On his way through the silent streets, made more desolate by the cheerless light of coming day, he saw for a moment a mirage of an honorable love and happiness. In the fair city of his dream he beheld a bright and happy home, made so and adorned by the girl whose kiss was still upon his lips. There, always awaited him a heart which, through its love, added to each blessing, and dulled every sorrow. Ever on the portal stood a being he worshiped, who, with her fair arms wreathed a welcome of love about him. They pass within; a bright face offers itself for a kiss; fondly he stoops, but the dream vanishes;—in the breaking of the morn he stands alone;—hope dead within his breast.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 119]

### AT "THE SIGN OF THE LEOPARD."

Winter waited long for his servant's return. He walked restlessly up and down the chamber, ever and anon pausing, either for recourse to the flagon on the table, or to draw aside the curtains and gaze out upon the street. At last, sinking into a chair with a muttered curse at the long delay, he fell into deep sleep, overcome by the wine in which he had so freely indulged. Dawn broke gray and cheerless. The first rays of the sun penetrated into the chamber and fell upon the sleeper,—his position was unchanged since the small hours of the night. Gradually, as the light increased, he stirred uneasily, awoke, and rubbing his eyes, looked about as though not sure of the surroundings. His eye rested upon the flagon, then slowly traveled toward the window. The recollection of the last night, however, flashed before him, and springing from the chair, he dashed out into the corridor.

"Richard!" he called. No answer followed his summons.

"Richard," he repeated, in a still louder tone. The only response was the echo of his own voice.

"What mad business be this?" exclaimed he, retracing his steps and looking wildly about the apartment. "By this cursed drink have I brought ruin to our hopes and cause. Out upon thee," he cried in a transport of passion, suddenly seizing the flagon, and flinging it with all his might across the room. The heavy piece of metal struck the wall, sending out a deluge of wine, and falling with a crash, shattered into fragments an ivory crucifix resting upon a small table. Winter stood aghast at the havoc wrought.

[Pg 120]

"An omen," he whispered, white to the lips, glancing about with frightened looks, then kneeling to take up the broken cross.

"See," he cried, holding with trembling fingers the image of the crucified Savior which had escaped the wreck, and now dripped with wine;—"Christ's wounds do open their red mouths and bleed afresh at my awful deeds." The man arose, crossed himself, and thrust the image into his doublet, then wiping the sweat from his brow sank into a chair.

"'Tis not by these tremblings, or vain regrets, that I may fortify myself, or mend what's done," he exclaimed. "I must bethink me, and let reason check the consequences of my folly. The girl

asseverated that she heard all which transpired at her house last night. Oh, most unfortunate chance which gave the words into her ear! What foul fiend did raise the cup to my lips and leave my wit too weak to turn the deadly stroke? Nay," he continued, after several moments, shaking his head, "she'll not make known the purport of our speech, for the love she bears her father is a potent hostage for her silence, and if I be judge, Mistress Elinor will make scant mention of her visit yesternight. Even if there be small love in her heart for me, a most wholesome fear doth take its place, and for my present purpose one will serve as fittingly as the other. Marry," he continued, with a smile, seemingly relieved by his reflections, "thy ready wit hath at last returned; but by St. Paul! what hath become of that varlet Richard? 'Tis more than likely the open door of some pot house spoke more strongly to him than my command, and 'tis most providential if my surmise be true; I must have been mad indeed to trust the rogue on such a mission. Small doubt but that he heard all which transpired here last night, for he hath a most willing ear to listen, and a tongue given to wag. 'Twould be a heaven-sent deed if something would occur to silence his speech, for his knowledge, if he hath the wit to know its value, may be a deadly menace to our cause. When he returns I'll give the knave silver to quit the country; or, perchance," he added, a hard, cunning look coming into his eyes as he put his hand upon a small dagger at his side, "if that will not suffice, 'twill be necessary for our safety to introduce him to more sturdy metal."

[Pg 121]

The man arose and proceeded to efface the marks of dissipation, and set his disordered dress to rights, saying as he finished, "I must to my appointment with Garnet. Marry," he added, donning hat and mantle, "I hope he is safely housed, and that my letter to Giles Martin, which the worthy prelate was to present, did insure him some extra attention, as a pot house, at its best, must be a poor refuge for a priest."

It was early in the morning and few people were astir.

"Gramercy," quoth Winter, when he had proceeded some distance on his way, "would that some person were abroad that I might enquire the direction to 'The Sign of the Leopard;' I swear," he added, glancing about, "it must be in this neighborhood, but I can illy guess where." Looking, he perceived a group of men a little distance down the street. "There be some worthies," exclaimed he, "who can perhaps direct me to the hostelry." As he approached he saw they were regarding a figure lying upon the ground.

[Pg 122]

"Nay, Master Alyn," said one, "thou hadst best do naught but let it await removal by the King's guard; if thou disturb the body surely questions might be asked which 'twould bother thy head to answer."

"Beshrew my heart," exclaimed the man addressed, who, judging from his appearance, was a small tradesman, "I can ill afford to have this evil thing lying upon my step, preventing what little trade might drift this way."

Winter now came up with the group, and as they turned at the sound of his footsteps, he could see that the object of their remarks was a man lying face downward on the flagging, and his attitude of relaxation showed that death had overtaken him.

"What hast thou here, my men?" Sir Thomas exclaimed, "some victim of a drunken brawl?"

"That we cannot make out," answered the first speaker, touching his hat, on perceiving—by his dress and manner—that the questioner was a gentleman, possibly one in authority, "but for truth, he has been stuck as pretty as a boar at Yule-tide. Thou mayst look for thyself," he added, with some little pride, as of a showman exhibiting his stock, and laying hold of the body by the shoulders he turned it over, so that the distorted face gazed up at the sky.

Winter started at the sight, unable to repress a cry, for before him was the body of his servant. His wish had indeed been fulfilled; those silent lips would tell no tales.

"What, good sir!" cried he who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, on noting the white face of the other; "doth thy stomach turn so readily?"

"Nay," replied Winter, raising a gauntlet to hide his emotion, "but they who meet death suddenly are seldom sweet to look upon, and—and—for truth, I have not yet broke my fast; canst direct me to a certain hostelry in this neighborhood known as 'The Sign of the Leopard?'"

[Pg 123]

"I can, Master, for many a pot of ale I've drank in that same place. Look," he continued, pointing, "if thou wilt follow this street until the second turning to the right, from there thou canst readily see the tavern's sign."

"My thanks to thee," said Winter, taking a coin from his purse and handing it to the man. His eyes again for a moment turned upon the prostrate figure. "And my friends," added he, "I would deem it expedient that ye notify the guards, and have this unsightly thing removed." He then turned and proceeded in the direction given him. This incident brought a renewal of the apprehensions which had haunted him earlier in the morning, and he muttered as he went on his way: "There is the first consequence of my folly, and the next may be—nay, courage; heaven will not be so merciless as to permit one evil deed to overthrow our cause. God will pardon this hasty sin, when he who committed it doth risk life in His holy work. But," he added, with a smile, "'tis providential justice which slew the man, for the dead utter no words." At last he arrived before the house which he sought. "Marry," he exclaimed, gazing at the exterior of the tavern; "'tis indeed a sorry place for the saintly Garnet to reside in, but it has the advantage of being a secure retreat." He



tried the door, which yielded to his touch, and entered the apartment. On the tables stood the remains of last night's libations, and the air hung heavy with the odor of stale tobacco smoke. Over all was a spell of silent desolation, as if the ghosts of the songs and merry jests, which had echoed from the walls, had returned with aching heads to curse the room.

[Pg 124]

"This is a sweet place, truly," said Winter, looking upon the table. After a short delay the sound of footsteps could be heard approaching, a door opened and the host entered. Giles Martin, not at once recognizing the man who stood by the table, regarded his guest with some little surprise, for a customer at that early hour was rare.

"To what may I serve thee, sir?" said he, advancing toward Winter. "Well, Master Martin," exclaimed the one addressed, "dost so soon forget a face? It is, I swear, a poor trick for a landlord."

"What, Sir Thomas?" cried the other in surprise, holding out his hand, "I did not recognize thee in this uncertain light. A thousand pardons, and highly am I honored to find thee in my humble house."

"'Tis but small honor I do thee," replied the man, with a laugh, drawing off his gauntlets. "Didst receive my letter?"

"Aye, that I did, and have shown the bearer of it every courtesy which this poor tavern can provide. Much am I gratified to learn that Sir Thomas Winter remembered one whom he hath not seen since——"

"Nay, good Martin, I do recall the time thou wouldst name. But pray tell me, is my cavalier friend up at this early hour, for I would confer with him."

Giles cast a quick glance at the speaker, then letting his eyes fall, said:

"That he is, and little hath he slept this night, for 'twas late ere he arrived, and when I arose I heard him walking about."

"Then wilt thou tell him I await; or—nay, stop—thou needst not announce me; I will see him in his chamber. Show the way, I will follow."

[Pg 125]

"As thou dost wish," said Giles, turning to open a door which hid a flight of rickety stairs leading to the floor above. Reaching the landing Winter noted that Martin was about to follow and exclaimed:

"Nay, show me the portal, I will not trouble thee further. And if thou wilt be so kind, see to it that we are not disturbed in our conversation."

"Have no fear for that, Sir Thomas, I will take care that none do interrupt. The room is in front of thee," saying which, Martin turned and descended the stairs.

Winter tapped upon the panel.

"Enter," said a quiet voice.

He lifted the latch and passed into the room. The prelate had evidently been engaged in prayer, for, as the other stepped within, the priest was arising from his knees. His face seemed in strange contrast to the garb he had donned; the delicate, almost effeminate features of the man were little in keeping with the gay attire of a cavalier.

"Ah, Sir Thomas," exclaimed the Jesuit, advancing with gentle dignity and extended hand, "glad am I to see thee, for I have been more than lonely, but," he added, with a bright smile, "'tis not my nature to complain; these be but small discomforts, and gladly would I endure greater in the service of my Master. Hast any news? Hath aught happened since we met? But pray be seated," he added, pointing to one of the two chairs, which, with a low bed, comprised the furniture of the room.

"Nay, good father, nothing hath transpired," replied the other, a shade passing athwart his face; "and now tell me, what dost thou think of Fawkes? Is his enthusiasm great enough to serve our purpose?"

[Pg 126]

"A most terrible man, but one whose cruelty rests upon the love of God. Indeed, it is as thou didst say, if each Catholic in England were possessed of but one-half his zeal, then would the gutters run red with the blood of heretics; 'twas such as he who made the eve of St. Bartholomew. Are we free to speak?" queried Garnet, leaning toward the other.

"Quite free," replied Winter, "a faithful friend of mine is on guard that we be not interrupted."

"Then, 'tis well; I have spent the night in prayer, beseeching the Almighty to lead my mind aright that I may decide the justice of the plan proposed. Ah," exclaimed the Jesuit, arising, and with hands clenched before him, "'tis a hideous act, but," an expression of fierceness coming into his gentle face, "my supplication was answered, the deed is favored by God, for He hath sent me a token of His approval."

"A token, thou sayest, good father?" exclaimed Winter in an awed voice.

"Verily," cried Garnet, raising his eyes to heaven, "a sign from Him whose cause we serve. 'Twas thus: Long had I knelt in prayer, long had I raised my voice that He who holds the oceans in His

palm, and guides the planets in their courses, would lead me to a wise decision. 'O God,' I cried, 'send thou some token that I may know thy will.' Even as I gazed upon the crucifix clenched in my unlifted hand, the message I so craved had come, for the cross was stained with blood, which from it fell in sluggish drops. I looked more intently, filled with amazement, and perceived that so closely had I pressed the silver image of the blessed Savior it had cut into the flesh. But 'twas God's voice in answer to my prayer."

"Most marvelous," whispered Winter, crossing himself. "But didst thou comprehend all that Fawkes proposed? Hast dwelt on every point?" [Pg 127]

"Think not, my son," the prelate answered, "that because my eyes have long been used to the dim light of the sanctuary, they have not perceived all the horror of that which must be done. But now," he cried, his pale face flushed with emotion, "God in His wisdom hath for a time taken from me the crucifix and given in its place the sword. So be it," he continued, drawing the rapier hanging by his side and kissing the cross formed by the blade and handle, "He shall not find Henry Garnet wanting, for not until the Angelus doth sound from Landsend to Dunnet Head, will this hand of mine relax its hold, unless death doth strike the weapon from it."

"Ah, good father," cried Winter in admiration of the other's spirit, "thy enthusiasm and courage are surely heaven born, but," he whispered, "if we fail, what then?"

"We cannot," broke in the Jesuit, his eyes alight with the fervor of his spirit. "Have I not told thee that heaven approves our act? Victory belongs to us; the White Dove doth rest upon our helms. 'Tis true that some of us may perish, but what of them? Their fame shall live from age to age, and never will the call to Mass or Vespers sound, never will the clouds of incense mount upward—streaming past the Host without their names being within the hearts and on the tongues of the worshipers. Think how greatly we be blessed," he continued, laying his hand fondly upon the other's shoulder;—"a few, a happy few, who have been thus elected to raise the cross of Christ from out the dust. Nay," he added, shaking his head, "I would not wish our danger one jot or tittle less, for, methinks, some portion of the glory which is now our own might depart with it, and I could illy bear the loss of even one small gem which must rest in the immortal crown of our recompense." [Pg 128]

"Then thou dost feel our victory is assured," said Winter, in a constrained voice, looking anxiously toward Garnet.

"Nay, I do not feel—I am certain," replied the prelate, decisively. "And now there rests with us the duty of forming our plans, making everything ready to strike the mighty blow. What hast thou to offer or suggest?"

"Good father, I would not take upon myself to offer a suggestion," said Winter; "but methinks it would be well that we all assemble and discuss the matter more fully."

"And where shall the gathering be held?—at the house of Master Fawkes?"

"Not so," replied the other, so abruptly that the priest turned upon him an enquiring glance. "I mean," continued Winter, noting the look, "'twould be unwise for us to be seen again meeting in that place; it might arouse curiosity, and that might be fatal."

"Then what wouldst thou say to my Lord Catesby's?"

"Nay, for I deem the same objection doth apply to his dwelling. I would suggest we gather at the house of Sir Everard Digby. Will't suit thee, father?"

"I think thy caution most commendable, and thy proposition the best. And when shall the meeting be?"

"Say a week hence," replied Winter. "In the meantime I will see Sir Everard, and make the necessary arrangements. But what of thee till then?"

"Disturb not thyself, my son, concerning me," replied the prelate; "I will content myself, and be right comfortable in the care of thy friend the host. Dost think he hath suspicions?" [Pg 129]

"Nay," replied the other. "In truth, if his suspicions were aroused, he would be silent; such poor taste hath he, that love for me would make him dumb, and with it is the fact that the man is a zealous Catholic; methinks if his help could be safely won he would be most valuable to us. Shouldst thou find a fitting opportunity it might be well to sound the man."

"I will do so," replied the prelate, "if a chance doth offer itself."

"And now," continued Winter, rising, "I must away. Be ever careful, father, for thy loss would signify the destruction of our hopes."

"My son," answered the other, with a smile, "thou dost speak from thy heart; but methinks, if at this moment Henry Garnet were dragged away and hurried toward the block, the mighty work would be continued; success doth rest in higher hands than mine. Now, until we meet again, may the peace of Him whose servants we are rest upon thee."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.

Some leagues from London, in the shire of Buckingham, was situated the country residence of Sir Everard Digsby, who, with Catesby, Wright and Percy, was present at the house of the latter on the night in which Fawkes reached the city, whither he had been summoned by a letter from Sir Thomas Winter. The dwelling of the young nobleman, being somewhat remote from the more populous districts of the shire, seemed a fitting place for such discussion, and, perchance, of more weighty matters, pertaining to the fast-growing conspiracy against the King and his Parliament. This place Winter had suggested to Garnet as the safest spot for the Catholic gentlemen to assemble for the discussion of their plan.

'Twas the custom that those noblemen whose wealth afforded them two dwellings, one in London and another in the rural districts, should oft entertain at the latter such of their companions as pleased them; and these, riding forth from the city, singly or in goodly numbers, might pass but a single night, but sometimes when occasion served, a fortnight, in merrymaking at their host's expense. Such being a common practice throughout the kingdom little danger of causing suspicion lay in the fact that Winter, Rookwood, Catesby, Wright and such others as had been admitted to their council, departed from London in company. Garnet, indeed, had ridden on before them, attended by Sir Digsby and Fawkes, nor had any noted their departure; or, if perchance they did, were not disposed to comment upon it.

[Pg 131]

A staunch Catholic and a zealous follower of the Jesuits, Everard Digsby had lent himself willingly to the cause of his brother churchmen, having long ago satisfied himself that their actions were justified. In fact, his present convictions were to some extent the outcome of early teachings, for even at a tender age his mind had been under Catholic influence, and therefore it was not strange that on reaching manhood he should be a strong adherent of Romish doctrine. And still further, his attitude was less to be wondered at, when considered that the seeds of these same convictions were planted by no other hand than the friend, tutor and spiritual adviser of his youth—Henry Garnet. In truth, he had surpassed the zeal of many associates, for being denied the full privilege of such worship as his faith taught him, he had caused to be erected within the walls of his country residence a small chapel, fitted up under supervision of the Superior of the English Jesuits.

Somewhat early in the evening the little cavalcade rode into Buckinghamshire, and having reached their destination, were received with much cordiality by the young nobleman and his more austere companions. The ride from London, on account of the inclemency of the weather, had been most disagreeable, and the travelers were nothing loth to stretch their chilled limbs before the great fire prepared in readiness for their arrival, and to partake heartily of the well ordered refreshments which their host had caused to be in waiting. Having satisfied the carnal man, they were the more willing to turn to the spiritual repast which had drawn them together; for in each mind the conviction was strong that in plotting against the King they were but serving the ends of God.

