GERARD JOHN

WHAT WAS THE GUNPOWDER PLOT? THE TRADITIONAL STORY TESTED BY ORIGINAL EVIDENCE

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The following study of the Gunpowder Plot has grown out of the accidental circumstance that, having undertaken to read a paper before the Historical Research Society, at Archbishop's House, Westminster, as the day on which it was to be read chanced to be the 5th of November,[1] I was asked to take the famous conspiracy for my subject. It was with much reluctance that I agreed to do so, believing, as I then did, that there was absolutely nothing fresh to say upon this topic, that no incident in our annals had been more thoroughly threshed out, and that in regard of none, so far, at least, as its broader outlines are concerned, was the truth more clearly established.

When, however, I turned to the sources whence our knowledge of the transaction is derived, and in particular to the original documents upon which it is ultimately based, I was startled to find how grave were the doubts and difficulties which suggested themselves at every turn, while, though slowly and gradually, yet with ever gathering force, the conviction forced itself upon me, that, not merely in its details is the traditional story unworthy of credit, but that all the evidence points to a conclusion fundamentally at variance with it. Nothing contributed so powerfully to this conviction as to find that every fresh line of reasoning or channel of information which could be discovered inevitably tended, in one way or another, towards the same result. In the following pages are presented to the reader the principal arguments which have wrought this change of view in my own mind.[2]

I cannot pretend to furnish any full or wholly satisfactory answer to the question which stands upon the title-page. The real history of the Plot in all its stages we shall, in all probability, never know. If, however, we cannot satisfy ourselves of the truth, it will be much to ascertain what is false; to convince ourselves that the account of the matter officially supplied, and almost universally accepted, is obviously untrue, and that the balance of probability lies heavily against those who invented it, as having been the real plotters, devising and working the scheme for their own ends.

Neither have I any wish to ignore, or to extenuate, the objections which militate against such a conclusion, objections arising from considerations of a general character, rather than from any positive evidence. Why, it may reasonably be asked, if the government of the day were ready to go so far as is alleged, did they not go further? Why, being supremely anxious to incriminate the priests, did they not fabricate unequivocal evidence against them, instead of satisfying themselves with what appears to us far from conclusive? Why did they encumber their tale with incidents, which, if they did not really occur, could serve only to damage it, inasmuch as we, at this distance of time, can argue that they are impossible and absurd? How is it, moreover, that the absurdity was not patent to contemporaries, and was not urged by those who had every reason to mislike and mistrust the party in power?

Considerations such as these undoubtedly deserve all attention, and must be fully weighed, but while they avail to establish a certain presumption in favour of the official story, I cannot but think that the sum of probabilities tells strongly the other way. It must be remembered that three centuries ago the intrinsic likelihood or unlikelihood of a tale did not go for much, and the accounts of plots in particular appear to have obtained general credence in proportion as they were incredible, as the case of Squires a few years earlier, and of Titus Oates somewhat later, sufficiently testify.

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[1] 1894.

[2] Some of these have been partially set forth in a series of six articles appearing in *The Month*, December 1894 – May, 1895.

It is moreover as difficult for us to enter into the crooked and complex methods of action which commended themselves to the statesmen of the period, as to appreciate the force of the cumbrous and abusive harangues which earned for Sir Edward Coke the character of an incomparable pleader. On the other hand, it appears certain that they who had so long played the game must have understood it best, and, whatever else may be said of them, they always contrived to win. In regard of Father Garnet, for example, we may think the evidence adduced by the prosecution quite insufficient, but none the less it in fact availed not only to send him to the gallows, but to brand him in popular estimation for generations, and even for centuries, as the arch-traitor to whose machinations the whole enterprise was due. In the case of some individuals obnoxious to the government, it seems evident that downright forgery was actually practised.

The question of Father Garnet's complicity, though usually considered as the one point in connection with the Plot requiring to be discussed, is not treated in the following pages. It is doubtless true that to prove the conspiracy to have been a trick of State, is not the same thing as proving that he was not entangled in it; but, at the same time, the first point, if it can be established, will deprive the other of almost all its interest. Nevertheless, Father Garnet's case will still require to be fully treated on its own merits, but this cannot be done within the limits of such an inquiry as the present. It is not by confining our attention to one isolated incident in his career, nor by discussing once again the familiar documents connected therewith, that we can form a sound and satisfactory judgment about him. For this purpose, full consideration must be given to what has hitherto been almost entirely ignored, the nature and character of the man, as exhibited especially during the eighteen years of his missionary life in England, during most of which period he acted as the superior of his brother Jesuits. There exist abundant materials for his biography, in his official and confidential correspondence, preserved at Stonyhurst and elsewhere, and not till the information thus supplied shall have been duly utilized will it be possible to judge whether the part assigned to him by his enemies in this wild and wicked design can, even conceivably, represent the truth. It may, I trust, be possible at no distant date to attempt this work, but it is not possible now, and to introduce this topic into our present discussion would only confuse the issue which is before us.

Except in one or two instances, I have judged it advisable, for the sake of clearness, to modernize the spelling of documents quoted in the text. In the notes they are usually given in their original form.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness in many particulars to Mr. H.W. Brewer, who not only contributes valuable sketches to illustrate the narrative, but has furnished many important notes and suggestions, based upon his exhaustive knowledge of ancient London. I have to thank the Marquis of Salisbury for permission to examine MSS. in the Hatfield collection, and his lordship's librarian, Mr. Gunton, for information supplied from the same source. Through the courtesy of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records, every facility has been afforded me for consulting the precious documents contained in the "Gunpowder Plot Book." The Dean of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, has kindly given me access to an important MS. in the College Library; and I have been allowed by the Rector of Stonyhurst to retain in my hands Father Greenway's MS. history of the Plot during the whole period of my work. The proprietors of the *Daily Graphic* have allowed me to use two sketches of the interior of "Guy Faukes' Cellar," and one of his lantern, originally prepared by Mr. Brewer for that journal.

CHAPTER I.
THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

On the morning of Tuesday, the 5th of November, 1605, which day was appointed for the opening of a new Parliamentary session, London rang with the news that in the course of the night a diabolical plot had been discovered, by which the king and legislature were to have been destroyed at a blow. In a chamber beneath the House of Lords had been found a great quantity of gunpowder, and with it a man, calling himself John Johnson, who, finding that the game was up, fully acknowledged his intention to have fired the magazine while the royal speech was being delivered, according to custom, overhead, and so to have blown King, Lords, and Commons into the air. At the same time, he doggedly refused to say who were his accomplices, or whether he had any.

This is the earliest point at which the story of the Gunpowder Plot can be taken up with any certainty. Of what followed, at least as to the main outlines, we are sufficiently well informed. Johnson, whose true name was presently found to be Guy, or Guido, Faukes,[3] proved, it is true, a most obstinate and unsatisfactory witness, and obstinately refused to give any evidence which might incriminate others. But the actions of his confederates quickly supplied the information which he withheld. It was known that the "cellar" in which the powder was found, as well as a house adjacent, had been hired in the name of one Thomas Percy, a Catholic gentleman, perhaps a kinsman, and certainly a dependent, of the Earl of Northumberland. It was now discovered that he and others of his acquaintance had fled from London on the previous day, upon receipt of intelligence that the plot seemed at least to be suspected. Not many hours later the fugitives were heard of in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire, the native counties of several amongst them, attempting to rally others to their desperate fortunes, and to levy war against the crown. For this purpose they forcibly seized cavalry horses[4] at Warwick, and arms at Whewell Grange, a seat of Lord Windsor's. These violent proceedings having raised the country behind them, they were pursued by the sheriffs with what forces could be got together, and finally brought to bay at Holbeche, in Staffordshire, the residence of one Stephen Littleton, a Catholic gentleman.

There proved to have been thirteen men in all who had undoubtedly been participators in the treason. Of these Faukes, as we have seen, was already in the hands of justice. Another, Francis Tresham, had not fled with his associates, but remained quietly, and without attempting concealment, in London, even going to the council and offering them his services; after a week he was taken into custody. The eleven who either betook themselves to the country, or were already there, awaiting the issue of the enterprise, and prepared to co-operate in the rising which was to be its sequel, were Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, Robert and Thomas Winter, John and Christopher Wright, John Grant, Robert Keyes, Ambrose Rokewood, Sir Everard Digby, and Thomas Bates. All were Catholics, and all, with the exception of Bates, Catesby's servant, were "gentlemen of blood and name," some of them, notably Robert Winter, Rokewood, Digby, and Tresham, being men of ample fortune.

On Friday, November 8th, three days after the discovery, Sir Richard Walsh, sheriff of Worcestershire, attacked Holbeche. Catesby, Percy, and the two Wrights were killed or mortally wounded in the assault. The others were taken prisoners on the spot or in its neighbourhood, with the exception of Robert Winter, who, accompanied by their host, Stephen Littleton, contrived to elude capture for upwards of two months, being at last apprehended, in January, at Hagley Hall, Worcestershire. All the prisoners were at once taken up to London, and being there confined, were frequently and diligently examined by the council, to trace, if possible, farther ramifications of the

[3] So he himself always wrote it.

[4] Also described as "Great Horses," or "Horses for the great Saddle."

conspiracy, and especially to inculpate the Catholic clergy.[5] Torture, it is evident, was employed with this object.

Meanwhile, on November 9th, King James addressed to his Parliament a speech, wherein he declared that the abominable crime which had been intended was the direct result of Catholic principles, Popery being "the true mystery of iniquity." In like manner Chichester, the Lord Deputy in Ireland, was informed by Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, his Majesty's Secretary of State, that the Plot was an "abominable practice of Rome and Satan,"[6] while the monarch himself sent word to Sir John Harington that "these designs were not formed by a few," that "the whole legion of Catholics were consulted," that "the priests were to pacify their consciences, and the Pope confirm a general absolution for this glorious deed."[7]

Then follows an interval during which we know little of the course of events which were proceeding in the seclusion of the council-room and torture-chamber; but on December 4th we find Cecil complaining that he could obtain little or no evidence against the really important persons: "Most of the prisoners," he writes,[8] "have wilfully forsworn that the priests knew anything in particular, and obstinately refuse to be accusers of them, yea, what torture soever they be put to."

On January 15th, 1605-6, a proclamation was issued declaring that the Jesuit fathers, John Gerard, Henry Garnet, and Oswald Greenway, or Tesimond, were proved to have been "peculiarly practisers" in the treason, and offering a reward for their apprehension. On the 21st of the same month Parliament met, having been prorogued immediately after the king's speech of November 9th, and four days later an Act was passed for the perpetual solemnization of the anniversary of the projected crime, the preamble whereof charged its guilt upon "Many malignant and devilish papists, jesuits, and seminary priests, much envying the true and free possession of the Gospel by the nation, under the greatest, most learned, and most religious monarch who had ever occupied the throne."[9]

In consequence of this Act, was introduced into the Anglican liturgy the celebrated Fifth of November service, in the collect of which the king, royal family, nobility, clergy, and commons are spoken of as having been "by Popish treachery appointed as sheep to the slaughter, in a most barbarous and savage manner, beyond the examples of former ages;" while the day itself was marked in the calendar as the "Papists' Conspiracy."

It will thus be seen that the Powder Plot was by this time officially stigmatized as the work of the Catholic body in general, and in particular of their priests; thus acquiring an importance and a significance which could not be attributed to it were it but the wild attempt of a few turbulent men. As a natural corollary we find Parliament busily engaged upon measures to insure the more effectual execution of the penal laws.[10]

On January 27th the surviving conspirators, Robert and Thomas Winter, Faukes, Grant, Rokewood, Keyes, Digby, and Bates,[11] were put upon their trial. In the indictment preferred against them, it was explicitly stated that the Plot was contrived by Garnet, Gerard, Greenway, and other Jesuits, to whose traitorous persuasions the prisoners at the bar had wickedly yielded. All were found guilty, Digby, Robert Winter, Grant, and Bates being executed at the west end of St. Paul's Church, on January the 30th, and the rest on the following day in Old Palace Yard.

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[5] "The great object of the Government now was to obtain evidence against the priests." – Gardiner, *History of England*, i. 267. Ed. 1883.

[6] See his despatch in reply. *Irish State Papers*, vol. 217, 95. Cornwallis received Cecil's letter on November 22nd.

[7] See Harington's account of the king's message, *Nugæ Antiquæ*, i. 374.

[8] To Favat. (Copy) Brit. Mus. MSS. Add. 6178, fol. 625.

[9] Statutes: Anno 3o Jacobi, c. 1.

[10] This work was taken in hand by the Commons, when, in spite of the alarming circumstances of the time, they met on November 5th, and was carried on at every subsequent sitting. The Lords also met on the 5th, but transacted no business. *Journals of Parliament.*

[11] Tresham had died in the Tower, December 22nd. Although he had not been tried, his remains were treated as those of a traitor, his head being cut off and fixed above the gates of Northampton (*Dom. James I.* xvii. 62.)

On the very day upon which the first company suffered, Father Garnet, whose hiding-place was known, and who had been closely invested for nine days, was captured, in company with another Jesuit, Father Oldcorne. The latter, though never charged with knowledge of the plot, was put to death for having aided and abetted Garnet in his attempt to escape. Garnet himself, being brought to London, was lodged first in the Gatehouse and afterwards in the Tower.

As we have seen, he had already been proclaimed as a traitor, and "particular practiser" in the conspiracy, and had moreover been officially described as the head and front of the treason. Of the latter charge, after his capture, nothing was ever heard. Of his participation, proofs, it appeared, still remained to be discovered, for on the 3rd of March Cecil still spoke of them as in the future.[12] In order to obtain the required evidence of his complicity, Garnet was examined three-and-twenty times before the council, and, in addition, various artifices were practised which need not now be detailed. On the 28th of March, 1606, he was brought to trial, and on May 3rd he was hanged at St. Paul's. The Gunpowder Conspirators were thenceforth described in government publications as "Garnet, a Jesuit, and his confederates."

Such is, in outline, the course of events which followed the discovery of November 5th, all circumstances being here omitted which are by possibility open to dispute.