[Pg 132]

"Good gentlemen," said Garnet, the company having drawn about the fire in a room somewhat remote from the more inhabited part of the dwelling, "having partaken so freely of worthy Everard's hospitality, it is most fitting that we turn for a season to that which has summoned us from London. Methinks there be none absent?"

Catesby ran his eyes over the group about him, checking each off on his fingers. "Winter, my Lord of Rookwood, good Percy, Wright, Francis Tresham and Master Guido," said he, "these with Your Reverence, Sir Everard and myself, make up the number—nine."

"'Tis well," exclaimed Garnet, fixing his eyes for an instant on the face of each. "Certain things have arisen which render it most expedient that we make common cause with each other—what think ye?"

"That the time is ripe for the maturing of such plans as best are suited to our purpose," replied Rookwood; "James hath again declared against us."

"'Tis even so," broke in Percy, "and at the house of Master Fawkes when thou wert absent, there arose some discussion as to certain ways and methods best fitted to——"

"Ah!" cried Winter, looking toward the corner where was seated the soldier of fortune, with his chin upon his hand; "the opportunity has not served since our last meeting to inquire concerning thy good mother and thy daughter, friend Guido. Tell me, I pray, did the gathering of so many armed men in thy chamber disturb their slumbers?"

"Nay," replied Fawkes, gruffly; "the dame knew nothing of it; neither my daughter, of that——"

[Pg 133]

"And the lass," continued Winter, eyeing the man closely, "is she well and cheerful as becomes her youth and loveliness?"

"As to cheerfulness," answered the other, a shade of sadness coming into his face, "methinks the merry smile hath forever forsaken her lips, for now she looketh so pale and wan it doth seem but the shadow of her former self wandering about the house; but thank God, the worst is over, and she is on the road to recovery."

"And hath Mistress Elinor been ill?" inquired Winter, turning a surprised look toward the speaker.

"I had deemed," answered Fawkes, "that my absence from thy house for nigh on to a week would indicate to thee that something was amiss. I every day expected to——"

"For truth," broke in the other in a relieved tone, "had I known that thy daughter lay ill I would for a surety have called. But, pray, tell me; is she better now?"

"As I have said, she is better; but not herself as yet. In fact, it was on the night of the meeting at my dwelling, after ye had all departed, that I went for a breath of air upon the street and—and—well, it was when I returned that I found the girl in a high fever, and looking much as though she had beheld a foe. The fever spent itself in three days; now, 'tis but the after weakness which afflicts her."

"Thank God for her recovery!" exclaimed Winter, as he eyed Fawkes narrowly; but finding nothing in his countenance to arouse alarm, sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief.

"And now," said Garnet, who had listened with attention to the dialogue, "since thy last words have banished from my mind the anxiety called forth by the recital of thy fair daughter's illness, we may again turn our thoughts toward other matters, and listen to good Catesby here." [Pg 134]

"As thou knowest," began Catesby, "it hath ever been my desire to act quickly. Therefore I would suggest that no time be lost in carrying out such designs as will rid the kingdom of our enemies."

"Well spoken," cried Digsby; "to that we are agreed."

Garnet smiled sadly. "Would that all England cried amen!" said he, solemnly. Then turning suddenly to Fawkes, "and thou, Master Guido, what sayest thou?"

The soldier of fortune looked up quickly. "I am ever ready," said he, "whether we deal with all those in authority, or with the King alone."

"Then?" cried Winter, "then?——"

Garnet cast down his eyes, the soul of the priest struggling with dark apprehensions which arose within him. "If there were any shadow of sin in it," he murmured, "I would not countenance the bringing of it to an issue. No other reason hath drawn me into it save ardent and active interest in the cause of God." Then facing his companions he continued: "'Tis the will of Christ that in the hands of His weakest subjects shall be placed the sword of vengeance which shall sweep these infidels from the land. Good Catesby hath oft pondered in his mind, with some impatience, the meaning of my check upon his zeal. 'Twas that I might seek through prayer a way to our deliverance. That the time is near a revelation hath been vouchsafed to me from heaven."

A murmur ran through the little company. The priest's voice changed from tones of solemnity to those of one who spake with authority; and stretching forth the hand, he said: "We are of one mind. Perchance Master Fawkes hath opened a way whereby shall be destroyed both the King and his Parliament. What can effect our purpose quicker than the flash of gunpowder? God hath placed it in our hand for us to use, and do His will. Yet other things remain; the door being opened, will those who watch us from abroad unite with us in restoring to this unhappy England its altars and its sacrifices? Sir Thomas Winter, thou hast been in France and Spain to do man's bidding; wouldst go thither in obedience to the will of God?" [Pg 135]

Winter started, for the meaning of the other's words implied much. "Is it a mission?" he asked, fixing his gaze upon the Jesuit.

"Aye!" replied Garnet; "a mission of much danger, and one which will need all secrecy. At the Court of France dwell certain members of my Order, close to the King, and deep in affairs of State. Before them I will lay our undertaking, that when England shall be without a government and all the land involved in perplexity and beset with controversies, the armies of the Catholic Kings may come among us—the way being prepared for their entrance."

A murmur of approval burst from Catesby, Rookwood and Percy. "And if Sir Winter hesitates," cried the former, "I will——"

"Say no more," interrupted Winter; "this day week will see me at the Court of France."

"And thou, friend Guido," said Garnet, blandly, "thou art of ready wit, and a good sword may be needful. Shall brave Winter go alone?"

Fawkes knitted his brows—"I little thought to again leave England so soon," he replied, gruffly; "yet ere another sunset will I be ready if thus I may serve the cause." [Pg 136]

A look of kindness came into the Jesuit's eyes; the blind zeal of the man, a zeal that thrust all other thoughts aside, touched him, and with quick perception he saw in the rough cavalier one who, did all others fail, would with his single hand hurl the thunderbolt. Taking from his bosom a small silver crucifix, he laid it in Fawkes' hand. "Give this," said he, quietly, "unto thy daughter; 'twill guard her during thine absence. Aye! and dost thou fear to leave her? I swear to thee, I will see to it that she lacketh nothing."

Fawkes turned upon him a look of deep devotion. Bred in superstition, the fact that the priest understood that which troubled him—fear for the safety of his daughter—seemed a sign from

heaven. He kissed the crucifix reverently, and put it in his bosom between the hard steel of his cuirass and his heart.

Garnet turned to the group. "One thing remains," said he solemnly; "'tis the oath which, registered before heaven, shall hold each to his purpose. Sir Digsby, let us to thy chapel, that beneath the shadow of the cross we may seek that blessing without which all our deeds are sinful, and our purposes as sand."

Solemnly the little company, headed by the priest and Sir Everard, wended their way toward the chapel. No words were exchanged between them, for all were deep in thought. As they passed into the chamber set aside for worship, each reverently knelt and crossed himself, then took up a position in front of the altar. As it was late and the brief winter twilight faded from the sky, the chapel lay shrouded in deep gloom, relieved only by the red light burning in a hanging lamp suspended before the tabernacle, holding the consecrated elements. To the men there was something fearfully solemn in their surroundings. Before them stood that altar for the preservation of which they were about to pledge their lives. [Pg 137]

As their eyes became more accustomed to the subdued light, they beheld shadow-like forms slowly appear upon the walls, and while intently gazing, these apparitions gradually materialized and assumed definite shape, resolving themselves into paintings portraying the last scenes in the life of Christ. Penetrating everything was the clinging odor of incense, which, in some subtle way, brings to mind the awful majesty of God.

Presently Garnet emerged from the sacristy, bearing in his hand a flaming taper with which he lighted the candles on the altar. The Jesuit had placed over the costume which he wore a cope of deep red, richly embroidered with gold, and evidently the priest had not even laid aside his rapier, for its dull clank could be heard as he walked about. The rattle of the steel broke discordantly upon the deep silence, but was it not symbolic? A deed of violence was about to be committed, cloaked in the garb of religion!

Finishing his task, he knelt before the altar in silent prayer. Then arising, he passed to the gate of the rood screen, where his commanding figure was thrown into bold relief by the altar lights. Presently seating himself, he said in low and solemn tones to the men kneeling in the darkness: "Consider well, my brethren, the step ye are about to take; for he who turns back will be likened unto the woman who glanced over her shoulder at a city burning;—to pillars of craven cowardice would ye be changed—monuments to mark how men, even when their duty shone clear as though emblazoned on the azure vault of heaven, lacked heart to carry it out. Consider it well, then, all of you!" [Pg 138]

The deep voice of the priest rose as he uttered the last words, and its resonant tone returned in echoes from the vaulted ceiling as if each statted saint from out his niche cried: "Consider it well."

"Are ye all prepared?" he asked. A deep "All prepared" answered his question.

"'Tis well. Now shall I register your vows before the unveiled Host and upon the crucifix, that in the very presence of the Son of God ye may swear to perform them unto the end. To thee, my son," continued the Superior, addressing Catesby, "will I first administer the oath, for 'twas thy hand which was foremost to lift itself in the holy cause."

The man arose and knelt before the Jesuit. "Dost swear," said the priest, holding a crucifix before the other's eyes, "that as thou dost hope for salvation through the blood of Christ, so thou wilt yield thy blood if need be in this holy work; setting aside all else until a Catholic doth occupy the throne of England?"

"I swear it, father," answered Catesby, reverently pressing his lips to the cross.

To every one of the eight did the Superior give the oath, and then took the same himself.

"And now," said Garnet, when the men had once more resumed their places, "do we proceed to administer to each the sacrament which alone can fill your minds and bodies with sufficient strength to carry out our holy purpose."

The priest arose and turned toward the altar, bowed, then slowly ascended the steps. After unlocking the door of the tabernacle with a golden key, he drew forth from the recess the Monstrance containing the eucharist. Again he bowed, then elevated the Host, while the stillness was only broken by the deep tone of the sacring-bell, the men bending in adoration. Once more the priest made reverence; then arising, took from out the Monstrance the pyx, and facing the group, repeated the words: "Ecce Agnus Dei." All arose and knelt before him on the steps, receiving from his hands the sacrament, and when they had partaken, each silently returned to his place. A sense of the solemnity of their undertaking, accentuated by the awfulness of the act in which they were engaged, filled the men's hearts so that they scarcely beheld the Jesuit ascend to the altar and replace the Host within the tabernacle, or heard the benediction he pronounced.... [Pg 139]

Once more the men stood in the room they occupied previous to their entrance into the chapel. All seemed loath to speak, being deeply impressed by the ceremony in which they had taken part.

At last Fawkes made ready for departure, being desirous of reaching London ere daybreak. As he approached the door of the room the Superior arose and passed toward him. "Friend Guido," said

Garnet, as the other stood ready for the journey, "I will not see thee ere thou and Sir Winter return from France. Let thy mind be at ease regarding thy daughter, for in thy absence I will have her under my special care. Hadst better mention to her that she will have a visitor?"

"I will be guided by thee in the matter, good father," returned Fawkes; "but," he continued, in a husky tone, "guard her well, for she is very dear to me."

"Have no fear," Garnet answered, kindly, laying a hand upon the other's shoulder; "in that will I be as zealous as though she were a daughter of mine own."

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## CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 140]

### "THOU SHALT NOT KILL."

The deduction made by Winter concerning the silence of Elinor had been correct; but the power he had deemed potent to restrain her from uttering what she had overheard, and from giving voice to the indignities he in his drunkenness had heaped upon her, was not alone the reason of her silence; the mind was held in a species of lethargy. Now her father had left England; the motive which prompted his departure she could surmise,—his mission was an enigma. And who was his companion? The man whose face was ever before her, whose touch haunted her in dreams causing her to awake and cry in terror to the Virgin for protection. The girl was wrought up to a state of hysterical expectancy. Even when sitting within doors, an exclamation upon the street would cause her to start, fearing it might be a voice proclaiming the fulfillment of the awful threat which ever sounded in her ears. Never did she go abroad and behold a group of men but she approached with trembling limbs and nervous eagerness, feeling that the first words falling from their lips would be that England was without a king. What the effect of this anxiety might have been had she brooded over it long in solitude, is not difficult to tell. But solace arose from an unexpected quarter. On his departure for France, Fawkes had mentioned that there was in the city a certain friend, his companion several years before, whom he had again lately met and asked to call from time to time to inquire if he might render any service. The girl awaited the arrival of this visitor with trepidation and some anxiety, being well aware that the companions of her father were, as a rule, men of little refinement, accustomed to the rough life of a camp, and more at their ease in a pot-house than in the society of a young woman. Her expectations were pleasantly disappointed, for on his first visit the stranger, by his ease and grace of manner, banished from her mind all doubts concerning him. Although habited in the garb of a soldier of the period, there was about him something—a peculiar refinement of speech, a dignity of carriage, a certain reverent homage which he rendered unto her—that won from the girl a feeling of respect and confidence. His visits, far from being cause for apprehension, had become the one bright spot in her daily life; in his company Elinor for a brief time forgot the terrible anxiety to which she was a prey.

[Pg 141]

The only circumstance which impressed her as strange was that "Captain Avenel"—for by this name he had introduced himself—seldom visited the house by day, and there was always a certain amount of implied rather than actual caution in his movements, which seemed to the girl odd, as nothing else in his manner could be deemed in the least mysterious.

On one of those evenings, which Elinor now looked forward to with some pleasure, she and "Captain Avenel" sat together in a little room of Fawkes' dwelling.

"And didst say thou hadst intelligence of my father?" inquired she, eagerly.

"This very morning," answered the man, "did I receive a letter brought by packet from Calais, and in the note he wished me to make known his safe arrival; further, that he would by the next mail write thee, telling all about his travels. Now thou canst set thy mind at rest concerning him, for France in our time offers but few dangers, though in truth I think thy sire hath the look of one to whom peril would be a diversion."

[Pg 142]

"England doth offer more dangers than France," answered the girl, who was now abstractedly gazing into the fire.

Garnet turned a swift glance in her direction. The words awakened in the priest that feeling of apprehension which had ever been present in his mind since his arrival in London, but until now it had not been called forth by word or deed of hers. On the contrary, in her society the Jesuit felt for some reason, probably the innocence and loveliness of the girl, a sensation of rest and security that enabled him to throw off the dread of detection which so constantly possessed him. But he turned and inquired in a quiet tone:

"And dost deem England such a dangerous country?"

"Nay," replied Elinor, hesitatingly, "England doth seem all peace and quietude, but——" here she stopped, fearing the man might read what lay hidden in her heart, for he was regarding her with a look of surprise as he noted her embarrassment.

"Come, my daughter," said he kindly, his gentle heart touched by the fear written on her face, "I have suspected long that some matter did trouble thee. If I have power to lend aid, consider my

whitening hair, and hesitate not to confide in me, who am old enough to enjoy the blessing of being called father by thee."

Elinor looked into the benevolent countenance.

"Fear not," he continued in a persuasive voice, "if I can counsel thee, thy wish for help is granted ere 'tis asked."

[Pg 143]

She raised her head and met a look of gentle sympathy long unknown to her, and for which her poor heart so fondly yearned. The tears sprang to her eyes and her self control, that which the brutality of Winter could not break down, gave way. She turned toward him like a poor tired bird after battling with a storm; her weakness could not endure longer to see protection neath the leaf and branches of his goodness and not avail herself of it.

In a moment more the words had passed her lips,—all that she had overheard, the words uttered by Fawkes, and the fear and anguish which since had haunted her.

"Is there naught I can do?" she cried. "O God! when did I ever commit a sin worthy of the punishment?" She raised her eyes to Garnet. "Even thou art pale to the lips from the hideousness of the thing."

Through the girl's confession, Garnet's attitude remained unchanged. At her first words he started, but with an effort controlled himself. The sudden revelation that their plans were known by one outside those who composed the little band consecrated to the holy cause, filled him with a terror which, at first, reason was unable to check. But as she proceeded, the quick mind of the priest perceived that the girl's one thought was, not to save the King, nor to defeat their hopes, but only to deliver her father from the danger to which he was exposed. The fear gradually passed away, and as Elinor ceased speaking, the strongest feeling in the prelate's mind was one of sympathy for her who wept before him.

"Is there naught," Garnet inquired, mildly, when the girl had finished, "that thou can'st see to justify thy father's act, and by that justification bring to thee consolation? Think, even though he were marked to die, more honor belongs to him in this, than to live to old age in idleness and inactivity. Dwell upon thy love for him, then meditate on his love for the Church."

[Pg 144]

"Nay," she answered, "my knee doth bend before the altar with as great a reverence as any who do honor to the Host, and were my father to fall in open conflict I would not grudge his life given to a noble cause. But this act is not loyalty to God, for, did He not decree, 'Thou shalt not kill?' 'Tis naught but murder; and if my father fall, he will not meet death as a martyr, but as a common assassin."

Garnet was silent; the girl's words sounded strangely to him. Not wishing to reveal his identity he determined to avoid further argument, fearing suspicions might be raised in Elinor's mind which would only make matters worse. What course to pursue he did not know. As far as circumstances permitted, he would help her, but how to effect this was beyond his present comprehension.

"I have not told thee in vain? Thou wilt aid me?" she inquired.

"My child, I must have time to meditate," answered the Jesuit. "I cannot give thee advice upon such a weighty matter without due deliberation; but," he added hastily, "all is safe for a time at least; thy father is in France."

"I pray God," exclaimed the girl, "that I shall not have reason to regret opening my heart unto thee. Nay, thou couldst not be so cruel as to make known what I have told. Swear," she cried in sudden fear, noting a strange expression on the other's face, "swear thou wilt keep secret all I have revealed."

"Alarm not thyself," replied the prelate; "what thou hast uttered is as safe as if 'twere said under the seal of the confessional. Know further, thou hast told thy trouble to one who will ever cherish the confidence, even if his help avail thee little. But," added he, tenderly—in the sincerity of his heart forgetting the sword which hung at his side—"may the peace of Him whose hand was ready to turn the water into wine, or raise the widow's son, descend and give thee relief."