It will probably be maintained, as our best and most circumspect historians appear to have assumed, that we are in possession of information enabling us to construct a similar sketch of what preceded and led up to these events, – whatever obscurity there may be regarding the complicity of those whose participation would invest the plot with the significance which has been attributed to it. If it were indeed but the individual design of a small knot of men, acting for themselves and of themselves, then, though they were all Catholics, and were actuated by a desire to aid the Catholic cause, the crime they intended could not justly be charged upon the body of their co-religionists. It would be quite otherwise if Catholics in general were shown to have countenanced it, or even if such representative men as members of the priesthood were found to have approved so abominable a project, or even to have consented to it, or knowingly kept silence regarding it. Of the complicity of Catholics in general or of their priesthood as a body there is no proof whatever, nor has it ever been seriously attempted to establish such a charge. As to the three Jesuits already named, who alone have been seriously accused, there is no proof, the sufficiency of which may not be questioned. But as to the fact that they who originated the Plot were Catholics, that they acted simply with the object of benefiting their Church, and that the nation most narrowly escaped an appalling disaster at their hands, can there be any reasonable doubt? Is not the account of their proceedings, to be read in any work on the subject, as absolutely certain as anything in our history?

This account is as follows. About a year after the accession of James I.,[13] when it began to be evident that the hopes of toleration at his hands, which the Catholics had entertained, were to be disappointed, Robert Catesby, a man of strong character, and with an extraordinary power of influencing others, bethought him in his wrath of this means whereby to take summary vengeance at once upon the monarch and the legislators, under whose cruelty he himself and his fellows were groaning. The plan was proposed to John Wright and Thomas Winter, who approved it. Faukes was brought over from the Low Countries, as a man likely to be of much service in such an enterprise. Shortly afterwards Percy joined them,[14] and somewhat later Keyes and Christopher Wright were added to their number.[15] All the associates were required to take an oath of secrecy,[16] and to confirm it by receiving Holy Communion.[17]

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[12] "That which remaineth is but this, to assure you that ere many daies you shall hear that Father Garnet … is layd open for a principall conspirator even in the particular Treason of the Powder." —*To Sir Henry Bruncard, P.R.O. Ireland*, vol. 218, March 3rd, 1605-6. Also (Calendar) *Dom. James I.* xix. 10.

[13] In Lent, 1603-4. Easter fell that year on April 8th.

[14] "About the middle of Easter Term." —*Thomas Winter's declaration*, of November 23rd, 1605.

[15] "Keyes, about a month before Michaelmas." —*Ibid.* About Christopher Wright there is much confusion, Faukes (November

These are the seven "gentlemen of blood and name," as Faukes describes them, who had the main hand in the operations which we have to study. At a later period six others were associated with them, Robert Winter, elder brother of Thomas, and Grant, both gentlemen of property, Bates, Catesby's servant, and finally, Rokewood, Digby, and Tresham, all rich men, who were brought in chiefly for the sake of their wealth, and were enlisted when the preparations for the intended explosion had all been completed, in view of the rising which was to follow.[18]

Commencing operations about the middle of December, 1604, these confederates first endeavoured to dig a mine under the House of Lords, and afterwards hired a large room, described as a cellar, situated beneath the Peers' Chamber, and in this stored a quantity of gunpowder, which Faukes was to fire by a train, while the King, Lords, and Commons, were assembled above.

Their enemies being thus destroyed, they did not contemplate a revolution, but were resolved to get possession of one of the king's sons, or, failing that, of one of his daughters, whom they would proclaim as sovereign, constituting themselves the guardians of the new monarch. They also contrived a "hunting match" on Dunsmoor heath, near Rugby, which was to be in progress when the news of the catastrophe in London should arrive; the sportsmen assembled for which would furnish, it was hoped, the nucleus of an army.

Meanwhile, as we are assured – and this is the crucial point of the whole story – the government of James I. had no suspicion of what was going on, and, lulled in false security, were on the verge of destruction, when a lucky circumstance intervened. On October 26th, ten days before the meeting of Parliament, a Catholic peer, Lord Monteagle, received an anonymous letter, couched in vague and incoherent language, warning him to absent himself from the opening ceremony. This document Monteagle at once took to the king's prime minister, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, who promptly divined its meaning and the precise danger indicated, although he allowed King James to fancy that he was himself the first to interpret it, when it was shown to him five days later.[19] Not for four other days were active steps taken, that is, till the early morning of the fatal Fifth. Then took place the discovery of which we have already heard.

Such is, in brief, the accepted version of the history, and of its substantial correctness there is commonly assumed to be no room for reasonable doubt. As Mr. Jardine writes,[20] "The outlines of the transaction were too notorious to be suppressed or disguised; that a design had been formed to blow up the Parliament House, with the King, the Royal Family, the Lords and Commons, and that this design was formed by Catholic men and for Catholic purposes, could never admit of controversy or concealment." In like manner, while acknowledging that in approaching the question of Father Garnet's complicity, or that of other priests, we find ourselves upon uncertain ground, Mr. Gardiner

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17th, 1605) implying that he was introduced before Christmas, and Thomas Winter (November 23rd, 1605) that it was about a fortnight after the following Candlemas, *i. e.*, about the middle of February.

[16] The form of this oath is thus given in the official account: "You shall swear by the blessed Trinity, and by the Sacrament you now propose to receive, never to disclose directly or indirectly, by word or circumstance, the matter that shall be proposed to you to keep secret, nor desist from the execution thereof until the rest shall give you leave." It is a singular circumstance that the form of this oath, which was repeated in official publications, with an emphasis itself inexplicable, occurs in only one of the conspirators' confessions, viz., the oft-quoted declaration of T. Winter, November 23rd, 1605. This – as we shall see, a most suspicious document – was one of the two selected for publication, on which the traditional history of the plot depends. Curiously enough, however, the oath, with sundry other matters, was omitted from the published version of the confession.[Published in the "King's Book: " copy, or draft, for publication, in the Record Office: original at Hatfield. Copy of original Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 6178, 75.]

[17] T. Winter says: "Having upon a primer given each other the oath of secrecy, in a chamber where no other body was, we went after into the next room and heard mass, and received the blessed Sacrament upon the same." —*Declaration*, November 23rd, 1605.

[18] Digby was enlisted "about Michaelmas, 1605;" Rokewood about a month before the 5th of November. Tresham gives October 14th as the date of his own initiation. *Examination*, November 13th, 1605.

[19] This is clear from a comparison of Cecil's private letter to Cornwallis and others (Winwood, *Memorials*, ii. 170), with the official account published in the *Discourse of the manner of the Discovery of the Gunpowder Plot*.

[20] *Criminal Trials*, ii. 3.

has no hesitation in declaring that "the whole story of the plot, as far as it relates to the lay conspirators, rests upon indisputable evidence."[21]

Nevertheless there appear to be considerations, demanding more attention than they have hitherto received, which forbid the supposition that, in regard of what is most vital, this official story can possibly be true; while the extreme care with which it has obviously been elaborated, suggests the conclusion that it was intended to disguise facts, to the concealment of which the government of the day attached supreme importance.

As has been said, the cardinal point of the tale, as commonly told, is that the Plot was a secret and dangerous conspiracy, conducted with so much craft as to have baffled detection, but for a lucky accident; that the vigilance of the authorities was completely at fault; and that they found themselves suddenly on the very brink of a terrible catastrophe of which they had no suspicion.[22] If, on the contrary, it should appear that they had ample information of what was going on, while feigning absolute ignorance; that they studiously devised a false account of the manner in which it came to their knowledge; and that their whole conduct is quite inconsistent with that sense of imminent danger which they so loudly professed – the question inevitably suggests itself as to whether we can rely upon the authenticity of the opening chapters of a history, the conclusion of which has been so dexterously manipulated.

A French writer has observed[23] that the plots undertaken under Elizabeth and James I. have this feature in common, that they proved, one and all, extremely opportune for those against whom they were directed. To this law the Gunpowder Plot was no exception. Whatever be the true history of its origin, it certainly placed in the hands of the king's chief minister a most effective weapon for the enforcement of his favourite policy, and very materially strengthened his own position. Without doubt the sensational manner of its "discovery" largely contributed to its success in this respect; and if this were ingeniously contrived for such a purpose, may it not be that a like ingenuity had been employed in providing the material destined to be so artistically utilized?

There can be no question as to the wide prevalence of the belief that previous plots had owed their origin to the policy of the statesmen who finally detected them, a belief witnessed to by Lord Castlemaine,[24] who declares that "it was a piece of wit in Queen Elizabeth's days to draw men into such devices," and that "making and fomenting plots was then in fashion; nor can it be denied that good grounds for such an opinion were not lacking". The unfortunate man Squires had been executed on the ridiculous charge that he had come over from Spain in order to poison the pommel of Queen Elizabeth's saddle. Dr. Parry, we are informed by Bishop Goodman, whose verdict is endorsed by Mr. Brewer,[25] was put to death by those who knew him to be guiltless in their regard, they having themselves employed him in the business for which he suffered. Concerning Babington's famous plot, it is absolutely certain that, whatever its origin, it was, almost from the first, fully known to Walsingham, through whose hands passed the correspondence between the conspirators, and who assiduously worked the enterprise, in order to turn it to the destruction of the Queen of Scots. As to Lopez, the Jewish physician, it is impossible not to concur in the verdict that his condemnation was at least as much owing to political intrigue as to the weight of evidence.[26] Concerning this period Mr. Brewer says: "The Roman Catholics seem to have made just complaints of the subtle and unworthy artifices of Leicester and Walsingham, by whom they were entrapped into the guilt of high treason.

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[21] *History of England*, i. 269 (1883).

[22] "We had all been blowne up at a clapp, if God out of His Mercie and just Reuenge against so great an Abomination, had not destined it to be discovered, though very miraculously, even some twelve Houres before the matter should have been put in execution." —*Cecil to Cornwallis*, November 9th, 1605. Winwood, *Memorials*, ii. 170.

[23] M. l'Abbé Destombes, *La persécution en Angleterre sous le règne d'Elizabeth*, p. 176.

[24] *Catholique Apology*, third edition, p. 403.

[25] Goodman's *Court of King James*, i. 121.

[26] Mr. Sidney Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography*, *sub nom.*

'And verily,' as [Camden] expresses it, there were at this time crafty ways devised to try how men stood affected; counterfeit letters were sent in the name of the Queen of Scots and left at papists' houses; spies were sent up and down the country to note people's dispositions and lay hold of their words; and reporters of vain and idle stories were credited and encouraged."[27] Under King James,[28] as Bishop Goodman declares, the priest Watson was hanged for treason by those who had employed him.[29]

It must farther be observed that the particular Plot which is our subject was stamped with certain features more than commonly suspicious. Even on the face of things, as will be seen from the summary already given, it was steadily utilized from the first for a purpose which it could not legitimately be made to serve. That the Catholics of England, as a body, had any connection with it there is not, nor ever appeared to be, any vestige of a proof; still less that the official superiors of the Church, including the Pope himself, were concerned in it. Yet the first act of the government was to lay it at the door of all these, thus investing it with a character which was, indeed, eminently fitted to sustain their own policy, but to which it was no-wise entitled. Even in regard of Father Garnet and his fellow Jesuits, whatever judgment may now be formed concerning them, it is clear that it was determined to connect them with the conspiracy long before any evidence at all was forthcoming to sustain the charge. The actual confederates were, in fact, treated throughout as in themselves of little or no account, and as important only in so far as they might consent to incriminate those whom the authorities wished to be incriminated.

The determined manner in which this object was ever kept in view, the unscrupulous means constantly employed for its attainment, the vehemence with which matters were asserted to have been proved, any proof of which was never even seriously attempted – in a word, the elaborate system of falsification by which alone the story of the conspiracy was made to suit the purpose it so effectually served, can inspire us with no confidence that the foundation upon which such a superstructure was erected, was itself what it was said to be.

On the other hand, when we examine into the details supplied to us as to the progress of the affair, we find that much of what the conspirators are said to have done is well-nigh incredible, while it is utterly impossible that if they really acted in the manner described, the public authorities should not have had full knowledge of their proceedings. We also find not only that the same authorities, while feigning ignorance of anything of the kind, were perfectly well aware that these very conspirators had something in hand, but that long before the "discovery," in fact, at the very time when the conspiracy is said to have been hatched, their officials were working a Catholic plot, by means of secret agents, and even making arrangements as to who were to be implicated therein.

These are, in brief, some of the considerations which point to a conclusion utterly at variance with the received version of the story, the conclusion, namely, that, for purposes of State, the government of the day either found means to instigate the conspirators to undertake their enterprise, or, at least, being, from an early stage of the undertaking, fully aware of what was going on, sedulously nursed the insane scheme till the time came to make capital out of it. That the conspirators, or the greater number of them, really meant to strike a great blow is not to be denied, though it may be less easy to assure ourselves as to its precise character; and their guilt will not be palliated should it appear that, in projecting an atrocious crime, they were unwittingly playing the game of plotters more

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[27] Goodman's *Court of King James*, i. 121. Ed. J.S. Brewer.

[28] *Court of King James*, p. 64.

[29] Of this affair, – the "Bye" and the "Main," – Goodman says, "[This] I did ever think to be an old relic of the treasons in Q. Elizabeth's time, and that George Brooks was the contriver thereof, who being brother-in-law to the Secretary, and having great wit, small means, and a vast expense, did only try men's allegiance, and had an intent to betray one another, but were all taken napping and so involved in one net. This in effect appears by Brooks' confession; and certainly K. James … had no opinion of that treason, and therefore was pleased to pardon all save only Brooks and the priests." —*Court of King James*, i. 160.

astute than themselves. At the same time, while fully endorsing the sentiment of a Catholic writer,[30] that they who suffer themselves to be drawn into a plot like fools, deserve to be hanged for it like knaves, it is impossible not to agree with another when he writes:[31] "This account does not excuse the conspirators, but lays a heavy weight upon the devils who tempted them beyond their strength."

The view thus set forth will perhaps be considered unworthy of serious discussion, and it must be fully admitted, that there can be no excuse for making charges such as it involves, unless solid grounds can be alleged for so doing. That any such grounds are to be found historians of good repute utterly deny. Mr. Hallam roundly declares:[32] "To deny that there was such a plot, or, which is the same thing, to throw the whole on the contrivance and management of Cecil, as has sometimes been done, argues great effrontery in those who lead, and great stupidity in those who follow." Similarly, Mr. Gardiner,[33] while allowing that contemporaries accused Cecil of inventing the Plot, is content to dismiss such a charge as "absurd."

Whether it be so or not we have now to inquire.

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[30] *A plain and rational account of the Catholick Faith*, etc. Rouen, 1721, p. 200.

[31] Dodd, *Church History of England*, Brussels, 1739, i. 334.