[Pg 145]

"Thou speakest like a priest," she said.

Garnet started, but quickly replied, "Never could a priest grant thee absolution with a gladder heart, than I would release thee from this trouble, were it in my power, and were it the will of God that I should do so."

"And dost think it is God's will that I suffer thus?"

"Perchance, yes," said he, in a thoughtful voice, as if communing with himself, "and it may be His decree that many more do groan with thee. Be not regretful thou has told thy sorrow, for even to confide a grief is to make it lighter."

"Nay, I do not regret, I think there is little else left me but to endure; would that I were dead and beyond the touch of sorrow," she added, with a hopeless sigh.

"Thou shouldst not wish thyself dead, for to do so is to be unreconciled to the will of God. If this poor hand doth fail to bring comfort, my prayers shall ever be for strength that thou mayst bear with fortitude all which the wisdom of heaven deems just to send. Try to look upon thy grief as a tribute God demands to work out some mighty project of His own."

"I will try," the girl said, a sad smile coming into her face. "Think not I am ungrateful for thy words of comfort."

"And now, my daughter, will I wish thee the blessing of sweet sleep, for 'tis late; I will see thee again soon."

"Thou art very good," she replied simply, "thou, the only one remaining—" her lips trembled and tears filled her eyes; suddenly she threw her arms about him, and between the sobs which shook her frame, exclaimed, hiding her face upon his shoulder, "all that is left me now."

[Pg 146]

Garnet regarded the slight figure clinging to him: "Oh God!" he thought, "Is it Thy will that such as these must suffer?" He raised his arm as if to encircle her, but let it drop by his side.

"Come, my child," he said after a moment, putting her gently from him, "thy tears well nigh unman me; I would it were in my power to give thee consolation, but help must come from higher hands than mine."

As he reached the threshold he turned and beheld a picture which haunted him many a day, and for an instant raised within his holy mind a doubt of the justice of such grief. As she stood, the imprint of deep sorrow was on the fair young face—a sorrow the young should never know. One arm was raised as though in mute appeal to him not to forsake her in this misery. A look, and he closed the door, passing out into the night.

The effect produced upon Garnet by the trouble he had just witnessed was complex. Never doubting the justice of the cause he espoused, still, his quiet nature could not hide from itself a feeling of pity that one so good and innocent should be called upon to suffer equally with those whose unholy hands were raised to snatch the cross from off the altar of his fathers.

"Truly," he muttered, as he proceeded on his way—pressing a hand to his breast that he might feel the crucifix resting there—"it hath been resolved by higher authority than my weak will that this thing must be done. And, Henry Garnet, who art thou to question? Still," he added, sadly shaking his head, the memory of a tear-stained face passing before him, "it is a pity; but for every tear that falls from thy gentle eyes a soul will be redeemed."

[Pg 147]

He continued on his way in silence. As he approached the more densely populated districts of the city, an almost unconscious movement of the hand brought the fold of his mantle over his shoulder, so that it hid the lower portion of his face. The tall figure of Garnet was one which could not fail to attract attention, and many a passerby turned to see who the cavalier might be. This did not escape the eye of the prelate, and evidently for the sake of being unnoticed, he turned into a less frequented thoroughfare, and proceeded by a circuitous route to gain the hostelry wherein he resided. The way brought him through a portion of the city composed of narrow intersecting streets and alleys, faced by poor and worn out hovels. A few old warehouses here and there marked the spots where in times gone by fine goods had been stored. As they stood with broken windows and open doors sighing and creaking in the wind, they appeared like living creatures who had fallen from conditions of plenty, and were now, in their hunger, bemoaning the loss of the abundance which once had filled them.

In front of one of these buildings Garnet paused for a moment to more closely examine the pile, and being deeply absorbed in his task of inspection, was not aware of the glimmer of a lantern which came bobbing toward him along the main road. The first intimations that any one but himself stood upon the street were a sudden flash of light in his face, a heavy hand falling upon his shoulder, and a gruff voice exclaiming:

"Henry Garnet, in the name of the King I arrest thee!"

The priest started, and with rapid motion drew his cloak about him, at the same time springing upon the step of the building. The man lowered the light and by its reflection the Jesuit could see that he wore the uniform of the King's guard.

[Pg 148]

"Come," continued the soldier, drawing his sword, "submission better suits thee as a priest, than does resistance."

The blow had fallen so quickly, so unexpectedly, that for an instant Garnet stood as one struck dumb, unable either to reply or form a plan of action. However, in a moment his alert mind grasped the situation. He had been recognized, that was evident, but his arrest was simply for disobeying the edict by which he, as well as all his order, were banished from the kingdom. The penalty following the violation of this decree, at its worst, would simply mean imprisonment in the Tower. But what, he asked himself, would be the consequence of it? While far from being an egotist, the Jesuit knew that he alone was the thinking power of that cause which to him was dearer than life. And now, when plans were fast maturing, the corn ripening in the field, awaiting but the hand of the reapers, he was placed in sudden danger which threatened to frustrate all their hopes. These thoughts flashed through his mind with the rapidity of lightning as he confronted the man standing at the foot of the steps. Escape he must,—but how?

"Come, Henry Garnet," the man repeated, ascending the steps, lantern in one hand, a sword in the other. "Thou art my prisoner, and in the name of his most gracious Majesty, James I., I arrest thee!"

A bold rush now would be of no avail, for the man stood with the point of his rapier close to the prelate's breast, almost touching his doublet; furthermore Garnet's sword was in its scabbard,

[Pg 149]



and at the first attempt to draw it, he, in all probability, would be run through the body. Was there no alternative but to yield? A gust of wind caused the door at his back to creak. In an instant the Jesuit had sprung for the portal, but the soldier, perceiving his purpose, lunged with his weapon, and so true was the aim, that the prelate's cloak was pinned fast to the wooden frame. An instant he was held there, but the clasp of the mantle giving way released its wearer, and Garnet stood in the dark entry, the door shut, and his foot set firmly against it. The move had been none too quick, for the soldier hurled himself upon the closed portal, which caused the old boards to groan, but they did not yield; the only result of the man's efforts were, that the lantern flew from his grasp, rolling down the steps into the street. The priest heard him descend to recover the light, and relinquishing his hold upon the door, groped his way through the darkness, hoping to elude his pursuer in the building. His hand came in contact with the baluster, and he quickly ascended the rickety stairs. By this time, the guard had relighted his lantern and was peering cautiously into the hall, evidently fearing a sword thrust from out the darkness. In this instant's hesitation, Garnet gained the loft above. Here the obscurity was less intense, for the waning moon shining through a broken window into a room at his left, enabled him to see his way more distinctly. There was little time for choice of direction, for even now the soldier had commenced to ascend, and Garnet, not venturing to grope further in the gloom, turned toward the ray of light, and passed quickly into the room, pressed himself against the wall and waited. The priest could see his pursuer holding the lantern above his head, as he ascended the stairs, looking carefully about the while. The soldier approached the chamber in which the Jesuit lay hid, peered in at the door, and as if not satisfied with this cursory examination entered. At last the man seemed satisfied, and with a muttered curse was about to leave the apartment, when a fatal turn of the lantern swept one of its rays full upon the Jesuit.

[Pg 150]

"Ah! there thou art, my sly fox!" cried the soldier, springing, sword in hand, at Garnet; another instant would have seen the priest pinned fast to the wall, had not the man's foot in some way become entangled in the mantle hanging upon his arm, throwing him headlong with great clatter of steel to the floor.

In a moment Garnet was upon him, both hands at the soldier's throat, the long fingers pressing firmly the windpipe; one more strong clasp and the priest released his hold, seized the other's sword, which had fallen to the floor, and stood with its point upon the man's breast.

"Swear by the God thou fearest, and upon thine honor, that thou wilt remain in this room until I leave the house! Swear it!" the priest repeated, "ere I run thee through!"

No answer followed his command.

"Come. Swear it!" he repeated, pressing the rapier firmly against the other's chest. The ominous silence fell upon the priest as strange. He stooped to look into the face. The light was dim, and still lower he bent. Suddenly the sword dropped from his hand, for the Jesuit saw by the bulging eyes which stared into his that he had demanded an oath from a corpse. Those long white fingers had pressed more firmly than they knew; the man's windpipe was crushed like paper.

"My God!" the Jesuit whispered, kneeling beside the prostrate form, horror of the deed falling upon him. "Of what have I been guilty? This man's blood upon my head?" Terror-stricken, he looked about the room. Again his eyes returned to the thing lying beside him. Was that a movement of the distorted face? He gazed upon it in horrible fascination. Slowly the lips of the dead man parted, the jaw dropped, and it seemed as though a hideous smile lay upon the distorted visage.

[Pg 151]

"Ah!" cried Garnet, springing to his feet, "Even in death thou art the victor, for I am shackled to thee. Never in this world can I escape the recollection of thy countenance!"

The priest fell upon his knees, and raised his hands:

"God help me and forgive me for this deed!" he cried. "If I have sinned, 'twas not to save this worthless life of mine; not that I deemed it sweet to live, but that I might survive to consecrate or yield that life in the furtherance of Thy holy work!"

He paused a moment in silent prayer, then arose, and taking a crucifix from his doublet, knelt by the figure on the floor and pressed the symbol to the dead lips.

"Nay," said he, as he stood regarding the man, "I did not wish thy death, and would gladly yield my life to see thee breathe again, but 'twas ordained thou shouldst go first. And who next?" he added, raising the cross and gazing upon it—"Mayhap he doth wear a crown."

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## CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 152]

### MONTEAGLE AND SALISBURY.

Four months passed; months of impatience to the conspirators who awaited with eagerness the hour to strike against the government. Winter and Fawkes had returned from France, their mission in part accomplished, as they had obtained from certain of the Catholic nobility promises of assistance in the way of men and money, did the doors of England open to receive them. The

plot to strike at the heart of the ruling powers was slowly maturing; Fawkes, now the leading spirit, worked diligently both with brain and hands to perfect the plan decided upon by Winter, Catesby and the others. Secure in a feeling of strength, the King had little thought that Fate was slowly winding about him and his ministers a shroud which prompt action alone could cast off.

Toward the close of a sultry midsummer day, Lord Cecil, Earl of Salisbury and Prime Minister of England, after holding audience with the King, returned to his dwelling, glad to cast aside his decorations and forget during a few hours the weighty affairs of State. He was scarcely seated, with a glass of wine in hand, when my Lord of Monteagle was announced as waiting in the ante-chamber. 'Twas no strange thing for this nobleman to seek the Minister at his home, for between them there was a warm friendship, and it pleased Cecil to receive the other at any time he chose to visit him. He therefore ordered that Monteagle should be at once conducted to his apartment, and a second glass of wine prepared.

[Pg 153]

As the peer entered, the keen eyes of his host noted that his bearing betokened a mind ill at ease.

"Faith!" said he, rising from his seat and extending his hand, "thou bearest a most sour visage, my lord. Hath ridden in the sun, or did thy cook forget his occupation and serve thee an ill-prepared repast?"

Monteagle smiled faintly. "Nay," said he, "'tis my mind which is somewhat disturbed."

"Then sit thee down," cried Cecil cheerily, "and unburden thyself to me of all save affairs of State; of them am I exceeding weary, for the King hath a new hobby, a tax on beets and onions, in the discussion of which the afternoon has been consumed."

"Then his Majesty devised another way——" began Monteagle.

Salisbury raised his hand. "'Tis treason," said he in feigned displeasure; "wouldst have us in the Tower, good Monteagle, that thou speak so lightly of James' statesmanship?" Then changing his jesting tone to one of gravity: "But tell me, what troubles thee? Hath the air of France failed to restore the spirits of thy son, Effingston? He hath not returned?"

"He is still in Paris," replied the other, touching his lips to the glass which had been proffered him, "I this day received a letter in which he speaks encouragingly of his health, and announces his return within the month. Thy mind is easy, my lord?"

"And why not?" demanded the Prime Minister, holding aloft his glass that he might watch the reflection of the sun's rays upon the wine. "England is at peace, the King seated firm upon his throne, and the Ship of State rides on an even keel. Hast dreamed of treason, my Lord Monteagle?"

[Pg 154]

"Perchance not treason," replied his companion, drawing his chair nearer, "but—certain things my son hath written, added to others coming under my own observation, have caused me some uneasiness—a shadowy suspicion, as it were, that an ill plan is brewing against the King's authority."

"Tut!" cried Salisbury. "'Tis a fit of indigestion, about which thou hadst best consult thy doctor. Yet, what be these suspicions?"

"Thou knowest," replied Monteagle, sinking his voice so that it scarce reached the other's ear, "there are certain Catholics among the nobles who chafe grievously under the exactions of laws passed by Parliament and approved by James."

Salisbury shrugged his shoulders. "That is beyond peradventure," said he, "but the laws will stand."

"Of that I would speak nothing," replied Monteagle, "being neither King nor Parliament, but it hath been hinted that perchance the wind of discontent may fan into life a flame of——"

"Thou hast relatives among the Catholics," interrupted Cecil, looking keenly at the other, "hast become a confidant?"

Monteagle shook his head. "Nay," said he, "nor do I desire to mix in affairs concerning my former faith. Yet, I have knowledge of certain meetings which have taken place composed of sundry persons opposed to the policy of James."

"The dogs cut by the lash herd together in their discomfiture," replied Cecil, "yet they fear to bite the hand which stung them."

Monteagle frowned, for the words of the Prime Minister were not to his liking.

[Pg 155]

"There is more," said he; "certain of those have been seen in France."

"'Tis a most Catholic country," replied Salisbury, "and, perhaps, wishing to worship unmolested before their altars, some have gone thither for their religion's sake."

"My lord!" cried Monteagle, perceiving the Minister was in a mood for jesting, "hast thou had no fear that some hidden danger might lurk beneath the calm exterior of the peace which covers England? Do not smile, but hear me. Thou knowest the Viscount Effingston is in France, at the Court of Henry, and hath mingled much with some who are close to the throne. Perhaps it may not have reached thine ears that some months back a bloodless duel was fought between him and

one Sir Thomas Winter, a zealous Catholic and enemy to the King."

"Ah!" broke in Salisbury, "thy speech grows interesting; and what brought about this duel?"

"'Twas an insult cast upon me by this Winter," replied Monteagle. "Effingston chancing to hear, resented it, and an exchange of sword thrusts followed; but that is past. As I told thee this morning I received a letter from Paris in which the Viscount says he hath met this Winter and another, a soldier of the commoners, and——"

"A second duel hath followed?" interrupted the Minister.

"Not so," replied the other, "but being suspicious of the fellows, my son did set a spy upon them, feeling sure that no honest errand took them into France."

"And what did he discover?" asked Salisbury.

"That Winter and his companion sought many times audiences with certain high churchmen known to be enemies of England. Once, he chanced to meet them upon the street, when Winter flushed a scarlet and hastily passed. After this he learned that two Englishmen, one a soldier who had served the King of Spain, gained the ear of certain prelates and noblemen; that their conferences had been conducted with much secrecy, and having finished, the men left Paris in the night, taking poste for Calais."

[Pg 156]

"And what then?" asked Salisbury, "did thy son learn anything concerning those secret conferences?"

"No way was open to him," answered Monteagle, "but he thought it best to lay the matter before me; the more so that Winter and the other have returned to London."

The Prime Minister pondered for a moment. "Faith! my lord!" said he, "thy zeal for the welfare of the State is most commendable, and the King shall know of it, but thy spirit is overwrought with idle fear. What if certain Catholics in England have sought audience with those of their faith in Paris? Have we then fear of France? My word upon it, good Monteagle, that calm thought will quell thy doubts. Of this Thomas Winter I know something; a reminder of the luckless Essex, a gentleman whose zeal doth warp his reason, and who, should he presume too far, will feel the axe, I warrant. Thou sayest he is again in England; perchance he builds a castle which the sight of a line of soldiers will scatter to the winds. Again I thank thee for thy counsel, my lord, nor will I neglect such matters as pertain to the safety of the King. If it come to thee, that these dissatisfied Catholics grow too bold in speech, for I fear not other signs of treason, lay it before me, that I may stop their tongues, ere evil thoughts be planted in the minds of them who cry 'amen' to any wind of speech delivered in the market place."

[Pg 157]

Monteagle arose, for he perceived 'twas useless to speak further of ill-defined plots and perchance groundless fears of treason against the King.

"I but considered it my duty as an English gentleman to look to the welfare of——" he began.

"Thou hast my confidence," interrupted Salisbury, "and though I seem to treat lightly thy suspicions they will be most carefully heeded should occasion arise. There be certain chambers in the Tower, where those too zealous in their faith may pass the time in prayer, thanking God the King is merciful, and stays the axe."

Monteagle bowed and left the room. "It may be," he muttered, "that my mind doth dwell too much upon this matter, but I know Sir Thomas Winter well, and there be certain of the Jesuits yet in England."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

[Pg 158]

### SOWING THE WIND.

Late of an evening near to Michaelmas, three men applied for admission at the door of a house close to the edge of the Thames, and which, by reason of its surroundings, assured security from observation to those who might choose to abide therein. Knocking upon the panel with the hilt of a heavy rapier which he had drawn from its scabbard, the shorter of the trio listened impatiently for the sounds which would precede the drawing of the bolts within. His companions, who were in the shadow of a neighboring wall, glanced about apprehensively.

"'Tis an ill-favored place, Sir Thomas," whispered one, grasping tighter the hilt of his sword as though the touch of the steel might calm in a measure his disquietude. "Scarce is it to my liking that friend Guido hath chosen so——"

His companion laughed uneasily. "He hath a keen wit," replied he, "and much precaution is necessary that none suspect at the eleventh hour. As thou seest, good Percy, 'tis a most peaceful region, with few abroad and no signs of the authorities."