[32] *Constitutional History*, i. 406, note, Seventh Edition. In the same note the historian, discussing the case of Father Garnet, speaks of "the damning circumstance that he was taken at Hendlip in concealment along with the other conspirators." He who wrote thus can have had but a slight acquaintance with the details of the history. None of the conspirators, except Robert Winter, who was captured at Hagley Hall, were taken in concealment, and none at Hendlip, where there is no reason to suppose they ever were. Father Garnet was discovered there, nearly three months later, in company with another Jesuit, Father Oldcorne, on the very day when the conspirators were executed in London, and it was never alleged that he had ever, upon any occasion, been seen in company with "the other conspirators."

[33] *History*, i. 255, note.

CHAPTER II.
THE PERSONS CONCERNED

At the period with which we have to deal the chief minister of James I. was Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury,[34] the political heir of his father, William Cecil, Lord Burghley,[35] and of Walsingham, his predecessor in the office of secretary. It is clear that he had inherited from them ideas of statesmanship of the order then in vogue, and from nature, the kind of ability required to put these successfully in practice. Sir Robert Naunton thus describes him:[36]

"This great minister of state, and the staff of the Queen's declining age, though his little crooked person[37] could not provide any great supportation, yet it carried thereon a head and a headpiece of vast content, and therein, it seems, nature was so diligent to complete one, and the best, part about him, as that to the perfection of his memory and intellectuals, she took care also of his senses, and to put him in *Lynceos oculos*, or to pleasure him the more, borrowed of Argus, so to give him a perfective sight. And for the rest of his sensitive virtues, his predecessor had left him a receipt, to smell out what was done in the Conclave; and his good old father was so well seen in the mathematicks, as that he could tell you throughout Spain, every part, every ship, with their burthens, whither bound, what preparation, what impediments for diversion of enterprises, counsels, and resolutions." The writer then proceeds to give a striking instance to show "how docible was this little man."

Of his character, as estimated by competent judges, his contemporaries, we have very different accounts. Mr. Gardiner, who may fairly be chosen to represent his apologists, speaks thus:[38]

"Although there are circumstances in his life which tell against him, it is difficult to read the whole of the letters and documents which have come down to us from his pen, without becoming gradually convinced of his honesty of intention. It cannot be denied that he was satisfied with the ordinary morality of his time, and that he thought it no shame to keep a State secret or to discover a plot by means of a falsehood. If he grasped at power as one who took pleasure in the exercise of it, he used it for what he regarded as the true interests of his king and country. Nor are we left to his own acts and words as the only means by which we are enabled to form a judgment of his character. Of all the statesmen of the day, not one has left a more blameless character than the Earl of Dorset. Dorset took the opportunity of leaving upon record in his will, which would not be read till he had no longer injury or favour to expect in this world, the very high admiration in which his colleague was held by him."

This, it must be allowed, is a somewhat facile species of argument. Though wills are not formally opened until after the testators' deaths, it is not impossible for their contents to be previously communicated to others, when there is an object for so doing.[39] But, however this may be, it can scarcely be said that the weight of evidence tends in this direction. Not to mention the fact that, while

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[34] When James came to the throne Cecil was but a knight. He was created Baron Cecil of Essendon, May 13th, 1603; Viscount Cranborne, August 20th, 1604; Earl of Salisbury, May 4th, 1605.

[35] Robert, as the second son, did not succeed to his father's title, which devolved upon Thomas, the eldest, who was created Earl of Exeter on the same day on which Robert became Earl of Salisbury.

[36] *Fragmenta Regalia*, 37. Ed. 1642.

[37] He was but little above five feet in height, and, in the phrase of the time, a "Crouchback." King James, who was not a man of much delicacy in such matters, was fond of giving him nicknames in consequence. Cecil wrote to Sir Thomas Lake, October 24th, 1605: "I see nothing yt I can doe, can procure me so much favor, as to be sure one whole day what title I shall have another. For from Essenden to Cranborne, from Cranborne to Salisbury, from Salisbury to Beagle, from Beagle to Thom Derry, from Thom Derry to Parret which I hate most, I have been so walked, as I think by yt I come to Theobalds, I shall be called Tare or Sophie." (R.O. *Dom. James I.* xv. 105.)

[38] *History*, i. 92.

[39] In the same document James I. is spoken of as "the most judycious, learned, and rareste kinge, that ever this worlde produced." (R.O. *Dom. James I.* xxviii. 29.)

enjoying the entire confidence of Queen Elizabeth, Cecil was engaged in a secret correspondence with King James, which she would have regarded as treasonable – and which he so carefully concealed that for a century afterwards and more it was not suspected – there remains the other indubitable fact, that while similarly trusted by James, and while all affairs of State were entirely in his hands, he was in receipt of a secret pension from the King of Spain,[40] the very monarch any communication with whom he treated as treason on the part of others.[41] It is certain that the Earl of Essex, when on his trial, asserted that Cecil had declared the Spanish Infanta to be the rightful heir to the crown, and though the secretary vehemently denied the imputation, he equally repudiated the notion that he favoured the King of Scots.[42] We know, moreover, that one who as Spanish Ambassador had dealings with him, pronounced him to be a venal traitor, who was ready to sell his soul for money,[43] while another intimated[44] that it was in his power to have charged him with "unwarrantable practices." Similarly, we hear from the French minister of the ingrained habit of falsehood which made it impossible for the English secretary to speak the truth even to friends;[45] and, from the French Ambassador, of the resolution imputed to the same statesman, to remove from his path every rival who seemed likely to jeopardize his tenure of power.[46]

What was the opinion of his own countrymen, appeared with startling emphasis when, in 1612, the Earl died. On May 22nd we find the Earl of Northampton writing to Rochester that the "little man" is dead, "for which so many rejoice, and so few even seem to be sorry."[47] Five days later, Chamberlain, writing[48] to his friend Dudley Carleton, to announce the same event, thus expresses himself: "As the case stands it was best that he gave over the world, for they say his friends fell from him apace, and some near about him, and however he had fared with his health, it is verily thought he would never have been himself again in power and credit. I never knew so great a man so soon and so openly censured, for men's tongues walk very liberally and freely, but how truly I cannot judge." On June 25th he again reports: "The outrageous speeches against the deceased Lord continue still, and there be fresh libels come out every day, and I doubt his actions will be hardly censured in the next parliament, if the King be not the more gracious to repress them." Moreover, his funeral was attended by few or none of the gentry, and those only were present whose official position compelled them. His own opinion Chamberlain expresses in two epigrams and an anagram, which, although of

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[40] Digby to the King, S.P., *Spain*, Aug. 8. Gardiner, *History*, ii. 216.

[41] At the trial of Essex, Cecil exclaimed, "I pray God to consume me where I stand, if I hate not the Spaniard as much as any man living." (Bruce, *Introduction to Secret Correspondence of Sir R. Cecil*, xxxiii.)Of the Spanish pension Mr. Gardiner, after endeavouring to show that originally Cecil's acceptance of it may have been comparatively innocent, thus continues (*History of England*, i. 216): "But it is plain that, even if this is the explanation of his original intentions, such a comparatively innocent connection with Spain soon extended itself to something worse, and that he consented to furnish the ambassadors, from time to time, with information on the policy and intentions of the English Government… Of the persistence with which he exacted payment there can be no doubt whatever. Five years later, when the opposition between the two governments became more decided, he asked for an increase of his payments, and demanded that they should be made in large sums as each piece of information was given."At the same time it appears highly probable that he was similarly in the pay of France. *Ibid.*

[42] Queen Elizabeth regarded as treasonable any discussion of the question of the succession.

[43] Gardiner, i. 215.

[44] *Chamberlain to Carleton*, July 9th, 1612, R.O.

[45] "Tout ce que vous a dit le Comte de Salisbury touchant le mariage d'Espagne est rempli de deguisements et artifices à son accoutumée… Toutefois, je ne veux pas jurer qu'ils négocient plus sincerement et de meilleur foi avec lesdites Espagnols qu'avec nous. Ils corromproient par trop leur naturel, s'ils le faisoient, pour des gens qui ne leur scauroient guère de gré." – Le Fèvre de la Boderie, *Ambassade*, i. 170.

[46] (Of the Earl of Northumberland.) "On tient le Comte de Salisbury pour principal auteur de sa persécution, comme celui qui veut ne laisser personne en pied qui puisse lui faire tête." De la Boderie. *Ibid.* 178.

[47] R.O. *Dom. James I.* lxix. 56.

[48] *Ibid.*, May 27, 1612. Bishop Goodman, no enemy of Cecil, is inclined to believe that at the time of the secretary's death there was a warrant out for his arrest. *Court of King James*, i. 45.

small literary merit, contrive clearly to express the most undisguised animosity and contempt for the late minister.[49]

There is abundant proof that such sentiments were not first entertained when he had passed away, though, naturally, they were less openly expressed when he was alive and practically all powerful. Cecil seems, in fact, to have been throughout his career a lonely man, with no real friends and many enemies, desperately fighting for his own hand, and for the retention of that power which he prized above all else, aspiring, as a contemporary satirist puts it, to be "both shepherd and dog."[50] Since the accession of James he had felt his tenure of office to be insecure. Goodman tells us[51] that "it is certain the king did not love him;" Osborne,[52] "that he had forfeited the love of the people by the hate he expressed to their darling Essex, and the desire he had to render justice and prerogative arbitrary."[53] Sir Anthony Weldon speaks of him[54] as "Sir Robert Cecil, a very wise man, but much hated in England by reason of the fresh bleeding of that universally beloved Earl of Essex, and for that clouded also in the king's favour." De la Boderie, the French Ambassador, tells us[55] that the nobility were exceedingly jealous of his dignity and power, and[56] that he in his turn was jealous of the growing influence of Prince Henry, the heir apparent, who made no secret of his dislike of him. Meanwhile there were rivals who, it seemed not improbable, might supplant him. One of these, Sir Walter Raleigh, had already been rendered harmless on account of his connection with the "Main," the mysterious conspiracy which inaugurated the reign of James. There remained the Earl of Northumberland, and it may be remarked in passing that one of the effects of the Gunpowder Plot was to dispose of him likewise.[57] Even the apologists of the minister do not attempt to deny either the fact that he was accustomed to work by stratagems and disguises, nor the obloquy that followed on his death;[58] while by friends and foes alike he was compared to Ulysses of many wiles.[59]

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[49] The first of these epigrams, in Latin, concludes thus:Sero, Recurve, moreris sed serio;Sero, jaces (bis mortuus) sed serio:Sero saluti publicæ, serio tuæ.The second is in English:Whiles two RR's, both crouchbacks, stood at the helm,The one spilt the blood royall, the other the realm.A marginal note explains that these were, "Richard Duke of Gloster, and Robert Earl of Salisburie;" the anagram, of which title is "A silie burs." He also styles the late minister a monkey (*cercopithecus*) and hobgoblin (*empusa*).

[50] Osborne, *Traditional Memoirs*, p. 236 (ed. 1811).

[51] *Court of King James*, i. 44.

[52] *Traditional Memoirs*, 181.

[53] This feeling was expressed in lampoons quoted by Osborne, e.g.:"Here lies Hobinall, our pastor while here,That once in a quarter our fleeces did sheare.For oblation to Pan his custom was thus,He first gave a trifle, then offer'd up us:And through his false worship such power he did gaine,As kept him o' th' mountain, and us on the plaine."Again, he is described as"Little bossive Robin that was so great,Who seemed as sent from ugly fate,To spoyle the prince, and rob the state,Owning a mind of dismall endes,As trappes for foes, and tricks for friends."(*Ibid.* 236.)Oldmixon (*History of Queen Elizabeth*, p. 620) says of the Earl of Essex, "'Twas not likely that Cecil, whose Soul was of a narrow Size, and had no Room for enlarged Sentiments of Ambition, Glory, and Public Spirit, should cease to undermine a Hero, in comparison with whom he was both in Body and Mind a Piece of Deformity, if there's nothing beautiful in Craft."

[54] *Court and Character of King James*, § 10.

[55] *Ambassade*, i. 58.

[56] *Ibid.* 401.

[57] Against Northumberland nothing was proved (*vide* de la Boderie, *Ambassade*, i. 178), except that he had admitted Thomas Percy amongst the royal pensioners without exacting the usual oath. He in vain demanded an open trial, but was prosecuted in the Star Chamber, and there sentenced to a fine of £30,000 (equal to at least ten times that sum in our money), and to be imprisoned for life.Mr. Gardiner considers that, in regard both of Raleigh and of Northumberland, Cecil acted with great moderation. It must, however, be remembered that in his secret correspondence with King James, before the death of the queen, he had strenuously endeavoured to poison the mind of that monarch against these his rivals. Thus he wrote, December 4th, 1601 (as usual through Lord Henry Howard): "You must remember that I gave you notice of the diabolical triplicity, that is, Cobham, Raleigh, and Northumberland, that met every day at Durham-house, where Raleigh lies, in consultation, which awaked all the best wits of the town … to watch what chickens they could hatch out of these cockatrice eggs that were daily and nightly sitten on." (*Secret Correspondence of Sir Robert Cecil with James VI., King of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1766, p. 29.) Coming after this, the speedy ruin of all these men appears highly suspicious.

[58] Sir Walter Cope in his *Apology* (Gutch, *Collectanea Curiosa*, i. No. 10) says: "When living, the world observed with all admiration and applause; no sooner dead, but it seeketh finally to suppress his excellent parts, and load his memory with all imputations of corruption."Among such charges are enumerated "His Falsehood in Friendship. – That he often made his friends fair promises, and underhand laid rubs to hinder their preferment. – The secret passage of things I know not… Great Counsellors have their private and their publique ends…" etc.

But amongst those whom he had to dread, there can be no doubt that the members of the Catholic party appeared to the secretary the most formidable. It was known on all hands, nor did he attempt to disguise the fact, that he was the irreconcilable opponent of any remission of the penal laws enacted for the purpose of stamping out the old faith.[60] The work, however, had as yet been very incompletely done. At the beginning of the reign of King James, the Catholics formed at least a half, probably a majority,[61] of the English people. There were amongst them many noblemen, fitted to hold offices of State. Moreover, the king, who before his accession had unquestionably assured the Catholics at least of toleration,[62] showed at his first coming a manifest disposition to relieve them from the grievous persecution under which they had groaned so long.[63] He remitted a large part of the fines which had so grievously pressed upon all recusants, declaring that he would not make merchandise of conscience, nor set a price upon faith;[64] he invited to his presence leading Catholics from various parts of the country, assuring them, and bidding them assure their co-religionists, of his gracious intentions in their regard;[65] titles of honour and lucrative employments were bestowed on some of their number;[66] one professed Catholic, Henry Howard, presently created Earl of Northampton, being enrolled in the Privy Council; and in the first speech which he addressed to his Parliament James declared that, as to the papists, he had no desire to persecute them, especially those of the laity who would be quiet.[67] The immediate effect of this milder policy was to afford evidence of the real strength of the Catholics, many now openly declaring themselves who had previously conformed to the State church. In the diocese of Chester alone the number of Catholics was increased by a thousand.[68]

It is scarcely to be wondered at that men who were familiar with the political methods of the age should see in all this a motive sufficient to explain a great stroke for the destruction of those who appeared to be so formidable, devised by such a minister as was then in power, "the statesman," writes

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[59] Lord Castlemaine after mentioning the chief features of the Gunpowder Plot, goes on: "But let it not displease you, if we ask whether Ulysses be no better known?" (*Catholique Apology*, p. 30.)Francis Herring in his Latin poem, *Pietas Pontificia* (published 1606), speaking of Monteagle (called "Morleius," from his father's title), who took the celebrated letter to Cecil, writes thus:"Morleius Regis de consultoribus unum,(Quem norat veteri nil quicquam cedere Ulyssi,Juditio pollentem acri, ingenioque sagaci)Seligit, atque illi Rem totam ex ordine pandit."

[60] This is so evident that it appears unnecessary to occupy space with proofs in detail. De la Boderie remarks (*Ambassade*, i. 71) on the extraordinary rancour of the minister against Catholics, and especially against Jesuits, and that "he wishes to destroy them everywhere." Of this a remarkable confirmation is afforded by the instructions given to Sir Thomas Parry when he was sent as ambassador, "Leiger," to Paris, in 1603, at the head of which stood these extraordinary articles:1. "To intimate to the French king the jealousy conceived in England upon the revocation of the Jesuits, against former edicts.2. "To inform the French king that the English were disgusted at the maintenance allowed to the French king's prelates and clergy, to priests and Jesuits that passed out of his dominions into England, Scotland, and Ireland, to do bad offices." (P.R.O. *France*, bundle 132, f. 314.)

[61] Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 5. Strype says of the time of Elizabeth: "The faction of the Catholics in England is great, and able, if the kingdom were divided into three parts, to make two of them." (*Annals*, iii. 313, quoted by Butler, *Historical Memoirs*, ii. 177.)At the execution of Father Oldcorne, 1606, a proof was given of their numbers which is said to have alarmed the king greatly. The Father having from the scaffold invited all Catholics to pray with him, almost all present uncovered.

[62] Of this there can be no doubt, in spite of James's subsequent denial. Father Garnet wrote to Parsons (April 16th, 1603): "There hath happened a great alteration by the death of the Queen. Great fears were, but all are turned into greatest security, and a golden time we have of unexpected freedom abroade… The Catholicks have great cause to hope for great respect, in that the nobility all almost labour for it, and have good promise thereof from his Majesty." (Stonyhurst MSS. *Anglia*, iii. 32.)Goodman says: "And certainly they [the Catholics] had very great promises from him." (*Court of King James*, i. 86.)

[63] "The Penal Laws, a code as savage as any that can be conceived since the foundation of the world." – Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. (*To Lord Mayor Knill*, Nov. 9, 1892.)

[64] Gardiner, i. 100.

[65] Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, 18.

[66] *Ibid*. 20.

[67] Gardiner, i. 166.

[68] Green, *History of the English People*, iii. 62. Mr. Green adds: "Rumours of Catholic conversions spread a panic which showed itself in an Act of the Parliament of 1604 confirming the statutes of Elizabeth; and to this James gave his assent. He promised, indeed, that the statute should remain inoperative." In May, 1604, the Catholics boasted that they had been joined by 10,000 converts. (Gardiner, *Hist*. i. 202.)

Lord Castlemaine,[69] "who bore (as everybody knew) a particular hatred to all of our profession, and this increased to hear his Majesty speak a little in his first speech to the two Houses against persecution of papists, whereas there had been nothing within those walls but invectives and defamations for above forty years together."

This much is certain, that, whatever its origin, the Gunpowder Plot immensely increased Cecil's influence and power, and, for a time, even his popularity, assuring the success of that anti-Catholic policy with which he was identified.[70]

Of no less importance is it to understand the position of the Catholic body, and the character of the particular Catholics who engaged in this enterprise. We have seen with what hopes the advent of King James had been hailed by those who had suffered so much for his mother's sake, and who interpreted in a too sanguine and trustful spirit his own words and deeds. Their dream of enjoying even toleration at his hands was soon rudely dispelled. After giving them the briefest of respites, the monarch, under the influence, as all believed, of his council, and especially of his chief minister,[71] suddenly reversed his line of action and persecuted his Catholic subjects more cruelly than had his predecessor, calling up the arrears of fines which they fancied had been altogether remitted, ruining many in the process who had hitherto contrived to pay their way,[72] and adding to the sense of injury which such a course necessarily provoked by farming out wealthy recusants to needy courtiers, "to make their profit of," in particular to the Scots who had followed their royal master across the border. Soon it was announced that the king would have blood; all priests were ordered to leave the realm under pain of death, and the searches for them became more frequent and violent than ever. In no long time, as Goodman tells us,[73] "a gentlewoman was hanged only for relieving and harbouring a priest; a citizen was hanged only for being reconciled to the Church of Rome; besides the penal laws were such and so executed that they could not subsist." Father Gerard says:[74] "This being known to Catholics, it is easy to be seen how first their hopes were turned into fears, and then their fears into full knowledge that all the contrary to that they had hoped was intended and prepared for them", and, as one of the victims of these proceedings wrote, "the times of Elizabeth, although most cruel, were the mildest and happiest in comparison with those of King James."[75]

In such circumstances, the Catholic body being so numerous as it was, it is not to be wondered at that individuals should be found, who, smarting under their injuries, and indignant at the bad faith of which they considered themselves the dupes, looked to violent remedies for relief, and might without difficulty be worked upon to that effect. Their case seemed far more hopeless than ever. Queen Elizabeth's quarrel with Rome had been in a great degree personal; and moreover, as she had no direct heir, it was confidently anticipated that the demise of the crown would introduce a new era. King James's proceedings, on the other hand, seemed to indicate a deliberate policy which there was no prospect of reversing, especially as his eldest son, should he prove true to his promise, might be expected to do that zealously, and of himself, which his father was held to do under the constraint of

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[69] *Catholique Apology*, 404.

[70] Salisbury, in reward of his services on this occasion, received the Garter, May 20th, 1606, and was honoured on the occasion with an almost regal triumph.Of the proceedings subsequent to the Plot we are told: "In passing these laws for the security of the Protestant Religion, the Earl of Salisbury exerted himself with distinguished zeal and vigour, which gained him great love and honour from the kingdom, as appeared in some measure, in the universal attendance on him at his installation with the Order of the Garter, on the 20th of May, 1606, at Windsor." (Birch, *Historical View*, p. 256.)

[71] This belief is so notorious that one instance must suffice as evidence for it. A paper of informations addressed to Cecil himself, April, 1604, declares that the Catholics hoped to see a good day yet, and that "his Majesty would suffer a kinde of Tolleracyon, for his inclynacyon is good, howsoever the Councell set out his speeches." (S.P.O. *Dom. James I.* vii. 86.)

[72] Mr. Gardiner (*Hist.* i. 229, note) says that arrears were never demanded in the case of the fine of £20 per lunar month for non-attendance at the parish church. Father Gerard, however, a contemporary witness, distinctly states that they were. (*Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, ed. Morris, p. 62.)

[73] *Court of King James*, i. 100.

[74] *Narrative*, p. 46.

[75] Stonyhurst MSS., *Anglia*, iii. 103.

others.[76] As Sir Everard Digby warned Cecil, in the remarkable letter which he addressed to him on the subject:[77] "If your Lordship and the State think fit to deal severely with the Catholics, within brief space there will be massacres, rebellions, and desperate attempts against the King and the State. For it is a general received reason among Catholics, that there is not that expecting and suffering course now to be run that was in the Queen's time, who was the last of her line, and last in expectance to run violent courses against Catholics; for then it was hoped that the King that now is, would have been at least free from persecuting, as his promise was before his coming into this realm, and as divers his promises have been since his coming. All these promises every man sees broken."[78]

It must likewise be remembered that if stratagems and "practices" were the recognized weapons of ministers, turbulence and arms were, at this period, the familiar, and indeed the only, resource of those in opposition, nor did any stigma attach to their employment unless taken up on the losing side. Not a little of this kind of thing had been done on behalf of James himself. As is well known, he succeeded to the throne by a title upon which he could not have recovered at law an acre of land.[79] Elizabeth had so absolutely forbidden all discussion of the question of the succession as to leave it in a state of utter confusion.[80] There were more than a dozen possible competitors, and amongst these the claim of the King of Scots was technically not the strongest, for though nearest in blood his claims had been barred by a special Act of Parliament, excluding the Scottish line. As Professor Thorold Rogers says, "For a year after his accession James, if Acts of Parliament are to go for anything, was not legally King."[81]

Nevertheless the cause of James was vigorously taken up in all directions, and promoted by means which might well have been styled treason against the authority of Parliament. Thus, old Sir Thomas Tresham, father of Francis Tresham, the Gunpowder Conspirator, who had been an eminent sufferer for his religion, at considerable personal risk, and against much resistance on the part of the local magistrates and the populace, publicly proclaimed the new king at Northampton, while Francis Tresham himself and his brother Lewis, with Lord Monteagle, their brother-in-law, supported the Earl of Southampton in holding the Tower of London on his behalf.[82] In London indeed everybody took to arms as soon as the queen's illness had been known; watch and ward were kept in the City; rich men brought their plate and treasure from the country, and placed them where they would be safest,[83] and the approaches were guarded. Cecil himself related in open court, in praise of the Londoners, how, when he himself, attended by most of the peers and privy councillors of the kingdom, wished to enter the City to proclaim the new sovereign, they found the gates closed against them till they had publicly declared that they were about to proclaim James and no one else.[84]

In times when statesmen could approve such methods of political action, it was inevitable that violent enterprises should have come to be considered the natural resource of those out of power, and it is very clear that there were numerous individuals, of whom no one party had the monopoly, who were ready at any moment to risk everything for the cause they served, and such men, although their proclivities were well known, did not suffer much in public esteem.

The Gunpowder Conspirators were eminently men of this stamp, and notoriously so. So well was their character known, that when, in 1596, eight years before the commencement of the Plot,

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[76] Of the Prince of Wales it was prophesied:"The eighth Henry did pull down Monks and their cells,The ninth will pull down Bishops and their bells."

[77] Concerning this letter see Appendix B, *Digby's Letter to Salisbury*.

[78] R.O. *Dom. James I.* xvii. 10.

[79] Hallam, *Constitutional Hist.* i. 392 (3rd ed.).

[80] See Appendix C, *The Question of Succession*.

[81] *Agriculture and Prices*, v. 5.

[82] Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 17.

[83] Gardiner, *Hist.* i. 84.

[84] Trial of Father Garnet (Cobbett's *State Trials*, ii. 243).

Queen Elizabeth had been unwell, the Lords of the Council, as a precautionary measure arrested some of the principal amongst them, Catesby, the two Wrights, Tresham, and others, as being persons who would certainly give trouble should a chance occur.[85] Since that time they had not improved their record. All those above-named, as well as Thomas Winter, Christopher Wright, Percy, Grant, and perhaps others, had been engaged in the ill-starred rebellion of Essex, on which occasion Catesby was wounded, and both he and Tresham came remarkably near being hanged.[86] They had likewise been variously implicated in all the seditious attempts which had since been made – Catesby and Tresham being named by Sir Edward Coke as being engaged with Watson in the "Bye." Thomas Winter, Christopher Wright, and Faukes, had, if we may believe the same authority, been sent to Spain on treasonable embassies.[87] Grant made himself very conspicuous by frequently resisting the officers of the law when they appeared to search his house.[88] John Wright and Percy had, at least till a very recent period, been notorious bravoes, who made a point of picking a quarrel with any man who was reported to be a good swordsman, they being both expert with the weapon.[89]

It is evident that men of this stamp were not unlikely to prove restive under such treatment as was meted out to the Catholics, from which moreover, as gentlemen, they themselves suffered in a special degree. Lord Castlemaine remarks that loose people may usually be drawn into a plot when statesmen lay gins, and that it was no hard thing for a Secretary of State, should he desire any such thing, to know of turbulent and ambitious spirits to be his unconscious instruments,[90] and it is obvious that no great perspicacity would have been required to fix upon those who had given such evidence of their disposition as had these men.

It must, at the same time, be confessed that the character of the plotters is one of the most perplexing features of the Plot. The crime contemplated was without parallel in its brutal and senseless atrocity. There had, it is true, been powder-plots before, notably that which had effected the destruction of the king's own father, Lord Darnley, a fact undoubtedly calculated to make much impression upon the timorous mind of James. But what marked off our Gunpowder Plot from all others, was the wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter in which it must have resulted, and the absence of any possibility that the cause could be benefited which the conspirators had at heart. It was at once reprobated and denounced by the Catholics of England, and by the friends and near relatives of the conspirators themselves.[91] It might be supposed that those who undertook such an enterprise were criminals of the deepest dye, and ruffians of a more than usually repulsive type. In spite, however, of the turbulent element in their character of which we have seen something, such a judgment would, in the opinion of historians, be altogether erroneous. Far from their being utterly unredeemed villains, it appears, in fact, that apart from the one monstrous transgression which has made them infamous, they should be distinguished in the annals of crime as the least disreputable gang of conspirators who

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[85] Camden, the historian, to Sir R. Cotton, March 15th, 1596. (Birch, *Original Letters*, 2nd series, iii. p. 179.) Various writers erroneously suppose this transaction to have occurred in March, 1603, on occasion of Elizabeth's last illness. The correct date, 1596, given by Sir Henry Ellis, is supplied by a statement contained in the letter, that this was her Majesty's "climacterick year," that is, her sixty-third, this number, as the multiple of the potent factors seven and nine, being held of prime importance in human life. Elizabeth was born in 1533.From Garnet's examination of March 14th, 1605-6 (*Dom. James I.* xix. 44), we learn that Catesby was at large at the time of the queen's demise.For Cecil's description of the men, see Winwood's *Memorials*, ii. 172.