"Peaceful, indeed," replied Percy, casting his eyes down the poorly lighted and narrow street through which he had come; "so is a charnel-house, yet one would scarce——"

A second rap upon the door, delivered with increased force, interrupted the whispered conversation.

"Within!" growled Fawkes, bending so that his lips were on a level with the keyhole. "Art sleeping, Master Keyes, or——" [Pg 159]

The shuffling of feet answered, and a voice nearly inarticulate from drowsiness demanded in no gentle tones who sought admittance to an honest dwelling at so unseasonable an hour.

Upon Fawkes replying, the bolt was withdrawn, the door opened a few inches and the face of Master Keyes appeared in the aperture. The soldier of fortune motioned to his companions who quickly joined him.

"Good Robert, here, is a most cunning rogue," said he half laughingly, "having feigned sleep——"

The warden of the door forced a sneering smile. "Faith!" said he, making way that the others might enter, "'twas such feigning as may ever come to me when I would forget my troubles, and there be in my purse no silver to purchase that which is opposed to conscience. What wouldst thou, Guido Fawkes? that I sit upright in a corner from eventide till morn that thou be not kept waiting before the door? Ill was the day when, listening to thy words, I undertook this errand; thou art fain to wish that I may be blown to the devil by thy six and thirty barrels of——"

Fawkes hastily laid his open palm across the mouth of the irate man. "What now?" growled he gruffly, "that thou must cry aloud the contents of thy cellar? Hast not been paid?"

"Aye," grumbled the man, drawing back, "for sitting over hell! May those selfsame Spanish hirelings to whom thy powder goeth, be blown to their master with scant courtesy!"

Winter whispered in Percy's ear: "A pretty trick, good Percy, yet what more natural than, wishing to turn a penny by furnishing powder to the Dons, brave Guido should act with much secrecy, so that it be not seized by the authorities?" [Pg 160]

Already they were in the house, and the door was securely fastened. Fawkes laid aside some of his cautiousness.

"Friend Robert is a faithful man," said he, turning to his companions and speaking with much significance; "therefore have I entered into an agreement with him, that I, being under contract to the Spanish ambassador to convey certain barrels of gunpowder into Flanders, he should guard them till the time be ripe for loading into such vessels as will carry them to the ship which I have hired."

"Then," replied Winter, taking from his wallet a gold piece and tendering it to Keyes, "he will accept this token which, I warrant, will be increased by others of its kind if his diligence pleaseth thee."

On seeing the gold the man's ill temper vanished. "Good gentlemen," cried he, seizing eagerly the coin, "I spoke but hastily."

"That we know," said Winter, "and, perchance we, had we been so rudely awakened, would have done as thou didst. Hath any disturbed thee during thy guardianship?"

"None, save a few drunken braggarts who found their way hither, and would have battered in the door. Did any come whose wits were sharper than their caution, I would have——"

"What?" asked Fawkes pointedly, as the speaker hesitated.

"Faith!" replied Keyes, "being a poor man, and a bag of gold pieces forthcoming upon the safe loading of this devil's face powder onto the Spanish vessel, 'twould be but just, that did any seek to cheat me of it—well, the river tells no tales; what think ye, gentlemen?" [Pg 161]

Percy shuddered; Winter pressed his hand. "Nay, good Percy," he whispered, "'tis scarce like to happen, yet even so, we would be but instruments in the hand of God."

During this conversation Fawkes, who seemed to be familiar with the house, had led his companions into a small apartment whose window overlooked the river which, washing against the stone foundation of the dwelling, offered a safe retreat did any, bent upon trouble making, force the street door.

Winter and Percy glanced about them. The place was bare save for a rude cot, a shaky table upon which flickered an iron-bound lantern, and a small chest that, did occasion require, could be placed against the narrow door. At a sign from Fawkes, Keyes drew aside the bed, disclosing in the floor the outlines of a trap door, which covered an opening to the cellar beneath. Stooping, he raised the heavy cover, revealing the top rounds of a rude ladder leading into the blackness below.

"'Tis there!" said Fawkes shortly, "wouldst see it, gentlemen?"

Percy drew back, when Keyes, misunderstanding his hesitancy, caught the lantern from the table.

"I will go down," said he, "and thou mayst safely follow; the stuff be well housed, tight as a drum, and, as thou seest, the lantern scattereth no fire."

"But will not the dampness of the place destroy its usefulness?" asked Winter.

"There is little fear," replied Fawkes, "although it lieth below the surface of the river; the cellar is hewn from the rock, and dry as a tinder-box. Lead the way, good Robert, take heed with thy light."

[Pg 162]

With much cautiousness the two men followed Fawkes and his guide down the ladder to the floor ten feet below. Reaching it, Keyes held up the lantern so that its feeble rays penetrated the darkness. Piled against the walls of the subterranean chamber, Winter and Percy discerned irregular dark objects rising to the height of their heads.

"'Tis the wind which will free England of the pestilence," said Fawkes grimly; then catching the quick glance of Winter, which reminded him of the presence of Master Keyes, added: "Which sown in Flanders will bring forth a whirlwind against those who serve not God after the manner of the righteous."

"A goodly amount of the grains," said Percy, placing his foot again upon a round of the ladder; "and how much saidst thou, good Master Keyes?"

"As Fawkes hath told me, some six and thirty barrels," replied the watchman; "enough, methinks, to send all London up to the stars."

"And the King, also," whispered Winter in Fawkes' ear, and added, "let us to the room above. My stomach hath small liking for thy cellars."

Percy was already half way up the ladder, and the others quickly followed. To the soldier of fortune and to Master Keyes, 'twas of little moment that they had stood in the presence of such an engine of destruction, which, if properly applied, would shake to its foundation the strongest structure in Europe. But in Winter and Percy, especially the latter, the presence of the gunpowder, thoughts of the purpose for which it was to be used, and the lives which must be sacrificed, overcame for the moment their fanatical zeal, and they withdrew with a feeling akin to horror. 'Twas truly the seed of death; and in sowing the wind might they not, themselves, reap the whirlwind?

[Pg 163]

A short time in the upper chamber restored their calmness, and they no longer seemed such fearful things, those grim barrels of harmless looking black grains, which might lie harmless for centuries, as they had seen them, or, at the touch of a single tiny spark, shake London as by an earthquake, vacate a royal throne, and exterminate in an instant the proudest government in Europe. Percy, of more gentle disposition than his companion, gazed into the face of Guido Fawkes with a feeling akin to awe. His was the brain which had suggested this terrific method for the destruction of the King and Parliament; his the voice that had pronounced the words which laid bare the plan to Catesby, Winter and the others. If Fawkes had never come from Spain, perhaps—, but the subject of his gloomy thoughts was speaking in reply to a question put by Sir Thomas.

"Thou hast noted," said he, "that this dwelling lieth close to the river; so, 'twill be no great matter to remove the barrels from the cellar to the deck of a boat lashed beneath the window, and, if a dark night be chosen for the work, none, I warrant, will perceive the matter. What sayest thou, friend Robert?"

"That there is much of wisdom in thy speech," replied the other; "and once upon the boat, the channel to the sea, where will lie thy Spanish galley, is open. When, thinkest thou, the powder will be moved?"

"I know not," replied Fawkes, sharply,— "in due time——" Then, turning to his companions:

[Pg 164]

"Gentlemen, having seen that which lies below, what may be your pleasure?"

"To return quickly," replied Percy, relieved at the thought of escaping from such an ill-favored locality.

Keyes chuckled. "Thou art in haste to quit my presence, and my pretty devil's powder, good gentlemen," said he; "didst sleep so near as we, perchance you would come to love it as Master Fawkes and I do. One spark from this weak lantern, and—"

"Come!" cried Percy, drawing his arm through that of Winter,— "we are satisfied; what need to tarry longer?"

In the street once more they, with Fawkes leading, hastened to gain a more populous section of the city. 'Twas to Winter's house they went, where Catesby was waiting impatiently. He, with Fawkes, had visited the house by the river on the night previous, therefore he fell into their discussion with good knowledge of the subject in hand.

"Thou shouldst have been a general," said he to Fawkes; "it scarce comes to me how so goodly a quantity of powder could be stored in yonder place without detection."

"'Twas no great matter," replied Fawkes, setting down the wineglass Winter had handed him, "a little here, a trifle there, requiring some weeks in the gathering; but now, as thou hast seen, there is enough."

Winter laughed. "Faith!" said he, "I would fain not have thee for mine enemy, friend Guido; else, some fine night, while I dreamed not that danger threatened, my good dwelling would come to grief."

Fawkes smiled grimly. "Not so," said he; "if thou wert an enemy, and I had sworn to kill thee, 'twould be by other means,"—touching the hilt of his sword. "What thou hast seen is reserved for kings and parliaments."

[Pg 165]

"The powder is well stored," broke in Catesby,—"what next?"

"That hath been attended to," replied Percy. "As thou knowest, certain events must transpire ere Master Keyes gives up his guardianship. To me has fallen the duty of looking into the matter. The cellar of the Parliament House must be reached ere further effect can come from our planning."

"What hast thou decided?" asked Winter.

"Upon a simple solution of the matter," replied the Gentleman-Pensioner. "Foreseeing our course, I have made an agreement with one Henry Ferrers for the hiring of a dwelling close to the House of Parliament. The documents are already signed and sealed. As in many houses, the cellar extends some feet below the surface of the street and, next it, lies the foundation wall of the House."

"Then," cried Catesby, "we will play the mole; is it not so, good Percy?"

"Thou hast said it," replied the other; "to reach the cellar beneath the House of Lords we must pierce through the foundation. 'Tis of great thickness and the task will not be easy."

"I am little used to delving," growled Fawkes, "but there is no other way."

"And Garnet?" inquired Catesby.

"Garnet hath gone from London," said Percy, "nor will he return until the fuse has reached the powder. He is now at Coughton House to await such time as we shall summon him to join our forces."

[Pg 166]

"And them hast all in readiness?" asked Winter.

"In the house of Henry Ferrers are tools for digging—picks, hammers and the like," replied Percy.

"And in another place lie six and thirty kegs of trusty powder," added Catesby; "the instruments are at hand." Then rising: "Come, gentlemen! our conference is ended; to-morrow we work, not talk."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

[Pg 167]

### THE CELLAR.

The house of Master Ferrers stood on the narrow strip of land between the House of Lords and the river Thames. The wall of the dwelling being adjacent to that which guarded the east side of the Parliament House, 'twas not so difficult a matter for one bent upon gaining secret entrance to the latter, to tunnel through it. Being of soft bricks it would afford but a slight obstacle to determined men. To penetrate the official structure was a harder undertaking, the thickness thereof being some nine feet, and the masonry of flinty stone, firmly cemented, and hardened into a compact mass by the lapse of years. But, having once pierced through the two walls, the first of brick, the other of stone, one would find himself in a chamber of some extent, lying directly beneath the assembling place of the peers, and the throne from which the King witnessed the convening of his Parliament.

Though, in fact, a cellar to the main building, the room was upon a level with the street without, the walls being of "stout stones" and the ceiling formed by beams upon which rested the flooring of the House of Lords. 'Twas in this room the conspirators proposed to place the six and thirty barrels of gunpowder, and—Parliament being in session—to apply a spark to the slumbering power by which those who occupied the room above would be blown heavenward with such scant ceremony that none among them should have time to cry: "Good Lord, have mercy upon us! Amen!"

[Pg 168]

In selecting the house against the east wall of the Peer's meeting place, Percy had acted with some wisdom. The Thames was the silent highway of London, and did a boat stop beside the river entrance of the dwelling, none would be likely to take any note thereof, nor to think it matter of suspicion for one who occupied the place to use the water as means of conveying such commodities as he chose to his storeroom or cellar. In this manner the powder stored under the guardianship of Master Keyes was removed by night to the second storage place, that it might be in readiness when the time arrived for placing it beneath the floor of Parliament. Many persons dwelt in the neighborhood; in the vicinity were clustered the houses of the Keeper of the Wardrobe, auditors and tellers of the Exchequer, and many other officials of the government, any of whom might notice the barge lying close at the edge of the garden on the river front, and the men carrying from it to the house divers packages, but it was not probable that they would. None, unless having business with Master Percy, would approach the door, nor enter the garden, much less question the carriers concerning that which they removed so carefully.

It was at the end of the tenth day after the visit of Percy and Sir Thomas to Master Keyes that the six and thirty barrels—twenty-four hundred pounds—of powder were safely stored in the building next the Parliament House.

But ere this was accomplished, those who had undertaken the digging of the tunnel began their work. Under cover of the darkness, Catesby, Wright, Percy, Winter and Fawkes, entered the house leased by the Gentleman-Pensioner, and being provided with a goodly quantity of baked meats and other necessaries, that nothing should arise to call them abroad, they began their work upon the brick wall beyond which lay the masonry proper of the House.

[Pg 169]

Of the five, four were gentlemen of blood, to whom the handling of pick and bar came not so readily. To Fawkes, skilled through long service in foreign lands, where the undermining of walls and fortifications was a common occupation, it fell to direct the work, although in actual digging he took small part, it having been agreed that he should serve as watchman, warn the others did any approach the garden, or danger arise from sounds in the cellar reaching the ears of those whose curiosity might bring unwelcome investigation as to so strange a proceeding. Crowded as they were in the narrow space, the four conspirators, with doublets cast aside and limbs weary from their unusual occupation, plied drill and crowbar, enlivening their toil by discourse upon the subject of the undertaking, and stopping ever and anon to refresh themselves with ale, or wine.

"Faith!" said Sir Thomas, looking woefully upon his begrimed hands and vestment, "'tis a sorry thing to play the mole, when a sword thrust delivered from behind a curtain, or the stroke of a poniard, would as well free us of these tyrants."

"'Twere perchance easier," replied Percy, driving his drill through the last layer of bricks which stood between them and the second wall. "I, for one, would choose the Lord to give me work under an open sky, where there be less dust to blind the eyes and stifle the breath."

Catesby laughed harshly. "Could Garnet hear thee," said he, "a discourse of patience would soon be forthcoming. To your work, gentlemen; we have already pierced one wall."

[Pg 170]

An exclamation from Wright interrupted them.

"By the wounds," he growled, throwing down his crowbar with much show of temper, "one wall, indeed; a paper covering compared with this," and taking the bar again drove its point with great force against the one now exposed, belonging to the House.

The iron rebounded from the solid masonry as though driven against a sheet of steel, for the flinty stone turned it easily, and only a shower of sparks answered the blow.

"What hast thou there?" asked Winter.

"The gate of hell," retorted Wright, kicking the bar with his foot, "nine feet of it, by Master Percy's computation, and, I warrant, as many years will be required to see the further side. Try it, good Catesby, 'tis a nut a giant could scarce crack, though he wield a battering ram."

Taking up a lantern which stood by the wall, Catesby examined the masonry with great carefulness.

"Thou shouldst have struck the mortar," said he, tapping the cement between the blocks of stone with the point of his drill, "wouldst tear away the rock itself?"

For some moments he worked diligently, streaming with perspiration and his loud breathing filling the narrow place. A hole scarce three inches deep rewarded his exertions.

"'Tis well reasoned," growled he at length, "here is a riddle for Master Fawkes; wilt summon him, friend Percy?"

Glad for an excuse to leave for a moment the ill-savored cellar, Percy hastened on his errand, and Fawkes presently entered, looking keenly about.

[Pg 171]

"What now, gentlemen?" said he, "hast made an opening?"

"That have we not, save through this wall of brick," replied Catesby, "methinks thy gunpowder could scarce open a further way, friend Guido. Look thou at yon barrier of stone."

Taking the lantern, Fawkes followed the suggestion. "'Tis, in truth, most strongly put together," said he at length, "but with due patience and diligence this also may be overcome. Give me a drill."

Having received one from the hand of Winter he attacked the masonry, striking here, picking there, until, having loosened a goodly portion of cement, he caught up a heavy crowbar, and inserting its point into the narrow opening, bore down upon the iron with all his strength and the block of stone, freed from its fastening, was detached and fell with a dull crash upon the floor at his feet.

The soldier of fortune wiped his brow. "'Tis of the smallest," said he, "but the others will give way in turn. Thou must first be sure that the mortar is removed, when, using sufficient force, the rocks will loosen, thus making the hole larger."

"There be too few of us," said Winter. "I think some word should be sent to my brother Robert, that he join us in this business, and also Master Keyes, who being a man of much resource, and,

perchance, skilled in such labor as this, may aid us much."

"Can he be trusted in so dangerous a venture?" asked Wright. "Of thy brother Robert there is no fear, but what of this Master Keyes?"

"Friend Guido will answer for his loyalty," replied Winter; "the man is reliable, though his zeal turneth to the securing of money. Already have I examined him, and found that within his mind lay some suspicion as to our object in collecting such a quantity of powder. For recompense he will dig most industriously, and promise of reward when our mission is accomplished will make him dumb. Thou hast my word upon it."

[Pg 172]

"Then," said Catesby, "let him be summoned hither, and thy brother also; much labor lies before us; seven men can scarce accomplish it, and we are now but five."

It was agreed that on the following night Fawkes should bring Keyes and Robert Winter to the cellar, when, with a greater number to labor, the work of forcing a passage through the wall could be accomplished more rapidly. In the meantime, being excessively wearied, the conspirators left the cellar and sought repose.

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Two weeks passed. The excavation in the wall of the Parliament House had increased day by day, until a hole some five or six feet in length, large enough to admit the body of a man, was bored through the solid masonry. With the assistance of the two additional members to their little party the conspirators worked with renewed energy. Filled with enthusiasm they had little sense of fatigue, and plied pick and drill vigorously that they might gain entrance to the room beneath the lord's chamber before the convening of Parliament, which, as Percy learned, was to take place on the fifth of November. Confident that their work was appointed by God, those men of gentle blood curbed their impatience, though laborious and slow was the task, and every muscle and bone ached when the tools were laid aside. For a time the disposal of the earth and rock taken from the tunnel puzzled them, but Fawkes with characteristic quickness found a way;—such of the debris as would attract little attention was scattered about the garden; as for the larger rocks and mortar, the river was close at hand, and, as Robert Keyes had said, it told no tales.