[86] Catesby purchased his life for a fine of 4,000 marks, and Tresham of 3,000. Mr. Jessopp says that the former sum is equivalent at least to £30,000 at the present day. (*Dict. Nat. Biog., Catesby*.)

[87] But see Appendix D, *The Spanish Treason*.

[88] Father Gerard says of him that "he paid them [the pursuivants] so well for their labour not with crowns of gold, but with cracked crowns sometimes, and with dry blows instead of drink and other good cheer, that they durst not visit him any more unless they brought store of help with them." (*Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, p. 86.)

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[90] *Catholique Apology*, p. 403.

[91] *E.g.*, by Mr. Talbot of Grafton, father-in-law of Robert Winter, who drove their envoys away with threats and reproaches (Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 112), and by Sir Robert Digby, of Coleshill, cousin to Sir Everard, who assisted in taking prisoners. (R.O. *Gunpowder Plot Book*, 42.)

ever plotted a treason. On this point we have ample evidence from those who are by no means their friends. "Atrocious as their whole undertaking was," writes Mr. Gardiner,[92] "great as must have been the moral obliquity of their minds before they could have conceived such a project, there was at least nothing mean or selfish about them. They boldly risked their lives for what they honestly believed to be the cause of God and of their country. Theirs was a crime which it would never have entered into the heart of any man to commit who was not raised above the low aims of the ordinary criminal." Similarly Mr. Jardine, a still less friendly witness, tells us[93] that "several at least of the conspirators were men of mild and amiable manners, averse to tumults and bloodshed, and dwelling quietly amidst the humanities of domestic life," a description which he applies especially to Rokewood and Digby; while of Guy Faukes himself he says[94] that, according to the accounts which we hear of him, he is not to be regarded as a mercenary ruffian, ready for hire to do any deed of blood; but as a zealot, misled by misguided fanaticism, who was, however, by no means destitute either of piety or of humanity. Moreover, as Mr. Jardine farther remarks, the conspirators as a body were of the class which we should least expect to find engaged in desperate enterprises, being, as Sir E. Coke described them, "gentlemen of good houses, of excellent parts, and of very competent fortunes and estates," none of them, except perhaps Catesby, being in pecuniary difficulties, while several – notably Robert Winter, Rokewood, Digby, Tresham, and Grant – were men of large possessions. It has also been observed by a recent biographer of Sir Everard Digby,[95] that, for the furtherance of their projects after the explosion, the confederates were able to provide a sum equal at least to £75,000 of our money – a sufficient proof of their worldly position.

That men of such a class should so lightly and easily have adopted a scheme so desperate and atrocious as that of "murdering a kingdom in its representatives," is undoubtedly not the least incomprehensible feature of this strange story. At the same time it must not be forgotten that there is another, and a very different account of these men, which comes to us on the authority of a Catholic priest living in England at the time,[96] who speaks of the conspirators as follows:

"They were a few wicked and desperate wretches, whom many Protestants termed Papists, although the priests and the true Catholics knew them not to be such… They were never frequenters of Catholic Sacraments with any priest, as I could ever learn; and, as all the Protestant Courts will witness, not one of them was a convicted or known Catholic or Recusant."[97]

Similarly Cornwallis, writing from Madrid,[98] reported that the king and Estate of Spain were "much grieved that they being atheists and devils in their inward parts, should paint their outside with Catholicism."

In view of evidence so contradictory, it is difficult, if not impossible, to form a confident judgment as to the real character of those whose history we are attempting to trace; but, leaving aside what is matter of doubt, the undisputed facts of their previous career appear to show unmistakably that they were just the men who would be ready to look to violence for a remedy of existing evils, and to whom it would not be difficult to suggest its adoption.

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[92] *History*, i. 263.

[93] *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 151.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[95] *Life of a Conspirator, by one of his Descendants*, p. 150.

[96] *English Protestants' Plea and Petition for English Priests and Papists.* The author of this book (published 1621) describes himself as a priest who has been for many years on the English mission. His title indicates that he draws his arguments from Protestant sources.

[97] P. 56.

[98] November 25th, 1605, *Stowe MSS.* 168, 61.

CHAPTER III.
THE OPINION OF CONTEMPORARIES AND HISTORIANS

We have now for so long a period been accustomed to accept the official story regarding the Gunpowder Plot, that most readers will be surprised to hear that at the time of its occurrence, and for more than a century afterwards, there were, to say the least, many intelligent men who took for granted that in some way or other the actual conspirators were but the dupes and instruments of more crafty men than themselves, and in their mad enterprise unwittingly played the game of ministers of State.

From the beginning the government itself anticipated this, as is evidenced by the careful and elaborate account of the whole affair drawn up on the 7th of November, 1605 – two days after the "discovery" – seemingly for the benefit of the Privy Council.[99] This important document, which is in the handwriting of Levinus Munck, Cecil's secretary, with numerous and significant emendations from the hand of Cecil himself, speaks, amongst other things, of the need of circumspection, "considering how apt the world is nowadays to think all providence and intelligences to be but practices." The result did not falsify the expectation. Within five weeks we find a letter written from London to a correspondent abroad,[100] wherein it is said: "Those that have practical experience of the way in which things are done, hold it as certain that there has been foul play, and that some of the Council secretly spun the web to entangle these poor gentlemen, as did Secretary Walsingham in other cases," and it is clear that the writer has but recorded an opinion widely prevalent. To this the government again bear witness, for they found it advisable to issue an official version of the history, in the *True and Perfect Relation*, and the *Discourse of the Manner of the Discovery of the Gunpowder Plot*, the appearance of which was justified expressly on the ground that "there do pass from hand to hand divers uncertain, untrue, and incoherent reports and relations," and that it is very important "for men to understand the birth and growth of the said abominable and detestable conspiracy." The accounts published with this object are, by the common consent of historians, flagrantly untruthful and untrustworthy.[101] We likewise find Secretary Cecil writing to instruct Sir E. Coke, the Attorney-General, as to his conduct of the case against the conspirators, in view of the "lewd" reports current in regard of the manner in which it had been discovered.[102] The same minister, in the curious political manifesto which he issued in connection with the affair,[103] again bears witness to the same effect, when he declares that the papists, after the manner of Nero, were throwing the blame of their crime upon others.

Clearly, however, it was not to the papists alone that such an explanation commended itself. The Puritan Osborne[104] speaks of the manner in which the "discovery" was managed as "a neat device of the Treasurer's, he being very plentiful in such plots." Goodman, Anglican Bishop of Gloucester,

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[99] *Gunpowder Plot Book*, 129. Printed in *Archæologia*, xii. 202*.

[100] R.O. *Roman Transcripts* (Bliss), No. 86, December 10th, 1605 (Italian).

[101] Mr. Jardine writes (*Criminal Trials*, ii. p. 235), "*The True and Perfect Relation* … is certainly not deserving of the character which its title imports. It is not *true*, because many occurrences on the trial are wilfully misrepresented; and it is not *perfect*, because the whole evidence, and many facts and circumstances which must have happened, are omitted, and incidents are inserted which could not by possibility have taken place on the occasion. It is obviously a false and imperfect relation of the proceedings; a tale artfully garbled and misrepresented, like many others of the same age, to serve a State purpose, and intended and calculated to mislead the judgment of the world upon the facts of the case." Of the *Discourse* he speaks in similar terms. (*Ibid.*, p. 4.)

[102] R.O. *Dom. James I.* xix. 94. Printed by Jardine, *Criminal Trials*, ii. 120 (note).

[103] *Answere to certaine Scandalous Papers, scattered abroad under colour of a Catholic Admonition.* (Published in January, 1605-6.)

[104] *Traditional Memoirs*, 36. Of this writer Lord Castlemaine says, "He was born before this plot, and was also an inquisitive man, a frequenter of company, of a noted wit, of an excellent family, and as Protestant a one as any in the whole nation."

another contemporary, is even more explicit. After describing the indignation of the Catholics when they found themselves deceived in their hopes at the hands of James, he goes on: "The great statesman had intelligence of all this, and because he would show his service to the State, he would first contrive and then discover a treason, and the more odious and hateful the treason were, his service would be the greater and the more acceptable."[105] Another notable witness is quoted by the Jesuit Father Martin Grene, in a letter to his brother Christopher, January 1st, 1665-6:[106] "I have heard strange things, which, if ever I can make out, will be very pertinent: for certain, the late Bishop of Armagh, Usher, was divers times heard to say, that if papists knew what he knew, the blame of the Gunpowder Treason would not lie on them." In like manner we find it frequently asserted on the authority of Lord Cobham and others,[107] that King James himself, when he had time to realize the truth of the matter, was in the habit of speaking of the Fifth of November as "Cecil's holiday."

Such a belief must have been widely entertained, otherwise it could not have been handed on, as it was, for generations. It is not too much to say that historians for almost a century and a half, if they did not themselves favour the theory of the government's complicity, at least bore witness how widely that idea prevailed. Thus, to confine ourselves at present to Protestant writers, Sanderson,[108] acknowledging that the secretary was accused of having manipulated the transaction, says no word to indicate that he repudiates such a charge. Welwood[109] is of opinion that Cecil was aware of the Plot long before the "discovery," and that the famous letter to Monteagle was "a contrivance of his own." Oldmixon writes[110] "notwithstanding the general joy, … there were some who insinuated that the Plot was of the King's own making, or that he was privy to it from first to last." Carte[111] does not believe that James knew anything of it, but considers it "not improbable" that Cecil was better informed. Burnet[112] complains of the impudence of the papists of his day, who denied the conspiracy, and pretended it was an artifice of the minister's "to engage some desperate men into a plot, which he managed so that he could discover it when he pleased." Fuller[113] bears witness to the general belief, but considers it inconsistent with the well-known piety of King James. Bishop Kennet, in his Fifth of November sermon at St. Paul's, in 1715, talks in a similar strain. So extreme, indeed, does the incredulity and uncertainty appear to have been, that the Puritan Prynne[114] is inclined to suspect Bancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, of having been engaged in the conspiracy; while one of the furious zealots who followed the lead of Titus Oates, mournfully testified that there were those in his day who looked upon the Powder Treason "as upon a romantic story, or a politic invention, or a State trick," giving no more credence to it than to the histories of the "Grand Cyrus, or Guy of Warwick, or Amadis de Gaul," – or, as we should now say, Jack the Giant Killer.

The general scope and drift of such suspicions are well indicated by Bevil Higgons, "This impious design," he writes[115] of the Plot, "gave the greatest blow to the Catholic interest in England, by rendering that religion so odious to the people. The common opinion concerning the discovery of the Plot, by a letter to the Lord Mounteagle, has not been universally allowed to be the real truth of

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[105] *Court of King James* (1839), i. 102.

[106] Stonyhurst MSS., *Anglia*, v. 67.

[107] *E.g.*, in the *Advocate of Conscience Liberty* (1673), p. 225.

[108] *History of Mary Queen of Scots and James I.*, p. 334. Bishop Kennet, in his Fifth of November Sermon, 1715, boldly declares that Sanderson speaks not of Cecil the statesman, but of Cecil "a busy Romish priest" (and, he might have added, a paid government spy). The assertion is utterly and obviously false.

[109] *Memoirs*, p. 22.

[110] *History of England, Royal House of Stuart*, p. 27.

[111] *General History of England*, iii. 757.

[112] *History of His Own Times*, i. 11.

[113] *Church History*, Book X. § 39.

[114] *Antipathie of the English Lordly Prelacie, to the regall Monarchie and Civill Unity*, p. 151.

[115] *A Short View of the English History*, p. 296.

the matter, for some have affirmed that this design was first hammered in the forge of Cecil, who intended to have produced this plot in the time of Queen Elizabeth, but prevented by her death he resumed his project in this reign, with a design to have so enraged the nation as to have expelled all Roman Catholics, and confiscated their estates. To this end, by his secret emissaries, he enticed some hot-headed men of that persuasion, who, ignorant whence the design first came, heartily engaged in this execrable Powder Treason… Though this account should not be true," he continues, "it is certain that the Court of England had notice of this Plot from France and Italy long before the pretended discovery; upon which Cecil … framed that letter to the Lord Mounteagle, with a design to make the discovery seem the more miraculous, and at the same time magnify the judgment of the king, who by his deep penetration was to have the honour of unravelling so ambiguous and dark a riddle."

It may be added that amongst modern historians who have given special attention to this period, several, though repudiating the notion that Cecil originated the Plot, are strongly of opinion that as to the important episode of the "discovery," the traditional story is a fabrication. Thus, Mr. Brewer[116] declares it to be quite certain that Cecil had previous knowledge of the design, and that the "discovery" was a fraud. Lodge[117] is of the same opinion, and so is the author of the *Annals of England*.[118] Jardine[119] inclines to the belief that the government contrived the letter to Monteagle in order to conceal the means by which their information had in reality been obtained. Mr. Gardiner, though dismissing the idea as "absurd," acknowledges that his contemporaries accused Cecil of inventing the whole Plot.[120]

So much for the testimony of Protestants. As for those who had to suffer in consequence of the affair, there is no need to multiply testimonies. Lord Castlemaine tells us[121] that "the Catholics of England, who knew Cecil's ways of acting and their own innocence, suspected him from the beginning, as hundreds still alive can testify." Father Henry More, S.J., a contemporary, speaks to the same effect.[122] Father John Gerard, who was not only a contemporary, but one of those accused of complicity, intimates[123] his utter disbelief of the official narrative concerning the discovery, and his conviction that those who had the scanning of the redoubtable letter were "well able in shorter time and with fewer doubts to decipher a darker riddle and find out a greater secret than that matter was." One Floyde, a spy, testified in 1615[124] to having frequently heard various Jesuits say, that the government were aware of the Plot several months before they thought fit to "discover" it.

The Catholic view is expressed with much point and force by an anonymous writer of the eighteenth century:[125] "I shall touch briefly upon a few particulars relating to this Plot, for the happy discovery whereof an anniversary holiday has now been kept for above a hundred years. Is it out of pure gratitude to God the nation is so particularly devout on this occasion? If so, it is highly commendable: for we ought to thank God for all things, and therefore I cannot deny but there is all the reason in the world to give him solemn thanks, for that the king and Parliament never were in any danger of being hurt by the Powder Plot… I am far from denying the Gunpowder Plot. Nay, I believe as firmly that Catesby, with twelve more popish associates, had a design to blow up K. James, as I

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[116] Note to *Fuller's Church History*, x. § 39, and to the *Student's Hume*.

[117] *Illustrations*, iii. 172.

[118] Parker and Co. This author says of Cecil and his rival Raleigh, "Both were unprincipled men, but Cecil was probably the worst. He is suspected not only of having contrived the strange plot in which Raleigh was involved, but of being privy to the proceedings of Catesby and his associates, though he suffered them to remain unmolested, in order to secure the forfeiture of their estates" (p. 338).

[119] *Criminal Trials*, ii. 68.

[120] *History of England*, i. 254, note.

[121] *Catholique Apology*, p. 412.

[122] *Hist. Prov. Angl. S.J.*, p. 310.

[123] *Condition of Catholics under James I.*, p. 100.

[124] R.O. *Dom. James I.*, lxxxi. 70, August 29th, 1615.

[125] *A Plain and Rational Account of the Catholick Faith*, Rouen, 1721, p. 197.

believe that the father of that same king was effectually blown up by the Earls of Murray, Morton, Bothwell, and others of the Reformed Church of Scotland. However … I humbly conceive I may say the king and Parliament were in no danger of being hurt by it, and my reason is because they had not less a man than the prime minister of state for their tutelar angel; a person deeply read in politics; who had inherited the double spirit of his predecessor Walsingham, knew all his tricks of legerdemain, and could as seasonably discover plots as contrive them… This much at least is certain, that the letter written to my Lord Mounteagle, by which the Plot was discovered, had not a fool, but a very wise sophister for its author: for it was so craftily worded, that though it was mysterious enough on the one hand to prevent a full evidence that it was written on purpose to discover the Plot, yet it was clear enough on the other to be understood with the help of a little consideration, as the event soon showed. Indeed, when it was brought to Secretary Cecil, he, poor gentleman, had not penetration enough to understand the meaning of it, and said it was certainly written by a madman. But there, I fear, he wronged himself. For the secretary was no madman. On the contrary, he had too much wit to explain it himself, and was too refined a politician to let slip so favourable an occasion of making his court to the king, who was to have the compliment made him of being the only Solomon wise enough to unfold this dark mystery. Which while his Majesty was doing with a great deal of ease, the secretary was all the while at his elbow admiring and applauding his wonderful sagacity… So that, in all probability, the same man was the chief underhand contriver and discoverer of the Plot; and the greatest part of the bubbles concerned in it were trapanned into it by one who took sure care that none but themselves should be hurt by it… But be that as it will, there is no doubt but that they who suffer themselves to be drawn into a plot like fools, deserve to be hanged for it like knaves."

The opinion of Dodd, the historian, has already been indicated, which in another place he thus emphasizes and explains:[126] "Some persons in chief power suspecting the king would be very indulgent to Catholics, several stratagems were made use of to exasperate him against them, and cherishing the Gunpowder Plot is thought to be a masterpiece in this way."[127]

It would not be difficult to continue similar citations, but enough has now been said to show that it is nothing new to charge the chief minister of James I. with having fostered the conspiracy for his own purposes, or even to have actually set it a-going. It appears perfectly clear that from the first there were not a few, and those not Catholics only, who entertained such a belief, and that the facts of the case are inadequately represented by historians, who imply, like Mr. Jardine, that such a theory was first broached long afterwards, and adopted by Catholics alone.[128]

It is moreover apparent that if in recent times historians have forgotten that such a view was ever held, or consider it too preposterous for serious discussion, this is not because fuller knowledge of the details of the conspiracy have discredited it. The official version of the story has remained in possession of the field, and it has gradually been assumed that this must substantially be true. In consequence, as it seems, writers of history, approaching the subject with this conviction, have failed to remark many points suggested even by the documentary evidence at our disposal, and still more emphatically by the recorded facts, which cannot but throw grave doubt upon almost every particular of the traditional account, while making it impossible to believe that, as to what is most essential, the Plot was in reality what has for so long been supposed. That long before the "discovery" the Plot must

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[126] *Certamen utriusque Ecclesiæ*, James I.

[127] The author of the *English Protestants' Plea* (1621) says: "Old stratagems and tragedies of Queene Elizabeth's time must needs be renewed and playde againe, to bring not only the Catholikes of England, but their holy religion into obloquy" (p. 56).Peter Talbot, Bishop of Dublin, in the *Polititian's Catechisme* (1658) writes: "That Cecil was the contriver, or at least the fomenter of [the Plot,] was testified by one of his own domestick Gentlemen, who advertised a certain Catholike, by name Master Buck, two months before, of a wicked designe his Master had against Catholikes" (p. 94).

[128] A writer, signing himself "Architect," in an article describing the old palace of Westminster (*Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1800, p. 627), having occasion to mention the Gunpowder Plot, observes: "This Plot is now pretty well understood not to have been hatched by the Papists, but by an inveterate foe of the Catholicks of that day, the famous minister of James… All well-informed persons at present laugh at the whole of this business."

have been, and in fact was, known to the government; that this knowledge was artfully dissimulated, in order to make political capital out of it; that for the same purpose the sensational circumstances of its discovery were deliberately arranged; and that there are grave reasons for suspecting the beginnings of the desperate enterprise, as well as its catastrophe, to have been dexterously manipulated for State purposes; – such are the conclusions, the evidence for which will now be considered.

CHAPTER IV.
THE TRADITIONAL STORY

The history of the Gunpowder Plot prior to its discovery, as related with much circumstantiality by the government of the day, has, in all essential particulars, been accepted without demur by the great majority of modern writers. We have already seen that those who lived nearer to the period in question were less easily convinced; it remains to show that the internal evidence of the story itself is incompatible with its truthfulness.

The point upon which everything turns is the secret, and therefore dangerous, character of the conspiracy, which, as we are told, completely eluded the vigilance of the authorities, and was on the very verge of success before even a breath of suspicion was aroused, being balked only by a lucky accident occurring at the eleventh hour, in a manner fitly described as miraculous.

On the other hand, however, many plain and obvious considerations combine to show that such an account cannot be true. It is not easy to believe that much which is said to have been done by the conspirators ever occurred at all. It is clear that, if such things did occur, they can by no possibility have escaped observation. There is evidence that the government knew of the Plot long before they suddenly "discovered" it. Finally, the story of the said "discovery," and the manner in which it took place, is plainly not only untrue, but devised to conceal the truth; while the elaborate care expended upon it sufficiently indicates how important it was held that the truth should be concealed.

There are, moreover, arguments, which appear to deserve consideration, suggesting the conclusion that the Plot was actually set on foot by the secret instigation of those who designed to make it serve their ends, as in fact it did. For our purpose, however, it is not necessary to insist greatly upon these. It will be enough to show that, whatever its origin, the conspiracy was, and must have been, known to those in power, who, playing with their infatuated dupes, allowed them to go on with their mad scheme, till the moment came to strike with full effect; thus impressing the nation with a profound sense of its marvellous deliverance, and winning its confidence for those to whose vigilance and sagacity alone that deliverance appeared due.

That we may rightly follow the details of the story told to us, we must in the first place understand the topography of the scene of operations, which, with the aid of the illustrations given, will not be difficult.

a. The House of Lords. b. Chamber under the House of Lords, called "Guy Faukes' Cellar." c. The Prince's Chamber. d. The Painted Chamber. e. The "White Hall" or Court of Requests. f. The House of Commons (formerly St. Stephen's Chapel). g. Westminster Hall. h. St. Stephen's Cloisters, converted into houses for the Tellers of the Exchequer. i. Garden of the Old Palace (afterwards called "Cotton Garden"). j. House built on the site of the Chapel of "Our Lady of the Pew" (called later "Cotton House"). k k k. Houses built upon ruins of the walls of the Old Palace.	l. Vault under the Painted Chamber. m. Yard or Court into which a doorway opened from Guy Faukes' Cellar. n. Passage leading from the same Yard or Court into Parliament Place. o. Parliament Place. p. Parliament Stairs (formerly called "The Queen's Bridge"). q q. The River Thames. r. Old Palace Yard. s. Westminster Abbey. t. St. Margaret's Church. u v w. Buildings of the Old Palace, called "Heaven" (or "Paradise"), "Hell," and "Purgatory." x. New Palace Yard. y. Bell Tower of St. Stephen's. z. The Speaker's Garden.

The old House of Lords[129] was a chamber occupying the first floor of a building which stood about fifty yards from the left bank of the Thames, to which it was parallel, the stream at this point

[129] The name "old House of Lords" is somewhat ambiguous, being variously applicable to three different buildings:(i.) That here described, which continued to be used till the Irish Union, a. d. 1800.(ii.) The "Court of Requests," or "White Hall," used from 1800 till the fire of 1834.(iii.) The "Painted Chamber," which, having been repaired after the said fire, became the place of assembly for the Lords, as did the Court of Requests for the Commons.The original House of Lords was demolished in 1823 by Sir John Soane, who on its site erected his Royal Gallery. (See Brayley and Britton, *History of the Palace of Westminster*.)

running almost due north. Beneath the Peers' Chamber, on the ground floor, was a large room, which plays an important part in our history. This had originally served as the palace kitchen,[130] and though commonly described as a "cellar" or a "vault" was in reality neither, for it stood on the level of the ground outside, and had a flat ceiling, formed by the beams which supported the flooring of the Lords' apartment above.[131] It ran beneath the said Peers' Chamber from end to end, and measured 77 feet in length, by 24 feet 4 inches in width.

At either end, the building abutted upon another running transversely to it; that on the north being the "Painted Chamber," probably erected by Edward the Confessor, and that on the south the "Prince's Chamber," assigned by its architectural features to the reign of Henry III. The former served as a place of conference for Lords and Commons,[132] the latter as the robing-room of the Lords. The royal throne stood at the south end of the House, near the Prince's Chamber.

Originally the Parliament Chamber and the "cellar" beneath it were lighted by large windows on both sides; subsequently, houses raised against it blocked these up, and the Lords were supplied with light by dormers constructed in the roof. The walls of their apartment were then hung with tapestry, representing the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Although precise information on the point is not easy to obtain, it would appear that this did not occur till a period later than that with which we are concerned.[133]

Such was the position to be attacked. As a first step, the conspirators resolved to hire a house in the immediate neighbourhood, to serve them as a base of operations. Thomas Percy was selected to appear as the principal in this part of the business, for, being one of the king's pensioners, he had frequently to be in attendance at Court, and might naturally wish to have a lodging close at hand. The house chosen was one, or rather a part of one,[134] standing near the Prince's Chamber, and on the side towards the river.[135]

In treating for the lease of this tenement Percy seems to have conducted himself in a manner altogether different from what we might have expected of one whose object required him, above all, to avoid attracting notice. He appears, in fact, to have made the greatest possible ado about the business. The apartments were already let to one Ferrers, who was unwilling to give them up, and Percy eventually succeeded in his purpose, after not only "long suit by himself," but also "great intreaty of Mr. Carleton, Mr. Epsley, and other gentlemen belonging to the Earl of Northumberland."[136] These gentlemen were never said to have been privy to the Conspiracy, and one of them, the well-known Dudley Carleton, afterwards Viscount Dorchester, was not only at this time secretary to Sir Thomas Parry, the Ambassador in France, but was "patronised" by Cecil himself.[137]

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[130] The authority for this is the Earl of Northampton, who at Father Garnet's trial mentioned that it was so stated in ancient records. Remains of a buttery hatch in the south wall confirmed his assertion.The foundations of the building were believed to date from the time of Edward the Confessor, and the style of architecture of the superstructure assigned it to the early part of the thirteenth century, as likewise the "Prince's Chamber."

[131] Brayley and Britton, *History of the Palace of Westminster*, p. 421; J. T. Smith, *Antiquities of Westminster*, p. 39 (where illustrations will be found); *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1800, p. 626.

[132] It was here that the death warrant of Charles I. was signed.

[133] An old print (which states that it is taken from "a painted print in the Cottonian library,") representing the two Houses assembled in presence of Queen Elizabeth, has windows on both sides. The same plate, with the figure of the sovereign alone changed, was made to do duty likewise for a Parliament of James I. By Hollar's time (1640-77) the windows had been blocked up and the tapestry hung.

[134] Cecil wrote to Cornwallis, Edmondes, and others, November 9th, 1605, "This Piercey had a bout a year and a half a goe hyred a parte of Vyniards house in the old Palace," which appears to be Mr. Hepworth Dixon's sole authority for styling the tenement "Vinegar House."

[135] See Appendix E, *Site of Percy's house*.

[136] Evidence of Mrs. Whynniard, November 7th, 1605. Epsley is evidently the same person as Hoppisley, who was examined on the 23rd of the same month.

[137] Birch, *Historical View*, p. 227.

Neither does the house appear to have been well suited to serve the purposes for which it was taken. Speed tells us,[138] and he is confirmed by Bishop Barlow of Lincoln,[139] that it was let out to tenants only when Parliament was not assembled, and during a session formed part of the premises at the disposal of the Lords, whom it served as a withdrawing room. As the Plot was, of necessity, to take effect during a session,[140] when the place would thus be in other hands, it is very hard to understand how it was intended that the final and all important operation should be conducted.

The bargain for the house was concluded May 24th, 1604,[141] but the proposed operations were delayed till a much later date, by a circumstance which clearly shows the public nature of the premises, and that the lease obtained conferred no exclusive right of occupation. The question of a union with Scotland, for which King James was very anxious, was at the time being agitated, and commissioners having been appointed to discuss it, this very house was placed at their disposal for their meetings. Consequently the summer and autumn passed without any farther steps being taken by the conspirators.

At last, in December, they were free to take in hand the extraordinary scheme they had matured. This was, starting from a cellar of Percy's house,[142] to dig thence an underground mine to the foundations of the Parliament House, and through them; and then to construct within, beneath the Peers' Chamber itself, a "concavity" large enough to contain the amount of powder requisite for their purpose. On December 11th, 1604, they commenced operations,[143] and in a fortnight, that is by Christmas, they had tunnelled from their starting-point to the wall they had to breach; and that this first operation was of no small magnitude, especially for men who had never before handled pick or shovel,[144] is shown by the fact that what they contrived to do in so short a time was quoted as evidence of the extraordinary zeal they displayed in their nefarious enterprise.[145] Having rested a little, for the Christmas holidays, they began upon the wall, which presented an unexpected obstacle. They found that it was not only "very hard to beat through," but, moreover, nine feet thick, though since, as we shall see, they never penetrated to the other side, it is not clear how they were able to measure it.[146] Up to this point but five persons had engaged in the work, Catesby, Percy, Thomas Winter, John Wright, and Faukes. In consequence however of the difficulties now experienced, Keyes was called in to their aid. He had already been initiated in the Plot, and appointed to take charge of the powder, which was being accumulated and stored in a house hired for the purpose across the Thames, at Lambeth. It was therefore necessary to bring over the powder with him, which amounted at this time to twenty barrels, and was placed either in Percy's lodging itself, or in an outhouse belonging to it. About the same time Christopher Wright was also initiated and took his share of the labour.[147]

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[138] *Historie*, p. 1231.