[Pg 173]

So they worked, beguiling the weary hours with discussions as to what would follow the success of their project. England would be without a king; the machinery of the government shattered, and the way would be open for seating a Catholic upon the throne. Prince Henry, successor to the crown, would perish with his father and the peers in Parliament. They would seize the royal heirs who remained, Prince Charles and the Princess Elizabeth, hold them in durance, while the Catholics would choose the heir-apparent and appoint a Protector for the kingdom. It was a daring plan and the prospect of its execution lightened their toil, and intensified the flame of their zeal.

Somewhat near the middle of the day, when, having ceased for a moment the attack upon the wall, Wright, who had remained in the tunnel after the others had gone out, rushed wildly forth, his face pale under its coat of dust and his limbs trembling strangely.

"What aileth thee?" cried Catesby, alarmed at his companion's aspect, "hath the wall fallen in upon—"

"Nay," replied Wright with harsh voice, "but I go in no more; the devil hath seized this tunnel, and—"

Catesby entered quickly, and in a moment was at the end of the narrow aperture. On either side arose the rough masonry, torn and ragged where the stones had been forced apart; upon a heap of debris stood Wright's lantern, burning dimly, beside it his heavy drill and hammer. Catesby looked hurriedly about, but all was silent; the air was hot and stifling and the smoke from the lantern filled his nostrils. He turned to retrace his steps, with rough words for Wright upon his lips, when a faint sound fell upon his ears; an unearthly thing, which startled him and sent to his heart a thrill of superstitious terror. 'Twas a measured tinkling, as of a silver bell, which rose and fell with steady cadence. Instinctively his hand went to his left hip, but the familiar hilt was absent; he had left it in the room above, guarded by Robert Winter, who watched with Fawkes.

[Pg 174]

Snatching from his bosom a small silver vial filled with holy water, the trembling conspirator sprinkled a few drops upon the walls—the tinkling ceased, and from the entrance behind sounded the voice of Percy:

"What hast thou found, good Catesby, a goblin, or—"

The answer of the other was upon his lips when, above his head, apparently from the center of the solid masonry itself, came a sound as of the rushing of mighty waters, which continued for a short space of time, then died away. The noise reached the ears of those in the room without, and it needed not the white face of Catesby showing in the opening to send them upon their knees with prayers to the Virgin for protection. At that moment Fawkes appeared among them.

"What now?" said he gruffly, much amazed at so strange a sight, "think ye, good gentlemen, that praying will cause the stones to separate?"

"Brave Guido!" cried Winter with trembling voice, "either this place is bewitched or our plans



discovered; we have heard——"

The renewal of the noise interrupted him. Fawkes laid his hand upon his hilt and, with his lips pressed close together, thrust his head into the entrance of the tunnel. For a moment he remained silent, then turned with a grim look upon his face.

[Pg 175]

"'Tis from the place which we strive to reach," said he shortly; "go ye to the room above, while I learn its meaning;" and without more delay he left the cellar, followed by his terror-stricken companions.

Disguised in the dress of a common porter there was little danger in his venturing abroad. After an absence of about an hour, he returned to the six conspirators.

"Faith!" said he, tossing his cap upon the table, "thou mayst lay aside thy tools, Sir Thomas, and the others likewise."

"And wherefore?" asked Percy with bloodless lips. "Are we then discovered? If so, I will die with sword in hand——"

"Speak not of dying," replied Fawkes, a smile passing over his face; "rather set thy wits to working. Thou art good at bargaining; hire for us, therefore, this cellar beneath the House of Parliament."

The Catholic gentlemen gazed at him in astonishment, wondering if some sudden terror had beclouded his brain; or, did the man but jest with them?

"Hire the chamber under Parliament House?" gasped Catesby, "as well might good Percy bargain for the royal prerogative of James."

"Ye think me mad," said Fawkes, "but listen. After leaving you I made my way with all haste to the door of the Parliament cellar, which was open, and discovered the meaning of the noise which reached us in the tunnel;—'twas the sliding downward of a goodly quantity of coal, owned by a woman of some property called Bright, a dealer in coals and faggots. She being present, attending to the removal of her own, I addressed her and learned that, having hired the cellar from the authorities, she was about to give it over to them.

[Pg 176]

"And is't for rent?" asked I.

"That it is," replied she; "for he who hath the renting of it, one Whynniard, by name, did offer it for the coming quarter, but it pleaseth me to store my coals elsewhere."

"Thou seest, therefore, that this room is for us if we do choose, and Master Percy, well versed in such matters, has but to bespeak this Whynniard and possession will be given of a most valuable corner of the House of Parliament."

This sudden turn of fortune rendered the conspirators for the moment speechless. Winter was the first to regain his balance.

"It shall be done," cried he; "right glad am I that such a chance hath come to us. Good Master Percy, bestir thyself, before another seize the opportunity."

To all, it seemed that the hand of God had opened a way for them, and Percy made haste to do his errand, and with such success, that ere another sunrise the room beneath the House of Lords was in the hands of those who hoped to overthrow the government.

Having gained so easily the place they had sought to acquire by stealth and painful labor, the conspirators at once set about conveying into it the powder now stored in the house of Master Ferrers. Fawkes, to whom this work fell, bought, and ordered deposited in the chamber, a goodly quantity of coals and faggots, so that one chancing to enter would note only a pile of such commodities as dealers in fuel collected for sale. Care was taken that the unfinished tunnel in the wall should be covered so that none would notice it. This was easily done by replacing a few of the outer stones and cementing them together.

[Pg 177]

Some days yet remained before the opening of Parliament; during that time Percy, Catesby, Winter and others of the conspirators, formed such plans as would be to their advantage when the kingdom, shaken to its center by the death of the King and his ministers, should be thrown into confusion. As for Fawkes, each day found him in the fatal cellar, where he studied the condition of his coals and faggots, making sure that no prying eye had penetrated the covering, under which was hidden the "devil's powder" awaiting the spark which would free English Catholics from James of Scotland and his Parliament.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

[Pg 178]

### THE NOTE OF WARNING.

During the last week of October, sixteen hundred and five, near the day for the convening of Parliament, Lord Monteagle suddenly appeared in his house at Hoxton, from which he had been

absent a month. His manner was perturbed and preoccupied in the extreme. Usually of a genial disposition, he surprised the servants who attended him, by an impatient order that supper be served at once, as he and the gentlemen accompanying him had already fasted too long.

Soon after seven in the evening he dispatched a footman upon an errand into the neighboring street. This man shortly returned in haste, presenting to his lordship a sealed letter, addressed, in a cramped hand, to "The Right Honorable, the Lord Monteagle."

He received the missive, handling it in a fastidious manner, and inquired with some show of spirit how it had come through a servant, instead of being delivered in the usual way.

"'Twas given me," replied the footman, "by a reasonably tall person who stood upon a corner of the street, and directed with much semblance of authority that I give it into thy lordship's hand and to no other."

"'Tis a most unwonted thing," said Monteagle, breaking the seal, "probably some petition for alms which——"

Then, on glancing over the sheet, he started, and turned to a gentleman beside him.

"Good Thomas Ward," said he, "'tis written in a most illegible and wretched hand which I can scarce decipher; neither bears it any date or superscription. I pray thee take and read aloud, that all may hear and pass opinion upon so strange a matter."

[Pg 179]

Ward accepted the paper, and smoothed it out upon his hand. "It seems the writing of a laborer," said he, "one who doth wield a pick and spade with more ease than a quill. A most unmannerly jumble of ill-conditioned words, as thou shalt judge, my lord, upon hearing." So saying he read aloud as follows, while the others sat and listened:

"My lord out of the love I beare to some of your friends I have a cayer of your preservation therefor I would advyse youe as youe tender your lyfe to devyse some excuse to shift of your attendance at this parlement for God and man bathe concurred to punishe the wickedness of this tyme and thinke not slyghtly of this advertisement but retyre your selfe into your country where youe may expect the event in safty for though there be no appearence of any stir yet I say they shall receyve a terrible blowe this parlement, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. Thys cowncel is not to be condemed because it may do youe good and can do youe no harm, for the danger is passed as soon as youe have burnt the letter, and I hope God will gyve youe the grace to make good use of it to whose holy protection I commend youe."

"A most amazing document," said Ward, as he returned it to Monteagle; "and what think you of it, my lord? canst detect the meaning of so strange a warning?"

His lordship contracted his brow and studied the writing with much attention. "'Tis as you perceive," said he, "a warning unto me that some unexplained danger lies in the way."

[Pg 180]

"A boorish jest," cried one at the table; "think not upon it, my lord."

"Which is proved beyond doubt by the action of the one who brought it," said another; "he dared not deliver it at the door."

Monteagle folded the letter carefully and thrust it inside his doublet. There arose in his mind suspicion that in the tenor of the message lay the verification of the warning to Lord Salisbury, and that, mayhap, beneath the apparent serenity of the kingdom, smoldered a volcano which needed but the touch of a directing master hand to send belching forth its contents of treason and blood. Into his mind came also the words of the Prime Minister spoken one afternoon several months before, that should aught be unfolded of plots or treasonable designs, they should be disclosed to him, and thus the danger to the State be averted.

He had therefore a feeling of relief when the meal was ended, and his companions left him to carry out his intention. The raw October night was filled with storm and blackness, but the spirit of Lord Monteagle burned within him to lay before Salisbury and, perchance, the King, the warning which had come to him.

Scarce a quarter of an hour elapsed after rising from the table ere, covered by a great cloak, booted, and with a stout rapier girt at his side, he left Hoxton House unnoticed, and turned his steps toward the dwelling of the Prime Minister. Although the hour was late Cecil had not retired when he received the announcement that Monteagle sought an interview. Surprised at so unusual an occurrence the Minister hastened to greet his visitor, ordering, as was his custom, that a light repast be set before him.

[Pg 181]

"And what now, good Monteagle?" asked he, looking at his companion with a smile, "hast thy digestion played thee false again?"

"Of that thou shalt judge, my lord," replied Monteagle, taking the letter from his doublet and handing it to the Minister.

Salisbury mastered its contents with an aptness peculiar to himself.

"Faith!" said he, letting his eyes rest searchingly upon the face of his companion, "and how camest thou by this thing, my good lord?"

Monteagle related briefly the scene at the supper table.

"And didst thou have the letter read aloud, in the presence of thy gentlemen?" asked the Minister.

"Its contents were unknown to me," replied the other; "the writing was obscure and I did request Thomas Ward to decipher it."

Salisbury pondered for a moment. The warning of danger threatening those who would sit at the opening of the coming Parliament perplexed him, and drawing nearer to a light he studied the letter carefully.

"Thou hast done well," said he, suddenly turning to Monteagle, "in placing this paper in my hands without delay, yet—" he laid a finger on the letter, "perchance 'tis nothing, or—there may be much behind these ill-written lines. Thou perceivest that herein is written: 'for the danger is passed as soon as you have burned the letter!' What then can be the use of such a warning? as, hadst thou put the sheet to fire, there had been no danger."

[Pg 182]

"'Tis beyond my comprehension," replied Monteagle, "'tis a riddle."

Salisbury looked up quickly. Despite his assumed indifference at the time, the former conversation with the ex-Catholic nobleman had aroused in his mind suspicions that some danger might lurk beneath the calm which had lulled the King into a feeling of security. He understood well that, although there had been no open manifestations of treason on the part of zealous adherents to the Catholic faith in England, there were among them men who but awaited opportunity to show in no gentle way, their displeasure at the policy of James. He remembered also, that Monteagle had been a Catholic, though now a firm partisan of the government and in high favor at Whitehall. Might it not be possible that some knowledge coming to him of a plot against the State, and, not wishing to openly accuse his former compatriots, he had taken a more subtle way, seeking by veiled warnings and hints, to arouse suspicion in the other's mind, and so lead to some action on the part of the government? Yet, it was not in accordance with his policy to reveal his real thoughts; therefore, again thanking the other for his zeal with reference to the letter, he dismissed him with a promise that the matter should not be forgotten.

After Monteagle had left he again studied the missive, endeavoring to read between the lines, and bringing all his wit to bear upon the meaning. Then, as it was his custom to work quietly and without haste, for six days he held the document before making it known to the King.

James was at first alarmed, but upon perceiving that the Minister retained his calmness, he put aside his fears and questioned Salisbury closely concerning the meaning of the strange warning. In the latter's mind was no thought of arousing James to hasty action, for, if in truth a plot was brewing, too sudden a movement on the part of the government would warn those engaged in it, and only postpone the culmination to a more favorable opportunity. Following this line of thought the Prime Minister calmed the sovereign's fears, and the King, trusting to the prudence and shrewdness of his chief counselor, dismissed the matter with a jest.

[Pg 183]

Report, indeed, reached the ears of Winter, Catesby and others of the conspirators, that Lord Monteagle had been warned to absent himself from Parliament on the opening day. They were alarmed for a time, and sought solution of the problem, wishing to know who had played the traitor. Suspicion pointed to one Francis Tresham, whose sister had married Monteagle, and who, naturally, would seek to save his brother-in-law. But as Tresham denied all knowledge of the matter, the government made no move, and even Salisbury, usually alert, remained inactive. After a week of uncertainty, the conspirators again gathered their forces and the plot against the King and Parliament continued to ripen. Fawkes, beyond all others, became more reckless.

"Should all else fail," said he, "I remain firm; and at the end will kill this King even, if needful, in the royal bedchamber."

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## CHAPTER XX.

[Pg 184]

### ON THE STROKE OF ELEVEN.

"What, my daughter, up at this late hour!" exclaimed Fawkes, as he entered the room where Elinor sat. "I had deemed thee long abed."

The man threw himself into a chair by the fire with an air of fatigue, and sat in moody silence. The girl glanced up; then arising, passed over to him and lightly kissed his brow. The caress did not meet with any response; in fact, he seemed scarcely conscious of it, and after a moment's hesitation, Elinor resumed her seat.

She had led a strange existence for the past eight months;—ever waiting, ever dreading, and as yet nothing had occurred. To her this period had been one of breathless suspense, like the moment before the storm, when trees hang lifeless in a stifling atmosphere, and animals raise their heads in frightened expectancy, awaiting with nameless terror the first gust which shall herald the tornado. Since her father's return from France, she noted that the air of preoccupation

apparent before his departure, was now intensified. While in his kindness toward her the girl could detect no change, still, there had come between them a species of estrangement. Seldom was there an opportunity for them to converse, for Fawkes was up before daylight, and rarely returned until after the midnight hour had sounded. Often it was in her heart to ask his confidence—often to hint that she had overheard his words on that fearful night,—but when she approached with such intent, a nameless something in his manner held her mute.

[Pg 185]

The source from which she had hoped would flow sweet waters of comfort and relief proved dry and arid as summer dust; he to whom in an outburst of anguish she had confided her grief vanished completely from her life, as though the earth had engulfed him. True, Garnet visited her many times after the night she unburdened her heart to him, but his counsel was ever the same—to wait; at times she even imagined there was in his tones a hint at justification of her father's utterance. However, since the day on which Fawkes had returned, the Jesuit had never passed the threshold of the house. How to account for this absence she knew not, but in a vague way associated it with the mystery surrounding her father.

Winter, Elinor had not seen; her wonder at his studious avoidance of her was matched by the terror with which she anticipated meeting him. And her first grief?—the forced sacrifice of life's happiness with the man she loved—had time been kind, and stilled the aching of her heart? No; for in it the flame burned as brightly as when upon that day, long ago, his first kiss had breathed upon the glowing spark, changing it into a tongue of flame which leaped to her very lips. Where Effingston had gone, she did not know, but her prayers were ever the same, that in the abyss wherein lay her own fair fame he should cast his love;—so grief for him would cease to exist.

At last the silence of the room was broken by the man before the fire, who turned toward her, and, as if but just noting her presence, said, drowsily: "Daughter, methinks such late hours ill befit thee. It hath long since struck twelve; thou hast already lost thy beauty sleep."

[Pg 186]

Elinor arose, laid aside the work with which she had been employed, passed over to Fawkes, then stooped and kissed him. As her lips touched his, he reached up, took her face between his hands and gazing at her said, after a moment: "My pretty one, if at any time death should take thy father from thee, wouldst ever cease to love him?"

The girl started; for the words had broken strangely in upon her thoughts. Evidently the man beheld the shocked look, for he continued, putting his arm about her slight form and pressing it close to him, "Nay, my daughter, thou needst not be alarmed at what I say, for—for 'twas nothing. Thou knowest in years I do grow apace, and 'twould be small wonder if death did perchance tap me on the shoulder and say, 'Thou art the man!' There, there, little one," he added kissing her, "thou needst not reply; I can read an answer in thy eyes."

"And, prithee, didst ever doubt my love for thee?" whispered the girl, as she gently placed her arms about his neck.

"Nay, never!" answered Fawkes, quickly, in a husky voice, "but—but 'tis sweet to hear thee tell thy love, and," he added, taking one of her white hands within his own, "thou art all I have. If at any time death should steal thee from thy father's arms, methinks he would soon follow in thy light footsteps."

"Much happiness it doth give me to hear from thee such words," the girl replied, "even though they have but solemn import."

"And dost thy father's affection need repetition? Surely, thou knowest 'tis all thine own." For an instant there was silence, broken only by the crackling logs. Then the girl said, as though dwelling upon his words: "Nay, I never doubted thee—but—but——"

[Pg 187]

"But what, my daughter?" Fawkes asked, tenderly, pressing her fingers to his lips.

"Well, perchance," she answered with a smile, "I did but wish, like thee, to hear again the confession of it."

His only response was the pressing of her figure closer to his heart.