[139] *Gunpowder Treason, Harleian Miscellany*, iii. 121.

[140] At his first examination, November 5th 1605, Faukes declared that he had not been sure the king would come to the Parliament House on that day, and that his purpose was to have blown it up whenever his Majesty was there.

[141] The agreement between Percy and Ferrers is in the Record Office (*Gunpowder Plot Book*, 1.) and is endorsed by Cecil, "The bargaine … for the bloody sellar." Upon this there will be more to remark later.

[142] Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 42.

[143] The 11th of December, O.S., was at that period the shortest day, which circumstance suggested to Sir E. Coke, on the trial of the conspirators, one of his characteristic facetiæ; he bade his hearers note "That it was in the entring of the Sun into the Tropick of Capricorn, when they began their Mine; noting that by Mining they should descend, and by Hanging, ascend."

[144] "Gentlemen not accustomed to labour or to be pioneers." – Goodman, *Court of King James*, p. 103.

[145] "The Moles that first underwent these underminings were all grounded Schollers of the Romish Schoole, and such earnest Labourers in their Vault of Villany, that by Christmas Eve they had brought the worke under an entry, unto the Wall of the Parliament House, underpropping still as they went the Earth with their framed Timber." – Speed, *Historie*, p. 1232 (pub. 1611).

[146] In Barlow's *Gunpowder Treason* these foundations are stated to have been three ells thick, *i. e.*, eleven and a quarter feet. *Harleian Miscellany*, iii. 122.

[147] See Appendix F, *The enrolment of the Conspirators*, for the discrepancies as to dates. T. Winter (November 23rd, 1605) says that the powder was laid "in Mr. Percy's house;" Faukes, "in a low Room new builded."

The gang thus composed laboured upon the wall from the beginning of January, 1604-5, to the middle of March,[148] by which time they had succeeded in getting only half way through. While the others worked, Faukes stood on sentry to warn them of any danger.

Meanwhile, it must be asked how proceedings so remarkable could have escaped the notice, not only of the government, but of the entire neighbourhood. This, it must be remembered, was most populous. There were people living in the very building, a part of which sheltered the conspirators. Around, were thickly clustered the dwellings of the keeper of the Wardrobe, auditors and tellers of the Exchequer, and other such officials.[149] There were tradespeople and workmen constantly employed close to the spot where the work was going on; while the public character of the place makes it impossible to suppose that tenants such as Percy and his friends, who were little better than lodgers, could claim the exclusive use of anything beyond the rooms they rented – even when allowed the use of these – or could shut against the neighbours and visitors in general the precincts of so much frequented a spot.

How, then, did they dispose of the mass of soil dug out in making a tunnel through which barrels and hogsheads were to be conveyed? No man who has had practical experience of the unexpected quantity of earth which comes out of the most insignificant excavation, will be likely to rest satisfied with the explanation officially given, that it was sufficiently concealed by being hidden beneath the turf in the little garden adjoining.[150] What, moreover, was done with the great stones that came out of the foundations? Of these there must have been on hand at least some sixty cubic feet, probably much more, and they, at any rate, can scarcely have been stowed away beneath the turf.

What, above all, of the noise made during the space of a couple of months, in assaulting a wall "very hard to beat through"? It is a matter of common observation how sound travels in the ground, and every stroke of the pick upon the stone must have been distinctly heard for more than a hundred yards all around, constituting a public nuisance. Meanwhile, not only were there people living close by on every side, but men were constantly at work right over the heads of the diggers, and only a few feet from them: yet we are required to believe that neither these nor any others had any notion that anything unusual was going on.

Neither is it easy to understand how these amateurs contrived to do so much without a catastrophe. To make a tunnel through soft earth is a very delicate operation, replete with unlooked-for difficulties. To shore up the roof and sides there must, moreover, have been required a large quantity of the "framed timber" of which Speed tells us, and the provision and importation of this must have been almost as hard to keep dark as the exportation of the earth and stones. A still more critical operation is that of meddling with the foundations of a house – especially of an old and heavy structure – which a professional craftsman would not venture upon except with extreme care, and the employment of many precautions of which these light-hearted adventurers knew nothing. Yet, recklessly breaking their way out of one building, and to a large extent into another, they appear to have occasioned neither crack nor settlement in either.

We are by no means at the end of our difficulties. According to the tale told by Faukes,[151] all the seven miners "lay in Percy's house," never showing themselves while the work was in progress. This circumstance, to say nothing of the storage of powder barrels and timber, seems to imply that the premises were spacious and commodious. We learn, however, on the unimpeachable evidence of

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[148] There is, as usual, hopeless contradiction between the two witnesses upon whom, as will be seen, we wholly depend for this portion of the story. Faukes (November 17th, 1605) makes the mining operations terminate at Candlemas. T. Winter (November 23rd) says that they went on to "near Easter" (March 31st). The date of hiring the "cellar," was about Lady Day (March 25th).

[149] The buildings of the dissolved College of St. Stephen, comprising those around the House of Lords, were granted by Edward VI. to Sir Ralph Lane. They reverted to the crown under Elizabeth, and were appropriated as residences for the auditors and tellers of the Exchequer. The locality became so populous that in 1606 it was forbidden to erect more houses.

[150] Jardine, *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 48.

[151] November 17th, 1605.

Mrs. Whynniard's servant,[152] that the house afforded accommodation only for one person at a time, so that when Percy came there to spend the night, Faukes, who passed for his man, had to lodge out. This suggests another question. Percy's pretext for laying in so much fuel was that he meant to bring up his wife to live there. But how could this be under such conditions?

Still more serious is another problem. When the mining operations were commenced, in December, 1604, Parliament was appointed to meet on the 7th of February following, by which time, as is evident, the preparations of the conspirators could not have been completed. While they were working, however, news came that the session was to be postponed till October. This information the conspirators appear to have received quite casually before Christmas, for it is said that on the strength of it, they thought they could afford to take a holiday.[153] Early in January they were again at work,[154] and they continued their operations thenceforth, without any circumstance intervening to interrupt or alarm them, of which we hear anything either from themselves or from subsequent writers. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that the Lords actually met on February 7th – that is while the mining operations were going on – and not only went through the ceremony of prorogation, but transacted some little business besides, Lord Denny being introduced and his writ of summons read.[155] It is equally incomprehensible that the miners should have known nothing of so startling an occurrence, or that knowing of it they should never have made the slightest mention thereof. It is even more difficult to explain how the Peers thus assembled, and their attendants, could have failed to remark the mine, then actually open, in premises belonging to themselves, or any suspicious features of earth, stones, timber, or barrels.

The difficulties presented by the stubborn nature of the foundation-wall proved well-nigh insuperable, but, as is observed by Father Greenway,[156] one still more grave awaited the diggers had they succeeded in making their way through. The "concavity" to be excavated within, to contain the large number of powder barrels required for their purpose, would have involved engineering work of the most hazardous kind, and heavily laden as the floor above proved to be, it must, according to all rules of calculation, have collapsed, when thus undermined. But at this juncture, when the wall had been half pierced, a circumstance occurred, not less extraordinary than others we have considered, to change the whole plan of operations.

All this time, ridiculous as is the supposition, the conspirators appear to have been ignorant of the existence of the "cellar," and to have fancied that they were working their way immediately beneath the Chamber of the Peers.[157] If such a circumstance be incredible, the consequences must be borne by the narrative of which it forms an essential feature. That it is incredible can hardly be questioned. The so-called "cellar," as we have seen, was a large and conspicuous room above ground.

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[152] November 7th, 1605.

[153] Winter says: "… We heard that the Parliament should be anew adjourned until after Michaelmas; upon which tidings we broke off both discourse and working until after Christmas" (November 23rd, 1605).Lingard writes, "When a fortnight had thus been devoted to uninterrupted labour, Faukes informed his associates that the Parliament was prorogued from the 7th of February to the 3rd of October. They immediately separated to spend the Christmas holidays at their respective homes." —*History*, vii. 47 (ed. 1883).

[154] Faukes, as has been said, makes the work upon the wall terminate at Candlemas. Winter (*ut sup.*) says that they brought over the powder at Candlemas, that is, after they had been some time engaged upon the wall, and found the need of the assistance of Keyes.

[155] *Lord's Journals* "Ao 1604(5) 2 Jac. – Memorandum quod hodierno die, septimo die Februarii, Ao Regis ñri Jacobi, *viz.* Angliae (etc.) 2ndo, & Scotiae 38o, in quem diem prorogatum fuerat hoc praesens parliamentum, convenere Proceres tam Spirituales quam Temporales, quorum nomina subscribuntur."Then follow twenty-nine names, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lords Ellesmere (*Chancellor*), Dorset (*Treasurer*), Nottingham (*Admiral*), Suffolk (*Chamberlain*), Northumberland, Cranborne (Cecil), Northampton, etc. It is noted "Lords Montagu, Petre, and Gerard [all three Catholics] were present, though they were none of the Commissioners."

[156] *Narrative* (Stonyhurst MSS.), fol. 44 b.

[157] This absurd supposition is obviously implied by Faukes (November 17th, 1605), and T. Winter (November 23rd), in the only two accounts furnished by any of the conspirators wherein the episode of the mine is mentioned. In Barlow's *Gunpowder Treason* (*Harleian Miscellany*, iii. 123) it is expressly stated that the confederates "came to the knowledge of the vault" only on the occasion now detailed. Tierney says (Dodd's *Church History*, iv. 45, note): "At this moment an accidental noise … first acquainted them with the existence of the cellar."

There are reasons for believing that it served habitually as a passage between the different parts of the palace. It appears certain that some of the conspirators, Percy in particular, as being one of his Majesty's pensioners, must have frequently been in the House of Lords itself, and therefore have known where it was; and clearly men of their position were able to attend there when they chose.[158]

The manner in which they came at last to discover the "cellar" is thus related by Mr. Jardine:[159] "One morning, while working upon the wall, they suddenly heard a rushing noise in a cellar, nearly above their heads. At first they imagined that they had been discovered; but Fawkes being despatched to reconnoitre, found that one Bright, to whom the cellar belonged, was selling off his coals[160] in order to remove, and that the noise proceeded from this cause. Fawkes carefully surveyed the place, which proved to be a large vault, situated immediately below the House of Lords, and extremely convenient for the purpose they had in view… Finding that the cellar would shortly become vacant, the conspirators agreed that it should be hired in Percy's name, under the pretext that he wanted it for his own coals and wood. This was accordingly done, and immediate possession was obtained."[161]

It is obvious that Mr. Bright's men must on this, as presumably upon many previous occasions, have been at work among the coals, while the miners were hammering at the foundations beneath them, and yet have been as little aware of what was going on as were the others of the existence of the "cellar." It must, farther, be noted that the hiring of this receptacle was, in fact, by no means so easy a matter as the accounts ordinarily given would lead us to suppose. Faukes, in the narrative on which the whole history of this episode has been based, is made to say that he found that the coals were a-selling, and the cellar was to be let, whereupon Percy went and hired it. Mrs. Whynniard, however, tells us that the cellar was not to let, and that Bright had not the disposal of the lease, but one Skinner, and that Percy "laboured very earnestly" before he succeeded in obtaining it.

But, whatever the circumstances and manner of the transaction, it appears that at Lady-day, 1605, this chamber came into the hands of those who were to make it so famous; whereupon, we are told, they resolved to abandon the mine, and use this ready-made cavity for their purposes. To it, accordingly, they transferred their powder, the barrels, by subsequent additions, being increased to thirty-six, and the amount to nine or ten thousand pounds.[162] The casks were covered with firewood, 500 faggots and 3,000 billets being brought in by hired porters and piled up by Faukes, to whose charge, in his assumed character of Percy's servant, the cellar was committed. It is stated in Winter's long declaration on this subject,[163] that the barrels were thus completely hidden, "because we might have the house free, to suffer anyone to enter that would," and we find it mentioned by various writers

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[158] On the 3rd of October following, Thomas Winter was sent to be present at the ceremony of prorogation, and to watch the demeanour of the assembled peers.

[159] *Gunpowder Plot*, p. 55. This account is based almost entirely on that of Faukes, November 17th, 1605.

[160] In his Italian version of Father Gerard's history, Father Greenway interpolates the following note: "Questi non erano carboni di legno, ma una sorte di pietra negra, la quale come carbone abrugia et fa un fuogo bellissimo et ottimo" (fol. 44 b).

[161] "These Pioneers through Piercies chamber broughtTh' exhausted earth, great baskets full of clay;Thereby t' have made a mighty concave vau't,And of the house the ground worke tooke away:But then at last an obstacle they finde,Which to remove proud Piercy casts in 's mind.A thick stone wall their passage then did let;Whereby they cou'd not finish their intent.Then forthwith Piercy did a sellar get,Under that sacred house for yearly rent:Feigning to fill 't with Char coal, Wood, & Beere,From all suspect themselves to cloake & cleere."John Vicars, Mischeefes MysterieThis remarkable poem, published 1617, is a much expanded translation of *Pietas Pontificia* (in Latin hexameter verse) by Francis Herring, which appeared in 1606.

[162] On this point we are furnished with more than the usual amount of variety as to details. Cecil, writing to the ambassadors (Cornwallis, Edmondes, etc.), says there were "two hodgsheads and some 30 small barrels." The King's *Discourse* mentions 36 barrels. Barclay (*Conspiratio Anglicana*) says there were over 9,000 lb. of powder, in 32 barrels, and that one of extra size had been placed under the throne, for treason could not without dread assail Majesty even when unarmed. The indictment of the conspirators named 30 barrels and 4 hogsheads. Sir E. Coke always said 36 barrels. Barlow's *Gunpowder Treason* makes the extraordinary statement, frequently reproduced, that "to the 20 Barrels of Powder laid in at first, they added in July 20 more, and at last made up the number Thirty-six." Faukes (November 5th) said that of the powder "some was put in hoggesheads, some in Barrels, and some in firkins." Faukes also says that the powder was conveyed to the place in hampers. John Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton, November 7th, 1605, says it was carried in satchels. Barlow (*ut sup.*) quotes the amount as 9,000 or 10,000 lb.