"Tell me," she began after a moment, in a hesitating voice, casting a half-timid glance at her father's face; "dost think one ever speaks words from anger that—well, that in calmer moments he would give a world to unsay?"

"What brought such question to thy mind, daughter?" enquired the other with a smile of surprise.

"Perchance 'tis but a causeless query," she replied, smoothing his tumbled locks.

"Many foolish things are spoke in passion," said Fawkes; "things which leave a lifetime of regret behind. I do remember that once, in this very room, my temper did o'erleap its bounds and lent my tongue words which I would give a year of sweet life to unsay. Dost know my meaning, darling?" he inquired, looking at her with moisture in his eyes. "'Twas when I had not long arrived from Spain; in truth, 'twas on the very night when thou——"

"Nay, I will not hear thee repeat," she interrupted, laying her hand upon his mouth. "I know all, but thou canst not think how happy this doth make me."

"Didst thou imagine I could mean those wicked words?" asked the man tenderly, "'Twas a sudden outburst of temper on hearing—well, well, since thy dainty fingers forbid my speech I will be

mute."

"See!" cried Elinor, springing to her feet, in the first happiness of her relieved mind. "Now thou shalt hear me laugh and sing all through the day, till thou wilt cry mercy. And mayhap some time thou and I," continued the girl, seating herself beside him, "shall leave this chilly land with all its cares and fly to a fairer country, where cold winds are not known, where sweet flowers do ever bloom, and we will love each other; in that, forget all else, and in forgetting; be forever happy and at rest."

[Pg 188]

"Perchance, some day," murmured the man. "But now, one more caress and thou must to thy bed, or 'twill be light ere thou art in dreamland."

She arose, a bright smile upon her face—brighter than he had seen resting there for many a day.

"Ah!" she cried, once more throwing her arms about him, "would that I could give to thee the happiness thy words have brought to me."

"And so thou canst," replied the man, suddenly.

"How may that be done?—tell me quickly!" she exclaimed, playfully, "that I may the sooner begin."

"It is, sweet Elinor," said Fawkes, gazing down into her eyes, "that thou wilt always love this man before thee—nay, even," he continued with a depth of feeling in his tone which she had never heard before, "even shouldst thou hear him branded as—as—no matter what manner of things might be uttered against him, thou art always to remember that he at least loved thee with all his heart, and that thou wert his life." He stopped abruptly; the tears which coursed down his stern face seemed strangely out of place.

"Ah!" exclaimed the girl, "I cannot bear to have thee doubt me; thou knowest I shall be ever thy loving daughter, even unto the end of this life and in the next."

The man was silent for a space; then mastering his emotion, and passing a hand quickly across his face, he said: "Think naught of my words, little one; they were but idle, born of fatigue. Now, once more good night to thee, and a long, sweet sleep."

[Pg 189]

So she left him; but at the door she turned, and Fawkes remembered afterward the bright and happy smile which lay upon her face.

With a light heart she went to rest, for her father's words had banished from her mind the hideous doubt with which it had so long been oppressed. The dreadful gulf between them had, at last, been bridged, and once more they stood together hand in hand as in days gone by. She was almost unwilling to yield herself to sleep, fearing lest, on awaking, she might find her happiness but a vision of the night. Slumber claimed her at last, and she fell into dreams of her new-found joy. Many hours elapsed and the morning sun shone brightly into her room, when there fell upon the girl's ear the sound of voices in the apartment below. Remaining a moment in a dreamy state, wondering who the early visitors might be, she suddenly caught a sentence which stiffened the blood within her veins and brought back to her heart in deadly force the awful fears she had thought forever gone. Those in the chamber beneath had evidently been in conversation for some time, for she heard them advancing toward the door as though to depart. Then a voice, which the girl recognized as Sir Thomas Winter's, said in a low tone: "Now, the last arrangements are made; all doth await thy hand. Ah," he continued, "would that I might see the outcome of this. 'Tis a ghastly thing, even though it be——"

"What?" interrupted another voice, which Elinor knew to be her father's. "Doth thy heart begin to turn at this late hour? Marry, my one wish is that even now the clock stood on the stroke of eleven, for in five minutes thereafter England will be without its King and Parliament."

[Pg 190]

"Hast all that thou wilt need?" inquired Winter.

"Yea, verily," the other answered. "Here are flint and steel, quite new. The touchwood and the lantern are hidden beneath the faggots in the cellar. But stay, thou hadst better lend me thy time-piece; mine is not over trustworthy, and I would keep accurate track of the moments."

"Here is the watch," said the other voice; "it was true to the second yesterday. And now, for the last time, dost fully understand the signal? It is to be the first stroke of eleven. The King is expected at half after the hour of ten; that will leave thirty minutes' margin, and the lords will have assembled before James doth take his place."

"Knowest thou," inquired Fawkes, when Winter had ceased, "what may be the first measure before the House?"

"Methinks," replied the man, "one Lord Effingston will speak upon a bill relating to the duty upon wool." And he added, with a laugh which the girl could distinctly hear, "perchance his fine words will be interrupted, if thy tinder be not damp."

"Thou needst have no fear of that," answered Fawkes, gruffly. "But let us hence, for 'tis even now past the stroke of ten."

She heard them pass quickly out, and soon their footsteps died away in the distance. Elinor lay for a moment dazed,—the blow had fallen! The words he had uttered but a few short hours ago were a lie, uttered to blind her. She recoiled in horror from even the thoughts of that man with

[Pg 191]

the black and treacherous heart. He was now a father but in name; all her love turned to that other man, who, in that very moment, was standing over a hell which awaited but the hand of Fawkes to send it belching forth. Was there yet time to save him? All her energies bent themselves to this one purpose. She arose and dressed hurriedly, forming her plan of action the meanwhile. A sudden terror came upon her. If by some accident the mine should be prematurely exploded, what then? But she recollected the cautious man who was to fire it, and the thought quieted her. The bell in a neighboring steeple chimed the quarter after ten. Forty-five minutes only remained,—barely time, if she hastened her utmost, to reach the Parliament buildings before eleven would ring out upon the air. She was soon ready and hastened toward the door, her trembling fingers scarce able, in their eagerness, to lift the latch. At last they found the cord, but the portal held firmly to its place. Again she tried, putting forth all her strength. Still it did not yield. The horrible truth flashed upon the girl; the heavy door was securely fastened from the outside!

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## CHAPTER XXI.

[Pg 192]

### THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

As Elinor stood confronted by the barred door, a madness born of terror seized her. Frantically she beat upon the panel until in places the wood was stained with her blood. Again and again she threw herself against the heavy oak, but with no result. After many vain attempts she sank, almost fainting, to the floor.

As she lay breathless, her tender hands bruised and bleeding, there fell upon her ear the echo of the chime once more;—ten thirty! The sound infused new life into her slight form. Springing to her feet she seized a bench near by, and with a power almost superhuman, raised the heavy piece and struck the portal with all her might. A shower of dust rewarded her. Another blow and a wide fissure appeared across the panel. Once more the bench crashed against the door, and it gave way, a shower of splinters flying into the hall below. Quickly she hastened down the stairs and gained the street. People turned wondering looks upon the flying girl as with strength born of desperation she sped toward Parliament House. As she reached the neighborhood a group of men who stood engaged in conversation, noted her, and one drew forth his watch:—"There is one carrying a petition," said he; "but fifteen minutes yet remain before the opening of the House."

The words quickened her energies; a quarter of an hour yet!

In a moment she was in sight of the buildings. It had been her purpose to hasten to the hall, but suddenly flashed the thought that her entrance might be barred, and questions be asked. No time now but for one thing,—to seek her father in the cellar, and snatch the torch from out his hand.... The clock marked the hour of half past ten when Fawkes, having taken leave of Sir Thomas Winter, reached the door of the dark room under Parliament House. As he had left it, so he found it;—the portal locked, and silence reigning within where lay the faggots and the gunpowder. The soldier of fortune glanced about. Save for a few idlers the narrow passage flanking the cellar door was unoccupied. Soon even those went on their way, and unobserved he opened the portal and slipped into the fatal chamber, closing it noiselessly behind him, but leaving it unbarred; for, the spark once applied to the powder, there would be scant time for escape. The cellar was in darkness save where, through the rusty bars of a small window, a feeble ray of light struggled with the gloom, losing itself amid the shadows.

[Pg 193]

Stepping carefully, that no footfall might reach the ears of any above, he groped his way along the rough stone wall. Upon reaching a depression in the masonry, he took up from its hiding place a lantern, a rude affair formed of iron, pierced by countless holes, and within it a tallow candle, which, when he lighted it, sputtered fitfully and sent forth a sickly yellow light, the glare only serving to intensify the gloom. A rat, frightened by his approach, scurried into some dark corner with a plaintive squeak which startled him, despite his iron nerve.

"Faith!" he muttered, a grim smile relaxing for a moment the stern lines of his face, "thou art strangely nervous, Guido, that such a thing doth make thee tremble! 'Tis an adage that such vermin as I have disturbed make haste to leave a fatal ship, and, methinks, this Ship of State is very near the rocks. 'Tis a sign from heaven that I shall not fail." Then, turning to the pile of faggots: "So innocent are ye, that even Elinor, with all her gentleness, might bear you in her arms and take no harm; but——" here he bent and touched a hidden cask: "thou art more to my liking, and the King shall hear thee speak for me. Thine is the voice which shall tell all England that——"

[Pg 194]

For a moment the monologue was interrupted and he busied himself with the fuse, pouring from a flask taken from his doublet, fresh grains of powder upon the train already laid, that nothing should be lacking to speed the fire to its destination.

Overhead sounded countless footsteps, as the pages and attendants upon the floor of the Parliament chamber hastened hither and thither upon their various errands.

"My good lords and bishops are assembling," muttered Fawkes; "a most gallant gathering, I warrant. Pity 'tis, that all must perish; for there be some who have small voice in the passing of the laws."

Suddenly there fell upon his ear the muffled sound of a cheer raised by countless voices. The smile upon his lips grew scornful: "The King!" he muttered, "greeting his good Parliament. 'Tis said he loves a well-timed jest; pity to rob England of such a famous clown; perchance in hell the devil may use his wit to while away the dinner hour."

The noise above increased; the peers had entered the hall; the King had ascended the throne, and it lacked but fifteen minutes to the first stroke of eleven, when the Parliament would open—and the flint would kiss the steel.

[Pg 195]

Despite his hardihood the man waiting in the gloom beneath the feet of the sovereign and his noblemen grew restless as the fatal moment approached. Through his brain flashed thoughts of the fearful consequence of his bloody deed,—the terror, the widespread consternation and the chaos which would follow the destruction of the Parliament. To him came, also, the thought of his daughter—what she would say to him; but then—she was a child and little comprehended affairs of State. When all was over Garnet would quiet her fears, and her father would be a hero in her eyes.

Unconsciously he drew forth his dagger and pricked with its point the mortar between the stones of the pillar against which he leaned. With something to occupy his mind the moments would speed faster. The lantern, burning dimly, stands upon the floor near his side; beyond lies the fuse, ready for the fire.

Just at this moment Elinor, having reached the door of the cellar, paused an instant upon the threshold, then, scarce conscious of what she was doing pushed open the unbarred portal and stepped within the gloomy chamber. So silent was her coming that Fawkes, busy with his dagger and the mortar, did not perceive it. The girl hesitated, trembling in every limb; the blackness of the place, the intense excitement under which she labored, and the fearful thought that already the fuse might be burning, her father gone, and death so near, held her spellbound. She saw the faint glimmer from the lantern, a hundred tiny streaks of light glowing through the darkness. Her father must be there beside his light, and summoning all her energies she moves quickly forward, intent only upon accomplishing her mission.

The rustle of her garments struck upon Fawkes' ear. He turned and saw the half open door, the dim outline of the form which stood between him and the faint light struggling through the aperture. With a quick indrawing of the breath he grasped the hilt of his dagger and turned to face the advancing figure. Shall anyone thus ruin all, at the eleventh hour? His nerves became as if made of steel, all signs of indecision vanish; face to face with danger he becomes once more the hardened veteran who has met unflinchingly the fierce charge of the foemen in the Lowcountry.

[Pg 196]

Elinor at length perceived him whom she sought, and stretched out her hands to grasp him, for the dry lips refused to frame the words her tongue would utter.

In that moment, noting the extended arms, and thinking the other would lay violent hands upon him, Fawkes sprang forward and seized the frail form about the shoulders; small time to note the softness of the flesh and the clinging woman's garments, or the low cry which answers the grasp of his iron hand. The blackness of the place hides their faces, and his business is to carry out the plot.

For a moment the two—father and daughter—are locked together in a firm embrace; the slender figure of the child bent and tortured by the cruel pressure of the pitiless fingers. She struggled desperately, and in her efforts to free herself Fawkes finds the way to end the matter quickly.

"Thou wouldst undo the work," he hisses. "Didst think to find me unprepared? Thou art a cunning knave, but this—"

No eye, save that of God, sees the uplifting of the dagger, the quick movement of the arm, the rapid thrust which drives the fatal steel into that tender breast, letting forth her life-blood upon the rough pavement of the cellar.

[Pg 197]

Elinor reeled and released her hold upon him. In her agony God stretched forth His hand and held her in His grasp so that, ere she died, the end for which she had come might be accomplished. One word, a bitter cry wrung from her heart, escaped her lips: "Father!"

But Fawkes heeded it not. As he sent home the dagger his foot struck the lantern, overturning it, and sent the iron case with its burning contents rolling across the floor toward the powder train. In another instant the fire will have reached the fuse,—and 'tis not yet time!

With a frantic push he hurled the victim of his murderous blow away from him, and hastened to snatch the sputtering light. His violence flung the stricken girl to the floor, but with a last effort of will, she staggered to her feet and groped blindly for the door, one little hand outstretched before her, the other covering the cruel wound made by her father's knife.

At last she found the portal, and gained the narrow way to the street. There was but one thought in her heart,—to reach the hall above before death claimed her.

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Within the House of Lords all was ready for the opening of the Parliament. James, clothed in royal

robes of State, and exchanging jests with his favorites, was lolling upon the throne. The peers were in their seats; some, deep in conversation, others, silently gazing at the gorgeous scene of which they were a part. At a table standing near the space before the throne, sat Lord Monteagle and his son, the latter engaged in arranging the notes of his speech on the bill which he was soon to bring before the House. Effingston seemed to be strangely nervous as the hour for his address drew near and his father had evidently made some jesting remark concerning his tremulous hand, when suddenly the attention of all was drawn toward the great doors at the extreme end of the room. Affected by the tumult, James turned impatiently to see who had dared disturb the solemnity of the hour. Those who were looking in that direction started with amazement.

[Pg 198]

Through the open portal, flanked by its two rows of yeomen of the guard, advanced a slender girlish figure, with face white as marble and whose dark eyes sought the King. Clad in a gown of some soft gray stuff which had been torn open at the throat, revealing the gentle curve of the white bosom, the girl staggered up the long aisle leading to the throne. Between the fingers of the hand pressed above her heart showed a crimson stain which, touching the bodice of her dress, gradually spread itself upon the soft color.

Amazed at so unwonted a spectacle the peers could only stare, transfixed. The girl had reached the space before the throne and stopped beside the table at which Effingston stood, who alone, of all the House, had started to his feet and confronted her. For one brief moment she gazed into his eyes, then stretched forth her hand. The white lips parted, she cried in a stifled voice:

"My lords! flee the House ere——"

The voice fell to a whisper, she reeled and sought to grasp the table for support. Effingston sprang toward her, but before he reached her side, her form sank slowly to the floor and lay at his feet. Unmindful of the presence of the King, and of his fellow peers, the young nobleman raised her in his arms. None beside Lord Monteagle heard him whisper:—"Elinor!"

[Pg 199]

At her name the closed lids opened, and her lips parted in a faint smile.

"My love!" she murmured faintly, her head sinking upon his shoulder like that of a tired child slowly falling to sleep. "I am guiltless—thou alone—'twas for thy sake——"

A spasm of pain swept across her face; he felt a shudder shake the slender form, and a beseeching look sought his face.

"I understand, my darling," he whispered, pressing his lips to hers.

She sighed. A happy light shone in the fast glazing eyes.

"Elinor!" he murmured. "One more word——"

But God had taken her.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

[Pg 200]

### FAWKES BEFORE THE KING.

For a moment a great stillness pervaded the House of Lords. The King had half arisen from the throne, his hands tightly grasping the gilded lions on either side, and his eyes fixed upon the dead form of Elinor, lying at Effingston's feet. All followed the monarch's glance, the ministers and peers leaning forward to better see the stricken girl growing rigid in the clasp of death. So profound was the silence in the great hall, that the footsteps of those without were heard with startling distinctness in every part of the room. Before all the peers, leaned Lord Monteagle, his gaze riveted upon the face of his son. As for Effingston he heeded nothing; like an image of stone he stood, his limbs powerless and his blood turned to ice; the face of the dead was not whiter than his, yet, upon her face was the smile of peace, in his, the shadow of conscious, mortal agony.

So sudden had been the coming of that tender maid, born of the people, but now more noble than any lord of England, that none save, perchance, Salisbury, Monteagle and the King, comprehended its meaning. The girl's dying cry that all should flee the House of Parliament, was a mystery to the lords; but to the mind of the Prime Minister, and to Monteagle and James, came as by a flash of lightning, the veiled meaning in the letter, which, strong in his feeling of security, the King had hitherto looked upon as an idle jest, gotten up to disturb his dreams. Raising his eyes from the spot where Elinor lay, her blood staining the polished floor, he turned them upon Salisbury, with a look of interrogation. The Minister collected by an effort his scattered senses. Into his mind came as though by Divine inspiration some inkling of the nature of the threatened danger. Turning quickly, he summoned to his side Master Edmond Doubleday, an officer of the royal household.

[Pg 201]

"Go," said he hoarsely, "into the cellar, and whosoever thou findest there, be it man or woman, seize quickly. Perchance the King's life dependeth upon thy expedition."

Of quick wit, the officer comprehended that his superior had surmised some plot, the solution of which might be found below. Hastening from the hall he gathered on the way a dozen gentlemen,



and together the company hurried from the House and sought the door which opened to the chamber under it. Something guided their steps—great, crimson splashes upon the pavement, blood drops which left a well-marked trail from the space before the throne of the King—to the narrow entrance of the cellar wherein lay the danger which they must avert. Little did Guido Fawkes know—as little had the dead girl comprehended—that her heart's blood would mark the way which would lead him to the scaffold because it would be the means of hastening on his enemies, directing them with no uncertain significance to his hiding place.

In the semi-darkness of the cellar, amid his coals and faggots, with the six and thirty barrels of gunpowder ready for the spark, the daring soldier of fortune stood with trembling limbs, and a nameless terror at his heart. Unflinching in the face of danger, the first in all deeds of hardihood, famed for his valor in the Lowcountry, the overturning of the lantern so near the powder train, and the low cry of agony which followed the driving home of his dagger, had unnerved him. For one brief instant he thought he recognized the cry—that from the gasping lips so near his own had fallen the word "father!" but in the excitement of the moment he dismissed the dreadful thought. Some idle, curious knave had chanced to see the cellar door, and entered. Was it his fault that he had resorted to the knife to prevent the discovery of his presence?

[Pg 202]

Occupied with the overturned lantern he had noted little what befell the other. Stabbed to death, the intruder probably lay in some dark corner where the soldier's frantic push had sent him. The lantern burned dimly, and time was speeding, so 'twould be an ill thing to waste it upon a dead man. Steadying his nerves by an effort, Fawkes took out the watch which Winter had given him, and bending toward the flickering light studied the dial. The hour was at hand; in five minutes the great clock in the tower of St. Paul would mark the stroke of eleven, and he would fire the fuse.

Searching in his doublet he drew forth a tinder box and touchwood. Five minutes more and he would strike the spark; in five more the red, spitting serpent would reach the hidden powder; by then he would be safe, and, mingling with the crowd, would hear the roar of thunder heralding the passing of James Stuart and his Parliament into eternity.

As he waited, the flint held ready to strike the steel, there flashed through his mind the thought of his daughter, but she was safe at home, and——The sound of hasty footsteps and the passing of dark forms before the dim light struggling through the half closed entrance to the cellar, broke his reverie. Was it another come to meet his knife point?

[Pg 203]

As he drew back, shading the lantern with his cloak, the door was burst violently open, and a dozen men, the first holding aloft a torch, pushed into the cellar. Fawkes thrust the flint and touchwood into the bosom of his doublet, and, ever cool when danger threatened, bent carelessly over the pile of coals and faggots. Coming thus, without knowledge, any might have judged him an honest coal monger busy at his trade.

Those who entered so hastily rushed upon him; Edmond Doubleday raised a dagger, intent upon driving it into his body, but seeing Fawkes unarmed he lowered the steel and seized him by the shoulders. In an instant the soldier shook off the other's grasp.

"Who art thou?" cried he fiercely, "what is thy business, sir?"

For reply Doubleday turned to his companions. "Surround the fellow, gentlemen," said he sharply, "and search the cellar."

Fawkes was quickly hemmed in by a wall of men, each with drawn sword in hand. On the instant it flashed upon him that the plot was known, and that further dissimulation would be profitless; therefore he held his peace while two or three of his captors searched the cellar. One muttered an exclamation; he had come upon the fuse, and following it, perceived the barrels beneath the pile of faggots. Fawkes smiled grimly.

"If thou wilt look yet further," said he, "haply thou wilt find a dead man."

But nothing was discovered save Fawkes, his faggots, and the gunpowder.

The captive started. He had not then killed him who grappled with him in the darkness; sorely wounded, the other had escaped to set the bloodhounds upon his hiding place. He had thought his hand more sure.

[Pg 204]

After thoroughly searching the cellar those who had taken Fawkes led him to the passage without. He noted upon the stones the drops of blood, and smiled,—his knife had not been useless after all. As the little company with the soldier of fortune in their midst hurried along the passage there ran toward them Sir Thomas Knyvet and half a score of the royal guards. Perceiving the prisoner, the knight looked at him critically.

"What!" cried he, turning to Doubleday, "hast not bound the ruffian? 'Tis the King's pleasure that any whom thou hast taken be brought before the throne."

No cords were forthcoming, for, in their haste, small matters had been neglected, but one of the gentlemen, taking from his pocket a pair of garters proffered them to Doubleday.

"Take these," said he; "I warrant they will hold the knave."

Fawkes submitted without a protest, watching with grim indifference the passing of the garters about his legs and wrists. Once he smiled; but 'twas a fleeting shadow. Within the House his

captors searched him, coming upon the tinder box, touchwood, and Winter's watch—things which were to bear heavy evidence against the prisoner.

In the hall of Parliament all was confusion; Elinor, guarded by Effingston, still lay dead before the throne, and the ministers were gathered about it.

The tumult ceased as Fawkes was led through the doorway. He was to meet the King whom he would have slain, yet he advanced with uplifted head, not a muscle quivering. The peers made way for him, so that a space was cleared before the throne. Suddenly his eyes fell upon Effingston; for an instant he paused, then following the gaze of the grief-stricken nobleman, saw her who lay upon the floor. A mist gathered before his eyes; a blinding flash of unreal but fierce accusing light seared his brain and turned him into stone. Horror-stricken he advanced, scarce conscious that he moved, until he stood before the body of his daughter upon whose breast showed the red wound made by the knife. The King, Salisbury, and the ministers had turned and were looking fixedly upon him, but Fawkes was unconscious of their gaze. He saw only the white face, the half-closed eyes, the cold lips which had kissed his own so fondly and called him "father."

[Pg 205]

As the flashing of a great light coming out of the darkness, the truth gleamed in its red horror upon him—the reason of the presence of another in the cellar, the drops of blood along the pavement. She had sought to save him from the crime of murder—and he had killed her!

He would have cried out and thrown himself upon his knees beside the dead, but his iron will controlled the impulse, and the hands of the guard upon his shoulder held him firm. What cared he for axe or gibbet now? He had loved her next to his religion, and had slain her. The King was speaking:

"Ah!" said he, "what have we here, brave gentlemen? Doth tremble so at the sight of one dead girl? Who art thou, fellow?"

Fawkes replied nothing, nor, perchance, heard the voice of James; his thoughts were in Spain, where, when a child, Elinor had climbed upon his knee.

"Faith!" cried the King, "hast caught a dumb man, good Master Doubleday? or hath the decoration of the garter so overcome his senses that he is in a maze?"

[Pg 206]

Some of the gentlemen about the throne smiled, for James loved a jest; but Effingston turned away and pressed his father's hand.

"Come!" cried the King, impatiently; "wilt not find thy tongue? 'tis not my custom to speak a second time. What didst thou in the cellar?"

Fawkes raised his eyes and the King saw in them a look of such utter hopelessness that some chord of pity in his heart was touched.

"My good Lord Cecil," said he, turning to Salisbury, "methinks terror, or something worse, hath driven away his wits; we but waste words upon him. See to it, pray, that he be closely guarded, for certain questions must be put to him. The Warden of the Tower hath a way to loosen stubborn tongues."

So saying, he arose with much dignity and left the hall, followed by many of his gentlemen. Fawkes they took out by another way—the road which led to the Tower. He gave no sign, but let his gaze dwell in one last farewell upon the body of his daughter. Then his eyes met those of Effingston, and in the other's look he read that the dead would rest in peace and honor.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

[Pg 207]

### THE BANQUET.

On the evening of that memorable Fifth of November, there were gathered in a spacious residence at Ashbery, Saint Ledger, a small company evidently bent upon pleasure.

During the day they had passed their time in the many ways gentlemen were wont to choose when seeking forgetfulness of the din and distractions incident to a great city. But it was not difficult to discern that the hearts of the men were far from interested in the various sports undertaken by them.

The hours from morning until dark had been spent in a variety of ways, but none evinced any enjoyment in their pastime. A few had beguiled a small part of the day in hunting, but they failed to find even in that excitement relief for the anxiety which so oppressed them. At last twilight came, lingered, and glided into night. But with the darkness the uneasiness of all increased.

Nor would this fact have caused wonder had it been known what thoughts lay in the mind of each; that they were momentarily expecting tidings upon which depended not only their hopes and happiness but, perchance their lives as well. Indeed, the company had been bidden thither by none other than Lord Catesby, who deemed it expedient that those not actually engaged in

carrying out the plot for the assassination of James and his Parliament, should tarry at his country residence until news of the accomplished deed should be brought them. Acting upon the suggestion, he, together with Sir Everard Digsby, Rookwood, Robert Morgan, Grant and the brother of Sir Thomas Winter, had ridden forth from the city the day before; and now, with apprehension which their sanguine hopes could not fully thrust aside, they awaited the news which was to tell them how the fearful plot had prospered.

[Pg 208]

After a day, the length of which was measured not by the standard of moments but by that of slow-moving years, all had assembled to partake of the evening repast. Surrounding the glittering table were anxious and thoughtful faces. The host was silent and distraught, but not more so than his guests. The terrible strain under which they labored forbade much conversation; and if a laugh, perchance, mounted to the lips of any, it sounded hollow and mirthless.

"What now, good gentlemen," cried Catesby, with an attempt at gayety, when silence had again fallen upon the group; "ye are in truth but sorry companions. It would appear that something besides good vintage lay in the cellar beneath us. Come, fill your cups and let wine bring to our lips the jest, since wit seemeth utterly barren."

"Nay, my lord," exclaimed Rookwood, as he thrust his glass aside; "I for one am done with pretensions; 'tis time some news did reach us." The man drew forth his watch, and glancing at it, said with a frown: "By Our Blessed Lady, 'tis past nine and we have had no tidings!"

The anxiety in the speaker's tone seemed to find a silent response in the heart of each. Before them all the wine stood untasted. A barking cur upon the highway caused them to start to their feet and listen, thinking the sound might be the herald of an approaching horseman. "'Twas nothing," said the host wearily, when once more seated. "Patience, patience, gentlemen; I think this delay doth not bode ill to us, for as ye are aware, bad news is ever atop of the swiftest steed."

[Pg 209]

"Ah, good Catesby," exclaimed Digsby, "it is to thee we look for consolation in this terrible hour. But I do most devoutly wish some intelligence, be it good or evil, would arrive; for naught can be worse than this awful waiting."

"Talk not of evil tidings," broke in Grant, nervously; "our minds are full enough of fears without thy—"

"Nay, good Robert," interrupted Sir Everard, "'twas but a figure of speech I used. Nothing is further from my mind than to play the croaking prophet."

"Art sure, my lord," queried Rookwood, "that Sir Winter did comprehend in what manner the intelligence was to be brought?"

"Quite certain of it," answered the host; "for 'twas the last topic upon which we spoke before I left the city. Have no fear; he understood full well that Master Keyes was to ride post haste the moment all was accomplished."

"How long would it take a horseman, riding at his best speed, to travel the distance?" enquired Rookwood, again drawing forth his watch.

"If nothing occurred to hinder on the way, and his mount was fresh at start, methinks the journey should be made in eight hours."

"Then," exclaimed the other, thrusting back his time-piece, "if all be well we would have heard ere now. I fear me—nay—I know not what I fear."

But hark! What sound is that which at last falls upon the listening group? Was it the wind sighing through the leafless trees? Nay, it cannot be; for now they hear it again, and more distinctly. There is no mistaking the flying hoofs of a horse striking the hard road. All spring from the table. The moment has arrived; they are to know. As each gazes into the white face of the other, he but beholds the reflection of his own pallid countenance, and speech for a moment is impossible.

[Pg 210]

"God!" cried Rookwood, listening; "Catesby, thou didst say but one rider was to bear the message, and I hear the noise of several rushing steeds, if, indeed, I be not mad."

Louder and louder grew the clatter of the hoofs, whiter and whiter the faces of the waiting men. At last five horsemen dash in at the gate and ride without drawing rein across the lawn and up to the very window of the banquet room.

No need to ask what tidings. Winter is the first to throw himself from his steaming horse, and followed by Percy, the two Wrights and Robert Keyes, staggers into the room. They are covered with mud and streaming with perspiration. Their hats and swords were left behind—evidently lost in the wild ride from London. Breathless they stand, for a moment unable to speak. Written on the face of each is an expression of utter despair, mingled with fear and pain, such a look as an animal wears when, shot through the body, it blindly flees from death.

Winter is the first to find voice; and clutching at the table, which shakes under his trembling grasp, pants, in a tone which is scarcely audible:

"Flee for your lives! There is yet time for us to escape. We cannot help him who is in the Tower. Our own necks will pay for further delay."

There is a horrified silence, broken only by the hard breathing of the men. At last Rookwood, pale with emotion, sprang toward the speaker, gasping: "What is this thou sayest? Failure! It cannot

[Pg 211]

be! Thou must be mad!"

"Nay," cried Percy, "'tis so, 'tis so, indeed. Fawkes is captured. Nothing is left for us but flight. Come, to horse! to horse! I say. Even now the soldiers are on the road, and any moment the sound of hurrying hoofs in pursuit of us may fall upon our ears."

In an instant the utmost disorder reigned. Chairs were overturned in the eagerness of the men to take in hand their swords, which rested against the wall. Glasses, swept from off the board, fell with a crash, adding to the general din. The floor was strewn with eatables and wine, carried from off the table in the mad rush. Panic ruled, and it had placed its sign-manual upon each face.

At last, above the uproar, the voice of Catesby can be heard, and standing by the door he addresses the fear-stricken men. "Gentlemen!" he cried, "has the grasp of terror seized upon and turned you all mad? Why should we fly, and by that course brand our deeds as sinful? Are we criminals? Have we stolen aught? Are we creatures to be hunted through the country? Come! play the part God has given to each, and at the end, since success is not ours let us meet death here, hand in hand, as becomes brothers in one faith—like martyrs!"

The words of the speaker had small effect upon the men, and did not check the general confusion. Those who had just arrived were in the garden attending to their jaded steeds, knowing full well that upon them depended their lives.

Rookwood burst again into the room, attired in a heavy riding mantle. "Come," he cried to his host; "to horse while there is time! 'Twould be a wickedness to tarry longer; it meaneth naught but self-destruction. Our steeds have been resting, and many miles may be placed between us and London ere break of day. Endanger not all our lives by thy foolish scruples."

[Pg 212]

At last the finer sentiments of Catesby were overruled by the words and entreaties of his companions, and he with them, hurried to the stable. With trembling fingers the bridles were fastened, the girths drawn, and in a moment all were ready for the flight. With a clatter the cavalcade sped out of the gate and thundered down the road at breakneck pace, disappearing in the darkness.

So ended the day which was to see the culmination of a deed which these fleeing men once dreamed would set the world on fire! And what had come of it? For them, nothing but the dancing sparks struck out by the hoofs of galloping horses, bearing their guilty riders from under the blow of a swinging axe. Fawkes, their unhappy tool, was already in the grip of the avenging power; and was tasting a more bitter gall than that of torture and death, for that he had, with his own hand, shed the blood of his well-beloved daughter, but not one drop of the heretic blood he so thirsted to spill.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

[Pg 213]

### "IN THE KING'S NAME."

The bomb having exploded so unexpectedly in the camp of the conspirators, Fawkes a prisoner in the hands of the government, which, following the custom of the day, would probably under torture wring from him a confession, the gentlemen who had been so zealous in the cause had now no thought but of flight. So sudden had been the exposure of their plot—laid bare to the eyes of all England at the eleventh hour—that the bold plans for a well-regulated defense were overthrown completely, and could not be carried out in any degree. Garnet, indeed, was for the time safe, his hiding place unknown to the authorities, and did Fawkes resist with physical and moral force the torture, the Jesuit might not become involved in the consequences of his treason. But Catesby, Percy, the two Winters and others stood in the shadow of the scaffold. That no mercy would be measured out to them was beyond peradventure. Though of brave spirit, they feared, and could but flee before, the anger of the law.

It was indeed a pitiful and chagrined body of horsemen who, hurrying through Worcestershire and the adjoining county, sought to hide themselves from the King's officers. Pausing in their mad flight, they rifled the house of Lord Windsor, taking such arms and armor as best suited their needs. Close after them rode the soldiers of the King incited by promise of reward and honor did they capture and deliver the little band into the hands of Salisbury and his ministers. One face was missing from among those fleeing for their lives in such wild haste. Catesby, Percy, my Lord of Rookwood, the two Wrights, Grant, Morgan and Robert Keyes rode side by side, but Thomas Winter, he who had summoned Fawkes from Spain, was absent. Small need of words between the proscribed conspirators. A single purpose was in each heart—to escape those in pursuit.

[Pg 214]

As dull night drew on, the horses jaded, their riders fainting from fatigue and fear, the luckless gentlemen reached Holbeach, the house of Stephen Littleton. The early stars were twinkling in the gray vault of heaven when lights from the welcome asylum greeted their eyes. Percy turned to Catesby, who rode at his side.

"Good Robert," said he, "there must we perforce remain till morning; horseflesh can scarce endure the strain much longer, and those who follow must needs halt, also. Stephen Littleton

hath been our friend, therefore is his dwelling at our disposal. 'Tis a stout structure, and should the King's men find us therein—some will go with us to the other world."

Catesby smiled sadly. "Here will we indeed rest," replied he; "for, as thou sayest, the beasts be weary. England is small, good Percy; we must not lack courage."

Noting the two leaders pull up their horses at the gate of the dwelling, the others did likewise, and all dismounted and entered the place which, to some, was their last abode—save the grave. In the main chamber a cheerful fire crackled; for in the month of November the air was chill, and Master Littleton perceiving the gentlemen trembling as from cold, caused to be thrown upon the embers a goodly number of faggots which blazed brightly. The sight recalled to Percy's mind the fatal cellar under the House of Parliament, where he had last seen Fawkes guarding with watchful eye the secret which lay beneath so innocent a covering.