[163] November 23rd, 1605.

subsequently, that free ingress was actually allowed to the public. Thus we read[164] of "the deep cunning [of the conspirators] in throwing open the vault, as if there had been nothing to conceal;" while another writer[165] tells us, "The place was hired by Percy; 36 barrels of gunpowder were lodged in it; the whole covered up with billets and faggots; the doors of the cellar boldly flung open, and everybody admitted, as though it contained nothing dangerous." On the top of the barrels were likewise placed "great bars of iron and massy stones," in order "to make the breach the greater."

We may here pause to review the extraordinary story to which we have been listening. A group of men, known for as dangerous characters as any in England, men, in Cecil's own words,[166] "spent in their fortunes," "hunger-starved for innovations," "turbulent spirits," and "fit for all alterations," take a house within the precincts of a royal palace, and close to the Upper House of Parliament, dig a mine, hammer away for over two months at the wall, acquire and bring in four tons of gunpowder, storing it in a large and conspicuous chamber immediately beneath that of the Peers, and covering it with an amount of fuel sufficient for a royal establishment – and meanwhile those responsible for the government of the country have not even the faintest suspicion of any possible danger. "Never," it is said,[167] "was treason more secret, or ruin more apparently inevitable," while the Secretary of State himself declared[168] that such ruin was averted only by the direct interposition of Heaven, in a manner nothing short of miraculous.

It must be remembered that the government thus credited with childlike and culpable simplicity, was probably the most suspicious and inquisitive that ever held power in this country, for its tenure whereof it trusted mainly to the elaborate efficiency of its intelligence department. Of a former secretary, Walsingham, Parsons wrote that he "spent infinite upon spyery,"[169] and there can be no doubt that his successor, now in office, had studied his methods to good purpose. "He," according to a panegyrist,[170] "was his craft's master in foreign intelligence and for domestic affairs," who could tell at any moment what ships there were in every port of Spain, their burdens, their equipment, and their destination. We are told[171] that he could discover the most secret business transacted in the Papal Court before it was known to the Catholics in England. He could intercept letters written from Paris to Brussels, or from Rome to Naples.[172] What was his activity at home is sufficiently evidenced by the reports furnished by his numerous agents concerning everything done throughout the country, in particular by Recusants; whereof we shall see more, in connection with this particular affair. That those so remarkably wide-awake in regard of all else should have been blind and deaf to what was passing at their own doors appears altogether incredible.

More especially do difficulties connect themselves with the gunpowder itself. Of this, according to the lowest figure given us, there were over four tons.[173] How, we may ask, could half a dozen men, "notorious Recusants," and bearing, moreover, such a character as we have heard, without attracting any notice, and no question being asked, possess themselves of such a quantity of so dangerous

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[164] *The Gunpowder Plot*, by L., 1805. It seems highly probable that the "cellar" was used as a public passage.

[165] Hugh F. Martyndale, *A Familiar Analysis of the Calendar of the Church of England* (November 5th). London, Effingham Wilson.

[166] *Letter to Cornwallis and Edmondes*, November 9th, 1605.

[167] H.F. Martyndale, *ut sup.*

[168] Letter to the Ambassadors, *ut sup.*

[169] *An Advertisement written to a Secretarie*, etc. (1592), p. 13.

[170] Sir R. Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia (Harleian Miscellany*, ii. 106).

[171] Blount to Parsons (Stonyhurst MSS.), *Anglia*, vi. 64.

[172] Such letters are found amongst the State Papers.

[173] The amount, it would seem, cannot have been less than this. A barrel of gunpowder, containing four firkins, weighed 400 lb., and had the casks in the cellar all been barrels, in the strict sense of the word, the amount would therefore have exceeded six tons. Some of these casks, we are told, were small, but some were hogsheads. The twenty barrels first laid in are described as "whole barrels." (Faukes, January 20th, 1605-6.)

a material?[174] How large was the amount may be estimated from the fact that it was more than a quarter of what, in 1607, was delivered from the royal store, for all purposes, and was equal to what was thought sufficient for Dover Castle, while there was no more in the four fortresses of Arcliffe, Walmer, Deal, and Camber together.[175]

The twenty barrels first procured were first, as we have seen, stored beyond the Thames, at Lambeth, whence they had to be ferried across the river, hauled up the much frequented Parliament Stairs, carried down Parliament Place, as busy a quarter as any in the city of Westminster, and into the building adjoining the Parliament House, or the "cellar" beneath the same. All this, we are to suppose, without attracting attention or remark.[176]

The conspirators, while making these material preparations, were likewise busy in settling their plan of action when the intended blow should have been struck. It was by no means their intention to attempt a revolution. Their quarrel was purely personal with King James, his Council, and his Parliament, and, these being removed, they desired to continue the succession in its legitimate course, and to seat on the throne the nearest heir who might be available for the purpose; placing the new sovereign, however, under such tutelage as should insure the inauguration of a right course of policy. The details of the scheme were of as lunatic a character as the rest of the business. The confederates would have wished to possess themselves of Prince Henry, the king's eldest son; but as he would probably accompany his father to the opening of Parliament, and so perish, their desire was to get hold of his brother, the Duke of York, afterwards Charles I., then but five years old. It was, however, possible that he too might go to Parliament, and otherwise it might not improbably be impossible to get possession of him: in which case they were prepared to be satisfied with the Princess Elizabeth,[177] or even with her infant sister Mary, for whom, as being English born, a special claim might be urged.

Such was the project in general. When we come to details, we are confronted, as might be anticipated, with statements impossible to reconcile. We are told,[178] that Percy undertook to seize and carry off Duke Charles; and again,[179] that, despairing of being able to lay hands upon him, they

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[174] An interesting illustration of this point is furnished by a strange piece of evidence furnished by W. Andrew, servant to Sir E. Digby. Sir Everard's office was to organize the rising in the Midlands, after the catastrophe, but he apparently forgot to supply himself with powder till the very eve of the appointed day. Andrew averred that on the night of November 4th, his master secretly asked him to procure some powder in the neighbouring town, whereupon he asked, "How much? A pound, or half a pound?" Sir Everard said 200 or 300 lb. Deponent purchased one pound. (Tanner MSS. lxxv. f. 205 b.)One Matthew Batty mentioned Lord Monteagle as having bought gunpowder. (*Ibid.* v. 40.)In the same collection is a copy of some notes by Sir E. Coke (f. 185 b), in which the price of the powder discovered is put down as £200, *i. e.* some £2,000 of our money.

[175] Gunpowder was measured by the *last* = 2,400 lb. (Tomline's *Law Dictionary*.) In 1607 there were delivered out of the store 14 lasts and some cwts. In 1608 the amount in various strong places is entered as: "*Dover Castle*, 4 lasts; *Arcliffe Bullwark*, 1 last; *Walmer*, 1 last, 8 cwt.; *Deal Castle*, 1 last; *Sandown Castle*, 2 lasts, etc.; *Sandgate*, 1 last; *Camber*, 1 last."

[176] The position and character of the "cellar" admit of no doubt, as appears from the testimony of Smith's *Antiquities of Westminster*, Brayley and Britton's *Ancient Palace of Westminster*, and Capon's notes on the same, *Vetusta Monumenta*, v. They are, however, inconsistent with some circumstances alleged by the government. Thus, Sir Everard Digby's complicity with "the worst part" of the treason, which on several occasions he denied, is held to be established by a confession of Faukes, which cannot now be found among the State Papers, but which is mentioned in Sir E. Coke's speech upon Digby's arraignment, and is printed in Barlow's *Gunpowder Treason*, p. 68. In Sir E. Coke's version it runs thus: "Fawkes, then present at the bar, had confessed, that some time before that session, the said Fawkes being with Digby at his house in the country, about which time there had fallen much wet, Digby taking Fawkes aside after supper, told him he was much afraid that the powder in the cellar was grown damp, and that some new must be provided, lest that should not take fire."Seeing, however, that the powder stood above ground, within a most substantial building, and could be reached by the rain only if this should first flood the Chamber of the Peers, it does not seem as if the idea of such a danger should have suggested itself.Another interesting point in connection with the "cellar" is that the House of Lords having subsequently been removed to the Court of Requests, and afterwards to the Painted Chamber, "Guy Faukes' Cellar" on each occasion accompanied the migration. From Leigh's *New Picture of London* we find that in 1824-5, when the Court of Requests was in use, and the old cellar had completely disappeared, Guy's Cellar was still shown; while a plate given in Knight's *Old England*, and elsewhere, represents a vault under the Painted Chamber, not used as the House of Lords till after 1832. Such a cellar seems to have been considered a necessary appurtenance of the House.

[177] Afterwards the Electress Palatine.

[178] Gardiner, *Hist.* i. 245; Lingard, vii. 59; T. Winter, November 23rd, 1605.

[179] Faukes, November 17th, 1605.

resolved "to serve themselves with the Lady Elizabeth," and that Percy was one of those who made arrangements for seizing her;[180] and again, that having learnt that Prince Henry was not to go to the House, they determined to surprise him, "and leave the young Duke alone;"[181] and once more, that they never entered into any consultation or formed any project whatever as to the succession.[182]

Still more serious are the contradictions on another point. We are told, on the one hand, that a proclamation was drawn up for the inauguration of the new sovereign – whoever this was[183]– and, on the other, that the associates were resolved not to avow the explosion to be their work until they should see how the country took it, or till they had gathered a sufficient force,[184] and accordingly that they had no more than a project of a proclamation to be issued in due season. But, again, it is said[185] that Catesby on his way out of town, after the event, was to proclaim the new monarch at Charing Cross, though it is equally hard to understand, either how he was to know which of the plans had succeeded, and who that monarch was to be, – whether a king or a queen, – or what effect such proclamation by an obscure individual like himself was expected to produce; or how this, or indeed any item in the programme was compatible with the incognito of the actors in the great tragedy.

Amid this hopeless tangle one point alone is perfectly clear. Whatever was the scheme, it was absolutely insane, and could by no possibility have succeeded. As Mr. Gardiner says:[186] "With the advantage of having an infant sovereign in their hands, with a little money and a few horses, these sanguine dreamers fancied that they would have the whole of England at their feet."

Such is in outline the authorized version of the history concerning what Father John Gerard styles "this preposterous Plot of Powder;" and preposterous it undoubtedly appears to be in more senses than he intended. It is, in the first place, almost impossible to believe that the important and dramatic episode of the mine ever, in fact, occurred. We have seen something of the difficulties against accepting this part of the story, which the circumstantial evidence suggests. When, on the other hand, we ask upon what testimony it rests, it is a surprise to find that for so prominent and striking an incident we are wholly dependent upon two documents, published by the government, a confession of Thomas Winter and another of Faukes, both of which present features rendering them in the highest degree suspicious. Amongst the many confessions and declarations made by the conspirators in general, and these individuals in particular, these two alone describe the mining operations.[187]

On the other hand, it is somewhat startling to find no less a person than the Earl of Salisbury himself ignorant or oblivious of so remarkable a circumstance. In Thomas Winter's lodging was found the agreement between Percy and Ferrers for the lease of the house, which was taken, as has been said, in May, 1604. This is still preserved, and has been endorsed by Cecil, "The bargaine between Percy and Ferrers for the bloody sellar…" But this contract had nothing to do with the "bloody sellar," which was not rented till ten months later. Again, writing November 9th, 1605, to Cornwallis and Edmondes, Cecil says: "This Percy had about a year and a half ago hired a part of Vyniard's house in the old Palace, from whence he had access into this vault to lay his wood and coal, and as it seemeth

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[180] Harry Morgan, *Examination* (R.O.), November 12th, 1605.

[181] T. Winter, November 23rd and 25th, 1605. As the information about Prince Henry was alleged to have been communicated by Lord Monteagle, the passage has been mutilated in the published version to conceal this circumstance.

[182] Faukes, November 5th, 1605.

[183] Sir E. Digby, Barlow's *Gunpowder Treason*, App. 249.

[184] Faukes, November 17th, 1605.

[185] Digby, *ut sup.*

[186] *History*, i. 239.

[187] There is also an allusion to the same in the confession of Keyes, November 30th, 1605; but this document also is of a highly suspicious character. Of the seven miners, none but these three were taken alive; Catesby, Percy, and the two Wrights being killed in the field. Strangely enough, though Keyes may be cited as a witness on this subject, on which his evidence is of such singular importance, the government, for some purpose of its own, tampered with the confession of Faukes wherein he is mentioned as one of the excavators, substituting Robert Winter's name for his, and placing Keyes amongst those "that wrought not in the myne." See Jardine's remarks on this point, *Criminal Trials*, ii. 6.

now [had] taken this place of purpose to work some mischief in a fit time." When this was written the premises had been for four days in the hands of the government. It is clearly impossible that the remains of the mine, had they existed, should not have been found, and equally so that Cecil should not have alluded to the overwhelming evidence they afforded as to the intention of Percy and his associates to "work some mischief," but should, again, have connected the tenancy of the house only with the "cellar."

It will, moreover, be found by investigators that when exceptional stress is laid on any point by Sir E. Coke, the Attorney General, a *prima facie* case against the genuine nature of the evidence in regard of that point is thereby established. In his speech on the trial of the conspirators we find him declaring that, "If the cellar had not been hired, the mine work could hardly, or not at all, have been discovered, for the mine was neither found nor suspected until the danger was past, and the capital offenders apprehended, and by themselves, upon examination, confessed." That is to say, the government could not, though provided with information that there was a powder-mine under the Parliament House, have discovered this extraordinary piece of engineering; and moreover, after its abandonment, the traces of the excavation were so artfully hidden as to elude observation till the prisoners drew attention to them. Such assertions cannot possibly be true; but they might serve to meet the objection that no one had seen the mine.

We likewise find that in his examination of November 5th, Faukes is made to say: "He confesseth that about Christmas last [1604], he brought in the nighttime Gunpowder *to the cellar under the upper house of Parliament*," that is some three months before the cellar was hired. Moreover, the words italicised have been added as an interlineation, apparently by Cecil himself. Evidently when this was done the mine was still undiscovered.

Yet more remarkable is the fact that it would appear to have remained undiscovered ever afterwards, and that no marks seem to have been left upon the wall which had been so roughly handled. It is certainly impossible to find any record that such traces were observed when the building was demolished, though they could scarcely have failed to attract attention and interest. On this subject we have the important evidence of Mr. William Capon, who carefully examined every detail connected with the old palace, and evidently had the opportunity of studying the foundations of the House of Lords when, in 1823, that building was removed.[188]

[188] His detailed notes and plans are given in *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. v.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.