[Pg 215]

Having removed their heavy boots and outer clothing the conspirators talked together, seeking to dispel the gloom which rested upon the company. All were ill at ease, for, although Percy had said the King's officers would rest, it was possible they might secure fresh horses, push on, and attack the house ere morning. Expecting no mercy if taken alive, each resolved to sell his life dearly.

The hours passed on to ten in the evening, when a thing happened which, to the minds of many in England, exemplified the law of God—that the wicked shall perish through their own evil devices. Wishing to have all in readiness should the officers come upon them during the night, and fearing that the gunpowder with which they were provided might have become dampened by reason of the humidity of the weather and its prolonged exposure to the elements, Christopher Wright poured upon a platter some two pounds of the black grains, and set it beside the hearthstone. Noting the action another of the party brought a second bag of powder and treated it likewise, thinking to remove it when sufficiently dry.

Percy perceived the danger and withdrew from his position before the blaze. "Were it not well," said he, "to have a care, lest a spark falling outward do much harm to those within the room?"

"Nay," replied Wright, "'tis my purpose to watch it closely; the stuff, being damp, is worthless."

Percy spoke no more, not wishing to be thought unduly nervous, and the company relapsing into silence watched the flames, each intent upon his own dark forebodings.

[Pg 216]

For many minutes they remained thus, but starting at each sound from without, and hearing in every rustle of the leafless trees and shrubbery the hoofbeats of horses bearing their pursuing enemies. The heat of the room, added to sleepless nights which had followed the arrest of Guido Fawkes and the discovery of the conspiracy, gradually overcame the majority of the party, and all but Percy and Catesby nodded in their seats. These two, the first confederates with Winter and the Superior of the Jesuits to formulate the plan for destroying the King and the government, sat moodily side by side, their burning eyeballs glassy in the red reflection of the flames, and their hearts heavy with thoughts of dismal failure and impending ruin.

"Would that Garnet were with us now," muttered Catesby, thrusting one foot upon the fender; "perchance his wit might devise some means to free us from our entanglement and perplexity, and save the cause. Would that Fawkes had——"

Percy raised his eyes quickly. "Thou art then sorry——" he began.

"Nay," replied Catesby with some haughtiness. "If I had thought there had been the least sin in it I would not have put my hand to it for all the world. No other cause led me to hazard my fortune and my life but zeal for the true faith. We have, in truth, failed, good Percy; yet was the match burning which, in another moment, would have given the spark to the powder, and the thunderbolt of which friend Guido spake to us would——"

Carried away by his earnestness he thrust forth his foot beyond the fender and struck the faggots which blazed in the fireplace. A shower of sparks answered the blow. One, falling beyond the hearthstone, found the platter heaped with the deadly grains. Then, in truth, the spark was given to the powder, but it was not that which lay beneath the floor of Parliament; it was the powder in the room wherein nodded the would-be murderers of the lords and the King of England. Ere Catesby was aware of the awful danger, before Percy—who had noted the falling spark—could cry out, there came a blinding flash, a cloud of sulphurous smoke, the crashing of bent and broken timbers, and the affrighted cries of the luckless inmates of the room. Yet in one thing there seemed to be a merciful interposition. Carried upward by force of the explosion, the bag containing a greater quantity of the powder was hurled through the opening in the roof, and fell into the yard untouched by fire; had it been otherwise, the public executioner's work would have been less, and fewer dripping heads had graced the spikes upon the Tower.

[Pg 217]

Blinded by fire and smoke but unharmed, save for a scorching of the hair and beard, the conspirators groped their way into the open air. Upon their souls rested a cloud of superstitious dread. In the explosion of the gunpowder they saw the hand of God; and—'twas not turned against the King!

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It was scarce daybreak when the horse bearing Sir Thomas Winter stopped before the door of the

ill-fated Holbeach mansion. Report had reached him of the explosion, also that many of his companions were sorely wounded, and that Catesby lay dead, with body shattered by the firing of the powder. Then was proved his gentle blood, and the valor of his race. Those with him when he received the news begged him to fly; but he only looked upon them with clouded brow, and said: "Nay; Catesby is dead. I will see to his burial; a gallant gentleman,—and my friend!"

[Pg 218]

Thus he rode in all haste to Holbeach, to find there his friends unharmed;—close following him were the soldiers of the King.

Scant time was given to the luckless gentlemen to prepare for receiving them.

"What have ye resolved to do?" asked Winter, having heard the story of the night.

"We mean to die," replied Percy stoutly; "we can scarce hold the house an hour."

"Then," said Winter quietly, "I will take such part as you do." And looking to his sword and firearms, he leaned against the casement of the window facing the road on which the King's men would come.

Toward noon they came, a gallant company of gentlemen and musketeers, flushed with the early morning ride and filled with zeal to take the traitors who awaited them behind the walls of Master Littleton's house. Watching from the window Winter saw many faces which he knew; Sir John Foliot, Francis Conyers, Salway, Ketelsby, all staunch adherents of the King;—men who, being dispatched upon any errand, would carry it through most zealously. Before the cavalcade rode a doughty gentleman, Sir Richard Walsh, sheriff of Worcestershire, armed with the royal authority to seize the persons of such conspirators as chanced to fall in his way.

It was the sheriff who halted the troop some fifty paces from the house, and, attended by Sir John Foliot and two musketeers, advanced boldly to the closed door.

Trying the latch and finding the portal barred, he tapped upon the panel with the hilt of his sword. None from within replied. Again the sheriff rapped, and a voice demanded who it was that sought admittance, and what might be his errand.

[Pg 219]

"That," replied Sir Richard, "is well known to thee. Open, therefore, in the King's name!"

The conspirators hesitated, for the command was one wont to be obeyed in England.

"Open!" repeated the sheriff; "lay down your arms!"

"We will die," replied Catesby firmly, "but will not open unto thee."

"Die thou shalt," replied Sir Richard cheerily, "with thy head upon the block." So saying, and perceiving that those within would sell their lives dearly, he returned to his men, ordering that some quickly fire the building, others stand ready to receive any, who, driven forth by fear or flame, might seek to escape through the garden.

Perceiving that they were like to be burned alive, those in the house resolved to gain the garden, and with sword in hand contend with the King's men. 'Twas Winter who unloosed the bolt; and perchance something had come of the venture, for the besieged were of most determined purpose, if some of the soldiers had not discharged their muskets, and a ball striking Sir Thomas in the shoulder wounded him sorely. A second fire sent a rain of balls through the open doorway, some of them hitting my Lord of Rookwood and the two Wrights, Christopher and John,—stretching them dead upon the floor.

"God's mercy!" cried Catesby; "let us forth, ere we all be murdered. Stand by me, Tom, and we will die together."

Winter, whose face was white with pain, replied hoarsely: "That will I, sir; but having lost the use of my right arm, I fear I will be taken."

[Pg 220]

Yet he stooped and caught up his sword with his left hand, standing a little back of Catesby and Percy who blocked the doorway.

"Wouldst contend against us?" cried the sheriff of Worcestershire, and then ordered that a third volley be delivered by his musketeers.

Most of the balls lodged themselves in the wall of the building, or tore splinters from the casement of the door. But one, as though resolved to atone for the fruitless efforts of its fellows, sped on its deathly errand, striking Robert Catesby in the neck, passing quite through, and burying itself in the breast of Percy, who with scarce a cry fell dead at Winter's feet.

Bleeding profusely, Catesby attempted to regain his footing, but death was near and he fell back crying to Winter to lift him up that he might help defend the doorway. The conspirators who remained unharmed, drew back in terror, crouching behind the furniture with no thought of resisting the King's authority.

Seeing that Percy, Rookwood and the two Wrights were dead, Catesby dying, and none to support him, Winter cast aside his sword and bent over his stricken comrade. At that moment certain of the sheriff's men charging upon the open doorway, perceived him standing there, and one, bearing a pike, thrust it at him so that the point pierced his doublet and wounded him grievously. Staggering under the blow Winter, his clothes covered with blood, gave back, and

again was wounded in the side by a rapier.

"Cowards!" cried he, striking blindly at the foremost soldier with his naked hand, "can ye not touch a vital part, but must torture me so?" [Pg 221]

One, perceiving him sorely wounded and unarmed, seized him and in a moment he was bound and dragged into the yard.

The others, Keyes, John Grant and Henry Morgan, were quickly overcome, and now of the nine Catholic gentlemen who had resolved to defend the house, five lay dead, and four were in the hands of the authorities.

Having so handily brought his errand to a successful termination Sir Richard, of Worcestershire, fell into great good humor.

"Faith!" cried he, sheathing his bloodless sword, "'tis a merry gathering for my Lord of Salisbury to look upon. Four plump birds ready for the axe man, and four and one knocking at the gate of hell. Rare sport, in truth, hath been the taking of so ill a brood; therefore, gentlemen, to London and the Tower with the nine. Though some be dead, their necks are ready for the axe, I warrant. 'Tis a brave sight will greet the populace, anon."

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## CHAPTER XXV.

[Pg 222]

### REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

Those who watched with Fawkes said he partook of no food, slept not—neither spoke, and refused to utter the names of his fellow conspirators. He sat all day in his cell without moving. At times there came into his drawn and haggard face a strange and unearthly light, as though he suddenly beheld a form glide from out the shadow of the dungeon, and kneel beside him. At these moments he would stretch forth his arms as if to embrace the airy figure of his brain, and whisper, nodding his head slowly the while: "Thou wert all I had—in a moment, darling;—wait until thy father can but pass this dreary portal."

They put him to the rack, but elicited nothing. He endured the torture as though scarce feeling it; and even in agony, was heard to mutter: "In a moment, my little one—but a moment more."

His trial, with that of the others implicated in the plot, was over. The sentence of death had been pronounced upon each. Three days after, Everard Digsby, with Robert Winter and Grant, met death by hanging in the churchyard of St. Paul's. Three remained awaiting the headsman's axe—Thomas Winter, Keyes and Guido Fawkes.

Their execution was anticipated by the populace of London with unwonted eagerness. The desire of the people to see justice meted to those whom they deemed the prime movers in a conspiracy which had shaken England to its foundation, was only rivaled by the curiosity resident in each heart, to behold the one who, with undaunted nerve, had stood beneath the House of Lords ready to fire the mine which would rob the kingdom at one fell blow of both its monarch and Parliament. [Pg 223]

In that age public executions were signals for general holidays; people flocked from the most distant shires, decked in best attire, to witness the doing to death of some poor malefactor. But this was no ordinary occasion; and, as if to emphasize the fact, a great throng had assembled at Westminster even before the sun arose, on the day set apart for the beheading of the remaining three conspirators.

At an early hour companies of halberdiers were forced to exercise their authority in keeping the crowd at proper distance from the ominous structure erected in the middle of the square. The object about which this innumerable concourse of people gathered was a high platform covered with black cloth, in the center of which stood the block. The condemned men had been brought from the Tower shortly after midnight, and were now lodged in the space beneath the scaffold, which had been converted into a kind of closed pen.

The hour for the execution was eleven, and as the time approached the multitude gradually swelled, being increased by thousands; as though some pitiless monster were fattening itself upon thoughts of the blood so soon to be shed.

Again and again the pikemen were forced to thrust back the surging mass, and at last the soldiers did not hesitate to use their weapons as the throng forced its way up to the very ropes surrounding the scaffold. But now above the babel of tongues the great bell of the Cathedral boomed out the hour of eleven. As its last note died away the roar of voices gradually subsided, until it sunk into a dull murmur of expectancy, but again it broke forth into a cheer as the headsman ascended the stairs leading to the scaffold. This man was popular with the rabble and noted for his dexterity and strength. As the applause greeted him he recognized the homage rendered with a bow. His was a gruesome figure, as, attired in the costume of the office, his features concealed by a scarlet mask, he leaned easily upon the handle of the glittering axe—and waited. [Pg 224]

Soon four soldiers, under command of an officer, approached the door of the inclosure and stood two on either side with halberds reversed. A moment of breathless stillness followed; the portal opened and one victim was led forth. Surrounded by guards he was solemnly conducted to the foot of the steps leading to the block. Keyes, for it was he, ascended without aid, and reached the platform. A murmur of disappointment ran through the multitude as he came into view, for they had supposed Fawkes would be the first to die.

The man for an instant stood quite still; he had been the first of the little procession to reach the top, and seemed undecided which direction to take, but only for a moment stood he thus; two of the guards quickly approached and led him toward the center of the scaffold. He knelt without assistance, laid his cheek upon the block, his right shoulder resting in the notch fastened for its reception. The soldiers retired. The headsman drew back, swiftly raised the axe above his head, measured the distance with a practiced eye, and struck.

The favorite of the rabble had again acquitted himself well. The head of the victim fell on one side of the block, the quivering trunk sinking to the floor upon the other. A cheer greeted the deed, then silence once more fell upon the multitude. Some soldiers now appeared carrying a box of sand. They quickly ascended the steps and scattered its contents upon the wet boards. Having finished, one of the men seized the head which still lay where it had fallen, fixed it upon the point of his pike and stuck the weapon with its gruesome burden upon the railing. The headless trunk was flung without ceremony into a cart which was in waiting.

[Pg 225]

Again the procession formed; once more a victim knelt; the axe fell, and another head stared down upon the throng below.

A ripple of expectancy again broke forth. Two had died; the next must be the one for whom they waited. All strained their necks in eagerness to catch the first glimpse as he should be led forth, and this was the sight for which they had longed:—

A man unable to stand alone; his form, weakened by torture and sickness, was dragged up the steps and stood confronting them. His arms were not bound, for they hung lifeless. Those who stood near could understand the absence of fetters; there was nothing upon which to clasp them, save a mass of crushed bones, in many places stripped of flesh by the cruel cords of the rack. He seemed quite oblivious of his surroundings, turned his head neither to the right nor to the left, but gazed past the headsman—past his captors—and far beyond the sea of upturned faces. His lips were seen to move, but only those who supported him could catch the words:—"In a moment, my little one!" he whispered; "thy father will soon kiss thy sweet lips—and then—we will love each other, and in that love forget all—"

They hurried him toward the block and were obliged to place his head upon it; his weakness was so great that he would have fallen had they not supported him. His guards drew back, the axe, already lifted, was about to descend, when, the poor limp figure slipped and fell with a thud to the floor, unable to save itself by reason of the uselessness of the arms. Again he was lifted; once more the axe was raised, and even in that moment they heard him whisper the name ever upon his lips:

[Pg 226]

"Elinor!"—Crash!—and he was away to clasp her to his breast.

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## CONCLUSION.

[Pg 227]

Of Henry Garnet something remains to be said. The alarm which was felt at the revelation of the treason which might, but for the arrest of Fawkes in the cellar under Parliament House, have resulted in the disruption of the government, was widespread, and it became necessary for the Jesuits remaining in the kingdom to hide most secretly.

As Catesby had said, the Superior, upon leaving London some weeks before the discovery of the plot, had taken refuge in the house of Sir Everard Digsby at Coughton. 'Twas there he received a letter from one of the conspirators announcing the failure of the enterprise to which he had lent himself. For three weeks he remained in hiding, when, by night, and in disguise, he was removed to Hendlip House, where with another of his Order, and two servants, he escaped for a time the diligent search instituted by Salisbury, and urged on by the King.

On the twentieth of January following the fatal Fifth of November, Sir Henry Bromley, a magistrate, arrived with an armed force at Hendlip, being in possession of a commission to search the mansion. The house was full of secret apartments, and for seven days the King's officer looked in vain for the Superior of the Jesuits. But on the eighth a soldier, chancing upon a room occupied by one of the women of the place, discovered in an aperture of the chimney a reed pipe, which excited his curiosity and suspicion.

Hearing of the matter, Sir Bromley followed the clew thus given him, and behind the wall, in a secret chamber, came upon Garnet and his companion, Oldcorne, who, since the coming of the authorities, had been fed through the reed with broths and warm drinks.

[Pg 228]

Taken to London, the Superior of the Jesuits was treated kindly. Many examinations were given him, nor was torture resorted to in his case, though Oldcorne was put to the rack. Through all Garnet divulged nothing, and there had been some likelihood of escape, for the King was kindly



disposed, had not a trick resorted to by the government resulted in his undoing. Allowed to hold communication with the unfortunate Oldcorne, a watch was stationed behind the wall of the cell, and such conversation as passed between the churchmen was taken down. The facts thus revealed hurried Garnet to his doom.

His trial was held late in March, and although he defended himself ably, the evidence of his having been a party to treason was conclusive. Through all he maintained that, though cognizant of the design to blow up the House of Parliament, he had taken no active part with the conspirators. Holding that the secret had come to him through sacramental confession, he affirmed that, by his faith, he was bound to disclose nothing concerning it. The trial ended with the sentence that he follow in the footsteps of Fawkes, Winter and those others who had met death upon the scaffold. Even then, the King, loth to see executed so famous a prelate, stayed for a time the hand of the axeman. 'Twas not till the third day of May, three months after the death of his former companions, that Garnet died—the last of those unfortunate men who sought to gain their ends by violence.

**THE END.**

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## **TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES**

1. Few quotes are opened with marks but are not closed and vice-versa. Obvious errors have been silently closed, while those requiring interpretation have been left as such.
2. The following misprints have been corrected:
  - "Fawke's" corrected to "Fawkes" (page 73)
  - "reovered" corrected to "recovered" (page 106)
  - "exlaims" corrected to "exclaims" (page 108)
  - "'tis" capitalized to "'Tis" (page 154)
  - "readinesss" corrected to "readiness" (page 215)
3. Other than the corrections listed above, printer's inconsistencies in spelling, punctuation, and hyphenation have been retained.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER \*\*\*

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